

Erasmus+ insights

Promoting
exchange,
diversity and
fundamental
values

2020

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Dear Reader,

The COVID-19 pandemic is creating huge economic, social, health policy and ultimately societal challenges for the world and thus also for Europe. As countries attempt to combat the pandemic, open borders – one of the greatest achievements of European integration – have been temporarily suspended. This, and other measures, have had and are still having a major impact on Erasmus+ as a mobility programme operating both within Europe and throughout the wider world.

During this crisis, the NA DAAD has been working successfully to ensure that mobility activities and projects can be continued in digital environments and can even be started in digital form from the winter semester onwards. As much as we hope that stays abroad will soon be possible once more, the safety and well-being of all participants in the programme is our top priority.

We are taking Germany's presidency of the Council of the EU, which began on July 1st 2020, as an opportunity to present the National Agency for EU Higher Education Cooperation and our work for the Erasmus+ programme in a series of English-language articles. These selected articles also appear in our regular German-language publications.

The border closures have not only had an impact on physical mobility in Europe, but have also triggered a general debate about European solidarity and reaffirmed what Brexit has already revealed: Europe must continue to work on itself and on creating a shared community of values. DAAD president, Prof. Mukherjee, pleads for European solidarity in his article and hence emphasises the importance of the common European Higher Education Area for creating stability and promoting identity. Initiated by the NA DAAD, key figures from the European higher education landscape came together in winter last year and discussed the special importance of universities as actors in society and their responsibility for fundamental and social values. The outcomes of this dialogue are set out in the Eberbach Statement, which we present in this issue.

In a joint article with the directors of all four National Agencies, we portray the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme in Germany. What specific challenges are the individual NAs facing due to coronavirus? What are the directors' wishes for the new Erasmus+ programme? We also present the National Agencies of the countries which held the Council presidency before Germany: Finland and Croatia. The NAs provide insights into their work and report on the importance of Erasmus+ for internationalising their higher education systems.

Three articles focusing on the central theme of gender equality round off this publication. Sabine Verheyen, chair of the CULT Committee at the European Parliament, talks about her ideas for the education sector that could contribute to greater gender equality in the future. She also explains how Erasmus+ is already helping to create a better understanding of equality. In an interview with DAAD vice president, Dr Muriel Helbig, we talk further about gender imbalances in academic and management positions at German higher education institutions. Margarete Hofmann, a director at the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), gives her personal perspective on gender equality in Europe in a guest commentary.

Holding the presidency of the Council of the EU, Germany will have the important task of coordinating efforts to tackle the coronavirus crisis in Europe over the coming months. However, crises can also offer opportunities – opportunities for development, change and progress. We are looking optimistically towards the future and an Erasmus+ programme that continues to promote exchange and thus an appreciation of diversity – a programme that continues to open up opportunities to experience Europe, both digitally and physically!



Photo: Susanne Reich/DAAD

Enjoy your reading!

Dr Stephan Geifes

Director Erasmus+ National Agency "Higher Education"
German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

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Photo: DAAD/Jonas Ratemann



Photo: TH Lübeck/Press

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Marina Steinmann

After the corona crisis: Europe

The letter from the President was published in the early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic (Spring 2020).

We live in the south of Aachen, a few minutes from the Belgian border. Our slip road joining the motorway, marked "Aachen-Süd" (Aachen South), is on the Belgian side, and so is the nearest supermarket, Delhaize. On the weekends, when we go for a walk or a hike, we often cross into Belgium or also the Netherlands without even noticing it.

These European habits, which we used to take for granted, were very much part of our lives. But now they've suddenly disappeared. It is no longer possible to travel into Belgium, and the Dutch border police have also been asked to stop Germans from crossing the border. A look at the media in the current crisis shows us that each nation-state in Europe has its own COVID-19 containment strategy. There is also an increase in countries defining their own exit strategies as well as stages in the gradual relaxation of lockdown measures. It's a paradox: we are dealing with a pandemic – an infection that knows no borders – and yet we've been acting for weeks as though we were sealed-off nation-states rather than a European Union. Well, we can of course explain this pragmatically by saying that when it comes to combating an epidemic, each nation-state – and in Germany also each federal state and district – is simply better qualified to make decisions than the EU. But the invisibility of the EU in combating this crisis – which is keeping us in suspense like no other event since World War II – forms part of a wider picture that includes the UK's exit from the EU, growing hostility towards Europe from the extreme right, a wave of authoritarian anti-liberalism in several EU countries, and the ongoing dispute about the EU's approach to debts caused by events such as the banking crisis, the euro crisis and the corona crisis. We might conclude these days that Europe no longer plays much of a role, that it is no longer based on solidarity and has stopped being a community of shared values. We are running the risk of forfeiting one of the greatest achievements since World War II: the ingenious idea of an ever closer Europe.

This increasing closeness within Europe has also greatly benefited academic life in Germany; for our universities and research institutes and our academics and students. One must only look, for example, at the large number of outstanding research projects that have been and are still being sponsored by ERC grants, the ERASMUS exchange programme which has been so successful for over 30 years, and the recently established European University alliances. So let's not deceive ourselves: if Germany did not form an integral part of Europe, it wouldn't have been nearly as attractive, effective or competitive as a location for science and research as it was until the corona crisis – and will hopefully continue to be. That's why it's important that we help strengthen the European project – both during and after the corona crisis.

When I gave my speech at the DAAD's General Assembly in June 2019, introducing myself as a candidate for president, I outlined three key focal areas for my tenure, one of which was Europe. Although, at the time, COVID-19 was not yet on the horizon, it was already abundantly clear that in an increasingly fragmented Europe the single European Higher Education Area is a force for closer cooperation, greater stability and clearer identity – a force which we must leverage. This particularly concerns the DAAD as an academic organisation and as the National Agency for EU Higher Education Cooperation. COVID-19 does not change the fact that Germany's successful future as a location for science and research can only be secured with the help of powerful European networks and intensive exchange within Europe. Europe will therefore need to play a prominent role in our foreign academic policy strategy for the 2020s.

The German EU Council Presidency in the second half of 2020 offers us a good place to start.

*Professor Dr Joybrato Mukherjee, President
German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)*



Eberbach Statement

Convened by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), in September 2019 European scholars and academic policy makers gathered at Kloster Eberbach to consider "European Values in Higher Education".

The participants reaffirm:

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) must be underpinned by the core values on which higher education and research in Europe as well as in other parts of the world have been built and continue to develop. Academic freedom and institutional autonomy, ethics and transparency in research, teaching and learning, the participation of staff and students in the life and governance of higher education institutions are essential conditions for universities to fulfil their missions of advancing knowledge and understanding. They are essential for universities to help ensure that Europe be not only a community of interest but also a community of values ("Wertegemeinschaft").

Universities are an integral part of our societies. They further the core of values rooted in the Enlightenment. Our identities as members of the academic community, Europeans, and citizens of the world are based on this tradition as well as the core values agreed on in Europe: democracy, human rights, rule of law, and absence of discrimination on any ground such as the applicant's gender, race, colour, disability, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status¹, as agreed upon in the fundamental documents of the Council of Europe which have been agreed on by all countries of the EHEA.

The value basis of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has been agreed by its member States through the declarations and communiqués adopted by its successive ministerial conferences.² They are nevertheless under more serious threat today than at any time during the two decades since the Bologna Process was launched and in the decade since the European Higher Education Area was formally established. It is therefore timely and necessary to sound the alarm to reaffirm our core values. We therefore call on Ministers to reaffirm the values of the EHEA and to ensure that these values not be reserved for declarations but are put into daily practice in their education systems and in the higher education institutions that make up the systems.

Universities have a responsibility for fundamental as well as for societal values

In the context of the EHEA, an important distinction is made between "fundamental values", such as academic freedom, institutional autonomy, student and staff participation, and "societal values", such as democracy, rule of law, and human rights. The universities bear responsibility for both.

Academic freedom and institutional autonomy are key values for the universities as they concern the universities directly. Neither the freedom of the individual member of the academic community to pursue knowledge and understanding nor the autonomy of institutions to set their own priorities and govern themselves can exist in isolation. In some cases, difficult decisions need to be made. When academics stand for views that contradict the values on which we base our societies, academic freedom becomes a difficult issue. Therefore, the question of which views to spread have recently led to conflicts on who has the right to teach or to speak at a university.

As higher education institutions depend on funding from many external sources, they are susceptible to pressures from many parties. Universities act in a financial and political context where it sometimes becomes difficult to contradict those who finance research, especially from private sources, or ministries on whom higher education institutions depend. Especially when governments curtail the autonomy of higher education institutions and act in ways harmful to the values of society or the universities, the options of the institutions' leadership or individual professors are limited and often uncomfortable. Not only policies, but concrete policy projects become a difficult issue, for example if nationalism and populism replace the search for truth as the guiding principle for universities. Truth is not a question of majority. However, universities can and should fight, even if they will not always prevail against authoritarian government policies. Universities as well as individual academics need the integrity to foster a culture of courage to not deny these values out of fear of losing reputation or financial support.

