

# Quality management assessment within Erasmus+ Programme according to the perception of the participating students

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**Abstract.** The aim of the paper was to analyze the perception of students regarding the quality of management within Erasmus+ programme carried out by Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu and their partner academic institutions from Romania and abroad. Through this paper we also tried to determine a classification of the evaluated variables, their correlation and the factor which influences most the quality of the management of Erasmus mobility projects. In order to assess these goals, the research consisted of collecting, processing and analyzing the responses to questionnaires from 66 Romanian students and 165 foreign students who have benefited from an Erasmus+ study or placement mobility in the last years. The findings highlighted that Romanian students compared to foreign students assessed better the quality of management in general, more exactly the variables related to promotion and information activities, quality and professionalism of the Erasmus selection competition, support in filling out the Erasmus documents, the level of support throughout the application process, information and support provided by the home university during their mobility and the support for the administrative part after returning from mobility.

## 1 Introduction

Following the rise of financial resources allocated by the European Union for mobility projects, as well as the increase of the beneficiaries of mobility projects [1], a current challenge of universities is to maintain the quality of the management of Erasmus programme. This aspect becomes even more important in the context in which the resolution of the European Commission adopted in September 2020, that is studying

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abroad should become a "norm" in order to reach to "the full potential of education and culture as drivers for job creation"[2].

Mobility projects are defined as "institutional projects involving partners from several countries (trans-national) " and may include "training courses, placement, teaching activities, study or volunteering internships, youth exchanges, training activities, job-shadowing " [3].

In the present paper, the emphasis lays on studying and training mobility projects which students may carry out as beneficiaries, during bachelor, master and doctorate.

Given the current context, managing Erasmus + mobility projects becomes a very demanding and complex work which confirms the opinion of Fraumann si Güney [4], according to which in a world that is characterized by globalization and marketing, human resources have a key role in keeping the higher education institutions on the actual competitive market, and hence this requires a very well trained staff. According to EAIE Barometer (2019) the success of an university in the international dimension -besides the organisation of the staff - depends also on its abilities and knowledge.

Nowadays a very important aspect which portrays higher institutions is internationalization which can be defined as "a set of activities or strategies which institutions formulate in order to face the increased globalization" and which "is reflected by an international character of education and research but also by the international nature of their funding basis, their quality assurance system, staff and students' population" [5].

Regarding the research on evaluation, trends and problems within European higher education institutions from Europe (De Wit, 2020), the ration of internationalization concerns "the improvement of quality/international standards". "A call for accountability by students, faculty, deans, the management of higher education institutions and national governments, as well as the call for quality assurance, is an important issue on the agenda of higher education, in general, and this includes the internationalisation process, programmes and projects" and ranking is one of the important keys on the"international higher education agenda" [6].

The aims of this paper are: (1) ascertain the perception of Romanian and foreign students regarding the quality of management of mobility projects in higher institutions – by analyzing the six variables concerning promotion and information activities, quality and professionalism of the Erasmus selection competition, support in filling out the Erasmus documents, the level of support throughout the overall application process, information and support provided by the home university/institution during mobility and the support of the administrative part after returning from mobility – related to the project phases (before, during and after mobility); (2) establish the differences of perceiving the quality of the management of mobility projects by Romanian and foreign students; (3) establish the correlation between the variables of the three projects mobility steps (before, during, after mobility) and the most influential factor in the management of mobility projects; (5) determine the consequences of a high or low evaluation level regarding the quality of mobility projects on higher institutions.

The first part of the paper is a theoretical one and describes the actual context of Erasmus programme, of mobility projects and the notion of internationalization. The second part focuses on explaining the methodology of research, on analyzing the outcomes and on establishing the conclusions of the research.

The importance of the research is determined by the study of the quality management of mobility projects carried out by the home university of the responding students based on the three steps of mobility (before, during and after mobility).

The opportunity of the paper consists in the possibility of processing and analyzing the statistical data from respondents coming from different countries and different higher institutions. The prerequisite of the research is based on the need of evaluating the quality

of the management within Erasmus programme in general and also in particular following the three steps of a mobility. The analyzed variables indicate the general efforts of higher institutions in administrating the Erasmus programme. Another aspect of the research is the determination of relations between variables, on the three stages of the project, respectively on the two types of mobility - study and practice - and the clasification of the indicators of the quality of the management of mobility projects based on their importance in the evaluation process.

## 2 Research methodology

In order to evaluate the quality of the management of Erasmus mobility projects- **during, before and after mobility**- we conducted a quantitative research for two months with the help of the questionnaire and by using Likert scale [7].

