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Careers.org**

Internationalisation in Career Guidance



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Authors: Katerina Papakota, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Celine Guerin, Erasmus Student Network AISBL

Contributors: partners of Erasmus Careers Project: UAM, TiU, LLLP, AUTH, and ELM

Design: Patrycja Skalska

Photos & Illustrations: Canva, Erasmus Student Network AISBL

Contact: <https://project.erasmuscareers.org>

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- Erasmus Student Network
- Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
- Universidad Atonoma de Madrid
- Tilburg University
- Lifelong Learning Platform
- Expertise in Labour Mobility



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Table of contents

INTRODUCTION	4
THE CONSORTIUM PARTNERS	6
1. BEFORE MOBILITY	9
a. Should I stay or should I go? Why international experience is important (skills gained outlook and related to the global job market)	9
b. Going abroad for studies or embarking on an international internship?	12
c. Where should I go? Factors to consider related to one's career	17
d. Submitting Application: Practical tips on CV preparation for studies or internship, Job search, LinkedIn, Interviews	21
2. BEFORE ARRIVAL	31
a. Practicalities	31
b. Linguistically	32
c. Psychologically – Cultural adaptation	32
3. DURING MOBILITY	34
a. Networking	34
b. Meet the locals	34
c. Maximise one's mobility experience by participating in group projects & student groups)	34
d. Volunteer and Part-time job	35
e. Mentorship	35
4. PRE-DEPARTURE	37
a. Reference letters	37
5. AFTER MOBILITY	38
a. Skills identification	38
b. LinkedIn	39
c. Alumni – Keeping up with the network (professors, supervisors and colleagues)	40
REFERENCES	42

Introduction

Measuring the impact of students' international experiences on their career development remains a complex task, often compounded by limited support from universities in evaluating acquired competencies. The [Erasmus Careers](#) project addresses this challenge by striving to ensure that the skills gained during mobility programs are acknowledged both by students and prospective employers, thereby enhancing the career prospects of Erasmus+ participants.

Six partner organisations from Belgium, Spain, Greece, and the Netherlands decided to cooperate to achieve this goal by leveraging their experience as student and employer representatives, career services counsellors, and socio-economic researchers. The consortium comprises Erasmus Student Network (ESN), Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM), Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), Tilburg University (TiU), Expertise in Labour Mobility (ELM), and The Lifelong Learning Platform (LLLPL).

As a recognition of the pivotal role of equipped university staff in supporting students' career development, this "Guidebook for Internationalisation in Career Guidance" has been created. This guidebook's content is grounded in a thorough review of scholarly articles, insights gleaned from student focus groups detailing best practices from EU Universities, and data obtained from institutional and career counsellors' surveys conducted in different work packages of Erasmus Projects. These combined sources contribute to a robust and practical guide for enhancing internationalisation in career guidance within university settings.

The guidebook is divided into offering practical tips and advice for career counsellors supporting internationalisation through each of the five different stages of mobility.

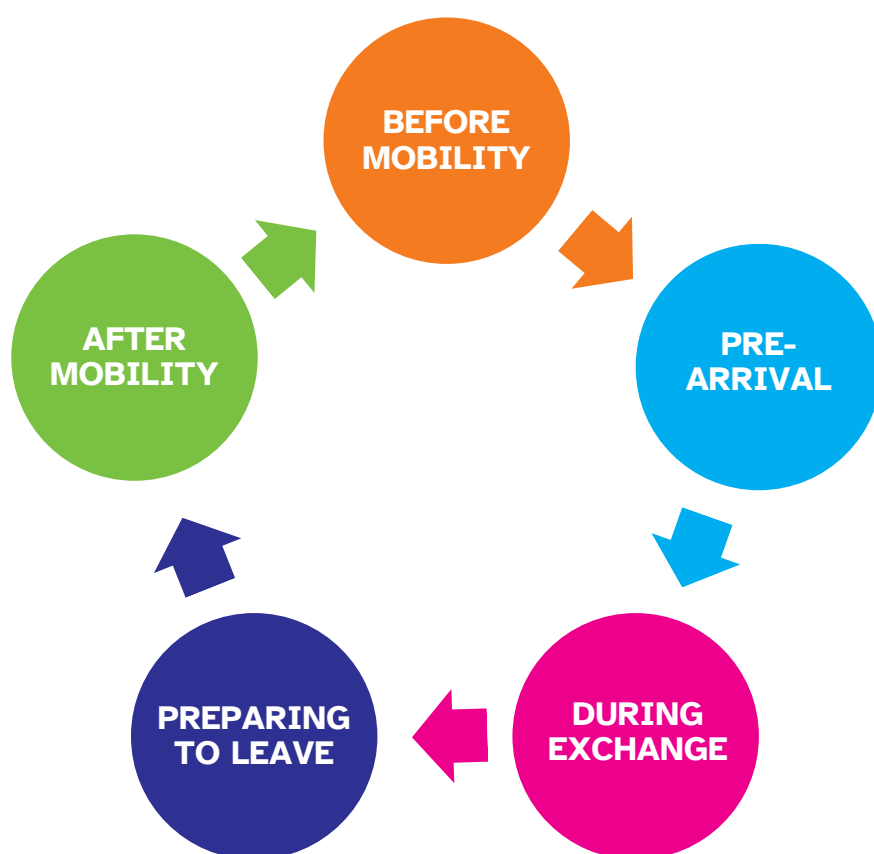


Figure 1: **Mobility stages**

The consortium partners

Erasmus Students Network (ESN), Europe's largest student organisation dedicated to mobility and higher education internationalisation, operates across numerous countries and institutions. With a focus on supporting international students, ESN facilitates mobility, promotes social cohesion, and enhances intercultural awareness and active citizenship. Through various initiatives such as training and seminars, ESN empowers students to engage in education policy and contributes to a more flexible learning environment. At the international level, ESN conducts research projects on mobility and higher education issues. With a professional secretariat and a team of experienced staff and volunteers, ESN's headquarters in Brussels is well-equipped to manage European projects effectively. ESN's involvement in the project is driven by its commitment to exploring employment opportunities and competencies gained through mobility experiences. Building on past initiatives, ESN will coordinate the project, lead the learning path, and contribute to policy discussions alongside LLLP.