Universities, then, have an obvious interest in the fundamental values. They have no less of a responsibility for our societal values and should include them into their mission.

Education needs to be more than a process for acquiring practical competences, skills and knowledge but rather has the responsibility to shape the personality and character of young people and help them becoming mature and responsible citizens. That includes transmitting values in an open and critical way. This has to take into account that everybody is exposed to multiple influences, especially through social media and that people entering the university have already acquired certain values. Institutions should be aware of the virtual circle: they educate teachers which later will teach pupils. Teachers should not teach (only) yesterday's values to today's children who are expected to shape the world of tomorrow but take into account that values can evolve. A critical approach to sources is a fundamental competence in research. Universities must make it a fundamental competence also of our societies.

Institutions should teach about values, rather than teach specific values

The role of the universities is among others to deal and to teach dealing with different views; they cannot be arenas for streamlining thought.

Values should be transmitted through teaching and developed through academic dispute. Learning outcomes are not only about what we know, understand, and are able to do: they are also about what we are willing to do – and abstain from doing. The ability and will to engage in ethical reflection and critical analysis must be part and parcel of every higher education study programme. Students should be explicitly exposed to values; thus, there should be a space for critical debate and examination of values. This includes critical reflection with the students about which kind of society we want to live in. The way in which this space is organised reflects a certain set of values.

The transmission of societal values requires a holistic approach

The structure and the management of university has to reflect its values and include the students. Leaders themselves need to act as role models and practice what they preach. But most of all, transmitting values requires a holistic approach to education and has to be a result of participatory engagement;

they have to be trained through both theory and practice.

As many studies confirm, studying abroad is a very potent means to further critical thinking, develop a more mature personality, reflect upon one's own values and at the same time support many of the values agreed upon (openness, tolerance, intercultural understanding etc.). There are different ways of creating a space for critical transmission of values. Doing so successfully and effectively requires a holistic approach. Mobility is a significant experience to compare values and views in different countries. To reflect with others on their experiences can be helpful in the process of critical thinking about civic values and help students to act in the larger society.

An additional task is imparting academic and research integrity, especially in the light of recent fraud and plagiarism cases on the one hand, and an increasing scepticism about the value of science on the other.

If the responsibility towards society is to become a central part of the university mission, action also should be taken at political level

Higher education institutions need to take responsibility for transmitting and respecting values.

If values are to be taken seriously, the way in which they are addressed and furthered need to be included in the assessment and evaluation systems, e.g. by offering incentives for academics, study programmes, and institutions.

Universities should base their activities on fundamental and societal values and develop and maintain an appropriate internal culture and procedures to do so.

We call on the Ministers to cater for an environment, in the European Higher Education Area and within each education system, to create the conditions and the attitudes required to make this important mission of higher education possible.

Sjur Bergan, Head of Education Department,
Directorate General Democracy, Council of Europe

Professor Alastair Buchan, Director of Oxford in
Berlin, United Kingdom

Professor Dr Mircea Dumitru, Rector University
of Bucharest, Romania

Adam Gajek, Former President European
Students' Union (ESU)

Ulrich Grothus, President Academic Cooperation
Association (ACA)

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Information Security, President of University
Foundation INUIT-TOR Vergata, University of
Rome Tor Vergata, Italy

Professor Chryssi Vitsilaki, Rector University of
the Aegean, Greece

1. Cf. Article III.1. of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

2. Cf. <http://www.ehea.info/page-ministerial-declarations-and-communicues>.

Value orientation: an essential prerequisite or a new mission for higher education institutions?

Political and social developments in several European countries, which call into question the basic consensus of the EU, have provoked reactions at various levels. These include the funding objectives of the new Erasmus+ generation. Terms such as value orientation and active citizenship are now being increasingly used in relation to the role and mission of higher education.

A commitment to values

Fundamental values have always formed part of the discussion around the European Higher Education Area, but their importance has increased over recent years. Starting with the fundamental principles that were expressed in the Bologna Magna Charta of Universities in 1998, every European Ministerial Conference since 1999 has taken into account the social obligations of higher education institutions. Thus, in the final communiqué of the EHEA Ministerial Conference held in Paris in 2018, ministers committed themselves to “developing policies that encourage and support higher education institutions to fulfil their social responsibility and contribute to a more cohesive and inclusive society through enhancing inter-cultural understanding, civic engagement and ethical awareness”.¹

The Bologna Follow-Up Group, which is responsible for preparing the Ministerial Conferences, named the fundamental values and attached priority to academic freedom and institutional autonomy. A subject area has thus already been defined and the consensus reached has been well documented. Basic ethical principles (e.g. democracy, freedom of expression and human rights), which higher education institutions in Europe are expected to observe, are also frequently addressed in the communiqués; however, there is no comparable documentation that offers the precise wording for their definition.

A question that must also be asked is where the values of academic freedom and institutional autonomy stand in relation to other values. Are they on an equal footing or are they rather a prerequisite for conveying and defending those values?

Unanswered questions

Apart from the fact that other values equally deserve more precise definition, the overarching term itself merits consideration. Can fundamental values be equated with European values? If so, is the reference to geographical Europe or to the European Higher Education Area correct? Outside Europe, a greater emphasis on the social responsibility of higher education institutions and students can also be seen. How might values differ in other parts of the world? Can a consensus be reached on what constitutes – or should at least constitute – an indisputable component of these values in any form of university-level education and training? Even if the challenges differ greatly, recent developments in a number of countries suggest the need to explore activities for integrating core societal values in all higher educational offerings.

Higher education institutions are currently being encouraged by a wide range of stakeholders to focus on common European values and communicate these to their students. This is also true of the first-ever call for proposals for “European Universities”, which was launched by the European Commission at the end of October 2018 and met with a huge response. The corresponding programme line in Erasmus+ was inspired not least by Emmanuel Macron’s speech at the Sorbonne in September 2017. The message of his speech was not primarily about establishing a further funding opportunity, however, but was an impassioned plea for the stimulation or creation of a European identity.²

But, besides multilingualism and cultural diversity, what exactly are European values and a European identity? How can universities reconcile a general orientation towards values with academic freedom? Does this freedom not also include the right for each and every teacher and student to have an individual choice of values? And what impact could this value orientation have for global cooperation with partners in other countries and higher education systems which may not share (all) European values and may acknowledge other methods of teaching and learning at a higher education institution?

New challenges

In connection with the new Erasmus+ generation, the following objectives and tasks are outlined in an internal European Commission document:

The programme will support active citizenship and ethics in lifelong learning; it will foster the development of social and intercultural competences, critical thinking and media literacy. Priority will also be given to projects that offer opportunities for people's participation in democratic life, social and civic engagement through formal or non-formal learning activities. The focus will also be on raising awareness and understanding the European Union context, notably as regards the common EU values, the principles of unity and diversity, as well as their social, cultural and historical heritage.³

Behind these statements lie a wide range of challenges for higher education institutions. How can institutions ensure they appropriately reflect a European model in their structure and way of working? New forms of learning might be more appropriate for meeting the objectives than traditional learning methods. Or higher education institutions could decide to embed interdisciplinary modules for presenting and discussing different sets of values in all degree programmes. There may be other curricular requirements to otherwise guarantee that values are taught in all individual programmes. Will the various demands create additional burdens – quality assurance, for example – that will also have to be taken into account at various levels?

There are no simple answers to all the issues raised in this article; however, ideas have already been put forward in different contexts. For example by Professor Peter-André Alt, President of the German Rectors' Conference, who while referring to Macron's speech proposed the creation of a European educational canon that could include Europe's most important historical intellectuals and philosophers (such as Thomas Hobbes, Karl Marx, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant and Sigmund Freud). Ideas on numerous other aspects deserve closer consideration. In the months and years to come, it will be interesting to see how far higher education institutions acknowledge the teaching of values as one of their key tasks, what priorities will be set and whether expectations for educational institutions on the one hand, and their own self-perception on the other, will change.

Marina Steinmann,

*Expert for EU Higher Education Cooperation,
June 2019*

1. EHEA Ministerial Conference Paris 2018, Paris Communiqué, Paris, 25 May 2018, p. 1, available online at http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2018_Paris/77/1/EHEAParis2018_Communique_final_952771.pdf [27/05/2019].

2. Discours d'Emmanuel Macron pour une Europe souveraine, unie, démocratique, 26 September 2017, available online at <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2017/09/26/initiative-pour-l-europe-discours-d-emmanuel-macron-pour-une-europe-souveraine-unie-democratique> [27/05/2019].

3. Note for the attention of the members of the Erasmus+ Committee.

Change by exchange

- *Focus Germany: The German Erasmus+ National Agencies*
- *Agencija za mobilnost i programe Europske unije:
The Croatian National Agency*
- *Opetushallitus / Utbildningsstyrelsen:
The Finnish National Agency for Education*

Texts: Marcus Klein, PhD



Focus Germany: The German Erasmus+ National Agencies

Text: Marcus Klein (June 2020)

The Federal Republic of Germany was a founding member of the European Economic Community and is also one of the 11 (previously 12) member states which, in 1987, began to implement mobility activities for students as part of the newly launched ERASMUS programme (EuRoPean Community Action Scheme for the MoBility of UniverSity Students). These activities represented the first steps in what we now know as an era of European educational cooperation.¹

Responsibility for initial implementation of the programme was assigned to the National Agency, located at the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). As an association of German higher education institutions, the DAAD had the relevant expertise required to support and promote the international exchange of students and academics.

