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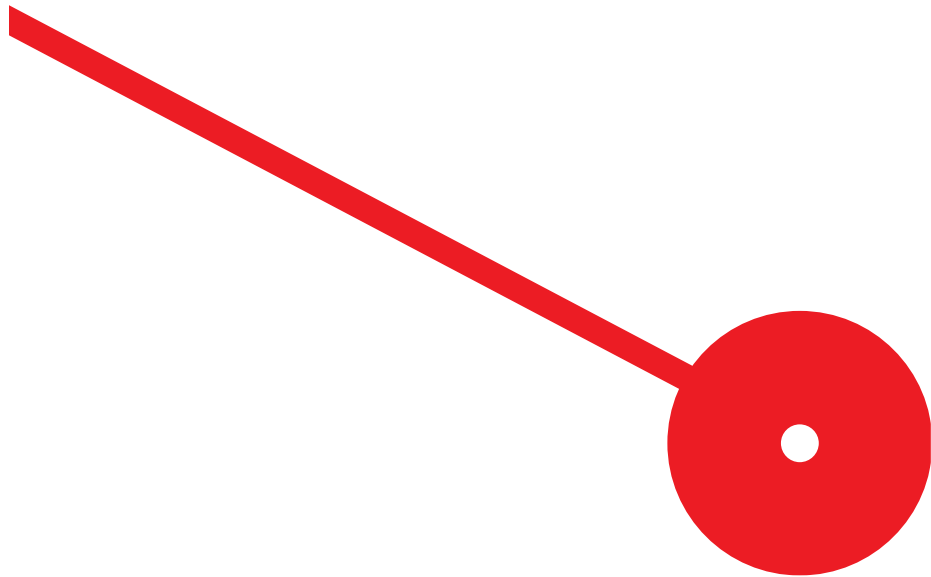
MASTER'S DEGREE IN
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

**The Impacts of Digitalisation on International Mobility: A Report on
the Curricular Internship Experiences at the International Office of
the Porto Accounting and Business School**

Isabela Giacomazzi Vieira

11/2025

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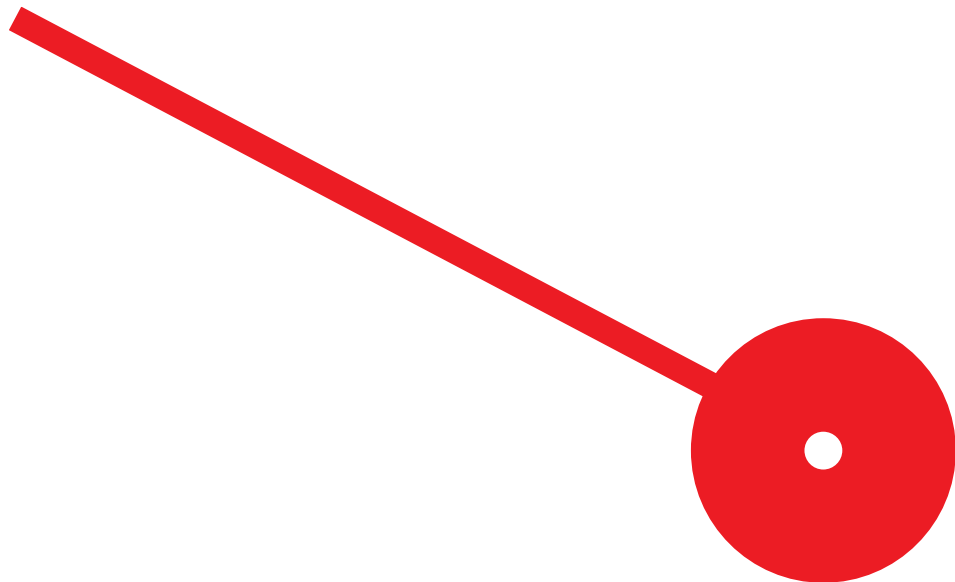
Internship Report

Presented to Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração

do Porto to obtain the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship and

Internationalization, under the supervision of Professor Doutor José

de Freitas Santos



Dedication

To my Robin, thank you for teaching me how to fly and for carrying me when my wings were broken. You will always be in my heart.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Doutor José de Freitas Santos, who supported me every step of the way, took my concerns seriously and helped with solutions. This work would not have existed without him.

I would also like to thank Prof. Doutora Maria Clara Dias Ribeiro, for always being so kind and helpful, and especially for calming me down when I was spiralling, and Prof. Doutora Alexandra Albuquerque, for accepting me in her office with open arms despite the short notice, taking the time to teach me the ins and outs of the work and urging me forward to reach my best potential.

Thank you, Débora Maia for being my first mentor and the coolest teacher ever.

Thank you, Ana Monteiro, Cláudia Duarte, Lara and Sara for being the best co-workers ever and making me feel so welcome in the office.

I am most grateful to my family. To my brother, my sister-in-law and my Hibiscus, thank you for keeping me as sane as I can be. I would be lost without you three. To my grandma, Dr. Vera Vieira, for giving me the best advice when I had writer's block, and to my dad, Dr. André Vieira, for helping me with editing and listening to my woes. And to my mom, Dr. Maria Giacomazzi for lending me her expert counsel when creating my first questionnaire ever.

I would also like to thank all my international colleagues who were so nice and patient with me while I was learning, and to acknowledge everyone who took time out of their day to answer my questionnaire. This work could not have existed without you.

Shout out to Dr. Sofia Pissarra, for literally maintaining my sanity during the entirety of my Master's (and some of my bachelor's as well).

Thank you, Tsukki, for being the light of my life and reason to keep going.

Abstract:

This report is both a description of the author's experience of interning in the International Office of the Porto Accounting and Business School as well as an exploratory study on the impacts of the digitalisation of the Erasmus+ programme on international mobility. It is also a compilation of relevant data regarding the perceptions of International Relations Officers regarding the Erasmus Without Paper programme. Which includes advantages, disadvantages, criticism and suggestions of the digitalisation process.

Based on a theoretical review and empirical evidence, and as part of the curricular internship activities at the International Office, an anonymous questionnaire was created for International Relations Officers with experience with Erasmus Without Paper. The objective was to evaluate the perceived impacts of the programme on their work. After analysing the data, the most relevant was that a significant number of respondents stated that since the implementation of Erasmus Without Paper their workload has become heavier. Which goes against the principle of efficiency, that is at the foundations of digitalisation.

This internship and research opportunity proved invaluable in terms of knowledge, work experience and interpersonal relationships with colleagues in the same field. This internship report is composed by the fruit of the skills acquired during the time spent in the International Office of the Porto Accounting and Business School.

Keywords: Digitalisation; Erasmus Without Paper; International Mobility; International Office.

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This work is a summation of the knowledge acquired during the internship experiences and research done at the International Office of the Porto Accounting and Business School. Most of the required four months of curricular internship experience was spent in the aforementioned office. Although one third was done in the enterprise Ship4link Transitarries Lda. This experience drew to my attention the issue of digitalisation at the international level. Much of the work there consisted of making budgets for a client's specific request of transportation of merchandise or private belongings. This involved navigating the websites of big global companies, such as CMA, Hapag-Lloyd, OOCL, One, Maersk and others. These websites were, in general, surprisingly rudimentary. In particular, OOCL's and One's, which were not functional most of the time. And led to contacting the enterprises directly instead of even attempting to budget on the website. Which defeated the purpose of its own existence. Although these two were the most difficult to work with, they were by no means the only ones with issues. Occasionally, CMA or Hapag-Lloyd would stop functioning as well. This empirical experience led me to focusing on the digitalisation process of the Erasmus program as an important area of study. Most of the internship work in the International Office was done within the Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) platform. Which is the official platform for the digitalisation of Erasmus+. Most of this work consisted in completing International Institutional Agreements (IIAs) in the platform which were in a state of stasis. This stasis was usually due to errors in the EWP network. Which therefore made me curious as to how common these issues were and led to the exploratory research of the impacts of digitalisation on the mobility of Erasmus+. However, before further explaining this study's findings, it is important to note that I carry a bias toward this matter. Most of the contracts I closed were that way because the previous intern could not. Which occurred because of an error that prevented them from doing so. Many times, related to issues in the EWP network. As such, most of the time closing contracts also consisted of me finding solutions and working around any issues that prevented the finalization of these agreements previously. Nonetheless, I have done my utmost best to negate this bias and maintain an open mind. From the responses gathered from the questionnaire launched as part of the research, the opinions of International Mobility Officers on the EWP network seem to be mixed. Nevertheless, according to the overall annual report of 2023 on the EWP (European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and

Culture, 2024), the initiative seems to be having a positive effect on the Internationalization of Knowledge. There is also a competent and hardworking team behind the project which is constantly accepting feedback from users in order to better the experience. Most of the issues seem to come from third party providers and a miscommunication between users and developers. Looking at the online forums made and used by EWP developers, it seems that some updates and rules of the platform are not intuitive for the users. Furthermore, not every Higher Education Institution (hereafter referred as HEI) has a budget to offer training on the platform for their employees, especially considering that the training would have to be as constant as the updates. These are people from different areas of study, with different levels of understanding on what the platform should look like. However, according to the latest update of the European University Foundation, it seems the people behind the EWP program seem intent on bridging the gap between themselves and their users.

Normally, a report such as this one would start with the presentation of the entity which hosted the intern, in this case it is the International Office of the Porto Accounting and Business School, which hosted me during almost the entirety of my internship, and this would be followed by a description of the activities done during the aforementioned internship. However, before that, there are some terms and definitions which are important to clarify so that the activities done in the International Office are easy to understand, since digitalisation of Erasmus+ is a complex and relatively new matter.

Therefore, this work will follow a different sequence. Firstly, I will display the theoretical framework and explain more about the Erasmus+ program and its digitalisation. Then, I will present the hosting entity and the internship activities. Afterwards, the focus will be on the study, including the latest assessment of the digitalisation of the Erasmus Without Paper Platform, as well as the results of the questionnaire to the International Mobility Officers on the impacts of digitalisation in their work. Lastly, I will analyse critically the internship and conclude the report.

CHAPTER I – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1 Theoretical Framework

There are some terms and definitions which are important to clarify before continuing. After all, what does international mobility mean? And what is “digitalisation”? And how does it correlate with Erasmus+? What are contracts and agreements? This will all be explained in this chapter.

1.1 International Mobility and Mobility Officers

According to the Model of International Mobility Convention published in the Columbia Journal of Transnational Law, although the term “International Mobility” has no exact legal definition, it can be broadly defined as “the movement of individuals across borders for any length of time as visitors, students, tourists, labour migrants, entrepreneurs, long-term residents, forced migrants, refugees, victims of trafficking, people caught in countries in crisis and family members” (Model International Mobility Convention, 2018, p.4). The Organisation for Economic Co-Development (OECD), a global academically recognized forum of information on global policy, defines “Student International Mobility” as “the movement of students across borders to pursue higher education in foreign countries significantly impacts individuals, institutions and societies worldwide.” Adding that it “can serve as a catalyst for academic excellence, cultural exchange, economic growth, and international understanding in an increasingly interconnected world.” (International Student Mobility, 2024)

From observations at the International Office of the Porto Accounting and Business School and the literature, an international mobility officer (or international relations officer), in the context of HEIs, are the ones responsible for ensuring the comings and goings of individuals from one place to another. They take care of the logistics, bureaucracy, communications and support behind international mobility. The specific actions of international mobility officers will be further explained in the presentation of the host entity.

1.2 Digitalisation of Erasmus+: Definition, Principles and History

The official definition of “digitalisation” in the Cambridge Dictionary is: “the process of changing something such as a document to a digital form (= a form that can be stored and read by computers), or the use of digital technology to do something” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024).

The Erasmus Without Paper initiative was launched by the Erasmus+ community to digitalise the Erasmus+ exchanges between HEIs. As well as to expand other relevant projects with the help of technology, such as the European Student Card Initiative (ESCI) (Erasmus without Paper, n.d.).

According to the official Erasmus+ website, which belongs to the European Commission, Erasmus is the European Union’s program to encourage and support youth, sports and, especially, education in its many forms. Such as Higher Education, Vocational Education and Training, School Education and Adult Education. This is an expansion of its earlier goals, which only involved Education. That change was made in 2014, when the “+” in “Erasmus” was added as a way to emphasize its commitment to support other areas of interest (Erasmus to Erasmus+: history, funding and future | Erasmus+, 2025).

Essentially, Erasmus+ is an organization which promotes the international exchange of knowledge and the encouragement of transnational cooperation. It has been doing so since its inception in 1987. In order to achieve these goals, the program has three key actions: the key action 1 is the “learning mobility of individuals”, the key action 2 is the “cooperation among organisations and institutions”, and the key action 3 is the “support to policy development and cooperation”. (Erasmus to Erasmus+: history, funding and future | Erasmus+, 2025)

Erasmus+ regularly updates its main benchmarks and objectives in intervals of about 6 to 7 years. This time-frame is based on the Multi-Annual Financial Framework of the European Union. Which is the long-term budgeting process of the EU (James, 2025; European Commission, n.d.). The most recent funding period goes from 2021 to 2027. Erasmus+’ priorities during this time are, quoting from their website, the following: “supporting the green transition”, “addressing the digital transformation”, “promoting social inclusion and diversity”, and fostering stronger participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement”. (Erasmus to Erasmus+: history, funding and future | Erasmus+, 2025)

With digitalisation as well as the key action 2 in mind, the European Student Card Initiative was created. The ESCI is composed of 3 building blocks to achieve the most seamless and efficient international student mobility possible. The first building block is the European Student Card, which transforms any student card in the EU into one that provides student benefits both in and out of a student's country. The second is the Erasmus+ App, which is an easily accessible app that allows students to oversee their mobility. This is achieved by making available in one place a detailed guide, together with all of the services needed to be mobile. And the third, and most important block for this work, is the Erasmus Without Paper initiative. Also known as EWP, it is briefly described in the European Commission website as "A digital solution for higher education institutions to connect their Erasmus+ mobility management systems so they can manage their mobility students online" (About the European Student Card Initiative, 2024; Erasmus without Paper, n.d.). The objective of EWP is to digitalise the mobility process between HEI's. This is to the benefit not only of the students, but also to the mobility of staff and trainees. The exchange of information between HEI's can be very complex and costly. Therefore, by placing all the mobility information in one secure space only accessible to those with the correct authorization, it is easier to communicate and manage the mobility of people. By reducing costs and physical paperwork, this also aids in the current priorities of Erasmus+. Promoting diversity and social inclusion by making the Erasmus+ program more available to HEI's which don't have resources for traditional student exchanges. And supporting the transition to greener options by creating a system which utilizes a substantially lesser quantity of paper (Leys and Mincer-Daszkiwicz, 2022, pp. 2-3).

The first foray into digitalisation presented to the international community was the Erasmus Without Paper Dashboard, an application launched in 2016 (About the future of Erasmus Without Paper, 2024). The EWP Dashboard is a tool for HEIs and their IROs to manage their Erasmus+ mobilities. It is a free tool for all HEIs, but its main purpose is to support those that do not have their own software for the administration of mobility and that cannot, or will not, seek a third-party provider to be part of the EWP network (About the EWP Dashboard, 2024).

According to a news article published by the EUF in 2023, titled "The Enhanced EWP Dashboard Is Here! | EUF", in this same year, there was an important launch of an enhanced version of EWP Dashboard. Which showed changes based on user feedback

that made it more intuitive and prepared for supporting the growth of the EWP scale and its activities. In the same article, it is stated that “more than 80% of all HEIs that exchange Erasmus students connect to the EWP network via the EWP Dashboard”. Thus highlighting the importance of the EWP dashboard and of the EWP network initiative.

There was another article published by EUF in 2024, titled “About the Future of Erasmus without Paper”, that declared the EWP Dashboard as being “the only pan-European IT solution developed by universities and for universities”.

The EWP Dashboard and its development and popularity continue to grow, as the latest European Association for International Education (EAIE) Conference, marked the first EWP Dashboard stand. Which, according to reports, became a point of reference and community for the attendees (Reflections from the EAIE: The EWP Dashboard Community at the Heart of the Conversation | EUF, 2025).

However, different HEI’s have different protocols and systems for managing their international mobilities. Therefore, the proposal of EWP is not to create one single uniform system, but to incorporate the different HEI’s international mobility systems into one network. Thus, allowing individuality and freedom to HEI’s, while also bringing them and their information together. (*Erasmus Without Paper - Erasmus+*, n.d.)