The target group is represented by Romanian students and foreign students who have benefited of placement and study mobility projects abroad.

The collected data come from two important Romanian universities and sixty-eight international ones.

The respondents are from twenty-three E.U. and Non - E.U. countries (Bulgaria, Austria, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Germany, Portugal, Ukraine, Poland, France, Turkey Indonesia, Jordan et cetera) respectively from universities in partnership with Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu.

The questionnaires have been sent by email and Facebook, which allowed reaching a larger number of respondents from more institutions and countries.

The type of sampling is non-probabilistic (non-random), intentional on typical cases and "snowball" sampling" [8].

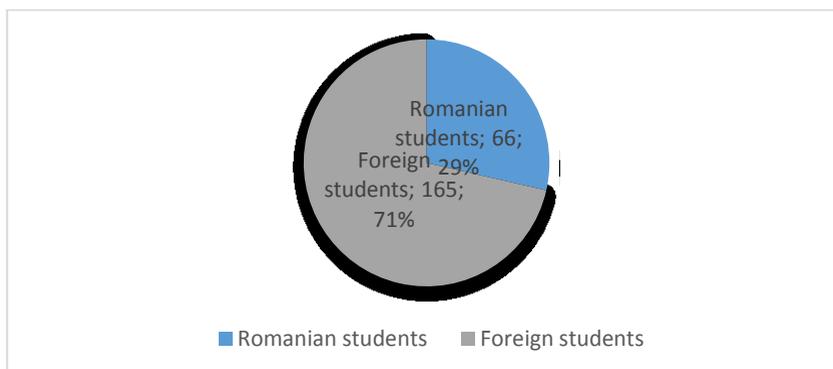
The questioner was built in Google forms and was designed to evaluate the perception of students regarding the quality of the management of Erasmus programme in their home institution as stated in the mobility agreement of a study or placement mobility (learning agreement/training agreement).

**Table 1.** Studied variables based on the three stages of the mobility

<i>Mobility stages [9],</i>	<i>Variables</i>
<i>Before;</i>	1. Promotion and information activities;
	2. The quality and professionalism of the selection contest;
	3. Support in filling in the Erasmus documents;
	4. The support throughout the whole application process;
<i>During;</i>	5. The support provided during mobility;
<i>After mobility;</i>	6. The support provided after returning from the mobility;

## 3 Assessment of the quality of management

Following the evaluation of the statistical data, the results of the research show that Romanian students have appreciated more, on average, the quality of the management of mobility projects in their home university (Fig.1).



**Fig. 1.** Percentage of Romanian and foreign respondents

**Table 2.** The average of the assessments of Romanian and foreign students regarding the quality of the management of the Erasmus programme in their home university

<i>Target group</i>		<i>1.</i>	<i>2.</i>	<i>3.</i>	<i>4.</i>	<i>5.</i>	<i>6.</i>
<i>Romanian students</i>	Mean	4,12	4,48	4,30	4,56	4,23	4,35
	N	66	66	66	66	66	66
<i>Foreign students</i>	Mean	3,90	4,04	3,89	4,07	3,87	3,82
	N	165	165	165	165	165	165
<i>Total</i>	Mean	3,97	4,17	4,01	4,21	3,97	3,97
	N	231	231	231	231	231	231

As far as it concerns the evaluation of the variables of **the first stage of the mobility (before mobility)**: a. **the activities of promotion and information**, are situated on the last place for Romanian students (**4, 12**) and on the third place for foreign students (**3, 90**) (Table 2); b. **The quality and professionalism of the selection contest** is situated on the second place both for Romanian (**4, 48**) and foreign students (**4, 04**); c. **The support in filling out the documents** comes in the fourth place in the classification of variables with a score of **4, 30** for Romanian students and **3, 89** for foreign students. The best score is achieved by **the whole support received during the application process**, both for Romanian students (**4, 56**) and foreign students (**4, 07**).

**The second stage of the mobility (during mobility)**, evaluated by the variable regarding **the support received during mobility** comes in the fifth place both for Romanian (**4, 23**) and foreign students (**3, 87**).

**The third stage of the mobility (after mobility)**, characterized by **the support received after mobility** comes in the fourth place from the Romanian student's (**4,35**) an on the last place for foreign students (**3,82**).