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM), a renowned public university founded in 1968, boasts exceptional teaching and research standards, earning it recognition as one of Spain's top universities. With faculties spanning various disciplines, including Science, Economics, Law, Medicine, and Engineering, UAM offers a diverse range of programmes to its approximately 30,000 students. Supported by 3,200 professors and researchers, and nearly 1,100 administrative staff, UAM has excelled in research, earning the prestigious "Campus of International Excellence" recognition in 2009. Leveraging its extensive experience in managing international mobility and educational programmes, including those under the Lifelong Learning Programme and the VII Framework Programme for Research, UAM actively participates as a coordinator and partner in

Erasmus+ projects across various key actions. Building on its past successes, UAM's involvement in this project stems from its expertise and leadership in similar initiatives, particularly as the coordinator of the Erasmus Skills project.

The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) is Greece's largest university, with 10 faculties, 41 schools, and over 88,000 students. The university offers a wide range of services and facilities, including University clinics, a Summer Camp, a University Farm, and the Tellogleion Foundation of Art. Administrative services such as the Department of Studies, the Department of European Educational Programs, and the Career Services Office play a crucial role in supporting students and academic staff. The Career Services Office (CSO), established in 1997, aids students and graduates in their transition to the workforce by providing job search assistance, further education information, and career counselling. The Career Services office of AUTH was a partner in the previous Erasmus Skills project, along with UAM, ESN and Expertise in Labour Mobility. With a focus on career guidance, AUTH's involvement in this project brings invaluable expertise to Erasmus Careers, where they will concentrate on career guidance for students.

The Lifelong Learning Platform (LLL), established in 2005, comprises 44 European networks in education, training, and youth, representing millions of stakeholders across Europe. Recognised by the European Commission in 2009 as a "unique representation" of lifelong learning, LLLP has received operational support from the EU since 2010. It advocates for equity, social cohesion, and active citizenship in European education and training systems by facilitating exchanges of good practices and expertise among stakeholders. LLLP actively monitors EU policy developments on lifelong learning and collaborates with European institutions through various forums and expert groups. LLLP's expertise in education, including competence development, and its extensive network make it a valuable partner in the project. Overall, LLLP's involvement in the project

enhances its capacity to disseminate project results at the European level and contribute to the development of competence frameworks in education.

Tilburg University (TiU), established in 1927, hosts over 14,000 students, including 2,064 international students from 102 countries. Ranked 18th in the US News Best Global Universities Ranking 2016, TiU focuses on social innovation to address societal challenges by fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge transfer. Through research, learning, and understanding, TiU strives to create value for society by engaging with companies, organisations, government, and citizens. The university emphasises quality education, social orientation, and a vibrant campus atmosphere, facilitating an international community conducive to mutual inspiration and growth.

Expertise in Labour Mobility specialises in international labour mobility solutions, collaborating with corporate clients and higher education institutions globally. ELM advises governments on how to attract and retain talent. They also co-create and manage the International Student Barometer, a global higher education survey with over 4.3 million student responses, collaborating with over 170 universities and national education bodies in continental Europe. Additionally, ELM provides professional training on cross-border work and intercultural communication, along with personalised career coaching services. Their career guides outline pathways to international employment, complemented by the CareerProfessor.works app, delivering gamified global career advice. ELM's involvement in this project stems from their expertise in competences gained abroad during learning mobility, having previously collaborated with ESN and other partners on skills gained through mobility.

1. BEFORE MOBILITY

a. Should I stay or should I go? Why international experience is important (skills gained outlook and related to the global job market)

According to the World Economic Forum's "Education 4.0" initiative (World Economic Forum, 2023), students should develop certain skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and digital literacy in order to be prepared for the rapidly evolving job market and societal needs. The proposed taxonomy consists of knowledge, skills and attitudes and how educational institutions can foster them through activities that combine practical experiences, games, and technological applications. It also stresses the importance of lifelong learning and adapting to the continuous changes brought by technological advancements.

Students who participate in a mobility abroad program, gain useful knowledge, skills and experiences that can significantly equip them for the global job market. Results from the Erasmus Careers Focus groups revealed that students gain:

- **Cultural adaptability:** Being exposed to a variety of cultures and experiences fosters openness, flexibility, and cultural awareness—all of which are critical in the global workplace, where cross-cultural communication is the norm.
- **Language proficiency:** Living abroad can greatly enhance one's language abilities, which is advantageous in today's globalised society when speaking more than one language is highly esteemed.
- **Global perspective:** Studying abroad extends one's horizons by promoting a more thorough comprehension of world issues, a variety of work styles, and a range of problem-solving techniques. This wider perspective is beneficial in an international workplace.
- **Networking:** During a study abroad program, making friends from all over the world creates a worldwide network. These relationships may prove advantageous for upcoming professional prospects, collaborations, and comprehending the global labour market.

- **Resilience and independence:** Living abroad cultivates resilience, independence, and self-reliance—qualities that are essential in a labour market that is changing quickly.
- **Cultural competencies:** Experiencing diverse cultural conventions, values, and communication styles improves one's ability to communicate across cultural boundaries. In multinational companies, it is becoming more and more crucial to comprehend and navigate cultural nuances
- **Enhanced CV:** students believe that experiencing international mobility will improve their CV: an employer may perceive it as a guarantee of a certain level of foreign language skills, or mobile students gain experience and values that make them stronger candidates.
- **Problem-solving abilities:** Solving problems in a new environment stimulates resourcefulness and problem-solving skills, which are highly appreciated in any type of business.

Similar, were the findings from the previous Erasmus skills project. In case you are more interested in, check a relevant publication ([Papakota & Mouratoglou, 2024](#)).

By developing these skills and experiences, students who have studied abroad are better equipped to navigate the complexities of the global labour market and contribute effectively to an increasingly interconnected world economy.

However, students might feel insecure about moving abroad and therefore career counsellors should be well informed about the advantages and disadvantages of this choice. Not all people are ready to go abroad, but helping them navigate the challenges and be well-prepared can facilitate their decision.

Activity: Are you ready for an international experience? How to prepare your students.

Throughout this guide, there will be some activity outlines and resources that are designed for Career Guidance Counsellors to implement with students, either physically in group settings or as individual homework. These activity outlines can be found after each section of the document.