This is how the EWP network was launched in 2018. In a conference, the team behind its development showed participants a successful exchange of information of mobilities between different software’s. Evidently, the EWP network has been largely successful in its goals of digitalisation and easy exchange between different management systems. This allows HEIs that use their own software or software from a third-party provider, as well as EWP Dashboard users to create, sign, approve, cancel, and overall exchange important documentation into one network of systems. This is facilitated by Application Programming Interfaces, also known as APIs. They allow the process of exchange of encrypted information from one software to another to be standardized while not changing the software programmes themselves. When dealing with important documentation and information, it is vital to guarantee that the data is secure, not only for the sake of privacy, but also for protection from those looking to steal information for malicious purposes. This is why the information traded between HEIs is never stored. The only data stored within the EWP network is the identification information of members within the network and the list of APIs they respectively use, which is not

dissimilar to a phonebook. Meanwhile, the HEIs servers are responsible for their own methods of authentication. This is concisely explained by Leys and Mincer-Daszkiwicz (2022) in their paper “Erasmus Without Paper: dream becoming reality”: “An institution wishing to initiate a data transaction consults the identification data of the concerned partner in the Registry and sends a data package directly to the partner via the relevant API. The data package itself is encrypted according to EWP defined standards ensuring the communication cannot be accessed by other parties; this guarantees high levels of security and privacy. Each server takes care of the authentication and user rights of its own users” (Mincer-Daszkiwicz, J. Baszkiewicz, P. (2022), p. 8). In the same paper, the authors provide the following image to further clarify the process:

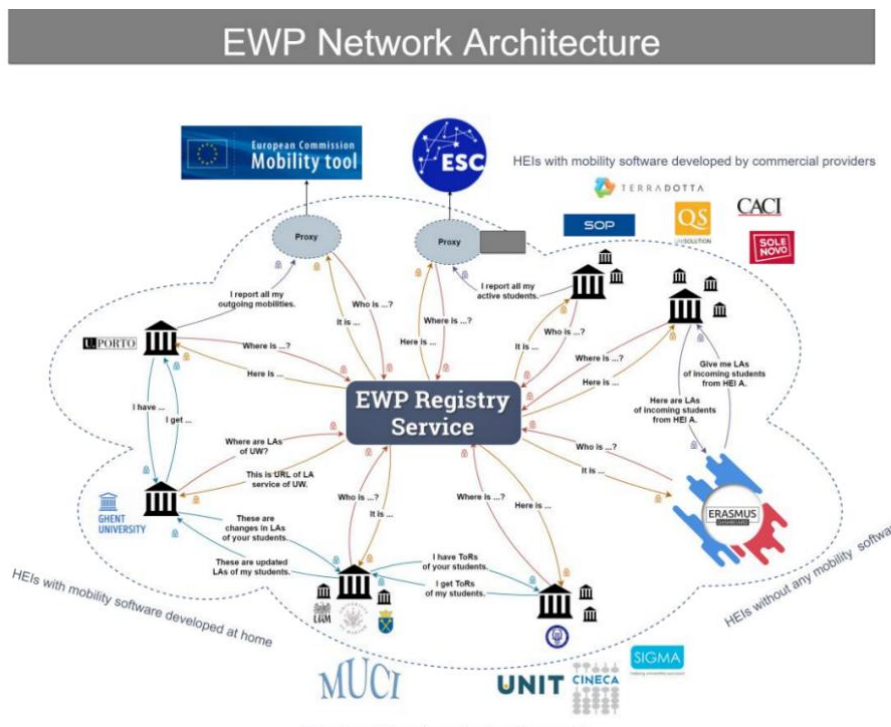


FIGURE 1 EWP NETWORK ARCHITECTURE – SOURCE: ARCHITECTURE OF THE INTEROPERABILITY SECTION OF THE EWP NETWORK (LADAS, ET AL., 2024).

1.3 Data of 2023 Assessment, Inter-Institutional and Online Learning Agreements

Since 2018, the EWP initiative has substantially increased the total number of student mobility exchanges. According to an update on the ESCI initiative published on the Erasmus+ website, in early 2024 “completed inter-institutional agreements (IIAs) and learning agreements (LAs) both increased by around 100,000 agreements, bringing the total to 145,500 IIAs and 174,000 LAs by the end of the year (2023)” (Erasmus without Paper: Reflecting on 2023, Setting 2024 Priorities, 2024).

Both Inter-Institutional Agreements and Learning Agreements (hereafter referred to as IIA and LA, respectively) are at the basis of student mobility. IIAs are agreements between two or more HEIs that establish cooperation between those who sign it in the context of Erasmus+. It must be approved and signed before any mobility of students or staff can take place. And those institutions that take part in it must abide by the Erasmus Charter Higher Education (ECHE). Meanwhile, LAs are the study or traineeship program that students or trainees agree to follow for the time of their mobility. It is a way of providing transparency between students and trainees, their HEIs of choice for their mobility, and the IRO’s in charge of the management of said mobility. The details of the student’s or trainee’s activities during their time in another country are laid out for important parties to see, through both the Erasmus+ App and the EWP network. It also provides legitimacy for the future, since it shows and proves the knowledge and experience acquired during the individual’s Erasmus+ experience (Learning Agreements | Erasmus+, 2024).

CHAPTER II – PRESENTATION OF THE HOSTING ENTITY

2 Presentation of the Hosting Entity

The international office is one of its most important subdivisions of the Porto Accounting and Business School, also known as ISCAP. Its mission is to support the internationalization of the school. The concept of internationalization is one vital to its values and history. ISCAP was founded in 1886 on the premise that success and sustainability lie in forming partnerships inside and outside its environment, and in adapting to the evolution of such environments and relationships. Consequently, the international office of ISCAP is synonymous with the existence of the school itself. Its internationalization strategy includes establishing partnerships with other countries of the Erasmus+ network, and countries which speak the Portuguese language (also known as CPLP). The objective is to keep expanding as much as possible. In other words, the mission and continuous activities of this subdivision is to encourage, support, and facilitate the internationalization of the school. This means that the office is constantly creating and maintaining partnerships with other HEIs and sending and receiving students, professors, other staff and interns, primarily within the Erasmus+ program. There are several activities performed in the office which are integral to its success. Namely a constant management of documents (which allow for the exchanges), the creation of events which integrate people from outside, the maintenance of communication with those who go to other countries from Portugal, helping exchange students with their study plans, and supporting outgoing and incoming people. Although varied, these activities are done with the same objectives of promoting the exchange programmes and ensuring the experiences of outgoing to incoming exchanges are as efficient as possible (História — ISCAP | P.PORTO, n.d.; Sobre Nós – GRI – ISCAP, 2023).

Although the international office started only with mobilities within the Erasmus program and CPLP countries, it has increasingly expanded its range. Today having many partnerships with countries outside of those categories. The office has made partnerships with Asian countries, such as India and South Korea, and with non-Portuguese speaking American countries, such as Chile and The United States of America, and also with non-Portuguese speaking African countries, such as South Africa. It also partners with other European countries outside of the European Union. Notably, the office has a strong relationship with Ukrainian colleges (Parceiros – GRI – ISCAP, 2023). Ultimately, the international office is not restrained by the limits of Erasmus+. The head of the

international office is in constant contact with other academics and employees of HEIs in order to expand the possibilities of ISCAP's students, academic and non-academic personnel in relation to international mobility options (GRI – ISCAP – Gabinete de Relações Internacionais Do ISCAP, 2023).

2.1 Partnerships

Thus far, the office has had success in its internationalization mission, having many partnerships across a variety of international networks. Concerning the Erasmus+ initiative, it has over 100 partnerships throughout 32 programme countries (Parceiros – GRI – ISCAP, 2023)

It also has contract mobilities within the Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility context. Which is a part of the Erasmus+ program that allows for mobility to Partner countries. The latter refers to third countries that are not associated with the program. According to the Erasmus Generation Portal, “This action of the Erasmus+ programme allows students and staff to study, train, or teach at partner institutions in non-EU countries, fostering global cooperation and academic exchange” (Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility | Erasmus Generation Portal, 2025).

Additionally, the international office is part of the European Consortium on Applied Research and Professional Education, also known as the CARPE Network. According to its own website, CARPE is a strategic alliance made of several European Universities of Applied Sciences. Its goal is to promote cooperation in European research programmes, provide education that is based on current demand and innovation to prepare students for their future, maintain partnerships with a variety of enterprises, and promote “entrepreneurship, social responsibility, sustainability and internationalisation” (About CARPE | Carpe Nieuw, 2023).

The Porto Accounting and Business School is part of a larger learning institution called the Polytechnic of Porto, to which belong various schools other than the subject matter of this section. Nevertheless, the Polytechnic of Porto, and consequently the Porto Accounting and Business School are part of ATHENA, which is the Advanced Technology Higher Education Network Alliance. It is made of 10 HEIs hitherto and presents itself with the following vision statement: “ATHENA University aims to define a common European approach to scientific, societal and technological development that helps foster a better future.”. Some of the current main goals of ATHENA go together

with the latest objectives of Erasmus+ and the EWP initiative. The alliance is very focused on supporting digital innovation and making the transition to a greener and more digital world equitable for all involved. ATHENA emphasizes addressing European needs (ATHENA 2024-Onward - ATHENA European University, 2025).

2.2 Office Structure

As described in the organizational chart, the international office is divided into three levels. The first level is the position of head of the international office. Their job is to coordinate incoming and outgoing mobilities, create international welcoming events and provide support. The head supports not only the staff at the office with their work, but also incoming and outgoing students, professors and staff. (Sobre Nós – GRI – ISCAP, 2023; Porto Accounting and Business School - ISCAP - Porto Accounting and Business School, 2024).

The second level is composed of two International Mobility Officers: the OUT-going mobility officer and the IN-coming mobility officer (Sobre Nós – GRI – ISCAP, 2023). The outgoing mobility officer manages students, academics, and non-academic personnel going out of Portugal into another country. Whilst the incoming officer manages those who come to Portugal from outside. Although some of their duties are similar, such as dealing with documentation, study plans, and the well-being of their charges, their work is fundamentally different. The outgoing officer's duty is to prepare students in particular to go outside of the country. They address the challenges in mobility that relate to the different countries which were chosen by the students. The outgoing officer has knowledge and experience regarding the many cultural, linguistic and academic differences between countries which may affect mobility. They educate their students about these specific differences to prepare them for studying outside their home country. The incoming mobility officer, however, is focused on helping students from outside the country to plan their stay in Portugal. They also help to acclimate them to the country, during their stay (Sobre Nós – GRI – ISCAP, 2023; Mobilidade out – GRI – ISCAP, 2023; Incoming Mobility – GRI – ISCAP, 2023).

The third level is composed of trainees. From participant observation in the office, there was always one event management trainee, one focused on contracts and organization and one trainee helping with student mobilities. The trainees' work depends on what their educational course and background, what they hoped to learn and what they knew to be

skilled in. Although, due to the interpersonally supportive nature of the international, there was occasionally an overlap in tasks (Sobre Nós – GRI – ISCAP, 2023).

Presented here is an organigram explaining in visual terms the structure and hierarchy of the international office:

Head of the
International
Office

Incoming
Mobilities Officer

Outgoing
Mobility Officer

Trainees

CHAPTER III – DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERNSHIP ACTIVITIES

3 Description of the Internship Activities

3.1 Contract Related Tasks

The traineeship at the international office was primarily focused on creating, managing and approving inter-institutional agreements between the Porto Accounting and Business School and other HEIs. The majority of those contracts were made in the EWP dashboard platform.

The first task was to organize and update the Excel spreadsheet where the information about these contracts was written in. This was done by verifying if each HEIs name, location, respective mobilities, and expiration dates were correct. After acquiring the knowledge of the concept of “Blended Mobility”, time was spent verifying which contracts fitted and did not fit that definition and updating the excel spreadsheet accordingly. A mobility is “Blended” if it involves both remote and in person learning. Throughout these tasks, it was important to verify the status of the contract. In other words, to confirm whether it was approved by the international office of ISCAP, approved by the partner HEI, approved by all or simply submitted by one or the other. It was color-coded in the spreadsheet. The “approved by all” was green, the ones in the process of approval were in yellow, and, finally, the non-active, or out of date ones were in red. It is important to note that this verification process was almost always made in the EWP platform. Where the information of the respective IIAs was located and then transferred to Excel. Oftentimes, the location associated with a HEI in the table was not correct. The reason behind that is that often the universities have many campuses and different departments relating to the same subject and within similar distances, which may be confusing. In the cases that the location in the Excel sheet did not reflect the specific campus and/or departments in question, it was necessary to search for the correct one, considering the EWP agreement in question, and correct it.

After guaranteeing that the Excel spreadsheet was correctly updated, the focus changed to finishing the agreements that were in the process of approval. The process of finishing a contract was started by contacting the other institution’s international office, specifically their Erasmus section, if one existed. Then, an email would be sent with the subject line: “Kind request to sign the IIA on the EWP”. Subsequently, if the HEI responded, the response varied between two formats. One format was that they would have signed the contract and requested it to be validated by the international office. The other format,

which was more common, was that it was still in the process of being signed because there was an issue that needed to be solved. In those cases, both parties cooperated to discover a solution to the problem. Occasionally it was an Information Technology (IT) problem on their side, but, usually, it was an issue in the EWP dashboard itself. In that case, the solution was to create a new IIA identical to the previous one and then submit it for approval.

Another important but time-consuming task was to find out the reason behind an HEI no longer being present in the EWP Dashboard. Or those institutions that, although evidently had an agreement with the international office, that contract did not exist in the EWP Dashboard. In the former case, it was necessary to discern what the specific issue was, therefore determining the correct procedure to solve it. If the HEI had permanently closed, the contract would remain inactive. If the institution had changed its name, the solution was to contact the new institution and make a contract with them. If the institution merged with another HEI, two possible scenarios were possible. The original institution could have merged with a similar sized HEI to make a new institution under another name. This was the case of the Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki in Greece, which merged into the International Hellenic University. Or the HEI could have been absorbed by a bigger institution and therefore adapted its name. This was the case of the Šiauliai University, which was absorbed by the Vilnius University, in Lithuania. In these cases, it was necessary to contact the newly made or the bigger HEI in order to know if they had any interest in the renewal or continuation of the agreement. Finally, in cases where an institution split into different ones then there would be an investigation to acquire the correct names and contacts to send the respective emails to those separate institutions. When the institutions were not in the EWP Dashboard, there was search for the Erasmus folder in the OneDrive of the international office to find the most recent contract available. Then the IIA could be sent to the HEI to verify if its terms could be maintained or if there was any change that they would like to make. This led to some issues as the Porto Accounting and Business School, at a certain point since the end of the previous agreements, had stopped dealing in the areas of Tourism and Leisure, as well as Journalism, even though those were written in the contract. In the Erasmus+ program, the subjects of “Tourism and Leisure” and “Journalism”, as well as several other different areas of study, are categorized as “ISCED-F Codes”. They are also known as “Study Field Codes”. The current codes that the Porto Accounting and Business School deals in are all

410, which means “Business and Administration, no further defined”. It englobes all the study fields related to this subject, which all start with 041 but the final digit can go from 1 to 9. The only unrelated codes that the school deals with are 0322 which is “Library and Archival Studies”, and 0230, which is “Languages, no further defined”.

There were some cases in which it was necessary to rectify previous agreements that were still valid but did not have the correct ISCED-F codes. In those cases, negotiations were made with the other party, to verify that both HEIs had other field codes which were compatible. During negotiations, the foreign HEI could also request the international office’s fact sheet. This was a document with information about the courses that ISCAP has available for Erasmus+ students. In those cases, the HEI gave their fact sheet in return for the international office to assess compatibility as well. Once finding compatibility, a contract was made. Otherwise, there was no contract.

There was a particular case where, although in the current school year there was no compatibility, the partner HEI would be opening new courses under those study fields. Henceforth, it was noted that there was an opening for a future contract. For those discussions, approval from the head of the international office was needed. For most negotiations the process was not so complicated as to need approval. It was only necessary to know the regular procedure, which could be clarified with senior colleagues. For instance, when one party wanted to add or take out a certain mobility. Or when discussing what languages were necessary. In the latter case, it was always stated that the Porto Accounting and Business School needed a minimum level of English B2 for incoming students.

Before continuing, it is important to explain the concept of Erasmus Codes. An Erasmus Code is the specific code that a higher education institution within the Erasmus program is under. It must be used not only in a written contract, but also to filter agreements in the EWP Dashboard. In the Polytechnic of Porto’s case, the Erasmus Code is P PORTO 05. The first letter of the code refers to the country of origin of the institution (in this case, P stands for Portugal). The following letters are equivalent to the city and/or region. And the number is to identify the specific HEI because there are usually many HEIs in the same city.

3.1.1 The Research Process

The research process varied depending on whether an HEI did not appear in the EWP Dashboard, or when one HEI did, but did not have any agreements in the platform. Even if a contract were out of date, there would still be a history of its existence in the EWP Dashboard. This research processes included, not only discerning if something changed in the HEI, but also acquiring a valid contact for their respective head of the International Office (or an equivalent with the authority to sign a contract). The securing of the most recent contract available was also vital to having a foundation for the renewal of the IIA to be negotiated.