**Table 3.** Classification of variables based on the evaluation of respondents

<i>Romanian students</i>	<i>Foreign students</i>
1. The support throughout the whole application process (4,56);	1. The support throughout the whole application process ;(4,07)
2. The quality and professionalism of the selection contest (4,48);	2. The quality and professionalism of the selection contest;(4,04);

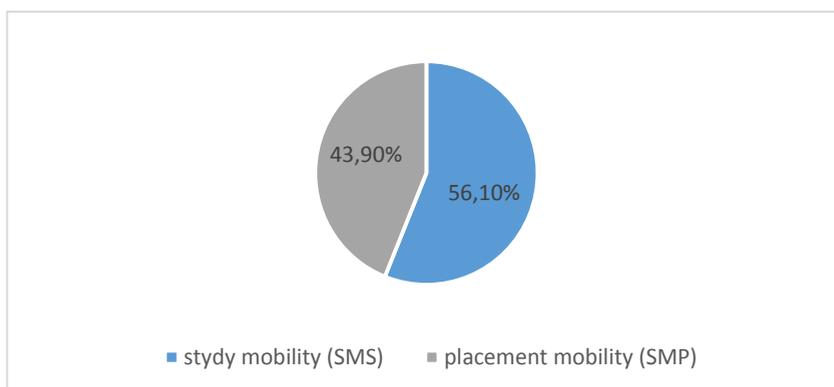
3. The support provided after returning from the mobility (4,35)	<b>3. Promotion and information activities (3,90).</b>
4. Support in filling in the Erasmus documents (4,30)	4. Support in filling in the Erasmus documents (3,89)
5. The support provided during mobility (4,23)	5. The support provided during mobility (3,87)
<b>6. Promotion and information activities (4,12)</b>	<b>6. The support provided after returning from the mobility (3,82)</b>

Although there are small differences in evaluation process of the two groups of respondents regarding the above variables, in table 4 one can notice that the frequency of Romanian and foreign students who have evaluated the quality of management is **high (95)** and **very high (75)**. It is also noticeable that a very small number of respondents has evaluated the quality of management as being very low (**6**).

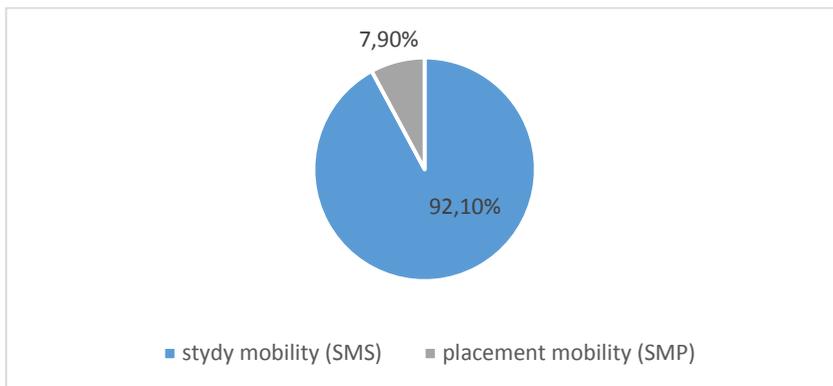
**Table 4.** The degree of appreciation of the quality of the management within Erasmus programme

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Very low	6	2,6	2,6
	Low	10	4,3	4,3
	Medium	45	19,5	19,5
	<b>High</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>41,1</b>	<b>41,1</b>
	<b>Very high</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>32,5</b>	<b>32,5</b>
	Total	231	100,0	100,0

In order to establish the differences regarding the quality of the management concerning study mobility projects (SMS) and practice mobility projects (SMP), we appealed to a division of the Romanian and foreign students by these two categories (table 5) and calculated the average of the six variables.



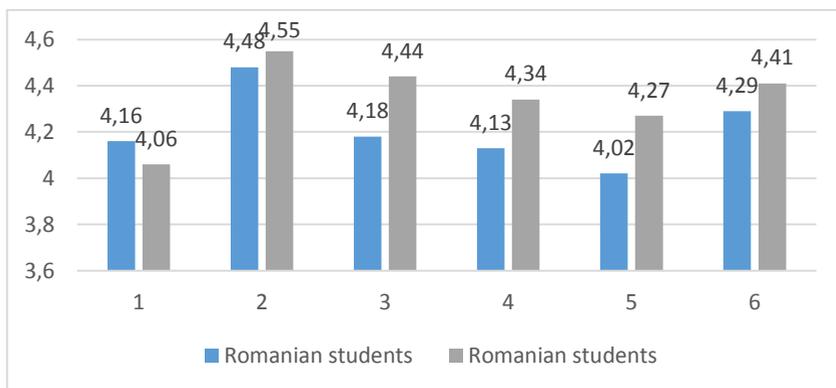
**Fig. 2.** Distribution of Romanian students based on their type of mobility