Federal education structures were a decisive factor here. Furthermore, with the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) and the Pädagogischer Austauschdienst (PAD) of the Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, two well-functioning institutions were in place which were able to take on new responsibilities as National Agencies without any problems.

As is well known, this tried-and-tested structure of four National Agencies which had evolved over the years did not change when all the EU programmes for general and vocational education, youth and sport were brought together under the single umbrella of Erasmus+ in 2014. The NA within the PAD is responsible for the school sector, the NA at the BIBB for general and vocational education and training, the NA JUGEND für Europa for youth and the NA DAAD for higher education.² Germany is

The following year saw the launch of “Jugend für Europa” (Youth for Europe), the first European programme of action for young people in a non-school setting. Also in 1988, the Federal Republic decided – like most of the other EEC countries – to establish a separate office to handle programme implementation in Germany: the “Deutsche Büro Jugend für Europa” (Youth for Europe German Office) at IJAB e.V. – International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany. Unlike the majority of the countries participating in the educational programmes, the German federal government also continued to adhere to this path when the European Union, as it became, subsequently launched initiatives for schools (Socrates), for adult education (Grundtvig) and vocational training (Leonardo da Vinci and predecessor programmes).

therefore included in the majority of the, at present, 34 programme countries in which Erasmus+ is implemented by more than one NA.

Diversity and unity

Within the framework of Erasmus+, the German National Agencies have substantial budgets of differing amounts at their disposal for their respective areas of education. For example, in 2018 the NA at the BIBB had a quarter of all funding (Key Actions 1 and 2) for general and vocational education and training, while the NA DAAD had nearly 50 percent for higher education.

Differences can also be noted regarding the role of individual funding lines for the activities of the National Agencies; this is partly determined by the programme³. In 2018, for example, a quarter of all



Photo: DAAD/Susanne Reich

“Erasmus+ is more than a purely academic programme. It is a European programme that lets young people experience Europe at formative stages of their lives. Experiencing this diversity and multilingualism for themselves should inspire them to continue building on the past achievements of the European unification process.”

Dr Stephan Geifes

National Agency for EU Higher Education Cooperation at the German Academic Exchange Service (NA DAAD)

A division of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)

Area

Higher Education

Fields of activity

- Informing and advising German higher education institutions on the centralised and decentralised actions of Erasmus+: mobility of individuals (Key Action 1); stays abroad for students and academic staff within and outside Europe (Key Action 2) and support for policy reform (Key Action 3)

accompanied by

- Guidance on central measures such as the “European Universities”
- Coordinating (with financial support from the BMBF) the Europe meets School project and local Erasmus+ initiatives
- Providing support and guidance to German higher education institutions on implementing the Bologna Process; supporting German involvement in the ASEM Education Process

Further details in German at eu.daad.de

German mobility projects (Key Action 1) were implemented by organisations operating in NA JUGEND für Europa’s sphere of responsibility. In the same year, for cooperation projects between schools, higher education institutions, youth organisations, public authorities and enterprises throughout Germany (Key Action 2), just over half of all organisations were schools supported by the NA PAD.⁴

In all of this it must be noted that, ultimately, the challenges are the same for the NAs. Under normal circumstances, they are required to attract their target groups to Erasmus+, and they do so successfully, as evidenced by the numbers of applications and participants which have been increasing in recent years across all educational areas. And in an exceptional situation, like that which has resulted from the coronavirus outbreak in spring this year, it is important to manage framework conditions quickly, so that funding recipients taking part in both in-

dividual mobility activities and also in cooperation projects are able to bring their European experience to an end that is as satisfactory as possible. The top priority is to keep all programme participants from harm, and thus the Erasmus+ programme overall.

And this is precisely what the National Agencies have managed to do, states Dr Stephan Geifes, director of the NA at the DAAD, on behalf of his colleagues. This was possible thanks to the combined efforts of the EU Commission, which demonstrated flexibility, and of dedicated employees working from home, sometimes under difficult conditions.

It is currently impossible to predict the indirect effects of the pandemic. While the continued existence of our predominantly public higher education institutions and schools is not in jeopardy, the situation in the field of vocational training and adult education is much more uncertain “due to the large pro-



Photo: Jugend für EUROPA/
Jörg Heupel

“Programme activities need to be much more project-like in nature. This would allow us to combine various forms of cooperation and interaction between young people and experts involved in projects, and enable them to adjust more easily to changing circumstances.”

Hans-Georg Wicke

National Agency for Erasmus+ Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps (NA JUGEND für Europa)

A division of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ)

Area

Youth

Fields of activity

- Providing information on the objectives, opportunities, regulations and priority areas of the Erasmus+ Youth in Action programme
- Promoting international youth exchanges, transnational initiatives for young people, training and qualification of experts working in non-formal youth education, strategic partnerships and structured dialogue between political decision-makers and young people

Further details at www.jugendfuereuropa.de/ueberjfe/taetigkeitsfelder

portion of non-public organisations”. Klaus Fahle, head of the NA at the BIBB, says there is a significant risk that “the economic impact of the coronavirus crisis will be too great for many organisations and they will not survive”. Similarly, Hans-Georg Wicke, head of the NA JUGEND für Europa, sees “huge existential issues facing project sponsors in the youth sector due to their already very limited financial and personnel resources”. This applies to Germany, he adds, and “even more so to organisations in other European countries where the youth sector is far less institutionalised”.

Lessons and consequences

With regard to the new Erasmus+ programme generation, the upheaval caused by the coronavirus outbreak has suddenly illustrated how important digitalisation is. While virtual mobility and digital

collaboration are unlikely to replace traditional forms of mobility and collaboration, all the NAs agree that they are set to become even more important in the future. Corresponding efforts are needed in this area; teaching and learning concepts must be carefully reconsidered and framework conditions adapted. It is true to say that this is a task that could pose more of a challenge to some educational areas and institutions than others. Not all of them are in the advantageous position of schools, which – as Dr Thomas Spielkamp, head of the NA for EU programmes in the school sector observes – are able to draw on many years of experience of activities such as eTwinning, for example, which “as a protected platform provides good virtual cooperation opportunities and tools”.

The events of recent weeks and months have also given new impetus to demands that had been repeatedly expressed by many parties in the past



Photo: NA PAD/private

"I think the schools that are addressing European cooperation are doing so very well, virtually and digitally. They are in a much better position than is often claimed. That being said, the new programme still needs to be made much simpler. We particularly want to encourage new schools to take part in the programme."

Dr Thomas Spielkamp

**National Agency for EU programmes in the school sector
(NA PAD – Pädagogischer Austauschdienst of the Secretariat of the
Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs)**

**A division of the Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers
of Education and Cultural Affairs**

Area

School education

Fields of activity

- Providing information, advice and support on the implementation of mobility projects for school staff (Key Action 1) and school partnerships and consortia (Key Action 2)
- National coordination office for the eTwinning European school network
- Initiating and supporting partnerships and projects; delivering conferences relating to the further development of the programme

Further details in German at www.kmkpad.org/programme.html

and with which Brussels was already very familiar: firstly, Erasmus+ needs to be designed more flexibly to ensure it is able to respond more quickly to critical situations. For example, Dr Stephan Geifes says that there will be the possibility of "starting mobility activities online as well in the near future." Secondly, it is necessary to make the programme simpler overall, which would mean that even more people could be reached. As a result, Erasmus+ would help these people experience the idea of Europe – which may sometimes seem too abstract and far-removed from the reality of their everyday lives – in a concrete and relevant way.



Photo: NA at BIBB

“Erasmus+ opens up new prospects and provides inspiration. In the vocational education sector, a great deal of impetus originates in Germany; in adult education, we sometimes look enviously towards Northern Europe, as holistic lifelong learning plays a very different role there.”

Klaus Fahle

National Agency for Europe at the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (NA at BIBB)

A division of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)

Area

General and vocational education and training

Fields of activity

- Providing information and advice on stays abroad and implementing stays abroad for learners and staff in the vocational education and training sector (Key Action 1); cooperative activities between organisations, companies, public authorities and initiatives (Strategic Partnerships, Key Action 2)
- Tasks within the remit of the National Europass Centre
- National coordinating body EPALE
- Promoting stays abroad in the field of vocational education and training worldwide
- Agency for the German–Israeli Programme for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (ISRAEL Programme)

Further details in German at www.na-bibb.de/ueber-uns

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1. Luxembourg did not participate originally, as it did not have its own higher education institution at that time. It followed in 1988.
 2. Short descriptions are available in German at <https://www.erasmusplus.de/wer-wir-sind> [23/05/2020].
 3. For example, adult learners cannot be supported in Key Action 1 in the current programme generation.
 4. See Erasmus+ 2018 in numbers, available online at <https://t1p.de/m1h2> [16/05/2020].