The first step of the process was always to verify if the status of the contract in the Excel spreadsheet was congruent to what was written in the EWP Dashboard. In the case that the Erasmus code was not there then a search for Erasmus code on google was made to understand if or until when the code was used. Afterwards, the corresponding HEI website was searched. In the case that the code did not appear in past or current documents, it was because it was badly written. That was corrected by searching for the institution's website and its Erasmus Code. In the case that the HEI did not appear in the search, it was important to question whether the HEI/website still existed. Whether there was news regarding it. Although an informal website, searching for the Wikipedia page of the HEI yielded results. If it existed, there was likely an explanation behind what happened in the period between the making of the agreement and the time of the research. After understanding the reason behind the discrepancy between the Excel sheet and the EWP Dashboard, the path to the solution was clear.

In the case of an HEI that split in two, the solution was to search for the website of both institutions, find their Erasmus office contacts, acquire the previous IIA in the Erasmus folder and send them each an email enquiring on their interest in a renewal. It was also important to request their current Erasmus code and update the Excel sheet accordingly. In the case of the institution not functioning at the current time, then the solution would lie in verifying the existence of decree-law confirming that the school closed permanently and updating the Excel sheet with that information. In the case where the HEI merged with a larger one and subsequently changed names, the approach lay in discerning whether the Erasmus offices conjoined or separated and sending email confirming the change. In most cases, the smaller HEI adapted the larger one's code. In the case where separate institutions merged to create a new one, the solution was to find the website for

the new institution and the contact of their person responsible for international cooperation, if possible. If not, then the subsequent action was sending an e-mail to their general International Office inbox to enquire about the changes and request the contact of the one responsible for IIAs. In the case where the name simply changed, the solution was to verify if the Head of Office/current contact was still the same and update Excel sheet accordingly.

There were also instances where the HEI existed in the EWP Dashboard, but the mentioned contract did not, and either no one responded to the e-mail sent to clarify the situation, or the contact was not viable according to Outlook. In these cases, the solution depended on the search for the contract in the ERASMUS folder. In the case where there was a valid contract in the folder, then there was no need for contact, only to add it to the Excel sheet. In the case where there was a recent but not currently valid contract and the contact was viable, then the solution was to send the contract to viable contact and enquire whether to renew the IIA in the EWP. Or, if they could not use the EWP, if they would like to renew it by e-mail, that is, by making a contract using the template on Word and sending them to sign. In the case where the contact is not viable the solution was to acquire both the contract and the correct contact.

3.1.2 The Search for Contacts

It is relevant to mention that, usually, general Erasmus+ contacts will not provide a response because either their inbox is full or it is for general Erasmus+ matters and not contracts. During the internship, for matters relating to IIAs it was preferable to seek the head of the international office or the head of international contracts in the Erasmus+ division. Unfortunately, the websites for HEIs usually only have the general addresses because they are aimed at students, teachers and staff who are interested in mobility and not for specific cases such as the inter-institutional agreement making process. Therefore, in the case where the preferable contacts were not displayed on the website, the solution was to search the name of the partner HEI's person responsible for the contract LinkedIn. This would show whether they still worked in the institution. If they did, then the contact was badly written. Afterwards, it was important search for the correct formatting of the HEI's institutional e-mail addresses. To acquire the correct address, one solution was to search the HEI's database for the person in question because heads of international offices in HEI are usually professors as well. If the contact was not there and correcting the badly written e-mail address based on the institutional formatting did not work, another solution

was to research for peer-reviewed articles or resumes of the person in question to find their real e-mail address. In the case that the LinkedIn search showed that that person did not work in the HEI anymore, then the solution was to find the current head of the international office. This was done by searching for the name of the institution along with the words “current head of international office”. This led to a piece of college news about the exchange of position and to LinkedIn as well. Once verifying on LinkedIn that the person who appeared in the search currently worked in the HEI, their contact was acquired by searching their name and email address on google. This led to their institutional page with their institutional e-mail address, if one existed. If there was no page with that information, and if research gate or any academic paper did not have their contact then the solution was to search for their name and add “contract” or “inter-institutional agreement” or “Erasmus”. This would lead to a template of a document (or a real document) which would have the contact details of the person in question. As those are necessary to have in official international mobility documents. After acquiring a reliable contact, the procedure was the same as previously mentioned. To send the contract and enquire if they would like to renew it.

There were cases where the partner HEI did not respond and a contract was not found. The most notable ones were the case of the Constantin Brâncoveanu University of Pitești (UCB) and the case of the Northern Lithuania College (NLC).

3.1.2.1 The Case of UCB:

In the case of UCB (RO PITESTI 02), the Erasmus+ code was present in the EWP Dashboard but there were no IIAs available. After searching through the digital records of the international office, it was discerned that there was no contract available. Therefore, there was nothing to send to the University. However, during the search of the digital archive, there were two separate ISCAP’s news articles on people visiting from UCB. Additionally, there were social media posts of visiting professors from UCB in ISCAP. These news and posts were published within the last five years of the current time of the search. Consequently, the conclusion reached was that there had been a contract signed within that time frame. After gaining permission from the IROs, an investigation of the physical files was made. This led to obtaining a contract between UCB and ISCAP which expired in 2018. Although it not the most recent contract, it provided a foundation of negotiation and official contractual evidence that the partnership existed and was legitimate. After clarifying this matter with the head of the office, an email was sent to

the contact provided in the contract. The purpose of which was to request digital documentation on the partnership that they had available, and to explain the fact that a possible mistake in the digital archives led to ISCAP not having the IIAs. Additionally, there was a request to establish an IIA on the EWP network, so that the contract would not be lost. At the time of leaving the internship, no response was received. However, after confirming with the head of ISCAP's international office that the partnership was currently valid, the Excel section for UCB was marked "approved by all". Furthermore, the physical contract served as the basis for the written conditions portion of the UCB IIA section on the Excel spreadsheet.

3.1.2.2 The Case of Northern Lithuania College

The case of Northern Lithuania College remained unsolved at the end of the internship period. The Erasmus+ Code for this HEI was in the Excel spreadsheet as L SIAULIAI 02. However, this code did not exist in the EWP Dashboard and there was no previous IIA between this institution and ISCAP in the office's digital archives. The NLC's website existed, but it did not appear as a normal college website. This was because the only information displayed was there was about non-conventional learning methods, support for families, mental health services and re-integration into the job market. The only indication towards it not being the wrong website was the name of the HEI displayed in the website's banner. Additionally, there were no other websites under the same name. It is of note that the web address was taken from the excel spreadsheet, which was further confirmation that the website was legitimate. Furthermore, there was a Wikipedia page on this college which stated that, between 2003 and 2020, the NCL provided courses on economy, financial institutions and event management, which are areas ISCAP also deals in. This led to the conclusion that possibly, since the last IIA between the schools, they had made major changes to their curriculum. Therefore, the objective was to discern whether NCL was still part of the Erasmus+ program, in spite of these changes. And if there was, consequently, any merit in renewing the partnership. These conclusions led to sending e-mails to the addresses in the Excel spreadsheet for this HEI. After a weeks of attempting to get a response and failing, contact was made with the official Erasmus+ of Lithuania entity. Although they did not have an explanation behind the missing Erasmus code or the website, they did provide the HEIs Organization ID number. The OID is an identification number other than the Erasmus Code used in Erasmus+. Its existence was evidence that NCL was still part of the program. Afterwards, the Incoming Mobilities

Officer found and shared a digital copy of a contract between ISCAP and NLC. It provided the name of the Head of the International Office of NCL, whose information was not on their website. After searching her name on LinkedIn it was revealed that she had stopped working at NCL in 2017. Since the contract was signed in 2014 and was valid until 2020, it made sense that it was not updated with the name of the new Head of the International Office. And it explained why there had been no answers to the e-mails because the contacts were old as well. With this information, a search for the current head of the international office was made. After finding her contact information, an e-mail was sent along with the copy of the contract. Although no response was received during the internship, this was a valuable lesson to always search first for who the head of the international office of the HEI in question when seeking clarification on the matter of IIAs.

3.1.3 Correcting Contacts

Another relevant task given by the head of the office was to find the right versions of e-mail addresses which were not viable. That was, the e-mails were not sent because there were errors. To rectify that, the same previously described process to obtain viable contacts was employed. Many of the instances where schools did not exist anymore were found during this task. There were cases in which the contact was linked to a completely different college than the one in the Excel sheet. And also instances when the addresses were badly written. All the addresses provided were updated with viable current contacts in the Excel table. When sending the inquiry as part of the study in this report, the contacts of all ISCAP's Erasmus+ partners in the Excel table were used. Some of those contacts details were not viable. These were cases in which the contract was approved by all and its status matched in the EWP platform. Therefore, there was no need to verify whether these e-mail addresses worked. That was helpful, because it allowed for the correction of e-mail addresses which would have otherwise remained unviable. Had the questionnaire not been sent, this situation would not have been noticed until it was required. And, at that point, the matter would have been much more pressing.

3.1.4 Details Relating to the Creation of IIAS

The creation of IIAs on the EWP Dashboard involves different types of information. Such as the names of the HEIs which are partnering, their relevant school departments to the agreement and their respective international offices' contacts. Some schools do not put

their contact details in the contract because it is based on the IRO's name and therefore changes depending on who is currently in that position. The details of the mobility of the agreement are also important. Such as the beginning and end dates of the validity of the contract, the number of vacancies, the ISCED-F code and the type of mobility. Which can be of "Teacher Staff", "Student Studies", "Staff Training" or "Student Traineeship". It is noteworthy that, unlike the other kinds, "Student Studies" mobilities can be further defined by one of two categories. They can be with "Blended Mobility" or without it. Additionally, the total months or days available for the mobility must be defined. It is also important to include the EFC level(s) an HEI has available, which languages are needed for the mobility and their respective degrees of fluency. As an example, ISCAP only accepts incoming students whose English is at a level of B2 at minimum, while many others accept a B1 level. It is encouraged for Portuguese students to have a B1 level of Spanish (minimum) before going to Spain as, even if classes are in English, their evaluations can be in Spanish.

3.1.5 Non-European IIAs

During the internship, work was also done regarding IIAs with HEIs in countries that, although not inside the program of the Erasmus+, are still considered partners, within the previously mentioned context of International Credit Mobility. These partner countries are especially outside the European Union and outside of Europe itself. During the internship, it was instructed that, within context of the ISCAP international office at the time, these kinds of mobilities were restricted outgoing mobility from Portugal. This was a difficult concept to acquire. Particularly because of another type of agreement called a "memorandum of understanding", in which a partnership is made between the two institutions, so that they can proceed with a certain mobility from one place to another. That can also be renewed, and the renewal can be automatic. This is different from the inter institutional agreement because it is not related to Erasmus. In the case of an IIA between a program country and a partner country of the Erasmus organization, the mobility is only made from the program country to the partner country, and all is within Erasmus jurisdiction. These non-Erasmus countries do not appear in the EWP Dashboard, since they are only Partner countries and therefore not technically in the Erasmus+ program. For the reason of not being able to create an IIA in the EWP Dashboard, a word template was used for the contract. This document was filled with the requested mobilities and the basic information for each school and then sent to the correct contact to be signed.

One problem which occurred in these instances was that, although it was written in the excel sheet that these countries were partner countries through the Erasmus program, that was not always the case. To explain this problem, it is necessary to further clarify the concept of “Organization ID (OID)”. OID is a code HEIs have which that serves the same purpose as an Erasmus code. Both Erasmus program and partner HEIs have an OID, but it is not necessary to be used when dealing with the former. This is because the Erasmus code is already an established filtering tool in the EWP network. These latter partner countries, however, do not have Erasmus codes, therefore the OID code, or the PIC code are used for identification. At the time of the internship, to find the respective codes for an institution, it was necessary to search their names in the website made to find Erasmus related organizations: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-esc/index/organisations/search-for-an-organisation>. However, some of the countries on the excel spreadsheet, though they did appear when searched on the website, were shown to not have a valid OID. This was because they were waiting for their National Agency’s certification. Which is a certification that makes a code and institution valid within the context of the Erasmus charter. After searching all the non-Erasmus HEIs from the Excel sheet through this website, there were many that were waiting for their certification. And, therefore, were not valid. For those which had a valid code, contracts were made and sent for signing. There were some institutions that were not present on the website. Which led to the conclusion that they were not partnered with the Erasmus program at the time of the search. In those cases, a contract could not be made. Consequently, if there was a need to make and/or extend ISCAP’s mobility with them, a different type of contract from the one used in Erasmus related countries would be used. One which would have a different legal jurisdiction.

3.1.6 Challenges with EWP and the Questionnaire

Throughout the experience and work in the international office, one of the starkest issues encountered by both IROs and interns was the inefficacy of the EWP Dashboard. Oftentimes, independently of the effort behind making a contract work in the platform, it was unavoidable to sign the contract or establish an official agreement on the mobilities through e-mail. Because of this, it was decided to base the research for this report on the digitalisation of international mobilities. The head of ISCAP’s international office helped with deciding on this topic of research. She also contributed with the questions of the questionnaire.

Part of the internship was exclusively dedicated to making the questionnaire, drafting and sending messages with it to ISCAP's international colleagues, and checking the results. Although more about the questionnaire will be explained in the "Study" section of this report, this activity was the inspiration behind the new colour categorization used in the Excel table. After working with and studying the EWP network, it was clear that the contract organization system would be improved by the addition of elements specific to issues withing the platform. At the end of the internship, some of the elements in the colour coding system remained the same as what was decided by the head of the office. For example, green was still "approved by all" whether by an official agreement through e-mail, signing through all parties of a contract through e-mail, or "approved by all" agreements in the EWP platform. Red was still for contracts which are not active, whose status were confirmed during the internship. Yellow was for cases in which an agreement had been submitted to a partner HEI for their approval and/or there was an issue that did not allow the contract to be fully approved. The new element added to the system was new category under chartreuse. Chartreuse meant that an agreement had been approved by all but, due to an issue in the EWP, that status was not able to be reflected in the network, and neither partner have found a need yet to make the agreement through e-mail because the issue was in the process of being resolved. There are many higher education institutions that have an IT department that can deal with these issues, but it can take time. There were often cases in which on the side of the partner the contract had been approved by them and vice-versa on ISCAP's side. However, this did not reflect on the platform, even though it was approved by all. There were also other instances in which there was no issue, but the platform did not allow for either party to sign the IIA. In this category, there was an informal agreement that the contract was approved, but because both parties were still working on the agreement, it was not valid enough to put it in green in the Excel sheet. The use of chartreuse was to indicate that if someone were to deal with that mobility, it had been approved by all parties, but if they required the paperwork to be correct, they would need to either solve the EWP issue or sign the contract by e-mail. Another addition to the colour code was orange, because there was a need to categorize non-Erasmus program country that was waiting for their N.A certification. It was also added as a reminded to check in periodically to see if their OID was valid to make an IIA with that HEI.

3.2 Non-Contract Related Activities

Although most of the internship activities were focused on contract making, there were also elements of event management related tasks.

3.2.1 Event Management Activities

Although most of the work under this category was done by colleagues in event management and creation courses, part of the curricular internship also involved giving support when needed in this area.

The first activity of this type during the internship was taking part in a “change management” workshop. During which, an attempt was made to bond with other students and to encourage to bond with each other as well. There were two instances in which support was provided to event management colleagues in the task of taking BIP students to a tour in the downtown area of Porto.

In the first instance of such a tour, the plan was to lead the visitors to the wine basements of Casa Velha, and then guide them to a boat tour, after which they would go wherever they wished. The first step was to gather the visitors and lead them to the bus that was supposed to stop at the previously mentioned basement. However, the bus stopped in Palácio da Bolsa instead of the basement in Gaia. Thus, ISCAP’s interns were required to herd an approximate number of thirty visitors from Porto to Gaia by foot. This more difficult than expected because the wine tour had a set start time that, if missed then the visitors would miss the entire activity. This time constraint was difficult to manage particularly due to many of the visitors wanting to get photos and to stop and look at the view, which caused further delay. There are also some members who were temporarily lost among tourist population. Despite all of this, the arrival at Casa Velha was done within the time constraints previously defined. The delay of the beginning of the wine tour, however, led to almost missing boat tour. Nevertheless, due to the effort of ISCAP’s interns, everyone arrived before the time limitation. The second instance of this activity also had obstacles involved. In this case, firstly, there was the boat and then there was the tour. The boat tour was almost missed due to car traffic encountered from the school to the pier. This delay, same as the previous instance, led to almost missing the wine tour. However, by maintaining the visitors focused on the destination, the arrival time was acceptable, and the tour proceeded as expected.

Another activity related to event management was working in the international office's coffee break. The objective of this was to gather funds for students across the world who would like to take part in an international mobility but could not afford it. Additionally, part of the internship involved providing support in the "Business in the EU" BIP. Which included the second instance of the previously mentioned tour, preparing the participant's coffee break, placing signs throughout the building to orientate the visitors, and organizing the participant's badges and gift kits while guaranteeing that they were easily reachable. A notable interpersonal event activity was working as an interpreter between a visiting professor and head of the legal department from Maribor University in Slovenia, and the head of human resources from the Porto Accounting and Business School. The objective of the visit was for there to be an exchange of knowledge between the heads of department. Although the head of ISCAP's human resources department could understand English perfectly, she had some difficulties in speaking it. Particularly considering the more specific legal terms used. Due to a background in International Law and International Business Law, this was an exchange easily facilitated by previous experiences, and which was included in this curricular internship's activities. The exchange of knowledge was successful and yielded positive results between the heads of department.