- At the beginning of a semester, students should be presented with all the various mobility schemes that are available to them, along with available grants as well as application procedures and timelines.
- Hearing from their peers' experiences is a great way to help students get ready for international mobility. Having former mobility students present their tips and tricks, as well as the added value of mobility to their studies and careers is a great tool to boost mobility and create connections between students. This could take place in the form of a conference, but a presentation in a small group can also be effective.

The following exercise can be used for that purpose:

- Divide participants into groups of 4-5. Explain that each Erasmus student will share their international exchange story. Groups will have to identify benefits and challenges from the mobility stories. (5 min)
- The participants are now into smaller groups, and start discussing their experiences. They should cover the following points of discussion (20min)
 1. Preparation and reasons for applying.
 2. First days in the new country.
 3. Adaptation after a few weeks/months.
 4. A fun fact or an interesting story.

As they listen to the stories, participants write down the benefits and challenges they hear.

- As all the participants return to an open circle, they share the benefits and the challenges they have heard. (15 min)
- The facilitator should then guide the participants to discuss how the challenges in mobilities can be overcome, and emphasise the benefits of mobility to their studies and career prospects. (10 min)

b. Going abroad for studies or embarking on an international internship?

Under the Erasmus+ mobility scheme, there are 2 main activities for higher education students: mobility either for studies or internship. Student mobility is possible across all academic fields and cycles (bachelor, master, doctoral, short cycle). In order to guarantee high-quality mobility experiences with the greatest possible impact on the students, the mobility activity must fit the student's degree-related learning and personal development needs.

Below we present a brief overview of the benefits and challenges of the different mobility activities.

Mobility for studies

A student can do a study period abroad at a partner higher education institution as long as their university has a signed and valid bilateral agreement. This study period abroad should be part of their study program in order to complete their degree at any study cycle. Any mobility experience can be valuable but deciding **when** and **where** to go for Erasmus Studies can be challenging and should not be spontaneous.

Students should search for their options through their international office web page and access the program of studies of the different partner universities to find out about the different courses offered, study methods applied, the language of instruction, and practical issues such as when and where to make their application. In the practical aspects, the language of instruction and the cost of living are other important issues to be considered. Erasmus funds can cover some of the expenses but to have a positive experience one can consider all these practical aspects.

Usually, students prefer to go for a study mobility in their 2nd or 3rd year and this can be their first mobility abroad. Knowing the main spoken language can be an asset for achieving smooth adaptability in the country. Erasmus for studies is considered more fixed and easier to follow, as the agreement among EU Universities facilitates finding accommodation, knowing the study process and networking with fellow Erasmus students.

Considering their personal development and career goals, students should base their decision on where they would gain a positive experience. A study mobility abroad helps to experience the academic environment of a University where the student might consider pursuing master's studies later, networking with professors and researchers in the academic field, and gaining first-hand experience of the laboratories, libraries, and other academic facilities. All these are valuable for enlightening students' career goals and relevant career decision-making.

When planning a study period abroad, it is crucial to understand how the academic credits earned will transfer back to the student's home institution. Ensuring that the courses they take align with one's degree requirements can prevent any delays in their graduation timeline, which can be critical for career plans. It's advisable for students to consult with their academic advisor and the international office to confirm that their chosen courses will be recognised and accredited appropriately.

But credit recognition is not all of the story. Understanding the support services and resources available at the host institution can significantly impact career development. Access to academic advising, tutoring, and career services can provide guidance on navigating the academic and professional journey abroad. Leveraging these resources can help to maximise the benefits of the study period or internship and align them with the student's long-term career goals.

These career goals should nonetheless keep in mind the broader context in which skills are acquired during mobility, which leads to the cultural component. Engaging in cultural integration activities such as language courses, cultural workshops, and student organisations can enhance global competency, a highly valued skill in today's job market. Participation in these activities can also expand the professional network, connecting with peers and professionals who might be influential in the students' careers. Pre-departure orientations are also essential for understanding the academic and professional environment of the host country. These orientations often include valuable information about career opportunities, industry standards, and networking events, which can be crucial for career planning and development.

Mobility for internship

Study abroad traineeships are encouraged for recent graduates and students in any study cycle. Traineeships (work placement, internship) can be done in a company, research facility, lab, organisation, or any other workplace unit as long as the work position is relevant to the student's field of study. This also covers research assistantships for students and doctoral candidates at any pertinent research facility, as well as teaching assistantships for student teachers. The traineeships are to be incorporated into the student's academic program wherever feasible. Regarding workload, participants are often required to work full-time, depending on the working conditions of their receiving organisation.

During the Erasmus Careers Focus groups, former participants in Erasmus for Internships have expressed that this experience proved invaluable in cultivating essential personal and employability skills. Specifically, they noted a significant boost in autonomy and independence and improvements in their capacity for adaptation and problem-solving. Working as an intern under the Erasmus+ scheme enabled them to acquire valuable experience in collaborating with individuals from diverse cultural and scientific backgrounds, and enhancing their language proficiency.

Erasmus Interns consistently highlight the development of their professionalism, collaboration, and networking skills as key outcomes of their internship. As a result, they notice that their CVs are significantly enriched, and because of their expanded skill set, they frequently receive job offers and recommendations.

Overall, an Erasmus internship offers a positive yet challenging work experience. Among the notable challenges faced when undertaking an internship abroad, participants commonly highlight feelings of isolation, being left to navigate on their own, and encountering difficulties in securing suitable housing as the primary concerns.

Developing a plan to address these challenges can serve as a survival toolkit.

For internships, other key points mentioned in the mobility section above also count, like the health and safety considerations and the legal and administrative requirements, while

other components might be even more challenging to achieve like the cultural interaction activities. The risk of isolation is in fact accentuated during an internship abroad and this means that the opportunities for cultural integration might be harder to achieve compared to the opportunities offered within study mobility where Erasmus+ students tend to create communities and connect more organically.

Activity: Decision-making “What kind of mobility?”