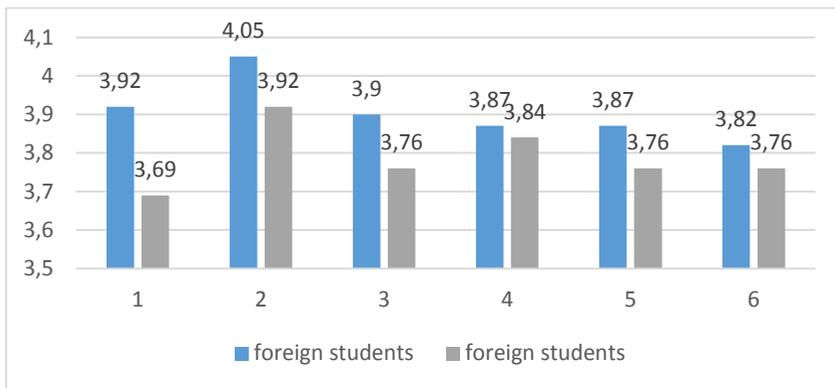
**Fig. 3.** Distribution of foreign students based on their type of mobility

**Table 5.** The average of the assessments of the Romanian and foreign students regarding the quality of the management of the Erasmus programme in their home university according to the type of mobility

Target group	Mobility type		1	2	3	4	5	6
Romanian students	SMS	Mean	4,16	4,48	4,18	4,13	4,02	4,29
		N	37	37	37	37	37	37
	SMP	Mean	4,06	4,55	4,44	4,34	4,27	4,41
		N	29	29	29	29	29	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>4,12</b>	<b>4,48</b>	<b>4,3</b>	<b>4,56</b>	<b>4,23</b>	<b>4,35</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>66</b>	
foreign students	SMS	Mean	3,92	4,05	3,9	3,87	3,87	3,82
		N	152	152	152	152	152	152
	SMP	Mean	3,69	3,92	3,76	3,84	3,76	3,76
		N	13	13	13	13	13	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>3,9</b>	<b>4,04</b>	<b>3,89</b>	<b>4,07</b>	<b>3,87</b>	<b>3,82</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>165</b>	

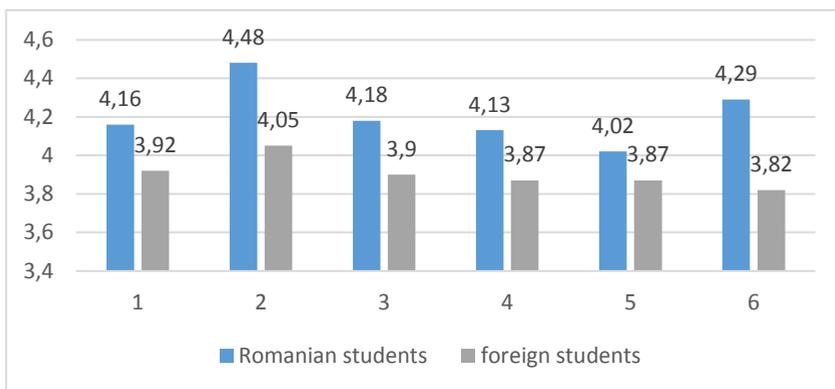


**Fig. 4.** The average assessment of the quality of management of study mobility projects (SMS) and placement mobility projects (SMP) of Romanian students

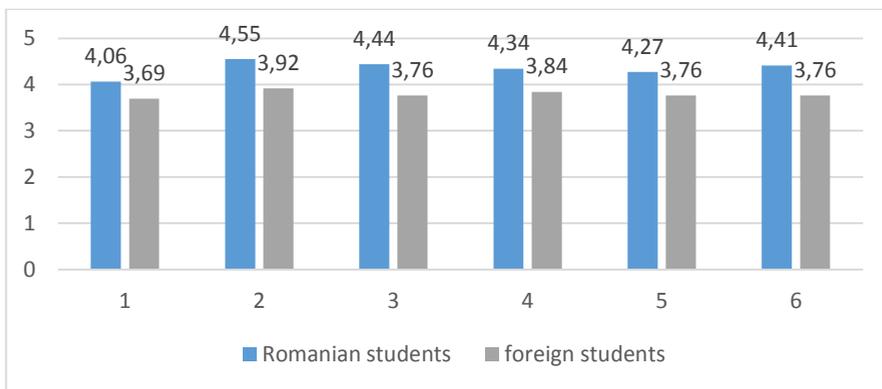


**Fig. 5.** The average assessment of the quality of management of study mobility projects (SMS) and placement mobility projects (SMP) of foreign students

Figures 4 and 5 show that Romanian students who benefited of a placement mobility abroad have appreciated more the quality of the management of Erasmus programme, for all six variables, compared to Romanian students who have benefited of a study mobility. Foreign students who have benefited of a study mobility appreciated instead more the quality of management in comparison to the foreign students who benefited of a placement mobility.