3.2.2 The III International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences

The event in which the most support was provided in the internship was the HSS25 - III International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences. This was a conference with over 100 participants, most of which were there in person. These visitors were hosted by ISCAP during the two days of the conference, which were on July 14th and 15th of 2025.

Firstly, there was the preparation process. That involved, once again, creating and placing signs within ISCAP's facilities to guide the conference attendees and participants from one place to another.

On the first conference day, all the certificates and the timetables of the event were printed. The first task of the day was to sit at the registration table and check in the people at the desk. A portion of this task involved organizing the identification badges in a way which made them easily accessible to the participant. Afterwards, it was a continuous process of checking the participant's name on the list and, give them the conference gift kit (if it was indicated in the list), and inform them that the lanyard to put their badge on

was inside the bag. It was important to keep a polite and happy attitude, so that they felt welcomed. When each part of the event ended, it was necessary to lead the participants and attendees from one place to another, because some did not look at the signs. Another relevant aspect of this activity was to always be available for any questions and issues that anyone might have had. Part of it was also to organize the certificates based on where and when their respective lectures were given and then place them in the room in advance. Occasionally there was no badge, or the badge with the name was badly written. In these cases, the correct badge was reprinted as swiftly as possible. The same happened with a small portion of the certificates. However, by the end of the conference, they were all rectified. Additionally, it was necessary to move the registration table from one place to another. This was because, in the mornings its correct place was in the Main Hall and, later, the lectures were given in the rooms 024 and 015, which were in another part of the building. The most interpersonal tasks included giving indications and personally accompanying those who arrived late to their correct destination. After the event, everything was cleaned. The last task assigned was to send the digital certificates to all participants, online or onsite, to the Organisation Commission and to the Portuguese members of the Scientific Commission. This task extended beyond the end date of the internship (18th of July), therefore, its completion was delegated to a fellow colleague who was part of the Organisation Commission and had not yet finished his internship. Nevertheless, at the time of the final day, the certificates had been sent to the majority of people.

3.2.3 Last Tasks

The last tasks were to finish organizing the Excel table and to address the end of the internship on Outlook. The latter involved making a goodbye e-mail to alert the international partners to not send matters of IIAs to the e-mail used during the internship. Additionally, there were instructions to create an automatic response for e-mails with the subject line related to IIAs. The version of Outlook and Microsoft 365 in the international office did not have that option, therefore, as a solution, a rule was created in the account that established that all e-mails with those specific matters in the subject line would be forwarded to the e-mail address of the head of the international office. All international partners were alerted to this forwarding process in the goodbye e-mail.

CHAPTER IV – CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE INTERNSHIP

4 Critical Analysis of the Internship

The internship experience in the International Office of the Porto Accounting and Business School was invaluable.

Much knowledge was acquired through interpersonal relationships with both international and national colleagues. About communication in a professional context and about e-mail etiquette. Most of the internship was divided between EWP Dashboard and Outlook, which provided experience and confidence in working with these tools. A positive result of the internship was the improvement and solidification of digital skills. The constant work in problem resolution during the experience also greatly improved critical thinking skills not only regarding digital issues but also with interacting with people during conferences. The experience involved practicing social skills in high-pressure environments, which led to an improvement of the former, and to a deeper understanding about teamwork. Learning how to interact with people of different countries in various contexts was a deeply educationally enriching experience. Although before the internship there was no expectation of working in event management, the skills and foundations learned from the colleagues in that field of study were versatile and valuable. The opportunity of acting as an interpreter was also very eye-opening, especially since there was an interest in the field of translation and interpretation prior to the internship. That experience and conversations with colleagues who were in the field of interpreting were very valuable in terms of knowledge. And expanded on already established language and interpersonal capabilities.

The biggest obstacles faced were communication and confidence. Although digital and technical issues could be considered obstacles, they were not difficult to address. Those matters were handled as a learning experience. The frustration involved in their resolution process was mitigated by satisfaction brought by learning how to get around those issues. Communication and confidence are personal competences that one usually has inside themselves and therefore do not need to be learned. Which makes them difficult to acquire in the case one does not possess these skills. The problem with communication was being able to explain the issues encountered to colleagues. Due to a tendency of having deep focus in personal work, it was difficult not to speak to others in a way that assumed the interlocutor already knew about the matter of conversation. Which they did not, because they were working on unrelated tasks to issue discussed. These interactions led to thinking

more about how to explain. This led to some strange interactions but forced me to think more about how to explain issues before bringing them to someone's attention. It was a valuable lesson in being more attentive to others. Then there was the matter of confidence. A lack of confidence and nervous demeanour are issues which can be detrimental during conferences. When confidence is fundamental to maintaining calm among the attendees and provide them with a good experience. By appearing stressed, one gives the impression that there is a problem, which can disturb the guests who are reliant on staff to resolve any difficulties they might find. Even though the successful work in the international office was a source of confidence, at the time of the end of the internship this was still an ongoing issue. Although problem-solving under pressure was a skill acquired during the experience, acting confident in those instances was not.

Other competences which were improved upon during the internship were Microsoft Office skills. Although a basic knowledge and experience relating to MS Office tools was had prior to the internship, the time in the international office allowed for the practice of those skills and acquirement of new ones. Though there is more to be learned, spending time working with Excel, Outlook, One Cloud and MS Forms brought a deeper understanding about these tools which went beyond basic knowledge. This led to navigating them with relative ease and confidence at an intermediate level of knowledge. Additionally, before the internship, no prior experience was had with either MS Forms or making questionnaires. The knowledge and experience acquired about the process of creating a questionnaire will be helpful in future projects.

Time-management was another obstacle faced during the internship. However, the schedule of the internship was relatively flexible, which allowed for the establishment of a personalized own routine which did not sacrifice work productivity. This led to more work being done, which was only possible due to the head of the international office. Whose biggest focus was on results and the work done instead of following a strict timeframe. Putting productivity and quality of work above rigidity was not only admirable, but effective.

Interning in the international office of ISCAP was a good experience. The variety of activities done demonstrated how entrepreneurship and internationalization includes not only business-related activities, but also more interpersonal ones. Such as event

management and customer service. However, the masters of entrepreneurship and internationalization is focused on economic and business subjects. Therefore, it was a challenge to perform tasks which were unrelated to these subjects. But the knowledge acquired during these instances was very valuable. Less personally pleasant activities, such as customer service and some of the more technical aspects of the HSS25 conference of placing indication signs for guests and sending out certificates for attendees, were important. These instances provided direct knowledge of what was not enjoyable. Which was as valuable as working with things more related to the field of internationalization in business. This internship was a first experience in the work field, therefore, being part of such a diverse office in terms of colleagues and activities was extremely positive.

In conclusion, although not for everyone, since straying so much from one's area of interest can be trying for some, this choice of internship was ideal. For someone who does not have only one set of interests and who is of a curious nature, this diverse environment was nonpareil. Knowledge was acquired about digital platforms and tools which was not previously had, and prior knowledge was improved upon. The experience allowed for the identification of previously unknown faults related to a professional environment. Additionally, it was an opportunity to practice international relations and language skills, thus solidifying them. And, most importantly, much was learned from colleagues and the head of the international office. They were all very welcoming, understanding and patient when explaining concepts and tasks. The internship, experience would not have been so fruitful and pleasant if not for them.

5 The Study

5.1 Introduction

As explained in previous sections of this report, the choice of study of the impacts of digitalisation on international mobility was due to the issues encountered in the use of the EWP Dashboard during the internship experience. Because the digitalisation of Erasmus+ is relatively recent, there were not many academic works found on this subject. Therefore, this work took the form of an exploratory study of the impacts of the digitalisation of Erasmus+ both on the work of IROs and on the evolution of international partnerships made since its implementation. The questionnaire was made to answer the question of whether issues with this digitalisation were common with IRO's outside of ISCAP. Additionally, if they did face issues, what were they, and how did they impact their work with international mobilities?

5.2 Literature Review

Due to the lack of academic articles on this matter, the literary review was based on the data released by the European Commission on the Erasmus program, as well as statistics publish within the Erasmus+ website itself.

The transition to digital has dramatically increased the number of IIAs and Las approval, according to the most recent Erasmus+ Assessment Report. Which published the data acquired in 2023. From 2022 to 2023, the rate of IIAs approved had an increase of 203%, going from 50 162 in 2022 to 152 253 in 2023 (Figure 2). The rate of approved LAs also had a significant increase of 165%, going from 69 562 in 2022 to 185 027 in 2023. The number of HEIs joining the EWP network grew as well, gaining 361 members from 2022 to 2023, adding to a total of 3342 HEIs at an increase rate of 12%. (European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2024).

Erasmus Without Paper Network	Total by the end of 2022	Total by the end of 2023	Percentage change
Higher education institutions connected	2 981	3 342	+12%
Inter-institutional agreements approved ⁴³	50 162	152 253	+203%
Learning agreements approved ⁴⁴	69 562	185 027	+165%

FIGURE 2 – EWP NETWORK EVOLUTION – SOURCE: FROM THE ERASMUS+ ASSESSMENT REPORT 2023 BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION: DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH, SPORT AND CULTURE, 2024, PAGE 56

There was also an effort in Erasmus+ part on improving the overall knowledge of digital tools. Which was an important contribution to the effort of making the transition from physical to digital as efficient as possible (Figure 3). In 2023, there were a total of 31890 mobility activities in digital skills in all fields of education and training. With 58% of the participants having reported an improvement in their digital competences (European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2024).

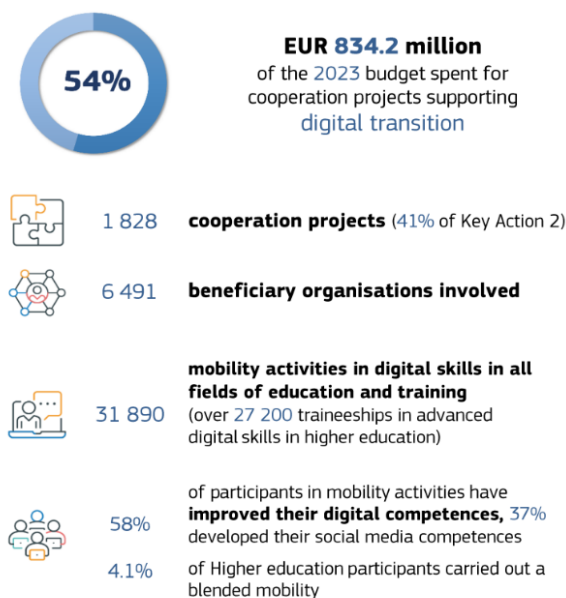
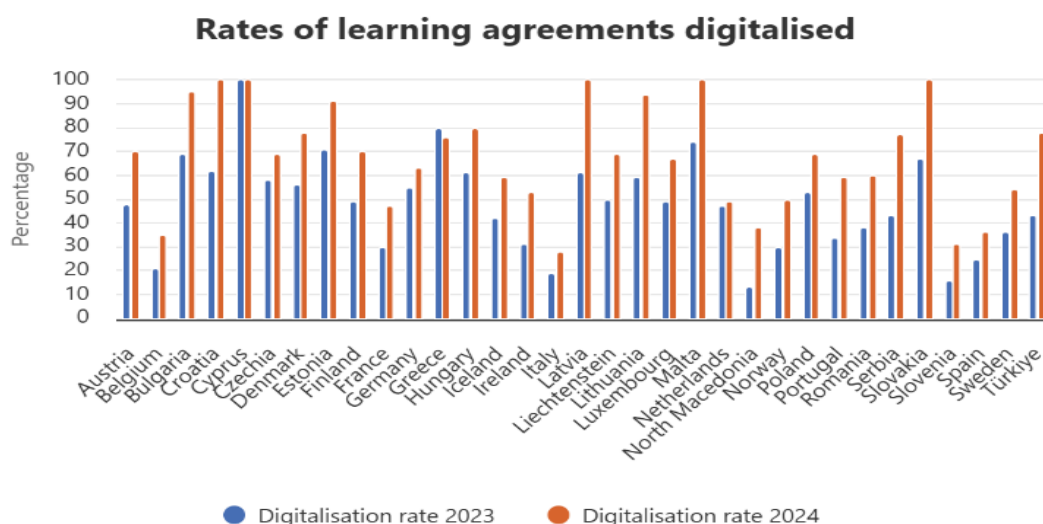


FIGURE 3 - DATA EWP REPORT – SOURCE: FROM THE ERASMUS+ ASSESSMENT REPORT 2023 BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION: DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH, SPORT AND CULTURE, 2024, PAGE 104

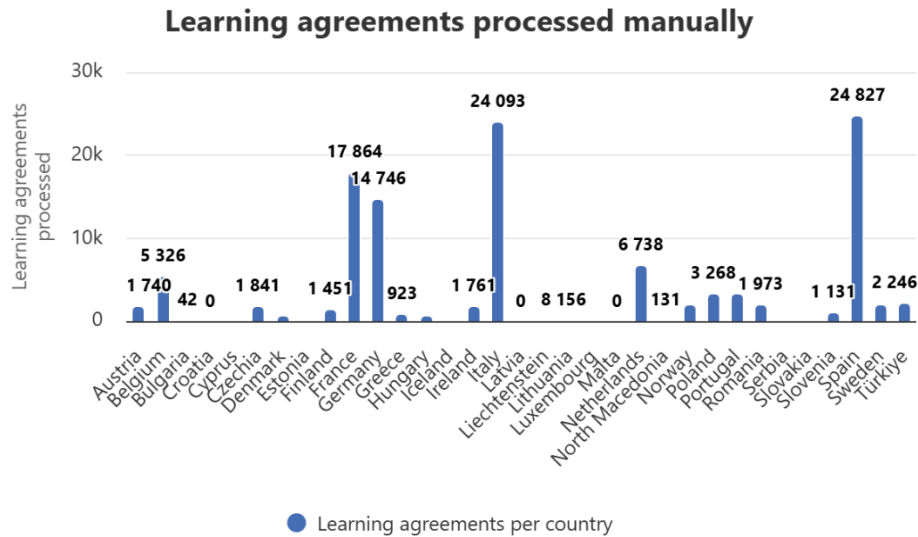
These efforts were demonstrated on the data of digitalisation published by Erasmus+ from the reports of Erasmus+ program countries of the years of 2023 and 2024 (*Digitalisation Rates and Trends*, 2025). The rate of LAs digitalised increased in all countries, except for Greece, which had a decrease between 2023 and 2024.



Learning agreements set out the programme that a student or trainee will follow when abroad

FIGURE 4 - RATES OF LEARNING AGREEMENTS DIGITALISED – SOURCE: FROM THE ERASMUS+ WEBSITE: [HTTPS://ERASMUS-PLUS.EC.EUROPA.EU/EUROPEAN-STUDENT-CARD-INITIATIVE/THE-INITIATIVE/DIGITALISATION-RATES-AND-TRENDS](https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/european-student-card-initiative/the-initiative/digitalisation-rates-and-trends)

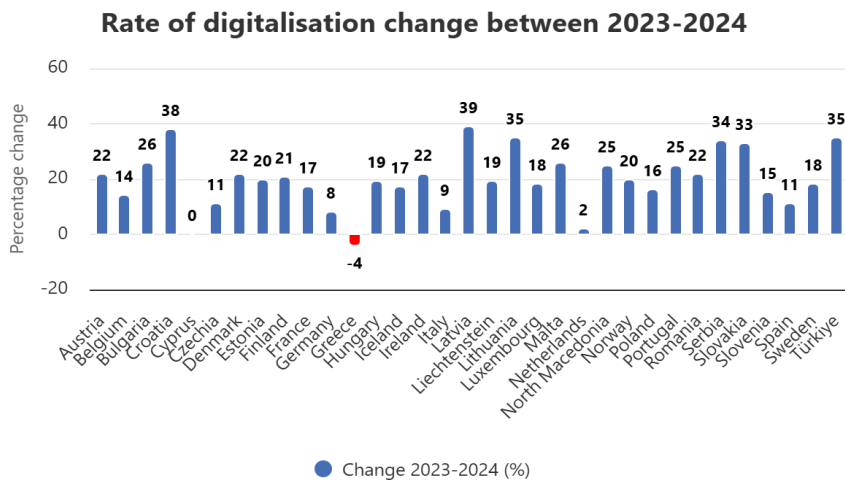
This was consistent with the rates of digitalisation per country. No matter how small, all countries except Greece had an increase in the rate of digitalisation (Figure 4). Greece had a decrease of 4% in the rate of digitalisation. Although that was not a positive change, and it is important not to leave Greece behind, the number of LAs processed through paper there were relatively small in comparison with other countries of the same size. 923 LAs were processed between 2023 and 2024, which could mean that their HEIs were digitalised enough that there was not more digitalisation to be made. It could also mean that 2024 was a bad year for these matters. What was more concerning was the instance of countries with high numbers of LAs processed through paper and a low increase of the rate of digitalisation, even if positive. Such were the cases of Spain, Italy, France and Germany. These countries had an abnormally high number of LAs processed manually in comparison to others. With the biggest numbers belonging to Spain and Italy, at a total of 24 827 LAs and 24 093 LAs respectively, as is showed in Figure 5.