- First, have the students write down the specific dilemma that concerns them and that they want to compare. Here, the options are:
 - Going on a mobility for studies;
 - Going on a mobility internship.
- For each of the options, students list in the corresponding columns the factors that influence their decision. More specifically, they should list the advantages (+) and disadvantages (-) of each option, as well as the consequences that will arise if they follow it.
- Students then evaluate on a scale of 1-10 the subjective significance of each factor for them. They should think, "How important is this to me?"
- After completing the above procedure, they compare one by one the factors in each option. They should think, "If I have this but the other one is missing, how will I feel? Does anything change in the significance of any of the factors?"
- In the end, the main factors that concern the students should remain. Which option has the most advantages and numerically the most weight, if they add up the numbers and then subtract the sum of the importance of the disadvantages? What are the consequences?
- By evaluating the results, students may now be able to make and jot down their final decision.

Dilemma: Should I go for a mobility of studies or an internship in X country?

Option 1: Going on a Mobility for Studies		Option 2: Going on a Mobility for Internship	
+	-	+	-

Consequences:

- **Option 1:** going on a mobility for studies

.....

- **Option 2:** going on a mobility for an internship

.....

FINAL DECISION:

c. Where should I go? Factors to consider related to one's career.

"Student success" is defined as "academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills, and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational outcomes, and post-college performance" (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006 as cited in Alyahyan & Düştögör, 2020 p.3) Similar, York, Gibson, & Rankin (2015) updated definition that focused on the six most crucial elements: academic achievement, satisfaction, skill and competency acquisition, persistence, reaching learning goals, and career success.

Any mobility experience can be valuable for one's personality growth and autonomy, however, career development and prospects are good to be considered when deciding where to go for Erasmus. Some aspects that can be crucial in this decision could be the following.

Erasmus for Studies**• Research interests of professors**

Searching thoroughly the research interests of professors in the relevant schools can be enlightening regarding educational outcomes and academic knowledge gained in certain fields of studies, research trends and academic knowledge that a student can gain during this mobility. This is very important especially when considering doing a thesis or part of their research there. A student can search for recent publications of the professors and main research projects that are taking place in each school that can give an insight into the academic work done.

Trying to contact professors beforehand and discussing with them the research interests and career aspirations can help decide where to go and can be valuable to ensure a positive mobility experience.

• Reputation of the university for one's discipline – metrics

Similar to the above, is taking into consideration the reputation of the school's research and its academic metrics. Academic excellence and quality of research can serve as a

predictor of quality assurance in both research and teaching at a university. Also, a well-known University can serve as a branding tool in a student's career profile. Being among the pioneers of research in the scientific field, experiencing the research work done, the facilities and culture can help a student decide whether or not to continue their studies later there. Also, networking with professors and researchers will be valuable for future career goals.

- **Career prospects in the country**

Mobility offers several benefits, such as career advancement, personal growth, and the opportunity to experience new cultures. However, in order to maximise these advantages, one should pay attention to several factors that can influence the decision of a country's destination including career prospects and economic opportunities, cultural differences and personal preferences. Conducting research on the local job market to understand the demand for one's skills, prevalent industries, and job opportunities in their field can help in making a better choice.

Erasmus for Studies

- **Work opportunities**

When choosing a destination for an Erasmus internship, students should consider the job market and industry strengths of each country. Different regions specialize in various fields, so identifying locations aligned with their career goals is key. For instance, students interested in renewable energy might explore countries leading in green technologies, while those drawn to fashion or design could target creative hubs like Italy or France.

Students should research the typical roles and tasks offered to interns in their desired industry within the chosen country. Some nations may have stronger traditions of integrating interns into significant projects or converting internships into long-term employment. Understanding these aspects ensures the experience will align with their professional aspirations.

- **Workplace culture and career development**

Workplace culture differs widely across countries, so selecting a destination that matches students' preferences or challenges them to grow in new ways can enhance their internship experience. For example, Scandinavian countries are known for their emphasis on work-life balance, while fast-paced environments like those in major financial cities might suit individuals seeking a high-energy workplace.

Students should also consider the mentoring and professional development opportunities available in each destination. Countries with strong professional development cultures may offer access to training, skill-building workshops, or structured feedback processes, providing added value during one's mobility.

- **Networking Opportunities**

A choice of country can significantly impact the professional connections one builds. Students should consider destinations with strong industry networks or active professional communities in their field of interest. Countries hosting global conferences, trade fairs, or networking events related to their career aspirations might provide greater opportunities to meet influential professionals.

Some regions are particularly renowned for fostering international collaboration, which can be an advantage for building connections that extend across borders. Researching the professional environment and culture of networking in a student's potential destination can help them identify places where they'll maximize their opportunities to establish valuable relationships.



Activity: Choosing where to go - which program and in which country is suitable for you?

To help students decide which destination is suitable for their project, the following list of questions can help foster their reflection. As these questions require the students to do some research and personal reflection, it is best to share the list with them and ask them to develop answers on their own. For this exercise, a group work setting is therefore not recommended.

(Questions were adapted from <https://www.studieren-weltweit.de/infos-finden/>)

- **What do you want to know?** Clarifying your learning goals and the outcome of the mobility is important to know what you're looking for.
- **What content does the program of studies or internship offer?** In other words, does the program of studies or the job offer meet your goals and career prospects?
- **Which languages or cultures are of interest to you?** Experiencing the culture or practising language skills are among the main gains of mobility. Therefore, thinking beforehand about which language skills one wants to develop or which cultures and countries one would like to add to their life and career map and why this is important are crucial questions to ask, to make conscious choices.
- **Do you know the spoken language of the country?** Language skills can smooth adaptability in everyday life.
- **Do you have personal relations with the respective country?** Having some personal contacts can ease not only practical matters such as finding accommodation but also culture shock or homesickness.
- **Other practical issues to be considered (cost of living, financial situation, career prospects and skills required)** In the Europass platform, there is the Europass Job and Skill Trends tool that supports users in finding valuable information about the demand for specific occupations and skills across EU countries, allowing them to explore top occupations in a particular country and identify the most relevant skills for a specific occupation.

Extra tips:

Remaining informed about the labour market trends, in-demand talents, and emerging industries both on local and worldwide levels is crucial to anticipate changes in the professional world. Success requires accepting change and equipping oneself with flexible strategies to thrive in changing job environments. Thus, while having a well-thought-out mobility strategy is recommended, this stage also calls for flexibility and an understanding of what aspects are essential to consider when making decisions.

d. Submitting Application: Practical tips on CV preparation for studies or internship, Job search, LinkedIn, Interview.