**Fig. 6.** The average assessment of the quality of management of study mobility projects (SMS) expressed by students



**Fig. 7.** The average assessment of the quality of management of placement mobility projects (SMS) of students

From figures 6 and 7 it results that Romanian students have assessed more the quality of management - both for study and placement mobility projects - compared to foreign students.

#### 4 Correlation between variables

Based on the Pearson correlation coefficient (Table 5) it was determined that there is a considerable relation between (1) **the level of support throughout the application process** and (2) **the support provided during mobility** ( $r=.826, p<0,01$ ), between (1) **the level of support throughout the application process** and (3) **the level of support provided after returning from the mobility** ( $r=.731, p<0,01$ ) as well as between (2) **the support provided during mobility** and (3) **the level of support provided after returning from the mobility** ( $r=.702, p<0,01$ ). These correlations indicate a linear ascending relation between variables, which means that “higher scores on one variable are associated with higher scores on the other variable” [10].

The outcomes show the increase of one variable determines the increase of the other two to as well [11]. This aspect illustrates that if one of the variables is evaluated with a high score so are the others two, which is valid also the other way around.

**Table 5. The correlation of the variables regarding the three stages of mobility**

Variables		4.	5.	6.
1. Support throughout the application process;	Pearson Correlation	1	,826**	,731**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000
	N	231	231	231
2.Support during mobility;	Pearson Correlation	,826**	1	,702**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,000
	N	231	231	231
3.Support after mobility;	Pearson Correlation	,731**	,702**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	
	N	231	231	231

#### 5 Determining the most “influential” factor

Starting from the linear relations between the variables [12], we have managed to determine the most ‘powerful’ independent variable of the quality of management of mobility projects by using a predictive model (Table 6).

**Table 6. Classification of independent variables**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2,887E-15	,000		,000	1,000

1.	Promotion and information activities;	,167	,000	,176	260240392,545	,000
2.	The quality and professionalism of the selection contest;	,167	,000	,169	251383393,783	,000
3.	Support in filling in the Erasmus documents;	,167	,000	,211	225436031,613	,000
4.	The support throughout the whole application process	,167	,000	,209	182621568,646	,000
5.	The support provided during mobility;	,167	,000	,200	229717692,450	,000
6.	The support provided after mobility;	,167	,000	,212	299575558,760	,000

Based on the outcomes one can notice that the most important factor which influences the quality of the management of mobility projects is **the support after the mobility ( $\beta=,212$ ,  $p<0,01$ )**- the better the support after the mobility, the better is the quality of management - followed by (3) **the support in filling out the application documents ( $\beta=,211$ ,  $p<0,01$ )** , (4) **the support in the application process ( $\beta=,209$ ,  $p<0,01$ )**, (5) **the support during mobility projects ( $\beta=,200$ ,  $p<0,01$ )**, (1) **activity of promotion and information ( $\beta=,176$ ,  $p<0,01$ )** and on the last place is (2) **the quality and professionalism of the selection contest ( $\beta=,169$ ,  $p<0,01$ )**.

## 6 Conclusions

From the point of view of some authors, achieving quality and assessing Erasmus projects represents a "hidden activity" of project management [13].

The present study aimed to bring to light a small part of the work of higher institutions involved in Erasmus programme and try to evaluate it.

The high scores achieved concerning the quality of the management of mobility projects- **before, during and after mobility** – as perceived by Romanian and foreign students indicate that all universities involved in the study provide a high level of the management of Erasmus programme for all the six analysed variables. This fact can be explained throughout the actions made by higher education institutions that are determined by the same objectives which are set by the European Commission.

Although important statistical outcomes have been settled - the correlation between the studied variables and the classification of factors influencing the quality of management-further directions of research could be considered useful and can be based on determining the factors underlying personal decisions regarding the evaluation of Erasmus programme. This can be done perhaps within a future mixed research [15].

The outcomes are also relevant for stakeholders:

- For National Agency as evaluator and financier [14], these results show that institutions ensure a quality of the management of Erasmus programme;
- For higher institutions represented by Erasmus offices and Erasmus coordinators as an indicator of their work and a future encouragement;
- For future students- ongoing efforts made by the higher institutions to offer the best quality of services;

In order to improve the quality of the management of Erasmus programme, Romanian universities may improve the activity of information and promotion and in what concerns foreign universities, they may work on improving the support offered to students “**after mobility**”.

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