There are still major discrepancies in level of digitalisation across higher education institutions

FIGURE 5 - LAS PROCESSED MANUALLY - SOURCE: FROM THE ERASMUS+ WEBSITE: [HTTPS://ERASMUS-PLUS.EC.EUROPA.EU/EUROPEAN-STUDENT-CARD-INITIATIVE/THE-INITIATIVE/DIGITALISATION-RATES-AND-TRENDS](https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/european-student-card-initiative/the-initiative/digitalisation-rates-and-trends)

Meanwhile, the rates of digitalisation change between 2023 and 2024 of these two were at some of the lowest. With Spain at an increase of only 11% and Italy with an increase of 9% (Figure 6).



Digital processing of learning agreements are seeing strong growth in almost all countries

FIGURE 6 - RATE OF DIGITALISATION CHANGE BETWEEN 2023-2024 – SOURCE: FROM THE ERASMUS+ WEBSITE: [HTTPS://ERASMUS-PLUS.EC.EUROPA.EU/EUROPEAN-STUDENT-CARD-INITIATIVE/THE-INITIATIVE/DIGITALISATION-RATES-AND-TRENDS](https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/european-student-card-initiative/the-initiative/digitalisation-rates-and-trends)

It is important to keep in mind that different countries and their HEIs have different cultures in relation to mobility. And some may be very opposed to digitalisation. Currently, considering that many countries are getting closer to having international

mobility fully digitalised, there is a risk of Italy and Spain falling behind in this process. And, although it is a speculation, they could risk losing partnerships with other HEIs if the discrepancy in digitalisation between them grows too large. It would be beneficial to have more projects to improve IRO's digital skills. If it were possible to do so without adding to their workload and if it were funded by Erasmus+ instead of the individual countries or HEIs. There must be support for those with difficulties in this transition period, especially if they seek help.

5.3 Methodology

The research included both a literature review and survey research in the form of the questionnaire and research on the issues commonly associated with the use of EWP.

The questionnaire was made with the intention of discovering what the general impact of the usage of the EWP network has on IRO's work. As well as researching how common some errors on the platform were encountered. The list of errors displayed in the questionnaire was a combination of common problems found in the EWP Knowledge Base, as well as some issues personally experienced through the internship. With the addition of information found in discussion forums for EWP programmers, and power point presentations of the latest EWP+ Infrastructure Forum Meetings of EWP programmers. Which were organized by these experts to address the issues of the network and improve it. It is important to add that the programmers displayed a strong commitment to the improvement of the EWP network.

The questionnaire was sent to the mobility officers of the HEIs which had Erasmus+ partnerships with Porto Accounting and Business School. It was sent to over 100 officers, and the 51 responses expanded through 17 countries. As displayed in the following graph.

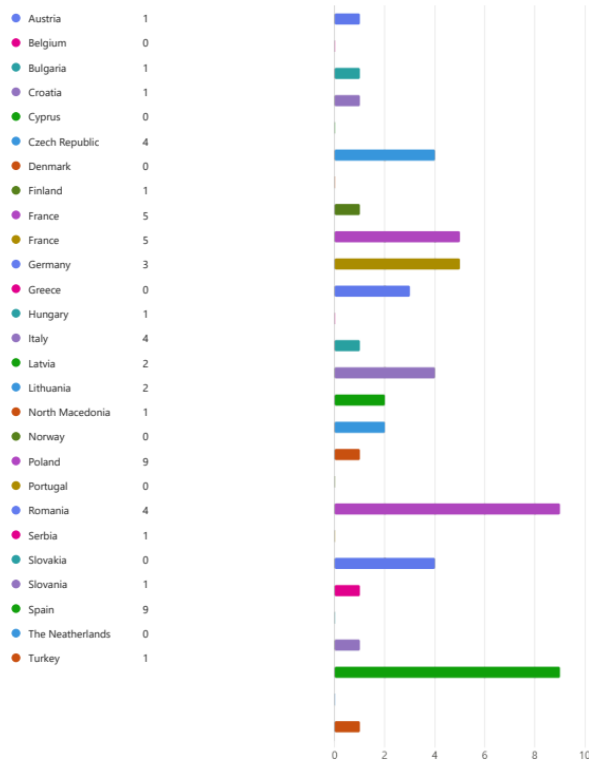


FIGURE 7 - SAMPLE – SOURCE: FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE MADE TO THE HEIS

The questionnaire included a total of 16 questions, with 2 of those being optional. The questions were:

1. Do you authorize the use of the data, anonymously, for academic and research purposes?;
2. Please select your HEI's country;
3. Please state your HEI's name;
4. How long have you been using the Erasmus Without Paper platform?;
5. How user-friendly do you find the EWP platform to be?;
6. Has your HEI's rate of new contracts changed since you started using the EWP platform?;
7. If you answered Yes to the previous question, has the change been positive or negative?;
8. Has the implementation of the Erasmus Without Paper platform changed the amount of physical paperwork you deal with and/or have in your office?;
9. In your opinion, how long does it take to create and/or approve an agreement through the EWP in comparison to other means, such as through e-mail?;
10. Have you ever not been able to close an agreement through the EWP platform?;
11. If you answered "Yes" to the previous question, what do you do when you cannot close a contract through the EWP platform?;
12. How often have you found the following issues with the platform?

- Difficulty in communicating, editing or approving the terms of the contract due to using a different software from the partner HEI
- You cannot approve the agreement because the platform says you have a different contract from your partner HEI when you know for a fact it is the same
- You cannot approve a contract because you or the other side is having issues with their server
- The platform does not allow you to approve a contract, with no specific explanation
- When your partner HEI approves or eliminates a contract, that action is not reflected on your side
- Contracts spontaneously disappear or change status (with, seemingly, no outside interference) without neither you nor your partner HEI being notified
- When you receive an approved agreement, it is completely different from what you submitted for approval and/or is missing information previously written
- When trying to register your partner HEI, their name is missing from the drop-down registration list or it is under a different name from what you expected
- Your HEI's default IIA Data aren't visible inside IIAs and/or can't be retrieved by your partner HEI
- You do not have access to IIA Manager's options. (Access denied error)
- The IIA is not valid for approval in the latest version of EWP (v7) and must be modified
- Your partner HEI does not have access to EWP yet
- You or your partner HEI cannot temporarily access EWP.

13. OPTIONAL - If you have found any other issues when making an agreement in the EWP platform, please state what they are;; 14. Do you feel your workload has changed since the implementation of the EWP platform?; 15. How would you say you experience with using the platform has been overall?; 16. OPTIONAL - If you would like to receive information about the results of the survey, please write down your e-mail, so you can be contacted. The registration of your e-mail data will not be linked to your responses.

5.4 Results

According to the sample (Figure 8), most people had at least 3 years of experience using EWP network. This was positive for the questionnaire answers because it added a layer of accuracy as most of the respondents were well acquainted with using the network.

4. How long have you been using the Erasmus Without Paper platform?



FIGURE 8 - USE OF THE ERASMUS WITHOUT PAPER PLATFORM - SOURCE: FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE MADE TO THE HEIS

5. How user-friendly do you find the EWP platform to be?

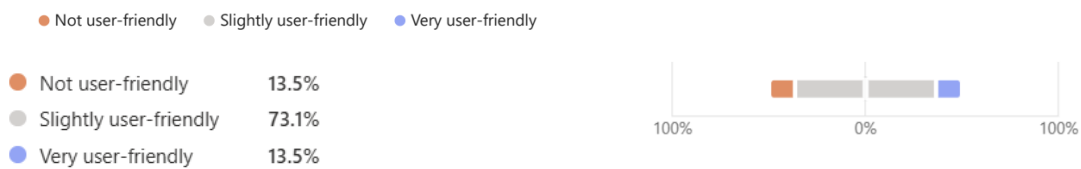


FIGURE 9 - IS THE EWP PLATFORM USER-FRIENDLY? - SOURCE: FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO THE HEIS

Most participants were in the middle in the matter of the user-experience of the EWP Network (Figure 9). The respondents who chose the option of “Not user-friendly” and those who picked “Very user-friendly” were evenly distributed.

Many of the respondents identified a change in the rate of new contracts since the use of the EWP platform (Figure 10).

6. Has your HEI's rate of new contracts changed since you started using the EWP platform?



FIGURE 10 - CHANGES IN USING THE EWP PLATFORM - SOURCE: FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE MADE TO THE HEIS

7. If you answered Yes to the previous question, has the change been positive or negative?

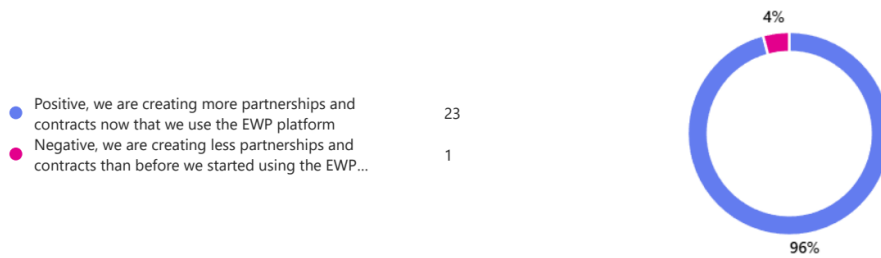


FIGURE 11 - POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE CHANGES - SOURCE: FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE MADE TO THE HEIS

8. Has the implementation of the Erasmus Without Paper platform changed the amount of physical paperwork you deal with and/or have in your office?



FIGURE 12 - CHANGE IN THE AMOUNT OF PAPERWORK - SOURCE: FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE MADE TO THE HEIS

Approximately half of those questioned noted a difference in the rate of new contracts in their HEI since the implementation of EWP. The overwhelming majority declared the change to be positive. Apart from one participant, all declared that more partnerships and contracts were being made at the time in comparison to before EWP (Figure 11). As expected, all were in the agreement that EWP led to dealing with less physical paperwork, thus confirming one of the biggest objectives of the initiative (Figure 12). What was not expected was that approximately half of those questioned reported that approving an agreement through EWP took more time than through e-mail. However, those who declared that it took them less time through EWP than through e-mail were close in number to the former. And those who perceived no difference in time related to these methods were in the minority (Figure 13). It was concluded that the perceived efficiency of EWP could vary depending on the HEI in question.

9. In your opinion, how long does it take to create and/or approve an agreement through the EWP in comparison to other means, such as through e-mail?



FIGURE 13 - COMPARISON BETWEEN PLATFORM AND OTHER MEANS - SOURCE: FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE MADE TO THE HEIS

10. Have you ever not been able to close an agreement through the EWP platform?



FIGURE 14 - AGREEMENTS CLOSED - SOURCE: FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE MADE TO THE HEIS

Another interesting finding was that two thirds of people shared the experience of not being able to close a contract through EWP, with varying alternatives to this issue (Figure 14). Of those who experienced this issue, most decided to close the contract through e-mail as an alternative (Figure 15). There was small percentage who postponed the agreements. Additionally, one third choose other options such as “all of the above options” (close through email/postpone/give up) and “contacting the Helpdesk of ESCI”. The latter of which proved to be a reliable method of solving issues occurring in the EWP, according to respondents. There was also one who specified their choice, with this explanation: “In this particular case, we back to the previous way of collaboration (PDF version), until our partner or the providers find the way to sign the agreement through the EWP platform.”

11. If you answered "Yes" to the previous question, what do you do when you cannot close a contract through the EWP platform?

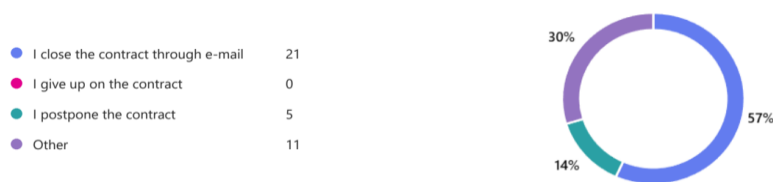


FIGURE 15 - WHAT TO DO WHEN A CONTRACT CANNOT BE CLOSED - SOURCE: FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE MADE TO THE HEIS

One of the biggest findings of this questionnaire was the perceived change of workload since the implementation of EWP (Figure 16). 41 out of the 52 respondents had worked in mobilities before the implementation of EWP. Over half of those, that is, 22 respondents, stated they felt they had a bigger workload currently than before. In this case, there was not much neutrality, as 11 respondents declared that they felt they had a smaller workload than before and only 8 not having noted any difference (Figure 17). In conclusion, out of all who had experience working before EWP, 54% felt they had a bigger workload, 27% felt they had a smaller workload and 19% felt their workload was the same as before EWP.

14. Do you feel your workload has changed since the implementation of the EWP platform?



FIGURE 16 - CHANGES AFTER THE EWP PLATFORM - SOURCE: FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE MADE TO THE HEIS

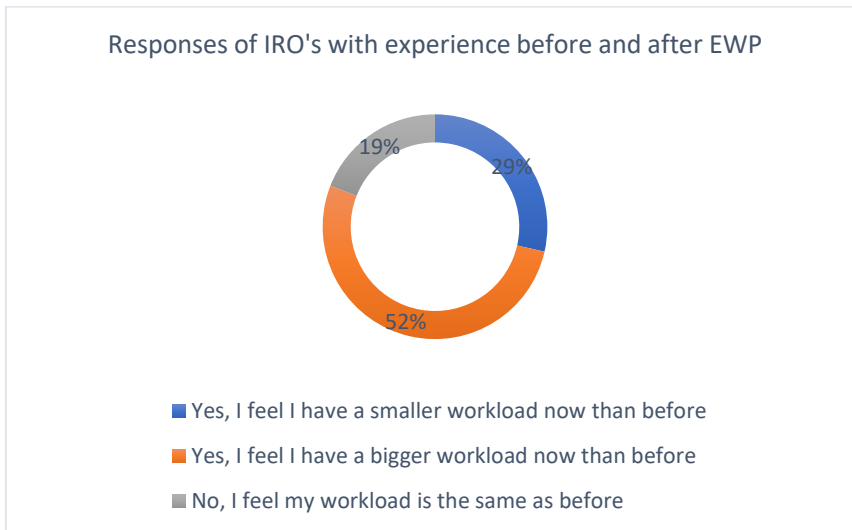


FIGURE 17 - EXPERIENCE BEFORE AND AFTER THE EWP PLATFORM - SOURCE: FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE MADE TO THE HEIS

Nevertheless, a significant number of participants declared their overall experience with EWP as positive. However, it is important to note that a significant number of

respondents, approximately a third, had negative experience. Adding to this, a quarter of people had a neutral experience (Figure 18).