In order to be selected for mobility, some self-branding tools need to be submitted. Usually, these are:

For Studies

- **Online Application form** (prepared by home University)
- **Transcript of grades**
- **Proof of language acquisition** (such as language exam certificate or linguistic courses certificates)
- **CV**

Although there are a vast majority of templates to follow for writing a CV, the best tips are to be short, concise and well-written. This application is being prepared for Erasmus coordinators within the applicant's educational institution and Erasmus/International officers. Therefore, it would be advisable to use the Europass format. The Europass CV template was created to provide uniformity in presenting the qualifications of candidates moving within the European Union. It serves as an additional recognised format for CVs and is used for academic and professional purposes.

Activity: Creating a CV in the Europass format

To compose a CV in the Europass format, one firstly needs to create a profile on the [Europass online platform](#) and then enrich it with detailed information concerning education, continuous training, professional experience, skills, etc.

There is the possibility to compose the CV, format it into alternative types and designs, store it, review it or even send it to career counsellors or universities via the Europass platform.

Detailed instructions for the format and composition of the European Curriculum Vitae are available in 30 languages. More information can be found on the official Europass website: <https://europass.europa.eu/en/create-europass-cv> .

In this specific portal, there are many other possibilities such as assessing digital skills, finding and providing detailed descriptions of personal and professional skills, drafting cover letters, and finding information about job opportunities, volunteering, and training in the countries of the European Union.

- **Motivational Letter**

The selection committee, among all other accompanying documents of the application, also asks for and evaluates the motivational letter or otherwise a "personal statement of purpose." This statement allows decision-makers to have an understanding of each candidate and helps them learn more about the motivations for participation, interests, and short-term and long-term academic and professional goals, beyond the impersonal numerical and statistical information they can gather from a transcript of records, courses, or language tests. More specifically, the committee wants to assess whether there is a connection between personal and professional goals, and educational needs and expectations from the specific program, and the goals and content of the program.

For many students, crafting this motivational letter proves to be the toughest aspect of the application process for mobility. Yet, it holds paramount importance, serving as a key differentiator among candidates. Crafting a successful statement requires careful attention and cannot be approached with a one-size-fits-all mindset. It demands meticulous preparation and dedicated time to ensure it is well-written and impactful.

Activity: Instructions to write a motivation letter

The motivational letter/personal statement essentially constitutes an analytical description of the applicant's ideas and goals. It aims to describe and declare, in a clear, precise, and convincing manner, why the candidate wants to participate in the specific mobility program and to go to a specific University, as well as how this mobility is connected to the next career goals. In other words, the applicant should sufficiently demonstrate that they know what they want to do, describe their expectations for the knowledge they will gain and the additional skills they will develop, and express their enthusiasm for this mobility experience.

- The tone of writing should be positive and essentially supportive of a student's choice, arguing and presenting persuasively both their achievements so far and their future career goals.
- Writing this essay also reflects their written communication skills as well as the depth, clarity, and orientation of their thinking. Therefore, they should be careful with the syntax and spelling of the text.

Essentially, the motivational letter/statement of purpose should answer the following questions:

1. Why do they want to pursue studies abroad? What are their scientific and academic interests that may be connected to this decision?

Through this question, the selection committee wants to learn what students have done so far that explains their decision to continue their studies in a different academic environment (e.g., attending relevant undergraduate courses and seminars, conducting projects, etc.). Students also refer to any previous mobility experiences, as well as linguistic skills you believe will help them adapt to the new academic environment.

2. Why do they choose to go to this particular University/country?

Students should tailor their answers to this specific question and refer to real reasons that influenced their choice of this particular University. They can mention the opportunity to collaborate with specific professors/instructors in the program and their

recognition in the academic community for their research or academic work, specific courses you will attend, or opportunities for practical training, participation in research programs, and anything else that genuinely sparked your interest. The selection committee wants to see how carefully and thoroughly students have evaluated the opportunities available to them before deciding to apply.

3. How will this experience help them achieve future professional goals?

The answers to this question will demonstrate that students know well how to leverage the knowledge they will gain from this specific program to achieve their future professional goals. They should strive to be specific and clear, as motivations and goals are among the main criteria in the selection of prospective students. Vague statements like "This specific program will help my future career" should be avoided.

For Internships

- **Job search**

Searching for internships abroad can be done through various channels. Below are some useful advice on where and how to look for Erasmus internship opportunities.

Activity: Where to search for Internships

- **Online Job Boards:** Numerous internship opportunities across a range of industries are listed on websites such as ErasmusIntern as well as Indeed, [Glassdoor](#), and [LinkedIn](#). You can narrow down your search based on location, industry or using keywords with your specific interest.
- **University Career Services or International Offices.** Companies interested in hiring students for Erasmus Internships usually post their job advertisements in career offices or international offices of universities. So, these offices might have a list of companies or open positions.

- **Networking:** Networking can often uncover hidden opportunities that aren't publicly advertised. Reach out to professors, professional contacts, friends or family members to inquire about internship opportunities abroad. Professors usually have contacts with colleagues from other EU Universities that can serve well as a first pool to ask for internships especially if you're interested in a research internship. Families and friends who live abroad can offer you useful advice on living conditions in a country but also on companies or industries that have open intern positions.
- **Professional Associations:** Join relevant professional associations or organisations in your field of interest in the host country. They may have a list of companies relevant to your career interests or appropriate career information for University students that might be of help.
- **Company Websites:** Identify companies you're interested in and visit regularly their websites to look for internship positions or career-related information that may help you connect with the people in charge of those chances within the department or industry that interests you.
- **Social Media:** Follow companies you're interested in on social media platforms like [LinkedIn](#) or [Xing](#) (for Germany only), X, and [Facebook](#). Many companies post internship openings on their social media platforms.
- **Emailing:** If there are some companies you're particularly interested in but don't have any advertised internships, consider sending a well-crafted cold email expressing your interest in doing your Erasmus Internship there. Make sure to customise each email and highlight why you'd be a valuable addition to their team.
- **Write down a list of companies and offers in an Excel file**, noting the website, position, person in charge, countries and any other useful information you would like to consider. In this way, you will better manage this searching position.

Remember to tailor your CV and cover letter for each application, highlighting relevant skills and experiences. Additionally, prepare for interviews by researching the company and practising common interview questions. Below you will find more specific tips on these!