Agencija za mobilnost i programme Europske unije: The Croatian National Agency

Text: Marcus Klein (March 2020)

Some Background Information

Croatia is a relative latecomer to the European Union's various education, mobility, and cooperation programmes. It was only in 2009, while accession negotiations with the EU were already well under way, that Croatia became a programme country (the 32nd at the time, to be precise). It was then that the country joined the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) as well as the Youth in Action (YiA) Programme, both of which had started two years before and would run until the end of 2013.

Then, as now, the Agencija za mobilnost i programme Europske unije (AMEUP, Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes), a Zagreb-based public institution founded in 2007, was responsible for the administration of these EU programmes and their successors; it was and is, thus, the sole National Agency (NA). AMEUP also has always managed a plethora of multilateral and bilateral programmes. Currently, it implements and promotes Horizon 2020 and coordinates, inter alia, the European Solidarity Corps, eTwinning, Europass, Euroguidance, Eurodesk, Eurydice, ECVET (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training), CEEPUS (Central European Exchange Program for University Studies), bilateral agreements and, of course, Erasmus+ (since 2014).

Running so many different programmes poses something of an organisational challenge for AMEUP and its 90 employees, slightly more than half of whom work on Erasmus+, as Antonija Gladović, the director of the Croatian NA, concedes. At the same time, as she also points out, "having all these programmes in the same National Agency enriches the knowledge and practices of the NA staff, provides us with many opportunities to develop synergies and offers a single-entry point for our (potential) beneficiaries". The many positive aspects outweigh, in other words, possible issues.

Early and Later Developments

When Croatian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) began to participate in LLP 11 years ago, at first only outgoing mobilities were carried out. Very soon, however, they began to take full advantage of the programme's possibilities and also hosted incoming students, whose number has grown gradually over the years. In fact, incoming students now outnumber out-going ones. In the academic year 2017/18, for instance, there were 2,485 incoming students compared to 2,013 outgoing students from both programme (KA103) and partner countries (KA107).

Regarding Erasmus+, Croatian HEIs were initially somewhat cautious when it came to the various cooperation projects, especially in the role of applicants. Over time, though, as they gained more experience, Croatian institutions started to apply for Strategic Partnerships in different educational fields, not least higher education. Their participation in centralised cooperation projects also increased. Three Croatian HEIs are participating in the European Universities Initiative,¹ and many more are interested in applying in future calls.

Broad Impacts

Despite its relatively short history, the overall impact of Erasmus on Croatian HE is difficult to exaggerate. The programme is, as Antonija Gladović makes clear, "by far the most important source of funding for the internationalisation of higher education in Croatia", with other schemes such as CEEPUS and bilateral scholarships trailing behind. As such, Erasmus "has both boosted the numbers of mobile individuals like no other mobility scheme before – amongst students as well as teaching and non-teaching staff – and offered Croatian HEIs new ways of international cooperation under project rules which are and were relatively simple compared to other programmes and funds". Therefore, it should come as no surprise that all but two Croatian HEIs are Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) holders.

In addition, as already stated in the Croatian National Report on the Implementation and Impact of Erasmus+ Programme in May 2017, Erasmus has had an influence that has gone beyond mobility and international cooperation; it has also led to structural changes in the Croatian higher education system. "Because of their participation" in the programme, the mid-term evaluation concluded, Croatian HEIs have "established [...] procedures" relevant to their new partnerships "(especially credit recognition procedures), increased their visibility and attractiveness, and introduced courses in foreign languages".²

Challenges Ahead

As widely accepted, popular, and momentous as Erasmus undoubtedly is, Antonija Gladović is convinced that there are some aspects that could be improved. One shortcoming, she feels, is the lack of flexibility when it comes to the transfer of funds between Key Actions, particularly from KA103 to KA107, which has recently gained in popularity. Another aspect that warrants more attention are the different budget, application and contractual rules for different action types for higher education (e.g. Strategic Partnerships compared to Knowledge Alliances or Capacity Building in Higher Education), for they have proved to be confusing for applicants. Last but not least, "we feel that the programme should contribute more to cross-sectoral cooperation and cooperation with the business sector", she states.

While Gladović is hoping that the new programme generation will mitigate at least some of the aforementioned shortcomings (and also introduce short student mobilities at all levels of HE and higher grants for students), the Croatian NA is continuing its endeavours to increase the visibility of Erasmus amongst non-beneficiaries and those who, for whatever reasons, could

and should participate in the programme, but have not yet done so. Together with national authorities, AMEUP thereby hopes to raise mobility rates which, for a number of (structural) reasons – an unfavourable national tax policy, for instance – have not kept pace with the steep budget growth over recent years. Given that even more funds will presumably be available with the start of the new programme generation in 2021, the issue seems all the more urgent.

Looking to the Future

All the while, the National Agency will also keep working on strengthening its already strong relations with other NAs and will develop existing networks. One of these networks connects National Agencies from the Mediterranean area and focuses on challenges and possibilities in the current and the future Erasmus+ programme. Another one, set up recently, is more regional in nature. In this network, the Croatian NA is co-operating with colleagues from Slovenia as well as Serbia and North Macedonia – incidentally the two newest programme countries after Croatia – with the objective of identifying and tackling common issues.

The added value of these international networks – as indeed of all forms of cooperation with other National Agencies, be they workshops, training courses, seminars, partnership building activities or job shadowing activities – is beyond doubt as far as Antonija Gladović and her staff at AMEUP are concerned. In one way or another, she concludes, they "serve to enrich our knowledge about programme management and topics regarding education and training, challenge established procedures and help us to come up with new ideas, either through joint discussions or just by observing other National Agencies' practices."



Antonija Gladović is the Director of the Croatian National Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes (AMEUP).

Photo: Sanja Hitrec
Leljak

1. Two universities are full consortium partners, while another one is an associated partner.
2. National Report on the Implementation and Impact of Erasmus+ Programme – Croatia, ed. Branko Ančić and Mari-ja Brajdić Vuković. Zagreb: Ministry of Science and Education and Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, 2017, p. 8, online available at <https://t1p.de/fqay> [04.02.2020].

Opetushallitus | Utbildningsstyrelsen: The Finnish National Agency for Education

Text: Marcus Klein (November 2019)

Background

It was in 1992, the same year that Finland submitted its application for accession to the European Union (of which it eventually became a member three years later together with Austria and neighbouring Sweden), that the country joined the fledgling Erasmus programme alongside several other nations. Ever since then, for almost three decades now, the EU's most sparsely populated country has actively and enthusiastically participated in the initiative, and this irrespective of the different governmental organisations that have administered it over the years. Until the end of 2016, the Erasmus+ National Agency was CIMO (Centre for International Mobility), since the beginning of 2017 it has been the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) – Opetushallitus (in Finnish) or Utbildningsstyrelsen (in Swedish) –, an institution that came about as a result of the merger of CIMO with the Finnish National Board of Education. Headquartered in Helsinki, EDUFI is a national development agency working under the Ministry of Education and Culture, tasked with "develop[ing] education and training, early childhood education and lifelong learning, and promot[ing] internationalisation in Finland". As such, Erasmus+ is only one of its many responsibilities. At the same time, as in most Programme Countries, it is the sole National Agency (NA) and thus manages all aspects and areas of the programme, that is to say (higher) education alongside training, youth and sport. In full-time equivalent, around one tenth of its employees – currently 460 – work on Erasmus+.

Historically, it has maintained close relations with the NAs in the other Nordic countries – Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden – which are not only "comparable in size" to Finland but also, as Anne Siltala of Opetushallitus states, "face similar challenges".

Their NA directors and representatives of other educational sectors regularly share views and ideas and, once a year, attend informal meetings to discuss current topics. From time to time, the National Agencies also jointly organise events. The most recent Nordic workshop for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) took place in Stockholm in October 2019 and focused on Capacity Building in Higher Education and Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees.

Significance

When looking at the programme itself, it becomes clear that Erasmus is a success story in Finland. It has had an impact on Finnish higher education that was difficult if not impossible to foresee back in 1992, when just 18 countries took part in the mobility scheme and fewer than 50,000 higher education students benefitted from it. In its different forms the programme has been, as Siltala underlines, nothing less than "the driving force for the systematic internationalisation of Finnish HEIs, for example concerning the establishment of International Offices, the development of services for incoming students or the provision of courses in English". It has even served as the reference framework for the development of national funding instruments, such as the Finnish Russian Student and Teacher Mobility Programme FIRST.

Moreover, as the mid-term evaluation of the programme concluded, Erasmus+ is "the most significant source of funding directed at international cooperation". Almost nine out of ten higher education respondents interviewed for the report commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture agreed with the statement that "Erasmus+ is a significant part of my organisation's international cooperation", while three out of four endorsed the view that "International cooperation and mobility would have decreased significantly without the [...] programme".¹

Actions

When looking at the key actions and the different activities and projects that are funded under Erasmus+, mobility has undoubtedly had the biggest and most profound impact on the Finnish education system, as all the country's HEIs – its 13 universities and 23 universities of applied sciences (UAS) – take part. Over the years, more than 100,000 Finnish students have been mobile through the Erasmus programme, and Finnish HE staff has very actively participated in Erasmus mobility, too. As Anni Kallio of EDUFI underlines, this has "increased both the international and professional competences of staff and the employability of students".