15. How would you say your experience with using the platform has been overall?



FIGURE 18 - OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE EWP PLATFORM - SOURCE: FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE MADE TO THE HEIS

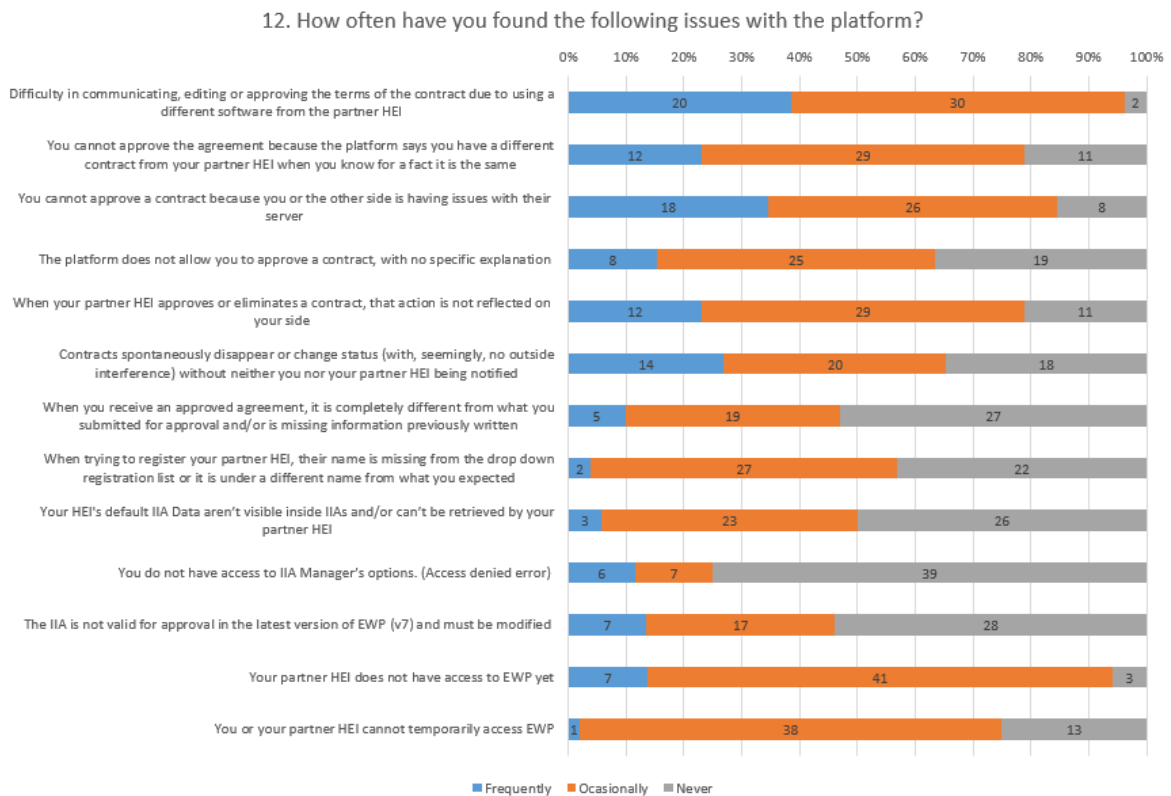


FIGURE 19 - ISSUES WITH THE EWP PLATFORM - SOURCE: FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE MADE TO THE HEIS

The list of errors compiled in the question 12 (Figure 19) of the questionnaire was an overlap between personal experiences of the internship, the FAQ on the Student Card Initiative (2025), the Knowledge Base of the EWP Dashboard (EWP Dashboard FAQs, 2023; Enhanced EWP Dashboard, 2023), common errors stated in the EWP Developers

Guide (Recognized issues, common bugs and recommended solutions, 2023), EWP GitHub forums for developers (Erasmus without Paper Repositories, 2025), the EWP Stats Portal that monitors errors in the platform reported by clients (EWP Stats Portal, 2025), and the EWP+ Infrastructure Forum Meetings of 2025 presented by Dr. Janina Mincer-Daszkiewicz of the University of Warsaw, the leading expert and developer of the EWP network (Mincer-Daszkiewicz, 2025).

Most of these errors were stated to have been encountered at least occasionally if not frequently. With the notable exceptions of “You do not have access to IIA Manager’s options. (Access denied error)”, “The IIA is not valid for approval in the latest version of EWP (v7) and must be modified”, “When you receive an approved agreement, it is completely different from what you submitted for approval and/or is missing information”, and “Your HEI's default IIA Data aren’t visible inside IIAs and/or can’t be retrieved by your partner HEI”. Meanwhile, almost all respondents stated to have had difficulty in communicating, editing or approving the terms of the contract due to using a different software from the partner HEI. This was the error most likely to be encountered. A similar majority of people noted issues due to their partner HEI not having access to EWP yet. And to a lesser extent themselves or their partner HEI temporarily not being able to access EWP. Other common errors encountered were “not being able to approve the agreement due to the platform saying you have a different contract from your partner HEI when it was clearly the same”, “not being able to approve a contract because they or the other side is having issues with their server”, “when one’s partner HEI approves or eliminates a contract, that action is not reflected on the other side”, “contracts spontaneously disappearing or changing status (with, seemingly, no outside interference) without neither partner doing anything to cause it”, and also “the platform not allowing someone to approve a contract, with no specific explanation”.

This was enlightening, particularly because since it showed that the bias towards errors being commonly found in the EWP was not unfounded. Additionally, it demonstrated that asking others with more experience with EWP was valid. Knowing what more experienced IROs thought of the EWP was one of the greater objectives of this questionnaire. Which is why the responses to question 13 (“13. OPTIONAL - If you have found any other issues when making an agreement in the EWP platform, please state what they are:”) were some of the most anticipated. Some of the most notable issues found by respondents not included in question 12 are the following: “Sometimes even Helpdesk

cannot help.”, “Many issues occur after creating a new IIA, once the 2 institutions start processing the draft and sending data from one system to the other.”, “Besides, the updates rolled out by the EWP network or the provider itself are like an invisible hand that destroys the house of cards...”, “unfortunately we are using a third party provider which is very strict and does not accept many of our partners' proposals. For example: we cannot share the same space for several study areas and/or study cycles, as most institutions do. This implies a higher workload from both sides as we need to renegotiate all IIAs.”, “I did not have other issues when making an agreement but I got issues when getting started on the EWP (creation of user, access to the different functionalities)”, “Some institutions merge, and they are setup in EWP as different partners instead of the new one, you the either cannot sign the agreements or loose the already signed”, “We use a third-party provider, and this sometimes makes very difficult to conclude an agreement”, “Very often when filling in the required information and adding the conditions, the platform freezes, and I can no longer make any changes or save what I had drafted up to that point. I am required to start over, and it can happen multiple times in a row. I have to save every new condition I add, afraid it will all disappear. It is incredibly frustrating, and it leads to the agreement not being finalised.” and “The partner provider displays a wrong hash code.”.

Most IROs felt their workload had increased since implementing EWP. Problems with servers, with third-party providers, the platform freezing, the update to the system causing foundational issues, wrong hash codes, HEIs merging without the update on EWP Registry being available and even problems when setting up EWP in the first place were some of the issues found.

Regarding the issues in the EWP, this was the most impactful response: “the updates rolled out by the EWP network or the provider itself are like an invisible hand that destroys the house of cards”. It lent credence to the idea of something being wrong with the foundations of the network itself.

5.5 Discussion

According to the results of the questionnaire, some of the biggest problems encountered by IROs when dealing with the EWP network were due to third party providers. A respondent pointed out that a vital missing question in the questionnaire was lacking,

which was whether the participant used the EWP Dashboard, an in-house or a third-party software. This would have added a higher level of importance to the questionnaire, permitting a more thorough investigation in the connection between what an HEI used when dealing with EWP matters and which corresponding issues they found more frequently. Alas, when creating the questionnaire during the internship there was a narrow window of time to finish and send it because it was close to August. Which is a month where typically academic offices and their staff are in vacation, and it would have been unlikely to receive responses during this month. Additionally, having to deliver the report in September, the short timetable did not allow for as much research as this questionnaire required. Nevertheless, there is importance in the results obtained, especially regarding the frequency of issues encountered and the perceived change in workload that came with this digitalisation process. In addition to that, the answers from question 13 were enlightening and demonstrated issues not previously found during the research or internship.

The exploratory nature of the questionnaire allowed for an elemental but important understanding of the struggles IROs find in their day-to-day work. Although the protocol from the developers for dealing with user feedback remained unclear during this study, this closer point of view of the IROs who utilize the EWP network everyday might be helpful for future updates. This could be a basis for further studies on the impact of digitalisation in day-to-day work. And it could bring helpful information on the process of digital transition that may help further endeavours. Additionally, conversations in developers' forums and EWP+ Infrastructure Forum Meetings suggested the existence of a gap of knowledge that causes misunderstandings between programmers and users. Therefore, this report and study were also ways to encourage more conversation between these groups.

One can say that a more effective option would have been to standardize the Erasmus+ management and software through the whole of Erasmus+ adept countries. Then there would have been no issues with APIs and third-party providers that are currently encountered. However, it is easy to speculate on what could have been, and hindsight is always more accurate than foresight. Ensuring that over 500 institutions with their own cultures and set of rules follow one single management style would have brought its own set of issues. And although the issues brought by APIs and miscommunication between developers and users make the work of IRO's harder in many instances, at this moment

in time it would be easier to fix those issues instead of launching an entirely new initiative of standardization. Particularly considering the recent cut in funds for Erasmus+ exchanges by the European Commission (New Funding Cuts for Higher Education Erasmus+ Projects | EUF, 2025). And other than those specific issues that mostly affect IIA's, the network is a success. The fact that the digitalisation process goes against its own goals by making IRO's work harder is still cause for criticism, as perhaps there should have been a more extensive phase of testing before releasing the network to the public. In fact, after the launch of EWP in 2018, one of the stated objectives was to have a complete transition to digital by 2021. Which caused much stress when the HEIs had to acquire their mobility vacancies for 2022/2023 through the network (Leys and Mincer-Daszkiewicz, 2025, p.2), when many had not yet been able to enter the network or understand how it worked. In ideal circumstances, were higher education at the international level always well-funded by the European Commission, it could be argued that there would be no reason for the rush of the digitalisation process or for the creation unachievable deadlines that impact the work negatively. However, the previously mentioned fund cuts have proven that, in hindsight, the rush might not have been so detrimental. For it allowed the digitalisation process to go faster while the HEIs had enough money from the European Commission to fund it. This is all conjecture. The facts are clear, though through the research some negative impacts of the digitalisation process of international mobilities in Erasmus+ were found, the latest updates from the European Universities Foundation and biannual EWP+ Infrastructure Forum Meetings showed that there was an acknowledgement of these issues and, most importantly, a focused commitment to solving them.

Perhaps a constructive strategy would be the creation of an open forum for IROs to display their problems and for other IROs to help. The helpdesk is vital, and a forum such as this would enhance the user experience. Common issues that are not displayed in the FAQ would be there for IROs and developers to see. Additionally, some people have much difficulty with digital literacy. These individuals would perhaps receive help more easily from a fellow IRO than a developer who they perceive as "not speaking the same language". Although there is a GitHub forum for issues, it is more targeted toward developers. There are EWP User Groups, which, according to the Erasmus+ website, "consist of the community of EWP end-users at large where you can contribute in shaping the initiative by participating in consultations organised in a structural manner by the

EWP Relationship Managers” (Erasmus without Paper User Groups - Guide for Participants, 2023). Structurally organized consultations are vital for progress, but they can be complimented by unofficial, easy to access and faster conversations between users. Or perhaps by an informal place for users and developers to share their thoughts and experiences. The EWP User Groups are a very valuable effort. In addition to this effort, the IRO EWP user community would benefit from a more informal and fast approach to their daily issues.

Although it comes from an unconventional source, a recent LinkedIn article from Michela Cobelli, MBA, a group expert of the European Digital Education Hub (EDEH) - an Erasmus+ approved group of digital education supporters who seek to “overcome the current fragmentation in digital education “ – provided an interesting insight on these difficulties with the digital transition of Erasmus+ (European Digital Education Hub | European Education Area, n.d.). As Head of the International Mobility Unit at the University of Pavia, a member of the ESCI Champions - HEIs who are examples of good EWP integration - (Introducing the ESCI Champions 2025 – 2027!, 2025), Cobelli mentioned many of the issues with EWP mentioned by IROs and developer colleagues during the internship. Such as interoperability issues, lack of technical stability and obstacles to managing LAs and IIAs due to small mismatches between HEI partners’ documents. She also mentioned an “unclear connection between EWP and the other building blocks of the ESCI initiative”. And claimed that many HEIs do not understand how to use the EWP network, the Erasmus+ App and the European Student Card tools together, as they should be. This stance can be criticized as evidence suggests that it is not a matter of understanding, but a domino effect which comes from the foundational issues when creating contracts and communicating with partners. If one does not trust the basis to work, why should they place effort in including more potentially troublesome digital tools which can make one’s work more difficult. However, the result is still a lack of cohesiveness between digital tools. Additionally, she mentioned a lack of trust from users, which observed both during the internship experience and through the results of the questionnaire. According to her, “Many universities still feel EWP is something ‘under construction’, not yet ready for real daily use.”. She claimed that the way to solve these problems was through a coordination between “better standardisation and compliance checks, stronger technical infrastructure, simpler workflows, and better user

support”, and advocated for a more “transparent approach with inclusive governance” (Cobelli, 2025).

Developers are already committed to solving the interoperability and have taken an important step forward in the last year by implementing AUP, which is a set of standards that third-party providers must follow to continue being eligible to take part in the program. By standardizing and enacting upon these standards with compliance checks, there will probably be less of these interoperability issues in the future. Though not as fast as desired, the path to a strong technical infrastructure is forward. (Mincer-Daszkiewicz, 2025; Acceptable Use Policy, 2025)

Cobelli made a myriad of relevant suggestions for the improvement of the EWP initiative and network and utilized ESCI Champions as an example of actions HEIs should take to make the EWP experience smoother. According to her, what made these institutions successful in digital mobility was a strong commitment to the digital transition partnered with an availability and willingness to dedicate time and resources to it. In more exact terms she mentioned these ideal conditions for success in EWP: “Strong collaboration between IT and international offices, clear national and EU-level guidance, investment in staff training, patience, flexibility, and peer support”. She suggested taking time out of the day to report the issues encountered in detail, to be part of tests for proposed solutions and to be as honest as possible when giving feedback. With the objective of diminishing the discrepancy between policy and practice and making the EWP work for HEIs instead of hindering them. A clear missing component mentioned in this publication was that of Staff-Mobility. Which is currently only accessible through IIAs and not LAs. Even though doing so would “reduce the admin workload for both the sending and hosting institutions, help monitor quality and impact more effectively, open the door to blended formats (virtual + physical) even for staff, and support better inclusion by simplifying short mobilities for those with limited time or responsibilities”. (Cobelli, 2025)

An important final point she made was that two vital processes must work to guarantee that the functionality of the EWP network. In other words, to make it no longer feel as if it was still in a trial phase. Those processes were online nominations and a transcript of records. According to Cobelli, “if nominations can be managed smoothly and digitally, universities save weeks of emails and manual data entry.”, and that the transcript of records would be “a fast, secure, and automatic way to share transcripts” and could “reduce delays in recognition and lower the stress for students and staff.”. She closed the

article with these parting words, which describe well the current situation of digital mobility: “The moment online nominations and digital transcripts become fully functional across Europe, the game will change. Because Erasmus deserves a digital future. And that future still starts with EWP.”.

5.6 Conclusion of the Study

The digitalisation of Erasmus+ has had both a positive and negative impact on international mobilities. The positive impacts are that more partnerships and contracts are being signed. Additionally, many countries have a stable growth of rates of digitalisation. The negative impact is on the IROs work. The questionnaire results suggested that digitalisation led to them having a bigger workload than before. And most declare having found issues during their work with the digital platform. However, there is a constant background work with the objective of solving these issues. And digitalisation appears to be the path forward for international mobilities in Erasmus+.

Conclusion

As is the nature of an exploratory study, no questions were fully answered. Nevertheless, the literature review, along with the archival study and the questionnaire provided a relevant understanding of the impacts of the digitalisation of Erasmus+ on international mobility. Particularly in the impacts to IROs work in this process. Without more peer-reviewed investigations on this matter, only conjectures can be made. Whilst drawing attention to certain aspects of the issue and inspire others with more knowledge to seek answers outside of this study's reach. From the knowledge that was gathered, it is a clear conclusion that all parties involved in the EWP initiative are doing their best. And have been doing so for years. Which leads to the question of why do so many errors still occur? And on that foundation of everyone doing their best, one can only assume that the cause lies in a deeper underlying issue. Whether it is a deep miscommunication between developers and users, pressures from higher ups for speeding up a process that should not be rushed, lack of funding or something else, the root of the problem is vital to understand for it to be resolved. If it remains unsolved, it may haunt every new and improved version of this initiative. Which would hinder its very purpose. The experience and knowledge behind this study were limited. The questionnaire made was a first attempt at this type of research. Additionally, there were time constraints which restricted the amount of archival research done. The most interesting information that was gathered was presented here. The intention was for interested people to make their own conclusions. Though, it is a hope to inspire others with more experience to ask questions and publish their thoughts and experiences on this subject. So that all can partake in the betterment of the international exchange of knowledge. As mentioned earlier, this was a first experience with an exploratory study and an exploratory questionnaire. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, the conclusions should be put in the context of the convenience sample used. Only 51 answers were gathered from a relatively small group of over 100 people. The matter of the impact of digitalisation in Erasmus+ was interesting because of the personal struggles with many of the EWP errors that appeared while working with it. As someone who was born in the digital age, it was surprising that such an official and important network had errors happen so frequently. Due to wanting to learn more about it, and about IRO colleagues' experiences the exploratory questionnaire was made. Another important aspect behind it was to understand whether these errors was as common as perceived previous to the questionnaire, or if it was due to of bias born the nature of the work of

dealing with IIAs put on hold due to issues in their completion process. While it was discovered that errors were common, they were not as common as the internship experience led to believe. Learning some IROs felt their workload increased with EWP was surprising. As an expectation prior to the questionnaire had been that even with the problems found, the digitalisation of Erasmus+ would make work lighter for people. During the research on the EWP, some of the more technical information was hard to find, having to go through many pages within the Erasmus+ website to reach the EWP technical and user guides. Finding this important knowledge could be more intuitive and easier. This work was, in part, born out of frustration due to not being accustomed to programs not working for no discernible reason. Usually, when things do not work, a simple google search and troubleshooting is enough to solve the issue. But this is not the case with the EWP. Not only can some of the troubleshooting information be hard to find, there are times in which troubleshooting is not even possible, whether it be because of an issue with the partner HEI or because it is a more technical issue regarding APIs, third-party providers, hash codes and other things that the average person not in the computer science community cannot solve, which is detrimental to someone's workflow. At the same time, during the research, it was clear that the developers behind the EWP are extremely skilled and committed and doing the best they can while taking on a project of unprecedented scale and complexity. Some of these difficulties appear to be growing pains of such a massive project. Despite that, one cannot help but to feel that the program is still unfinished and not ready for use. But it is also important to remember that, had the testing phase been longer before releasing the network, would some of these issues even have appeared? Though far from the field of programming, one can conclude that the exponential growth of the EWP endeavour must be one of the causes behind the increasingly more common issues mentioned in the EWP+ Infrastructure Forum Meeting of May 2025. This exploratory study demonstrated how the negative consequences of EWP on IROs work seem inevitable when working on the network's improvement, because improvement is born from difficulties. However, it was also helpful in determining IROs thoughts and needs outside of the complaints brought to the ESCI Helpdesk or the conversations held annually in the EAIE conference. Throughout this whole body of work, the basic knowledge of EWP, its tools, the architecture of the network, common errors one might find working on it, statistics, opinions on the matter and even some suggestions were explained. One of this reports' objectives was to have all of this information in one place, due to difficulties in finding them through the

Erasmus+ website during the research process. This compilation of knowledge was a way of making things easier for IRO colleagues. The work experience in the international office was not long, but it was work-intensive. And the workload was not even comparable to that of the IROs in the office. This primary observation allowed for the understanding of the difficulties one might have in learning how to work with the EWP Network during work hours. And as an advocate for work-life balance, the idea of working on this during rest hours is abhorrent. This compilation is an attempt at helping my colleagues with the transition to digital, taking into consideration their heavy work loads.