For Internships

- **LinkedIn**

In order to search for internships abroad and enhance student's chances of finding exciting opportunities in their desired location, they might consider using LinkedIn.

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional networking platform that links users from different industries and geographical areas, with employers, industry experts, colleagues and business partners around the globe.

Activity: Using LinkedIn to search for Internships

To use LinkedIn effectively to search for internships abroad, follow these tips:

1. **Create or Update Your Profile:** Ensure your LinkedIn profile is complete and up-to-date. Your profile serves as a digital resume (following US appropriate format) and should showcase your education, skills, experiences, and any relevant coursework or projects.
2. **Set Your Preferences:** Select "Preferences" from the LinkedIn "Jobs" page to set your parameters for your job search. Specify you are looking for internships and adjust the location setting to the foreign country or countries of your choice.
3. **Use Advanced Search Filters:** Use LinkedIn's advanced search filters to narrow down your internship search. You can set filters based on the industry, job title, experience level, and the country you are interested in going to.
4. **Follow Companies:** Follow companies you're interested in doing your Erasmus internship, especially those with an international presence.
5. **Network with Professionals:** Connect with professionals in your desired industry or country of interest. Networking can help you discover hidden internship opportunities and gain knowledge about the job market abroad.
6. **Join LinkedIn Groups:** Join LinkedIn groups related to internships, study abroad programs, or your field of interest. Talk to other group members, ask questions, and share your experiences. You might learn about internship opportunities or receive valuable advice from group members.

7. **Reach Out to Recruiters:** If you find an internship opportunity that interests you, don't be afraid to contact the recruiter or hiring manager of this position directly. Send a personalised message expressing your interest and highlighting why you are a great candidate for this position.
8. **Stay Active and Engaged:** Consistently check your LinkedIn for updates, job postings, and industry news. Participate in discussions and share relevant content in order to expand your network and increase your visibility.

- **CV**

CV serves as an initial representation to potential employers among possibly hundreds of applicants. Therefore, it is crucial to invest time in preparing it. A well-written CV acts as a tool to showcase one's skills and experiences, aiming to capture the recruiter's attention and secure advancement to the next stage, get an offer or have a call for an interview.

Activity: Tips to write a CV

Here are some tips to help your CV stand out and increase your chances of getting an Erasmus internship position:

- Tailor your CV to the specific job and company you're applying for. While maintaining a general structure and content, emphasise skills relevant to these.
- Keep it concise. Employers often have numerous CVs to review, so prioritise highlighting key skills and accomplishments without overwhelming detail.
- Ensure correct spelling and grammar. Before submitting your CV, thoroughly proofread it to eliminate any errors. Even if you meet the qualifications, mistakes can detract from your overall impression.
- Follow a reverse chronological order. Arrange your experiences from the most recent to the oldest, as recruiters typically expect this format.
- Pay attention to the CV's layout and structure. Ensure clarity, coherence, and readability by avoiding clutter and using consistent font styles and sizes throughout.

- Save it as a PDF. Opt for a PDF format to maintain a professional appearance and prevent formatting issues when viewed by the recruiter.
- Name the document appropriately when saving. Personalise the file name with your name to make it easily identifiable among other applicants' CVs downloaded by the recruiter.

There are numerous online CV templates. MS Word or Canva have also relevant good templates. Some useful sites one can use are:

- my-resume-templates.com (free of charge and easily edited in Word, docs etc.)
- enhancv.com
- creddele.io

Check also relevant guidelines at the [Erasmus Jobs](#) website.

- **Cover letter**

A cover letter for an internship is the body of the email that accompanies the resume when applying for an internship position. Its purpose is to introduce the student to the hiring manager, explain why they are interested in the internship opportunity, highlight their relevant skills and qualifications, and persuade the employer to open and read their resume and request an opportunity for an internship. In other words, a cover letter for an internship serves as an opportunity for the applicant to showcase their qualifications, demonstrate their enthusiasm for the role, and make a compelling case for why they are the ideal candidate for the internship position.

Activity: Tips to Write a Cover Letter

Here are some tips to help you write a cover letter that increases your chances of getting an Erasmus internship position:

- Draft a different letter for each internship position
- Address the letter to a specific person in the company responsible for hiring

- Specify the reason for contacting them (e.g., seeking an internship position through Erasmus+)
- Refer to the source of information for the specific job (pg website, linked-in adv, reference by a professor)
- Briefly outline your skills for the desired job position and connect your skills to the responsibilities
- Demonstrate knowledge about the company or organisation you're addressing
- Clearly state what you're requesting and what you can offer (what they will gain)
- Confirm that you've explained how to contact you
- Note the documents you're attaching (resume) and any links for additional information (pg site about the responsibilities of the company as an Erasmus partner)

Extra Tips:

- Show professionalism. Follow the standard format of an official letter.
- Keep the letter to one page.
- Pay attention to and correct any spelling and grammatical errors.

COVER LETTER TEMPLATE

- **Introduction:** Introduce yourself and express your interest in the internship position.
- **Body Paragraphs:** These paragraphs provide an overview of your academic background, relevant skills, experiences, and how they align with the internship requirements.
- **Closing:** Conclude your cover letter by expressing your enthusiasm for the opportunity, reiterating your interest, and thanking the employer for considering your application.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Dear **[Recipient's Name]**,

I am writing to express my interest in an internship opportunity at **[Company Name]** under the Erasmus+ program, for **X** months, starting preferably **(month/year)**

As a **[Degree/Field of Study]** student at **[University/Institution]**, I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to apply my academic knowledge and skills in a practical setting. With a strong foundation in **[mention relevant skills or qualifications]**, coupled with my passion for **[mention relevant interest or field]**, I am eager to contribute to **[Company Name]**'s mission while further developing my professional expertise.

Through my coursework and extracurricular activities, I have developed a strong foundation in **[relevant skills or qualifications]**. I am particularly drawn to this internship opportunity as it aligns perfectly with my career aspirations in **[mention your career goals or interests related to the position]**.

In addition to my academic background, I have also had the opportunity to **[briefly mention any relevant experience, projects, or achievements]**. These experiences have equipped me with **[mention specific skills or competencies]** which I believe will be valuable in contributing to the **[specific department or project you're applying for]**. Moreover, I have a keen interest in **[mention any specific aspect of the company or its projects]** and I admire **[mention something positive about the company or its mission]**. I am enthusiastic about the possibility of contributing to such meaningful work and I am eager to bring my skills to your team.