At the same, and looking beyond mobility (and Key Action 1), Finnish higher education institutions have collaborated with European and international partners in different cooperation projects funded by Erasmus+. Particularly noteworthy are, for example, Capacity Building projects, as Finland is one of the most active countries in proportion to its size. The development of Strategic Partnerships also deserves a mention. Whereas in the first years of Erasmus+ only two such projects could be funded annually because of insufficient resources, with a selection rate of below 10 percent, as many as seven Strategic Partnerships were approved in 2019 alone thanks to an increase in budget.

Challenges

However, not all recent developments are as positive. Mobility rates are a case in point. While interest in Erasmus+ mobility has been traditionally very high and Finnish HEIs are actively implementing mobility schemes with their European partners, with Germany currently being, by the way, both the most popular destination for Finnish students (2018: 969 outgoings) and the country responsible for the highest number of students going to Finland (2018: 1,896 incomings), the number of outgoing Finnish students has decreased by 15 per cent since 2017².

The reasons for this unwelcome trend are various. Higher education students are under increasing pressure to graduate (more) quickly, for instance, and they are also facing economic constraints which may make mobilities less attractive. In addition, as EDUFI's Mari Pohjola explained at the DAAD Erasmus+ Annual Conference in Saarbrücken, some degrees have become so tightly organised that there is simply no time to go abroad. This seems to be the case, above all, at universities of applied sciences.

Future

This trend also poses something of a dilemma for the National Agency, given the fact that its budget, just like those of the other NAs, increased significantly in both 2018 and 2019 and will continue to do so in 2020. Some funds were not used, even though both student allowances and staff grants were raised to make mobilities more attractive. In view of this fact, the Finnish National Agency, as Anni Kallio confirms, "is prepared to increase the grants even more as the maximum levels allowed by the Erasmus+ Programme Guide have not yet been reached".

With a view to the new programme generation, the Finnish NA is in favour of increasing the budget for intra-European mobility, as more funds would make it possible to take responsibility for the environmental impact of the programme, for example by allowing more environment-friendly travel. It would also welcome an increase in funding for cooperation projects administered on the national level, i.e. the current Strategic Partnerships. Additionally, and looking beyond financial matters, EDUFI would like to see changes to existing mobility options, especially more short-term mobility options for HE students. Such a step would increase the inclusiveness of Erasmus and allow different groups of students (such as more mature students, students with children, working students) to take part.

Ideally, all of this should go hand in hand with measures that simplify the programme and its administration. This could be achieved, as the midterm evaluation already concluded, by making the application process and reporting less complex, not least for the mobility schemes. At the same time, "[t]o improve the administrative routines and to make it easier for students to plan and complete mobility periods, digital routines should be integrated into the programme in a larger scale"³. As EDUFI's Anni Kallio points out in this context, "the digitalisation process is a big challenge for the coming years and will require attention and resources from all the stakeholders".

Mikko Nupponen is the Director of the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI).



Photo: private

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1. Antti Eronen, Katri Haila, Katri Lathinen, und Tapio Kuure, Mid-Term Evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme 2014–2020 Finland (Helsinki: Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, 2017), p. 15, online available at <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-263-491-7> [15.10.2019].
 2. Cfr. Statistics on International Mobility Periods of Higher Education Students in Finland 2017, Facts Express, 8B/2018, p. 4, available online at https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/166911_factsexpress8b-2018.pdf [15.10.2019].
 3. Eronen et al., Mid-Term Evaluation, p. 9.

Gender equality

- *How role-specific can science be today?*

An interview with Dr Muriel Helbig

- *How do we achieve balance?*

An interview with Sabine Verheyen

- *Gender equality in Europe –
A personal review of the current situation*

Margarete Hofmann



How role-specific can science be today?

Questions about change processes in the university landscape for DAAD Vice President Dr Muriel Helbig

Text: Paul Assies, Lutz Cleeves and Marcus Klein

Photos: TH Lübeck/Press & TH Lübeck/Olaf Malzahn

She holds a doctorate in psychology, has both US-American and German citizenship and sees herself as a science manager. In 2014 she became the first female director of the Technische Hochschule Lübeck – University of Applied Sciences. In June 2019, she was also elected Vice President of the DAAD by a large majority. She took office in January 2020. A good time for an in-depth interview.

With *DAADeuroletter*, Muriel Helbig discussed, among other topics, the many challenges facing universities and higher education, such as internationalisation and gender equality. Ultimately, she also talks about Erasmus+.

General challenges

Dr Helbig, the university landscape is changing. In your estimation, is the process moving fast enough?

Muriel Helbig: Speed is not necessarily the crucial factor. What is important is that we are moving in the right direction. I think we are doing that, for example in terms of internationalisation, which is a highly professionalised field. Germany is a popular destination for scientists and students from all over the world, and we ourselves are highly mobile. We have built an enormous wealth of expertise and an unparalleled worldwide network. We provide a wide range of intelligent support opportunities, which we adapt regularly and continue to develop.

I do however believe we are moving too slowly when it comes to “diversity”. I explicitly include the issue of “educational equality” in that term. Every status group in the entire university landscape would benefit if we opened up more and allowed for more unconventional study and career paths. Also, I generally share the view that we are not keeping pace with digitalisation. Mainly because in some subsections of digitalisation, it makes sense not to

jump on every bandwagon, because not everything that is technically possible and feasible is actually fully developed and will truly move us forward.

Do you also see any developments that are clearly misguided?

Yes, for example in the undifferentiated condemnation of dropouts, which could ultimately cost universities a lot of money. The discourse tends to ignore the fact that dropping out can also be an opportunity and a good decision, for example when students switch to a more suitable subject or to a training programme.

How far should changes go?

By no means should we change our differentiated academic system with its different types of universities. I think it is a very good system. In fact, if it didn't already exist in this form, we would have to invent it.

Ideas

What should or could the university of the future look like?

I picture the university of the future as a vibrant, inspiring and, even with all the digitalisation, still very real place, where interested people come together regardless of their age, gender or (social) origins. A place where people teach, research and work creatively in diverse and flexible and certainly also unconventional and courageous ways.

I doubt whether the rigid structure of faculties, departments and even courses of study will persevere, because we need more and more interdisciplinary knowledge and skills. The nature of communication – not just within the university but also between universities and (worldwide) society – will hopefully have become even more flexible. It will, for instance, occur in the classroom and digitally, at the university and outside of it, overcome different

qualification levels and status groups and transcend subject boundaries. High transparency between the individual subject fields would be important.

Doesn't this also imply a different understanding of teaching and research? A social opening of universities?

The idea that all professors are equally outstanding researchers and teachers will become obsolete, and new ways will be found to interconnect research and teaching. My hope is that basic and application-oriented research are generally recognised as equally valuable.

Knowledge transfer, I think, will play an ever larger role. This is in tune with the fact that in addition to the "classic" university personnel we will see more and more people at universities who want to further their education, engage in idea exchange, take part in creative workshops and are interested in matters relating to application. Those people will be normal citizens, if you will, who are coming to the universities for social education and conversely to define topics.

The universities themselves, I am convinced, will make a major contribution to sustainability and cosmopolitanism and shape our societies even more distinctly than they do today. Why? Because they are the one place that appeals to the largest group of people – to the most diverse, curious and creative. This is why universities must be and remain attractive: both in terms of the programmes they offer and as purely physical places.



Equality

After this look into the future, let's now examine the present situation. More than half of all graduates of German universities are women, but among full-time professors the proportion is only about a quarter.¹ What do you think are the reasons for this imbalance? What should and could be done to increase the percentage of women?

The proportion of women declines from one qualification level to the next: while among doctorates it is still at 45 percent, it slips to 30 percent among lecturers qualified to teach at professorial level and then to 25 percent of professorships, with certain differences for example depending on the university profile or federal state. The fact that the career path toward professorship is more fragile for women than for men has been researched thoroughly, and the reasons are varied. For example, directing a career toward a university professorship comes with certain risks and has to happen in a rather limited time frame, which usually coincides with the period of family planning. This is more likely to deter women than men.

Incidentally, conditions for a professorship at a university of applied sciences (Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften; HAW) allow for more flexible career paths, which might be more accommodating to women. Prerequisite for an appointment is practical professional experience rather than qualification to teach at the professorial level, publications and third-party funding acquisition. That experience does not have to be gained at a particular age or in full-time employment. Important factors are outstanding performances and contacts in the respective sector, such as corporate business or social institutions. Also, there is still a lack of skilled personnel for HAW professorships. I would encourage everyone to take a closer look at this career path!

Irrespective of the university type, however, the proportion of women in professorships is less than one quarter. I believe the low percentage at HAWs is due to the subject range and to a lack of knowledge (among men and women, by the way) about HAW career paths. We still have a lot to do in this context, which is why the HAWs initiated the nationwide campaign "unglaublich-wichtig" (incredibly important) on the occasion of their 50-year anniversary in 2019.

How could the proportion of women be increased in general?