Beginning as an exploratory endeavour, this work found purpose in providing helpful information for non-digitally-literate colleagues, bringing attention to countries that might be struggling with the digital transition, presenting a more personal perspective on IROs relationship with EWP, explaining common criticism among colleagues, highlighting the hard work of developers and advocating for more communication and works to be published about EWP from users, as well as developers. This is a small contribution to help with the digital transformation of Erasmus+. Hopefully, this exploratory study might inspire others to publish their experiences, thoughts and advice on the matter of the impact of digitalisation of Erasmus+.

The internship experience was positive, and the study was fascinating. Both things led to acquiring skills that otherwise, would have not been learned. The greatest conclusion from this internship was to always ask questions and to never be afraid of doing so. As an independent person and having always been more prone to solving problems and arriving at solution without help from others, it was clear that some tasks could have been made much simpler by asking instead of forging ahead without enough knowledge. Although independence and problem-solving skills are valuable traits, a balance between seeking help and being self-sufficient appears to be vital. Not only for academic and work success, but also for life in general. Although the knowledge acquired during the internship could never be repaid, a parting gift to the head and staff of ISCAP's international office is in the appendix portion of this work. It is a brief document for future interns who will work with IIAs with all the knowledge gathered during the experience. Hopefully, it will for them and for the staff since the goal of the document is to make the transition for newcomers into the workflow as smooth as possible. It was a pleasure to intern in the international office of the Porto Accounting and Business School.

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Appendixes

Appendix I – Data of the Survey Responses Adjusted For Anonymity

Country	How long have you been using the Erasmus Without Paper platform?	How user-friendly would you say EWP is?	Has your HEI's rate of new contracts changed since you started using the EWP platform? If you answered Yes to the previous question, has the change been positive or negative?	Has the implementation of the Erasmus Without Paper platform changed the amount of physical paperwork you deal with and/or have in your office?	In your opinion, how long does it take to create and/or approve an agreement through the EWP in comparison to other means, such as through e-mail?	Have you ever not been able to close an agreement through the EWP platform?	If you answered "Yes" to the previous question, what do you do when you cannot close a contract through the EWP platform?
Austria	3 years	Not user-friendly	No		More time	Yes	all of the above mentioned
Bulgaria	3 years	Slightly user-friendly	Yes	Positive, we are creating more partnerships and contracts now that we use the EWP platform	The same time	Yes	I close the contract through e-mail
Croatia	5 years or more	Slightly user-friendly	No		More time	Yes	I close the contract through e-mail
Czech Republic	5 years or more	Not user-friendly	Yes	Negative, we are creating less partnerships and contracts than before we started using the EWP platform	More time	Yes	Close it as pdf-based IIA
Czech Republic	2 years	Not user-friendly	No		More time	Yes	I close the contract through e-mail
Czech Republic	2 years	Slightly user-friendly	Yes	Positive, we are creating more partnerships and contracts now that we use the EWP platform	The same time	Yes	I close the contract through e-mail
Czech Republic	4 years	Not user-friendly	I don't know		More time	Yes	all of the above mentioned options
Finland	4 years	Slightly user-friendly	No		More time	Yes	I close the contract through e-mail

Italy	4 years	Very user-friendly	Yes	Positive, we are creating more partnerships and contracts now that we use the EWP platform	Yes, I deal with less physical paperwork now	Less time	No	
Italy	5 years or more	Slightly user-friendly	No			More time	Yes	I postpone the contract
Italy	3 years	Slightly user-friendly	Yes	Positive, we are creating more partnerships and contracts now that we use the EWP platform	Yes, I deal with less physical paperwork now	More time	Yes	I close the contract through e-mail
Hungary	4 years	Slightly user-friendly	Yes	Positive, we are creating more partnerships and contracts now that we use the EWP platform	Yes, I deal with less physical paperwork now	More time	No	
Germany	4 years	Slightly user-friendly	Yes	Positive, we are creating more partnerships and contracts now that we use the EWP platform	Yes, I deal with less physical paperwork now	Less time	No	
Germany	5 years or more	Slightly user-friendly	No			More time	Yes	I close the contract through e-mail
Germany	5 years or more	Slightly user-friendly	No			The same time	No	
France	5 years or more	Slightly user-friendly	No			The same time	Yes	I close the contract through e-mail
France	2 years	Slightly user-friendly	I don't know			More time	Yes	I close the contract through e-mail
France	5 years or more	Not user-friendly	No			The same time	No	
France	3 years	Slightly user-friendly	No			More time	No	
France	3 years	Slightly user-friendly	Yes	Positive, we are creating more partnerships and contracts now that we use the EWP platform	Yes, I deal with less physical paperwork now	The same time	No	

Spain	4 years	Slightly user-friendly	Yes	Positive, we are creating more partnerships and contracts now that we use the EWP platform	Yes, I deal with less physical paperwork now	More time	Yes	I close the contract through e-mail
Spain	3 years	Slightly user-friendly	I don't know			More time	Yes	I use the old paper format
Spain	3 years	Slightly user-friendly	No			More time	Yes	I close the contract through e-mail
Slovenia	4 years	Slightly user-friendly	I don't know			Less time	Yes	I write to the support.
Serbia	2 years	Very user-friendly	Yes	Positive, we are creating more partnerships and contracts now that we use the EWP platform	Yes, I deal with less physical paperwork now	Less time	Yes	I postpone the contract
Romania	5 years or more	Slightly user-friendly	I don't know			More time	Yes	I postpone the contract
Romania	4 years	Very user-friendly	Yes	Positive, we are creating more partnerships and contracts now that we use the EWP platform	Yes, I deal with less physical paperwork now	Less time	No	
Romania	5 years or more	Slightly user-friendly	I don't know			The same time	No	
Romania	5 years or more	Slightly user-friendly	Yes	Positive, we are creating more partnerships and contracts now that we use the EWP platform	Yes, I deal with less physical paperwork now	More time	Yes	I close the contract through e-mail
Poland	3 years	Slightly user-friendly	Yes	Positive, we are creating more partnerships and contracts now that we use the EWP platform	Yes, I deal with less physical paperwork now	Less time	Yes	I postpone the contract
Poland	3 years	Very user-friendly	Yes	Positive, we are creating more partnerships and contracts now that we use the EWP platform	Yes, I deal with less physical paperwork now	Less time	Yes	I close the contract through e-mail
Poland	1 year or less	Slightly user-friendly	I don't know			More time	No	

Spain	4 years	Very user-friendly	Yes	Positive, we are creating more partnerships and contracts now that we use the EWP platform	Yes, I deal with less physical paperwork now	Less time	Yes	I close the contract through e-mail
Spain	5 years or more	Slightly user-friendly	No			More time	Yes	I close the contract through e-mail
Spain	4 years	Slightly user-friendly	Yes	Positive, we are creating more partnerships and contracts now that we use the EWP platform	Yes, I deal with less physical paperwork now	Less time	Yes	sign in pdf format
Spain	4 years	Slightly user-friendly	I don't know			More time	Yes	I close the contract through e-mail
Spain	1 year or less	Slightly user-friendly	I don't know			Less time	No	
Spain	2 years	Not user-friendly	No			More time	Yes	I close the contract through e-mail
Turkey	5 years or more	Slightly user-friendly	No			Less time	Yes	Helpdesk helps:)
	3 years	Slightly user-friendly	I don't know			Less time	No	

QUESTION 12 RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

	Please select your HEI's country									
	Austria	Bulgaria	Croatia	Czech Republic	Czech Republic	Czech Republic	Czech Republic	Finland	France	
Difficulty in communicating, editing or approving the terms of the contract due to using a different software from the partner HEI	Frequently	Occasionally	Frequently	Occasionally	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently	Never	
You cannot approve the agreement because the platform says you have a different contract from your partner HEI when you know for a fact it is the same	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently	Never	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never	
You cannot approve a contract because you or the other side is having issues with their server	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently	Never	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never	
The platform does not allow you to approve a contract, with no specific explanation	Frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally	Frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never	
When your partner HEI approves or eliminates a contract, that action is not reflected on your side	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never	
Contracts spontaneously disappear or change status (with, seemingly, no outside interference) without neither you nor your partner HEI being notified	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never	Never	
When you receive an approved agreement, it is completely different from what you submitted for approval and/or is missing information previously written	Frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Never	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never	Never	
When trying to register your partner HEI, their name is missing from the drop down registration list or it is under a different name from what you expected	Never	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never	Never	
Your HEI's default IIA Data aren't visible inside IIAs and/or can't be retrieved by your partner HEI	Never	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never	
You do not have access to IIA Manager's options. (Access denied error)	Never	Frequently	Never	Never	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never	Never	
The IIA is not valid for approval in the latest version of EWP (v7) and must be modified	Frequently	Frequently	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Frequently	Never	Occasionally	Never	
Your partner HEI does not have access to EWP yet	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never	

Italy	Italy	Italy	Hungary	Germany	France	France	France	France
Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente
Ocasionalmente	Never	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Never	Never	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente
Frequently	Ocasionalmente	Frequently	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente
Never	Never	Frequently	Never	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente
Frequently	Ocasionalmente	Frequently	Never	Never	Frequently	Frequently	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente
Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Frequently	Never	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Never
Never	Never	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Never
Ocasionalmente	Never	Never	Never	Never	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente
Ocasionalmente	Never	Never	Never	Never	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente
Never	Never	Frequently	Never	Never	Never	Never	Never	Never
Never	Ocasionalmente	Frequently	Never	Ocasionalmente	Never	Never	Never	Never
Ocasionalmente	Frequently	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente

Spain	Spain	Spain	Spain	Romania	Romania	Romania	Romania	Poland	Poland
Ocasionalmente	Frecuentemente	Frecuentemente	Frecuentemente	Ocasionalmente	Frecuentemente	Frecuentemente	Frecuentemente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente
Ocasionalmente	Frecuentemente	Frecuentemente	Frecuentemente	Nunca	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente
Ocasionalmente	Frecuentemente	Ocasionalmente	Frecuentemente	Frecuentemente	Frecuentemente	Frecuentemente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente
Nunca	Ocasionalmente	Frecuentemente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Nunca	Nunca	Nunca
Nunca	Ocasionalmente	Frecuentemente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Frecuentemente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente
Nunca	Frecuentemente	Nunca	Frecuentemente	Frecuentemente	Frecuentemente	Frecuentemente	Nunca	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente
Nunca	Ocasionalmente	Nunca	Ocasionalmente	Nunca	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Nunca
Nunca	Frecuentemente	Frecuentemente	Frecuentemente	Ocasionalmente	Nunca	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Nunca
Nunca	Nunca	Frecuentemente	Frecuentemente	Nunca	Nunca	Nunca	Nunca	Ocasionalmente	Nunca
Nunca	Ocasionalmente	Nunca	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Nunca	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Nunca
Ocasionalmente	Frecuentemente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente	Ocasionalmente

Occasionally	Turkey	Frequently	Spain	Occasionally	Spain	Frequently	Spain	Occasionally	Spain
Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally
Never	Frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently
Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never	Occasionally	Never	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally	Frequently
Never	Never	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Occasionally	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally
Never	Never	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Never	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally	Frequently
Occasionally	Never	Never	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never	Frequently	Occasionally	Never	Occasionally
Never	Never	Never	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never	Occasionally
Never	Never	Never	Occasionally	Never	Never	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never
Never	Never	Never	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally	Never
Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Frequently	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally	Occasionally

PERCIEVED IMPACT ON WORKLOAD AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Please select your HEI's country	Do you feel your workload has changed since the implementation of the EWP platform?	How would you say you experience with using the platform has been overall?
Austria	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Negative
Bulgaria	I started working with mobilities after EWP was already in use at my HEI	Positive
Croatia	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Neutral
Czech Republic	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Negative
Czech Republic	I started working with mobilities after EWP was already in use at my HEI	Negative
Czech Republic	I started working with mobilities after EWP was already in use at my HEI	Neutral
Czech Republic	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Negative
Finland	I started working with mobilities after EWP was already in use at my HEI	Negative
France	No, I feel my workload is the same as before	Positive
France	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Negative
France	No, I feel my workload is the same as before	Neutral

France	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Negative
France	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Neutral
Germany	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Neutral
Germany	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Neutral
Germany	No, I feel my workload is the same as before	Positive
Hungary	No, I feel my workload is the same as before	Neutral
Italy	Yes, I feel I have a smaller workload now than before	Positive
Italy	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Negative
Italy	Yes, I feel I have a smaller workload now than before	Positive
Italy	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Negative
Latvia	I started working with mobilities after EWP was already in use at my HEI	Positive
Latvia	I started working with mobilities after EWP was already in use at my HEI	Neutral

Lithuania	No, I feel my workload is the same as before	Positive
Lithuania	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Neutral
North Macedonia	Yes, I feel I have a smaller workload now than before	Positive
Poland	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Neutral
Poland	I started working with mobilities after EWP was already in use at my HEI	Positive
Poland	No, I feel my workload is the same as before	Positive
Poland	No, I feel my workload is the same as before	Positive
Poland	Yes, I feel I have a smaller workload now than before	Positive
Poland	Yes, I feel I have a smaller workload now than before	Positive
Poland	I started working with mobilities after EWP was already in use at my HEI	Positive
Poland	Yes, I feel I have a smaller workload now than before	Positive
Poland	Yes, I feel I have a smaller workload now than before	Positive

Romania	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Negative
Romania	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Neutral
Romania	Yes, I feel I have a smaller workload now than before	Positive
Romania	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Negative
Serbia	Yes, I feel I have a smaller workload now than before	Positive
Slovenia	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Neutral
Spain	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Positive
Spain	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Neutral
Spain	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Negative
Spain	Yes, I feel I have a smaller workload now than before	Positive
Spain	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Negative
Spain	No, I feel my workload is the same as before	Positive

Spain	Yes, I feel I have a bigger workload now than before	Negative
Spain	I started working with mobilities after EWP was already in use at my HEI	Positive
Spain	I started working with mobilities after EWP was already in use at my HEI	Negative
Turkey	Yes, I feel I have a smaller workload now than before	Positive
	I started working with mobilities after EWP was already in use at my HEI	Positive

Appendix II – Survival Guide for Interns in Charge Of Inter-Institutional Agreements – an Informal Document for The International Office Of The Porto Accounting And Business School

SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR INTERNS WORKING WITH IIAs

What is IIA?

IIA stands for Inter-Institutional Agreement. It is a contract between two schools (it can be between three but that is relatively rare) that defines the terms of mobility between them. That means: how many vacancies are available for international students between schools? What kind of study fields do the schools decide they have in common? How many months can the students stay in each school? What cycle of study are they/us accepting? Is it a blended mobility?

What is an Erasmus Code?

An Erasmus Code is the specific code that a higher education institution within the Erasmus program is under and must be used not just in a written contract, but also as a way to filter agreements in the EWP platform, based on which partner we are making an agreement with. In the Polytechnic of Porto's case, the Erasmus Code is P PORTO 05. The first letter of the code refers to the country of origin of the institution (in this case, P stands for Portugal), and the following letters are equivalent to the city and/or region, and the number is to identify the specific HEI since there are usually many HEIs in the same city.

What is an HEI?

HEI stands for Higher Education Institution. These are usually universities of schools of applied sciences in the case of the International Office of ISCAP

What are ISCED-F Codes?