Enclosed, please find my resume for your review. You can also access it via the following link: **[insert link to your online resume/portfolio, if applicable]**. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss how my background, skills, and enthusiasm align with the needs of your team. Please feel free to contact me at **[your phone number]** or via email at **[your email address]** to schedule an online meeting at your convenience. I would be grateful if I could have your positive answer by the **date/month/year** in order to apply on time for Erasmus funding. In case you are interested in learning more about the Erasmus+ program, you can visit the relevant site....

Thank you for considering my application. I am looking forward to the possibility of contributing to **[Company Name]**.

2. BEFORE ARRIVAL

a. Practicalities

- **Erasmus+ App:** the mobile application for Erasmus+ participants which puts the whole mobility experience at the fingertips of young people. The application renders mobility easy, accessible and at arm's reach for every user while promoting innovation and digitalisation in the long run. It helps students plan and carry out their exchange so they can get the best out of their studies abroad, before, during and after their mobility. Students can access the application via their academic credentials, which is the login provided to them by their Higher Education Institution.
- **Secure Necessary Documentation:** students should ensure they have a valid passport and any required visas or permits for their stay abroad. They should research the specific entry requirements for students' destination country and make sure to obtain all necessary documents well in advance. This can be done by checking the national or city council webpage for information. Finally, navigating the legal and administrative requirements, such as obtaining the necessary residence permits, is crucial for a seamless experience abroad. Access to the correct documentation in place can be pivotal to allow students to focus on their academic and professional development without legal distractions.
- **Accommodation:** Finding accommodation has been a big challenge for EU youth recently. Look for accommodation options in their destination through different channels (ESN platform, home agencies, ex-Erasmus students) but they need to make sure to secure a place to live before their arrival.
- **Finances and Budgeting:** Students should create a budget for their time abroad, taking into account expenses such as rent, utilities, food, transportation, and leisure activities. They can consider opening a bank account in their destination country and familiarise themselves with local banking services.
- **Healthcare and Insurance:** students should research healthcare options in their destination country and ensure they have adequate health insurance coverage for their stay abroad. They should familiarise themselves with emergency contact numbers and

nearby medical facilities. Health and safety considerations are also important for ensuring that students remain focused on their academic and career goals.

Understanding the health insurance requirements and safety guidelines of the host country can prevent disruptions and allow students to fully engage in their studies or internships.

- **Networking and Support:** Students should connect with other expatriates, students, or professionals in their destination country. They should join online forums, expat groups, or social media communities to seek advice, share experiences, and build a support network. ESN Local Sections can assign a “buddy” to international students: a student at the university they will come to who knows how everything enrolls, from classes and public transport to shops and banks. This service is also known as [the Buddy System](#).

b. Linguistically

One of the biggest challenges when moving abroad is communication. While advanced English language proficiency is crucial, possessing basic skills in the host country can greatly aid in everyday life. Thus, undertaking language courses beforehand proves invaluable, not only enhancing one's chances of mobility selection but also facilitating adaptation and integration.

One can test the language skills in this site [OLS](#) or follow online courses via [Duolingo](#). Home Universities may offer some preparation language courses as well.

c. Psychologically – Cultural adaptation

Feeling insecure about this new experience, particularly if it's their first time moving abroad, is normal and expected. To be psychologically ready, it's a good idea for students to read up on culture shock phases, learn more about the country or the city they will be moving to and have an optimistic outlook on this new challenge in life.

In order to be familiar with the culture, language, customs, and local laws it's a good idea for them to follow the relevant host University's website, news and travel pages on the net or social media platforms. They should prepare themselves for cultural differences and try to learn about local customs, etiquette, and traditions to avoid misunderstandings and show respect to the local culture. Some Universities offer intercultural competence skills seminars that would be helpful to better understand one's own and other cultures.

Activity: Sharing resources on Intercultural Skills and Employment

How can we make students understand the importance of intercultural competences for career development? It is essential for them to understand what intercultural skills are, how they can be acquired, and their relevance in the job market.

The videos created by the [Epicur University Alliance](#) on [Intercultural Skills](#) (*INTERCULTURAL SKILLS - EPICUR Alliance, 2022.*) play an important role in raising awareness of the link between employability and the development of intercultural skills. As they emphasize the role of language learning, adaptability, and open-mindedness in building these competencies, which are increasingly valued in globalized workplaces, these videos are an interesting resource to share with students.



3. DURING MOBILITY

a. Networking

Networking is considered the best job search technique no matter the country, the field or sector of employment. While being abroad, try to make use of online and offline professional networks to establish connections with local professionals, professors, industry associations, alumni networks, and expatriates. Accept welcomingly invitations and try to participate in workshops, industry and networking events such as lectures or career fairs. Many alumni Erasmus students and interns mentioned that they had received a job offer or learned for a PhD or research opportunity from their network.

b. Meet the locals

While on a study or internship mobility abroad, make an effort to connect with locals and embrace cultural differences. Stay open-minded, adaptable, and willing to learn from diverse perspectives. Understand cultural nuances in communication, workplace hierarchy, and business etiquette to navigate professional interactions effectively. Foster empathy, improve cross-cultural communication and enhance teamwork skills to participate effectively in multicultural environments.

c. Maximise one's mobility experience by participating in group projects & student groups)

Participating in group projects rather than just attending a course can help develop students' teamwork and communication skills. Similarly, joining student groups of the host University, will not only help students make new friends but also exercise their language, communication and networking skills.

d. Volunteer and Part-time job

To obtain local job experience, make contacts, and get a firsthand understanding of industry processes in the host country, take into consideration volunteering or part-time positions. Look up for such opportunities at the local University career office or employment service.

e. Mentorship

Students should connect with mentors or career coaches who have experience in their target industry. Their guidance, advice, and insights can help them navigate challenges and make informed career decisions.

Activity: Organising an Employability and Mobility Fair

At Career Fairs, students can develop their professional skills and employability while meeting with stakeholders who have their own booth to present themselves to students looking for internships, jobs or general information about working abroad or in the same country.