I am in favour of the quota. Because it means a shift from “we do not discriminate” toward “we actively support”. We could, for example, use mandatory gender-balanced appointment lists. That would result in universities recruiting female candidates much more actively, both domestically and abroad. I am certain: with a mandatory quota we would all suddenly start moving much more creatively and enthusiastically toward equality.

But men would also have to do their part.

Equality is not purely a women’s topic. Many men contribute to equality and have already achieved great things.

But they should be much more deeply involved in the topic and be given an opportunity to be heard, in interviews like this one, for example.

Incidentally, this goes beyond the university landscape. In the context of equality, better compatibility of family and career is often mentioned. A great idea, but it should not come under the label “advancement of women”. Men also have to (and want to!) reconcile their family and professional lives. In order for the career to be equally important for men and women, the work of raising a family and managing a household must be handled jointly and equally.

Management levels

According to a study published in February 2019 by the Centre for Higher Education Development (Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung; CHE)² women are also grossly under-represented in university management. Only one in four positions is occupied by women. Do you think this is for the same reasons?

About one in four professorships are held by women and about one in four positions of university directors as well. Regarding the transition from professorship to university director, there are no great differences between the genders. This could be partly due to the fact that women at this point in their lives have already decided on a career. They simply continue to pursue that career, and the step toward university management generally happens during a later stage of professional life when the most intensive period of starting a family is over.

One tends to believe that along with an increased proportion of women in professorships, the proportion of female presidents or vice chancellors would increase as well. This should be the goal we aspire to. But there is another promising and quick way to recruit highly qualified women for these positions: by aggressively opening them to science managers. The share of women in science management is disproportionately high, and they bring interesting prerequisites to the office. For some, this idea is probably still a kind of culture shock, but why should it be?



Internationally, according to Times Higher Education magazine, women are ahead primarily in the Anglo-American region – the USA and the United Kingdom – and in Sweden and Switzerland. What can we learn from them?

According to the article, Germany is in last place among these five countries when it comes to women in university management (HAWs and music and arts colleges are not included in the analysis). In the US the proportion is only slightly higher. In Sweden, things look completely different. Here, 60 percent of all management positions at universities are held by women.

Of those countries, then, it seems to me we can learn the most from Sweden – even beyond the university landscape and the women-in-management issue. Sweden has successfully addressed the topic of “equality in society” and created the corresponding overall conditions. For instance, the country provides incentives for equal family work and independent sustainable livelihoods for men and women. It is no coincidence that Sweden takes third place in the most current Global Gender Gap Report, which examines equality of women in various areas (economics, education, health, politics). Incidentally, Germany is 14th in that ranking, the United States comes in at 51st place.³

Since 2014 you have been the President of Lübeck Technical University, a school of applied sciences that has traditionally been considered a male stronghold. In 2018, for instance, only 47 percent of all beginning students at universities of applied sciences were female. In engineering and computer science that percentage was much lower still, while at universities it was as high as 54 percent.⁴ Are application-oriented courses of study still addressing primarily the needs of male students?

The proportion of female students at HAWs has been climbing continuously for many years.⁵ However, the fact that universities attract more women than men is owed to the range of subjects offered. Many of the subjects preferred by women, for example law, German studies, medicine, psychology, English studies or biology, are only offered at universities. The supposed favourite subjects of men – mechanical engineering, computer science, electrical and electronic engineering, industrial engineering – are offered at both types of universities.

In subjects that are available at both types of universities, the percentage of women is about the same, by the way. That goes for subjects like business administration and architecture, which are popular with both genders, as well as the natural sciences, engineering and mathematics. Application-orientation does not affect that distribution.

The position paper “Lübecker Manifest”⁶, which was released in mid-June 2019 by the presidents of universities of applied sciences, explicitly points to the rising mobility and successful internationalisation efforts at HAWs. Are there special challenges to be considered in this context?

HAWs often have difficulties finding partner universities abroad with a similar level of application orientation. Also, the student body of HAWs is more heterogeneous, for instance there are more students who are the first in their families to attend higher education. To them, a visit abroad may be an even greater challenge or less of a matter of course than to other groups of students, or in subjects with an inherent international orientation like linguistics. Generally, HAWs focus strongly on work placements abroad.

Hence, HAWs benefit from international programmes like Erasmus+, but they also need programmes tailored specifically to them, like HAW International, offered by the DAAD to enable “universities of applied sciences to cultivate contact with foreign institutions and anchor international

partnerships within their own institutional infrastructure” and build corresponding counselling, training and exchange opportunities.⁷ In Lübeck, incidentally, we are doing amazingly well at getting employees excited about internationalisation and increasing the number of visits abroad among that group. Mobility rates among students, however, are rising more slowly than we had hoped.

Erasmus+

Speaking of Erasmus. You yourself went to Palermo with Erasmus in the early 2000s. What do you think now when you look back at your time in Italy, and what did you take away from the experience?

I planned my Erasmus trip for the time when I had already earned all my credits. That way I could pick and choose the courses I wanted to take and ended up in a seminar on Islamic studies, for instance, which had interesting and direct implications for Sicily, where the culture has Arabic influences.

What did I take away from my visit? I think what has stayed with me about Erasmus is what everyone remembers: people, images, smells, tastes. Some (at least) basic language skills. And a warm feeling for a place that will always have a special personal meaning for me.

As DAAD Vice President, what is your view of Erasmus+ and the coming programme generation?

I think Erasmus+ is one of the greatest and most important achievements of the European Union. We absolutely have to keep on strengthening the classic formats, which allow all academic personnel, trainees and adults to experience an exchange. It is positive that the number of possible exchanges per person has been increased and that more partner countries outside the EU have been added.

We have to continue our efforts to make Erasmus+ attractive – also for people in fields that are traditionally less mobile and for people with children as well as for people with disabilities. And we have to keep intensively advertising the programme, emphasise its great benefits and present its underlying values and visions. I do worry about populist Europe-sceptics. But I draw hope from the rising mobility figures and the increased interest of Europeans, young and old, in exchange that they reflect.

Just one last question, Dr Helbig. In June 2019, the DAAD General Assembly elected you Vice President. Looking back, what is your view of this decision?

Above all, I see the election result as an acknowledgement of my many years of commitment to “internationalisation”, both at universities and at a university of applied sciences. Moreover, I have been active in the DAAD for many years. Hence, I was elected by representatives of all types of universities.

Dr Helbig, thank you very much for this interview.



Dr Muriel Kim Helbig studied psychology at the University of Potsdam from 1995 to 2002. She earned her doctorate in psychology in an international DFG graduate college in cooperation with the University of Haifa in Israel and Friedrich Schiller University Jena in 2006. After working as a department head

for international relations at Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, Dr Muriel Kim Helbig has been President of Technische Hochschule Lübeck – University of Applied Sciences since 2014. She has been a member of the DAAD board since 2016 and its Vice President since 1 January 2020.

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1. See J. Rudnicka, Frauenanteile an Hochschulen in Deutschland, Statista, 17/10/2018, available online at <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/249318/umfrage/frauenanteile-an-hochschulen-in-deutschland/> [24/10/2019].
 2. See Männer leiten drei Viertel der deutschen Hochschulen, Forschung & Lehre, 07/02/2019, available online at <https://www.forschung-und-lehre.de/maenner-leiten-drei-viertel-der-deutschen-universitaeten-1486/> [24/10/2019]
 3. The Global Gender Gap Report is published by the World Economic Forum. The 2018 report is available online at http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf [24/10/2019]. The positions are on page 10 of the report.
 4. See Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), Table 2.5.21 Studierende und Studienanfänger/-innen im 1. Hochschulsemester nach Fächergruppen, Hochschularten und Geschlecht, last updated 01/2019, available online at <https://www.datenportal.bmbf.de/portal/de/Tabelle-2.5.21.html> [24/10/2019]. See also The interim results of joint project “MINT-Strategien 4.0 – Strategien zur Gewinnung von Frauen für MINT-Studiengänge an Hochschulen für angewandte Wissenschaften” (Strategies for attracting women to STEM course programmes at universities of applied sciences), which is funded by the BMBF, available online at <https://t1p.de/eu82> [24/10/2019].
 5. See Andrea Löther, Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern an Fachhochschulen, in: Chancengleichheit in Wissenschaft und Forschung: 22. Fortschreibung des Datenmaterials (2016/2017) zu Frauen in Hochschulen und außerhochschulischen Forschungseinrichtungen (pp. 1–27), published by Joint Science Conference (Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz) Bonn: Joint Science Conference (GWK), 2018, available online at <https://t1p.de/43yd> [24/10/2019].
 6. The 6-page document can be accessed at <https://t1p.de/flum> [24/10/2019].
 7. Further information about the programme is available on the DAAD website at <https://t1p.de/hxau> [24/10/2019].

How do we achieve balance?