“ISCED-F Codes”, also known as “Study Field Codes”. The current codes that the Porto Accounting and Business School deals in are all 410, which means “Business and Administration, no further defined”, and englobes all of the study fields related to it (they start with 041 but the last digit can go from 1 to 9). The other code that the school deals

with is 0322 which is “Library and Archival Studies”, and 0230, which is “Languages, no further defined”.

Appendix 1: ISCED Fields of Education and Training

Broad field	Narrow field	Detailed field
00 Generic programmes and qualifications	001 Basic programmes and qualifications 002 Literacy and numeracy 003 Personal skills and development	0011 Basic programmes and qualifications 0021 Literacy and numeracy 0031 Personal skills and development
01 Education	011 Education	0111 Education science 0112 Training for pre-school teachers 0113 Teacher training without subject specialization 0114 Teacher training with subject specialization
02 Arts and humanities	021 Arts	0211 Audio-visual techniques and media production 0212 Fashion, interior and industrial design 0213 Fine arts 0214 Handicrafts 0215 Music and performing arts
	022 Humanities (except languages)	0221 Religion and theology 0222 History and archaeology 0223 Philosophy and ethics
	023 Languages	0231 Language acquisition 0232 Literature and linguistics
03 Social sciences, journalism and information	031 Social and behavioural sciences	0311 Economics 0312 Political sciences and civics 0313 Psychology 0314 Sociology and cultural studies
	032 Journalism and information	0321 Journalism and reporting 0322 Library, information and archival studies
04 Business, administration and law	041 Business and administration	0411 Accounting and taxation 0412 Finance, banking and insurance 0413 Management and administration 0414 Marketing and advertising 0415 Secretarial and office work 0416 Wholesale and retail sales 0417 Work skills
	042 Law	0421 Law

EQF: What is a cycle of study?

EQF stands for European Qualification Framework. In the context of the International Office, it usually can vary between these levels, also referred to as “study cycles”:

First Study Cycle/Bachelors = EQF level 6

Second Study Cycle/Masters = EQF level 7

Third Study Cycle/Doctorate = EQF level 8

Step by step to creating IIA on the EWP Dashboard

One of my most common tasks was to create IIAs on the EWP Dashboard. Here is the process described step-by-step:

1-Click on create IIA

2- Insert your institution's department (ISCAP) and the contacts of the international office (outgoing mobility, incoming mobility and head of office)

3- Insert the partner institution's name and department if there is one. Some schools do not put their contact details in the contract because it is based on their name and if they leave the position then it will be null, so I leave it blank for them to be able to fill in later if that is the case, though if I know from previous contracts that they do then I insert the contact of the person I am speaking to via email in order to complete the IIA

4-Specify conditions:

4.1-When you add a condition, you must specify from which institution and respective department (if applicable) it is coming from and where it is going

4.2- Add the beginning and end years of the validity of the contract (earliest is 2022/2023 and latest is 2028/2029)

4.3- Specify how many vacancies there are

4.4- Insert the ISCED-F code

4.5- Choose the kind of mobility. It can be: "Teacher Staff", "Student Studies", "Staff Training" and "Student Traineeship"

4.5.1-If you choose "Student Studies" then you must also note if it is with "Blended Mobility" or not. "Blended Mobility" is when the exchange can have both in person and online teaching elements

4.6- Write how many months or days in total there are available for the mobility

4.7- Specify the EFC level available

4.8- Specify which languages are needed and their respective degrees of fluency in that specific mobility. ISCAP only accepts English if the level is B2 at minimum, while many others accept a B1 level. It is encouraged for Portuguese students to have a B1 level of

Spanish (minimum) before going to Spain as, even if classes are in English, their tests can be in Spanish and that catches many students off guard.

4.9- Add incoming and outgoing contacts. I usually only add the ISCAP ones and leave the rest for the partner to fill in

4.10-Add any further specifications if required

Now that part of my tasks and attached concepts are clear, I will explain the research process that I had to undergo when an HEI did not show up in the EWP platform, or when one HEI did, but did not seem to have any agreements in the platform in spite the fact that, even if it were out of date, there would still be a history of its existence, most likely. This processes included, not only finding out if something changed in the HEI, but also acquiring a valid contact for the head of the International Office (or an equivalent with the authority to sign a contract), and also the most recent contract available, so that there is a base for the renewal of the IIA to be negotiated.

Here are the processes described step by step:

1-Check the status of contract in the Excel spreadsheet

2-Go to EWP to see if it matches what is written

3-Erasmus code is not there

4-What to do?

5-Search for Erasmus code on google

6-Can see up to when the code was used

7-Search for corresponding HEI website

8-Does the HEI/website still exist? Is there any news regarding it?

9-Search for Wikipedia of the institution. If it exists, it usually says what happened in the meantime. Usually, it is a change made between 2020 and now.

10- In the case of an HEI that split in two:

10.1- search for the website of both institutions

10.2- find their Erasmus office contacts

10.3-find the previous IIA in the Erasmus folder

10.4 – Send them each an email asking if they have interest in the renewal of the agreement and also what their new Erasmus code is so that it can be updated in the Excel table

11- in the case of the institution not functioning anymore

11.1- check if there is a decree-law in order to verify that the school really shut down

11.2- update the Excel table with that information

12- in the case where the institution merged with a larger one and subsequently changed names

12.1- discern if the Erasmus offices conjoined or are still separate

12.2- the old code is now the bigger HEI's regular code for both of them

12.3- send an email to their international office confirming the change

13- in the case where separate institutions merged in order to create a new one

13.1-find the website for the new institution

13.2-find the contact of their person responsible for international cooperation if possible. If not, then send an e-mail to their general International Office inbox to ask about the changes and for them to provide the contact details of the one responsible for IIAs. Further manners of obtaining a reliable contact are described in later sections of this text

14-in the case where the name simply changed

14.1-check if the Head of Office/current contact is still the same

14.2-update excel table accordingly

There were also instances where the HEI existed in the EWP but the mentioned contract is nowhere to be found and no one responds to the e-mail sent to clarify the situation, or the contact is not viable at all (it cannot be sent by Outlook).

1-Check the status of contract in the Excel spreadsheet

2-Go to EWP to see if it matches what is written

3-There is no contract even though there should be a history of contract even if it were not valid anymore

4-Search for the contract in the ERASMUS folder

5- in the case where there is a valid contract in the folder

5.1-no need for contact, simply add it to the Excel table

6- in the case where there is a recent contract but not valid anymore (example: valid up until 2018 or 2022—insert examples) + the contact is viable

6.1- send the contract to viable contact and see if they would like to renew the IIA in the EWP or, if they are not able to use the EWP, if they would like to renew it by e-mail. In which case then make a contract with the template on word and send them to sign

7- in the case where there is a recent contract but not valid anymore (example: valid up until 2018 or 2022—insert examples) + the contact is NOT viable

7.1-once I have the contract I search for the contact

Very Important Note: in the search for a contact it is important to add that usually general Erasmus contacts will not get you a response since either their inbox is full or it is for general Erasmus matters and not contracts in particular. the best contacts to use in order to discuss IIAs is either the head of the international office (preferably) or the head of international contracts in the Erasmus division. unfortunately, the websites for HEIs usually only have the general addresses since it is mostly for students, teachers and staff who are interested in mobility and not for specific cases like the inter-institutional agreement making process.

7.2- Go to the website to search for the head of international office

7.3- There is no contact for the head of the international office or for the responsible for international cooperation

7.4- Put the name of the person in the e-mail address on LinkedIn in order to check if they still work there

7.5- If they do, then the contact is probably badly written and I search for how most institutional emails are written in that HEI. Then, I search their database for the person in

question (head of international offices in HEI tend to be professors as well). If none of that works, I go to Research Gate or search for resumes of the person in question in order to find their real e-mail address

7.6- If they do not work there anymore, then it is easier, since I just have to find who does.

7.7- Search for the name of the institution plus “current head of international office”. This usually leads me to a piece of college news about the exchange and to LinkedIn as well

7.8- First check LinkedIn to be sure they really work there

7.9- Once establish that they do, I then search their name plus email address on google

7.10- Sometimes it leads me to their institutional page with their institutional e-mail address

7.11- If there is no page with that information, and if research gate or any academic paper does not have their contact then I search for their name and add “contract” or “inter-institutional agreement” or “Erasmus”

7.12- This will lead me to a template of a document (or a real document) which will have the contact details of the person in question, as those are necessary to have in such a document

7.13- Send the contract to the viable contact and see if they would like to renew it, and if so if by e-mail or if I can create an IIA on EWP

Links to Frequently Asked Questions about the EWP Dashboard when in doubt

<https://esci-sd.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/DASH/pages/39452673/Inter-Institutional+Agreement+Manager+enhanced+EWP+Dashboard>

<https://esci-sd.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/DASH/pages/11862179/Train+the+trainer+package>

When you cannot use EWP Dashboard to sign an IIA, create a Word Document

There are templates available both in the Outlook “IIA – ISABELA” folder, in the computers and in the GRI – ISCAP online document folder (accessible through “documents” under “IIA – ISABELA”). If you cannot find it, ask your supervisors to send you.

The Word Template for “Program Country” is different from the Template for “Partner Country”

Program Country - countries that are part of Erasmus+ and are usually present in the Erasmus Code drop down list in the EWP Dashboard.

Partner Country – countries that are not part of Erasmus+ but have partnerships with Erasmus+ institutions and are recognized as following the Erasmus Higher Education Charter rules. These countries are not available in in the Erasmus Code drop down list in the EWP Dashboard, and usually use a Organization ID code instead, referred as OID, or PIC code. If you cannot find the OID/PIC in the Excel IIA table, then search the HEI through this website: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-esc/index/organisations/search-for-an-organisation>.

NOTE: Switzerland and other European countries not in EWP Dashboard are usually Partner Countries


ERASMUS+ ICM COUNTRIES

Although they are not inside the program of the Erasmus+, they are still considered Partners within the International Credit Mobility context. These partner countries are especially outside the European Union and even outside of Europe itself. In the context of the ISCAP International Office, these kinds of mobilities could only be made from Portugal to that specific country and not vice versa (outgoing mobility from Portugal).

MoU: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

For non-Erasmus countries there is usually a type of agreement called a “memorandum of understanding”, in which a partnership is made between the two institutions, so that they can proceed with a certain mobility from one place to another. That can also be renewed, but sometimes the renewal is automatic. This is different from the inter institutional agreement because it is **not related to Erasmus at all**.

How to send e-mails: template, protocol and more

Kind Request to sign the IIA in EWP  Summarize



Gabinete de Relações Internacionais



To: Małgorzata Chromy <mchromy@sgh.waw.pl>; +1 other

Tue 5/13/2025 16:15

Dear Partners,

I hope this e-mail finds you well.

I am writing to remind you that we have prepared the IIA on the EWP Dashboard platform with the ID: EWP-12823522, but unfortunately, it is still not signed on your end. Therefore, we kindly request your attention to this issue and to sign it as soon as possible.

Kindly let us know if any changes on our part are also necessary.
Your prompt attention to this matter is greatly appreciated.

Kind regards,
Isabela Vieira
(Trainee)

Kind Request to sign the IIA in EWP

Dear Partners,

I hope this e-mail finds you well.

I am writing to remind you that we have prepared the IIA on the EWP Dashboard platform with the ID: EWP-1298673, but unfortunately, it is still not signed on your end. Therefore, we kindly request your attention to this issue and to sign it as soon as possible.

Kindly let us know if any changes on our part are also necessary.

Your prompt attention to this matter is greatly appreciated.

Kind regards,


Your first and last name


(Trainee)

Create and add an email signature in new Outlook to work as a template for the e-mail

<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/create-and-add-an-email-signature-in-outlook-8ee5d4f4-68fd-464a-a1c1-0e1c80bb27f2>

Create and add an email signature in new Outlook

You can set up various signatures in new Outlook and then select the signature you want to use when composing a message. Watch the [video](#) .

1. Select **Settings** .
2. Select **Accounts > Signatures**.
3. If you have more than one account added to new Outlook, select the account you want to apply your email signature to.
4. Select **+ New signature**, then give it a distinct name.
5. In the editing box below the new name, type your signature, then format it with the font, color, and styles to get the appearance you want.
6. Select **Save** when you're done.
7. With your new signature selected from the list above the editing box, go to **Select default signatures** and choose whether to apply the signature to new messages and to replies and forwards. Or leave it blank and add the signature you want when composing a message.
8. Select **Save** again.

Add a signature when composing a message in new Outlook

1. From Mail, select **New mail**.
2. In the **Insert** group on the **Message** tab, select **Signature**.
3. Choose one of your saved signatures to add to your message.

If you want to create a new signature, select **Signatures...** from the dropdown. Follow the steps in the [Create and add an email signature](#) section to create and save a new signature.

You can insert the entirety of your e-mail template as a signature. That way, when writing an e-mail, you frequently send, you can just click on your “signature” and then all you have to do is change the specific details of that partner and the IIA in cause.

Etiquette to sending an e-mail to an international colleague

If possible, always mention the specific partner’s name, as a show of respect.

Unless you are sending an e-mail that is meant for all of the international partners of ISCAP, NEVER, UNDER ABSOLUTELY NO CIRCUMSTANCES SEND ONE SINGLE E-MAIL TO MORE THAN 5 PARTNERS, MAXIMUM. If you have a specific matter do deal with relating to a partner HEI, but do not know who to send, do not add all the contacts you find of that HEI in hopes of an answer. That is bad etiquette, and long recipient listings can make navigating through Outlook confusing. Instead, you should search for that HEI’s website, go to the International Office section and find the contact information which is relevant to your specific issue. When in doubt, either send it to the Head of that International Office, ask your supervisors for contact information, or search through past e-mails in Outlook to that specific HEI. NOTE: On Outlook, under “IIA – ISABELA”, you can find most of the information that I used.

Forming work relationships is important to a good office environment, so make sure to remember your international partner’s names, be polite, hope you find them well, ask them questions if you are having any difficulties, they are happy to help, and be available and patient when they encounter an obstacle as well.

Excel Sheet and Colour Guide

-When you access the Outlook for interns – griestag – go to the “OneDrive”

-Then, go to the Favourites, which might be written in Portuguese as “Favoritos”, there is a star marking it

There you will find a document called: (ATUAL) Parcerias Erasmus MAPA_ novo _em atualização

This is your holy grail of IIA at the office. It is likely what you will work on and it has the most updated version of any and all Inter-Institutional Agreements. You will probably have to update this. I have spent a lot of time trying to get it as organized as possible, please try to maintain this organization for future interns, it took hard work to edit it to be

this way and it's not even perfect :/ Nonetheless, I believe it to be understandable to anyone who accesses it. To make things easier, I made a colour guide to organize the IIA STATUS by category. The Colour Guide is in the Excel Document, but I put it here as well. Here is the IIA STATUS Categories divided by colour:

RED = no active IIA

YELLOW = the process of signing the IIA is in progress/there has been a change with the institution and I am trying to see if they are still interested in the renewal of the agreement and/or waiting for an answer in order to gather more information

GREEN = The IIA is completely approved with no issues

CHARTREUSE = the contract has been for all intents and purposes agreed by all, but there are issues in the ewp or otherwise that prevent me from declaring it complete since the formal process is not over until we solve the issue

ORANGE = Waiting for NA certification/Does not yet have a valid OID

YELLOW IN THE CASE OF COUNTRIES OUTSIDE THE ERASMUS+ = the country has NA but contract has not been signed

CHARTREUSE IN THE CASE OF COUNTRIES OUTSIDE THE ERASMUS+ = contract has been sent and am waiting for it to be signed

Important Folders

In the Outlook griestag, under the heading that says “documents”, which is under the “IIA – ISABELA” section, there are the most important folders you will probably need: the “ERASMUS FOLDER” and the “NON-ERASMUS FOLDER”. These have all the information you could possibly need to deal with IIAs. If you cannot access them, ask one of your supervisor's to send them to the griestag mail.

Organize your Outlook

When starting out in any workplace, it is important to organize your outlook in a way that makes sense to you. It is even more important in the case of the griestag mail, because you will probably not be the only intern using it and they will probably use it for different work-related activities from you. You are more than free to change my “IIA – ISABELA” folders to suit your needs. If that does not work, I recommend deleting them (the folder, NOT the e-mails/documents inside, because it is VERY IMPORTANT to have a HISTORY of e-mail exchanges) and setting up your own system. If not, you are welcome to use the one I made for myself, and even change the name to match yours.

When in doubt

Although autonomy and self-sufficiency are important, and your supervisors are probably very busy, if you are taking longer to solve a problem on your own than if you asked, then it's probably best to take your losses and ask them. Everyone is more than happy to help you and please don't forget about the Sunken Cost Fallacy.

Asking for help can be very difficult, but I can tell you from experience that your supervisor's are really nice and will never believe you are stupid for seeking help. You are learning, so please give yourself some grace. This is not an easy job.

Whoever you are, wherever you may be, I wish you luck in all your endeavours!