An interview with Sabine Verheyen, chairwoman of the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) of the European Parliament, about gender equality and the challenges of the European education system in the global context

Interview: Paul Assies, Lutz Cleeves and Marcus Klein (the interview was conducted in September 2019)

Photos: DAAD/Eric Lichtenscheidt

In 1979, when the Members of the European Parliament were directly elected for the first time in the 9 member states of the European Community, the percentage of women was a mere 16. In the most recent 2019 elections with still 28 members of the European Union, it had at least risen to 41. This puts it above the EU average for national parliaments, but it is still a long way from a fair proportion in light of actual gender percentages.

Designated EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen emphasised this disparity in her candidacy speech on 16 July 2019 to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. She joined in the demand for more gender equality posed continuously not only in politics but in all areas of social life. But how can this be achieved, for example in education, where there are noticeable imbalances? And what can be done about it at EU level and beyond it? Sabine Verheyen shared her views.

Mrs Verheyen, in late 2017 the proportion of women among academic and artistic staff at German universities was 39 percent, among professors it was about 24 percent. Is it enough to demand more funding, or do we perhaps – also – need new concepts to increase that percentage to match actual gender ratios?

Sabine Verheyen: Financial means are certainly one instrument for promoting a balanced gender ratio. However, I think it is above all a matter of overall conditions. Women's life plans are different in some ways from men's, so we need to focus on that as well. An essential issue is the question of child rearing and thus the compatibility of family and career, because the main burden in families still rests with the woman. We need even more childcare facilities, and at the same time social attitudes have to change. In France, it has always been a matter of course for a woman to take her child under three to a crèche, a nursery school, and I see the same in Belgium.

Moreover, it would be important to strengthen women's self-confidence, to support and encourage them to strive for certain positions, take leadership responsibility, to march in the front line; to do that we still need appropriate support programmes.

What might those look like, exactly?

I believe mentoring programmes for women at universities are one way of obtaining a certain amount of support and advancement as well as solidarity among women. I think we as women need a different network than what we had in the past. That goes for universities just as much as for large companies or the private sector in general. It also means that the old networks, the old structures have to be broken up somewhat. Ultimately, I am convinced, better compatibility of family and career would benefit men as well. To me this is truly a question of equality, not just a women's problem.

Let's turn to the topic of "Erasmus+", a programme that is now used by more women than men. Do you think that fact could positively impact gender equality in our society in the medium term?

In the long run, the programme will have a positive effect, yes. Participants see how things are done at other universities, can experience women as professors – in the classroom and in research – and see that they can be just as good and do just as much. This can, to put it casually, rub off to an extent and lead to more acceptance. It would be regrettable if women were at some point forced to move away to other countries in order to have a chance at a professorship.

What can or must the EU do in this regard?

The Erasmus+ programme is already doing quite a lot at this point, through mobility as well as university collaborations. But perhaps gender equality could be taken into account even more, and I don't mean approaching the issue just with the question of whether and to what extent women are disadvantaged in certain areas. Rather, we should also think about the situation of men. Because men or boys are often discriminated in school as well, when it comes to artistic subjects or languages, as studies on the matter have shown. This is why I think that apart from STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), we need to focus more on other subjects, such as socio-political subjects, but also – as I mentioned – the arts and creative subjects.

Hence, I think STEM should turn into STEAM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics should be augmented with the A for Arts. I think this would give us a chance to also see the creative elements, which women perhaps contribute even more strongly. The combination could result in a better balance between the different characteristics, talents and qualities. We need to consider this in programmes at the European level, but also very specifically in networks between universities. There should be a best practice exchange with regard to the advancement of women. This is one area where Germany has much to learn from others.

Let's leave Europe for just a moment and take a look at the international dimension of Erasmus, Africa in particular. The "Juncker Budget" for Africa provided further funds for mobilities with partner countries in 2019. Are the special budgets enough or would it take even more money to support, for example, the global goal of inclusive and equitable quality education named in the UN Agenda 2030 and to foster opportunities for life-long learning?

I am firmly convinced that education is the key to change in Africa as well. Democracy works well when people are educated enough to obtain information independently and freely. That means, when they can read, write and do maths and when they know how to handle sources of information. We have to increase children's opportunities to learn and not have to work, so we have to do a lot more in terms of development aid and invest in education.



At the same time, we need to realise that when it comes to the education level in Africa – with the historically explicable exception of for instance South Africa – there is still very much to be done. That goes for school-leaving qualifications as well as degrees.

UNESCO statistics clearly confirm it. Collaborations and mutual exchange are immensely important, not least of all with regard to universities, in order to improve the quality of degrees so they can stand up to international comparison. Development aid needs to focus on this aspect.

But would that be enough? Wouldn't it be just one step, though undoubtedly an important one?

Parallel to educational aid, Africa also needs economic development; the two must go hand in hand. It is by no means enough to educate people. They would also need corresponding job prospects. That means the development of a better education and training system always has to be accompanied by economic investments.

Another good idea would be the development of a dual system like the one we have in Germany. I know that German companies have done this in South Africa, particularly in the automotive and supply industry. They have what you might call in-company dual training programmes. Perhaps Europe could initiate something like that through the Erasmus Mundus programme and create opportunities for students from African nations, but also from Asia and Latin America, to come to Europe and vice versa for European students to gather experience in those countries.

But creating opportunities means more money.

Yes, absolutely, which is why we – the European Parliament – want to increase the budget. But the additional funds for the new 2021 programme generation must not be used to support only universities. Vocational training must also be supported more vigorously, as otherwise we will eventually see a break in society. We already see this happening even today. On the one side there is the elite with international experience, who has a completely different view of international collaboration and the real significance of internationality for their lives, and on the other hand we have the normal population, simple workers and craftsmen who rarely had a chance to gather experience abroad and thus naturally have a different perspective.

This brings us to the new programme generation of Erasmus+ and your position as chairwoman of the Committee for Culture and Education. What are your main goals regarding Erasmus as well as culture and education in general?

For one thing, I want to get the new Erasmus programme through the trilogues as quickly as possible, meaning I want to conclude negotiations between the Parliament, Commission and Council. This is extremely important because it enables us to continue in 2021 without any break. I am very anxious to really achieve the tripling of the budget and get the finance ministers of the member states to understand that every cent we invest wisely in education is a great added value and not a loss.

Apart from the Erasmus programme, the topic of “European cultural heritage” is important to me. It should be supported not merely with a one-time event like the European Year of Cultural Heritage. I would much rather like to create permanent awareness of our cultural roots and for the cultural diversity and see the preservation as well as development of our cultural heritage more firmly integrated.

Finally, I want to take the European Education Area to the next level. How can we make degrees not uniform but more comparable?

How can we make it possible for a person to move their lives to a different country without experiencing massive upheaval, so that what they have learned in one country is recognised in other European countries and educational systems? Those are the central issues I see in this context.

Are you expecting strong resistance?

There will certainly be some very tough nuts to crack. Since education policy is a purely national matter, the responsible ministers of education are not open to dialogue. It's especially bad in Germany, particularly when it comes to schools. But I have no intention of curtailing anyone's authority. They should do what they feel is right for their system. Diversity should be accepted and cultural differences in learning be preserved.

But I do think that certain core points need to be defined for every age in order to achieve comparable results. The Commission already started developing concepts during the last legislative terms, such as the European Qualifications Framework, which allows us to compare national qualifications across Europe. The momentum of the educational conference in Copenhagen, where agreement was reached on intensified cooperation in Europe in the area of “vocational training”, should be kept up.

In closing, let's return to the topic of gender equality. On a scale of 1 to 10, what do you feel should be the priority given to quickly achieving gender equality in the European educational system?

The topic has very high priority because education is simply important for the development of girls. We have a great deal more work to do to significantly improve access to education. That applies to Europe as a whole but especially to rural regions and there in particular to Eastern European member states, as shown by reports compiled by the Committee on Culture and Education during the last legislative term.

Whenever we discuss gender equality, we need to be conscious of the fact that it is a mission for the whole of society, not just a matter of the educational system. This takes time: changes don't happen overnight just by snapping our fingers. And it also takes strong initiatives. The way I see it, a lot more could be done in this regard too.





Which brings us back to the budget.

Yes, it comes back down to money... It is clear to me that education really should be the utmost priority because it leads to many other things. Unfortunately, that is not the reality.

Mrs Verheyen, thank you very much for this interview.

Sabine Verheyen has been a member of the CDU since 1990. She was a member of the Aachen City Council from 1994 to 2009 and was also mayor of her home town from 1999 to 2009.

Since 2009, Sabine Verheyen has been a member of the European Parliament and since the beginning of the current legislative term (2019) has been chairwoman of the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT).

Gender equality in Europe – A personal review of the current situation

Text: Margarete Hofmann¹ (27 October 2019)

Photos: EU/Lukasz Kobus

The dictionary definition of a guest is “someone who is staying temporarily in an environment other than their own, in particular with a group of persons of which they are not a permanent member, for specific purposes”. This definition fittingly describes our intention of including guest commentaries in the DAADeuroletter to reveal points of view and gain impulses that are not shaped by the daily work with and for Erasmus+. The selection criterion is relevance: our united Europe; the international exchange of knowledge, concepts and visions; the challenges that teachers and students alike will be facing – these are the topics on which we will invite authors to share their thoughts with us.

In this edition we hear from Margarete Hofmann, who has been working with the European Commission in Brussels since 1999. In July 2012, she was appointed Director Policy of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).

For many years and with varying intensity, the European Union (EU) has been the driving force in making gender equality a reality in Europe. Equal opportunities and equality of men and women is an indispensable element of our free, democratic and united society. As a specific feature of European law, it is included in Article 23 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and in Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty on European Union.

What have we achieved?

Accomplishments in terms of realising gender equality in Europe are impressive and have led to tangible improvements of women’s position in society over the past decades. The EU legal framework has been continuously developed. Particularly the European Commission and the European Parliament, to a lesser extent the Member States represented in the

Council of Ministers, have given impetus in this area and shown progressive attitudes. Also, let us not forget the Court of Justice of the European Union, which has issued several landmark decisions for the elimination of discriminating laws.

Equality policies created by the EU include laws against the discrimination of women in the workplace, equal pay for women and men, measures to promote compatibility of family and career, parental and maternity leave, and measures against gender-specific violence. A recent, though hard-fought success, is the Directive on work-life balance, which entered into force on 1 August 2019. Although the Directive does not reach as far as we had hoped, it does provide incentives for a more just division of care responsibilities between men and women and thus also a higher employment rate for women (67 percent in 2018, compared to 79 percent for men – falling short of the Europe 2020 target of 75 percent).

The fundamental demand for equal and fair participation of women in all aspects of life has in recent years mainly focused on the male-dominated decision-making positions in politics and business, as those who hold the reins of power do not share them voluntarily. In this respect, the pressure and campaigns of many allied women’s organisations such as the German Women Lawyers Association (Deutscher Juristinnenbund; djb), the European Women Lawyers Association (EWLA) or FidAR (Frauen in die Aufsichtsräte; “Women on Boards”) are important. They have contributed to the introduction of quotas in the private and public sector of at least some EU Member States, which led to a noticeable increase of women in leadership positions. However, partly due to resistance of the German Federal Government, the “Women on Boards” Directive proposed by the Commission back in 2012 has not been passed. The proposed Directive would have resulted in an EU-wide obligation to consider more women for leadership positions.

The European Commission under President Juncker has done its homework internally: it has even slightly exceeded its self-imposed target committing that 40 percent of middle and senior managers in the Commission should be women by the end of the 2019 mandate.

The actual percentage was 41 (as of 16 October 2019). At the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) where I work, I was the first ever female Director, today there are two of us (out of four), and 47 percent of Heads of Unit are women.

Equal participation of women in politics as a fundamental prerequisite of democracy has also been given more attention at European level lately, even though the EU does not have legislative power as such in this regard. The matter has been intensely debated and so-called gender parity laws (or electoral quotas) have been introduced in several EU Member States such as France, Belgium and Spain. Some German federal states are considering introducing such a law – Brandenburg and Thuringia have already done so. 100 years after women earned the right to vote in Germany, this is a very welcome development.

It should be mentioned that the European Parliament elections in May 2019 not only had a significantly higher voter turnout, but, for the first time in the history of the European Parliament, 40.4 percent of Members are women (2014: 36.4 percent). That is a good result, though not yet equal, and certainly far ahead of the current Bundestag with 30.7 percent female Members.

Gender equality cannot be treated as a niche policy. Rather, it is an issue for society as a whole. It affects and benefits both men and women. The European Union is trying to integrate gender mainstreaming as a cross-sectional issue in all areas of

policy making, which is not an easy thing to do. With regard to economic policy, for instance, catchword “European semester”, we know the annually recurring recommendations of the European Commission to the Federal Government to introduce more tax policies promoting gender equality, in particular to discontinue income splitting for married couples and provide a sufficient number of childcare facilities.

The EU’s progressive policies in other areas are also contributing to gender equality. Freedom of movement within the EU, accreditation recognition of school and university diplomas and the promotion of study visits abroad benefit women in particular who, based on a good and solid education, want to lead self-determined and economically independent lives. Young women have realised this, which is reflected in the participation in Erasmus+ – in 2016/2017, 61 percent of participants were women and 39 percent were men.

What shortcomings remain?

Despite this positive development, there are still considerable shortcomings. The Gender Equality Index published on 15 October 2019 by the European Institute for Equality Issues (EIGE) shows that equality of the sexes in the EU is advancing at a snail’s pace. With 67.4 points, the EU is still a long way from complete equality (100 points). Indeed, the index has only improved by 5.4 points since 2005.

Moreover, the values and trends differ substantially between the Member States. Sweden tops the list, Greece is at the very bottom and Germany is just below average.

One interesting result has emerged in the area of “power”: It still has the lowest ranking (51.9 points) but has increased by 13 points since 2005. This shows that the various national quotas are having an impact.

The results in the area of “knowledge”, on the other hand, are sobering: the EU index is stagnating at 63.5 points and has only improved by 2.7 points since 2005. While an increasing number of men and women complete higher education courses, with women in fact overtaking men, substantial gender-specific discrepancies in the areas of study remain. This is certainly cause for concern (only 21 percent of students in the fields of “education”, “health”, “social issues” and “humanities” are men, in the STEM subjects only 33 percent of graduates are women).



The principle of equal pay for equal work was already laid out in the Treaty of Rome in 1957 – a principle that, despite all efforts, is still not a reality. The so-called “gender pay gap” remains at an average of 16 percent across the EU (Germany: 21.5 percent; 2018 figures) and results in an increased risk of poverty in old age for women (“gender pension gap”).

For the first time, the EIGE Index also examined the area of “violence against women”, though without any reliable data to fall back on. Despite increased public awareness of this brutal form of discrimination against women and various initiatives and campaigns (e.g. the #MeToo movement), regressive tendencies are being observed in some EU Member States. For instance, EU ratification of the important Istanbul Convention on violence against women is currently blocked as some, primarily Eastern European, Member States perceive it as a threat to their traditional concept of the family. The European Commission is doing its utmost to correct misconceptions and appeal in favour of ratification.

It is typically difficult to achieve ambitious EU legislation to improve the situation of women because of the different circumstances and traditions in the Member States.

They can often inhibit progress. The fact that the Directive on work-life balance was passed should not detract from the fact that there is no progress in other areas (as regarding the above-mentioned Istanbul Convention and the “Women on Boards” Directive).

Outlook: what is to be done?

The role of civil society

Gender equality is a cornerstone of our European legal and value system. It affects society as a whole, all sectors and stakeholders, including civil society. The gender issue has a structural dimension; changing (power) structures is a difficult thing to do. There is much to be done to achieve lasting results.

Hence it is very gratifying that the new Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who was already a courageous advocate for women’s rights during her time as a federal Minister, has declared the “Union of Equality” one of the top priorities of the Commission in her political guidelines. Gender equality is to be significantly advanced by means of a comprehensive European equality strategy. The proposed list of ambitious measures includes the introduction of wage transparency measures intend-

ed to lessen the “gender pay gap”, the unblocking of the “Women on Boards” Directive and the eradication of discrimination and violence toward women, including online. In her role as Commissioner, Helena Dalli, committed feminist and former Minister for European Affairs and Equality in Malta, will be responsible solely for the “Equality” policy area, which underscores the significance of that portfolio.

Everything now depends on whether this ambitious programme is actually implemented and not defeated by protracted discussions. This will take perseverance and constructive interaction of stakeholders at all levels. Ursula von der Leyen and Helena Dalli can depend on the support of a civil society committed to women’s rights.

I have been a member of the German Women Lawyers Association (www.djb.de) and the European Women Lawyers Association (www.ewla.org) for many years (at EWLA currently on the board as Vice President). Both associations support national and European equality policy and legislation with constructive and critical expertise and innovative initiatives, such as the projects “Aktionärinnen fordern Gleichberechtigung” (Women shareholders demand equality) and “European Women Shareholders Demand Gender Equality”. These projects are funded by the EU and aim to fuel the debate on women in management positions. They have been instrumental in the introduction of quotas. The project “European Women Shareholders Demand Gender Equality” was finalised in 2016 with 15 concrete recommendations, one of which concerned the education sector (gender-sensitive education from pre-school to university; dismantling gender-specific clichés and behavioural roles).



My voluntary commitment to the djb and EWLA is not just for a good cause, it is also very rewarding to me personally. I have learned a great deal and various tasks have helped me to grow (e.g. effectively presenting our cause “Women in management positions” at annual general meetings of large companies in front of several thousand par-

ticipants). Women support each other in the framework of these networks, using various instruments of career development such as mentoring, coaching and networking. For instance, concretely I support young female lawyers by helping them find legal clerkships at European Institutions. If you would like to learn more: new members are always welcome!

Margarete Hofmann began her legal career as a public prosecutor, prior to becoming Head of Department at the German Federal Ministry of Justice. She was appointed Director Policy at the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) in July 2012; since June 2020 she is Director Operations & Investigations

(Expenditure). As a member of the German Women Lawyers Association (djb; Vice President from 2011 to 2015) and of the European Women Lawyers Association (EWLA; Vice President from 2015 to 2019) Margarete Hofmann is dedicated to equal treatment of women and men in society.

1. This article reflects the personal opinion of the author.