Organising a Career Fair with a special focus on Mobility and Employability will connect students with local companies, showcasing how international experiences enhance career prospects. It can provide students with valuable networking opportunities, localized career insights, and skill recognition, while offering employers access to globally minded talent. By aligning mobility programs with career outcomes, such an event can foster collaboration between academia, industry, and students, promoting the value of internationalization in the workforce.

The following core activities can be implemented during an Employability and Mobility Fair:

- **Opening panel discussion:** “The Career Boost of Going Global: Perspectives from Alumni and Employers”
 - Participants of the panel would be both Erasmus+ alumni whose international mobility had a strong impact on their career development, representatives from companies that value international experience in their hiring processes, and university representatives (either from the Career Office or International Relations Office)
 - Participants will gain inspiration from alumni success stories, practical insights into the career benefits of mobility, and an understanding of the skills valued by employers. They’ll leave with actionable advice for leveraging their mobility experience and new connections with industry professionals to support their career journey.
- **Career Speed Dating**
 - The **Career Speed Dating** workshop is a fast-paced networking activity where international students meet with multiple employers for brief, 5–7 minute conversations. During each round, students introduce themselves, discuss their skills, and learn about job opportunities, while employers share insights about their companies and career paths. This format allows students to practice professional communication, receive feedback, and explore various industries, while employers can quickly assess potential candidates for internships or job roles.
- **Working in the country of mobility: rules and regulations workshop**
 - The workshop will provide students with essential information on the legal and practical aspects of working in their host country. Topics covered can include work visas, local labor laws, tax regulations, and employment rights. The workshop aims to equip students with the knowledge to navigate the administrative requirements and cultural norms of the job market in their host country.
- **Skills recognition workshop**
 - Finally, the workshop will help international students identify and articulate the skills gained during their mobility experiences. Through guided activities, students will learn how to translate their international experiences into valuable competencies, such as cross-cultural communication, problem-solving, and adaptability. The workshop also provides practical tips on how to present these skills on resumes and in interviews, boosting students' confidence in showcasing their global experiences to potential employers.

4. PRE-DEPARTURE

a. Reference letters

Before saying goodbye, it's time for the student to gather reference letters. A reference letter is a formal document that outlines the academic and professional qualifications and strengths. Its purpose is to recommend the student to a potential employer or a selection committee for a graduate program. The recommendation letter should be confidential and personal.

Activity: Receiving a Reference Letter

The following tips can be helpful in receiving a Reference Letter

1. Carefully choose whom to ask for a reference letter and arrange a meeting to personally request if they can write a favourable recommendation letter for you.
2. Meet with your potential letter writers promptly and inform them about your plans, interests, and goals. Remind them of your activities and accomplishments. Ask them to highlight specific skills of yours that you would like to emphasise.
3. Express gratitude for the support and cooperation they have provided you and explain why you need the recommendation letter.
4. In order for them to gain a comprehensive understanding of your qualifications and skills, provide your letter writers with a copy of your CV. This will ensure that they are aware also of your knowledge and skills beyond what they already know (such as languages, courses or seminars attended, etc.).
5. Give your letter writers a time frame of at least 2 weeks to draft the letter. Keep in mind that writing a quality recommendation letter requires time.
6. Politely request to stay connected through professional social platforms such as Linked-in, ResearchGate, Academia etc and you may also ask for recommendations to be uploaded there.

5. After mobility

a. Skills identification

To maximise the skills gained from the mobility experience in a beneficial way for students' career prospects, it is also advisable to learn how their new set of skills can combine with the needs of the local labour market. International experiences are important to employers, but only if graduates can turn their gained skills into visible behaviours that translate into value-adding workplace performance, according to Predovic & Dennis (2019). Thus, students returning from mobility should make an effort to conduct research on the abilities that employers and recruiters in their home country are looking for, and present their Erasmus skills in a clear and concise manner.

Activity: Assess your Competences Gained on Mobility

As the Erasmus Careers project aims to enhance employability by identifying and recognising the skills students gain during study abroad, a **Competence Inventory** was developed to categorise the competences gained by students during a mobility.

On the [Erasmus Careers website](#), a self assessment tool is available for students to assess their competencies throughout the 5 stages of their mobility: pre-arrival, on arrival, during stay, pre-departure, re-entry.

The following 5 competences are tested:

- Intercultural Communication
- Social Intelligence
- Intrapersonal Intelligence
- Working in a Professional Environment
- Adapting to New Trends

Students can fill in the questionnaire at each stage of their mobility, and assess the competences gained during their Erasmus experience and see how they evolve along the five stages of their journey.

To access the self-assessment tool, the following steps need to be followed:

- Navigate to ErasmusCareers.org.
- Create a **Job Seeker account** using the registration form.
- Log in and select the **Competences** section from the menu.
- Access the **Self-Assessment Questionnaire**.

b. LinkedIn

Updating their LinkedIn profile after completing a mobility program is a great idea to highlight the experience and skills gained during the program. Below is some useful advice to support students.

Activity: Updating your LinkedIn profile after a mobility program

1. **Update the “about” section**, mentioning briefly your participation in the mobility and highlighting the knowledge, skills and experience gained out of it. Describe how this program has contributed to your personal and professional growth.
2. **Add Experience:** If the mobility was an internship program, add it as a separate entry in your Experience section. Include the organisation’s/ company’s name, and duration, and give a brief description of your role, projects involved, tasks or responsibilities you had during the program. Use bullet points to list the achievements and try to make it clear and specific.
3. **Update Education.** Ensure you add the institution and school of your Erasmus for Studies in your education section and include all relevant information about courses taken and projects conducted.

4. **Update Skills Section** to showcase any new skills developed during the mobility. They can be technical, soft or language skills.
5. **Recommendations & Endorsements:** Ask for recommendations from supervisors, professors or colleagues from the mobility program. Endorse and get endorsed for skills gained during the program. Future employers will be happy to learn more about your cooperation not only with your supervisor but also with co-workers or fellow students.
6. **Stay connected and active:** Become a member of alumni or other professional groups who share the same experience. Share interesting articles, posts or job offers related to your field of study. Engage in discussions and stay connected with your peers and professional network through comments, likes and shares.

c. Alumni – Keeping up with the network (professors, supervisors and colleagues)

By becoming a member of the alumni group of their Erasmus institution and actively engaging with their network (professors, supervisors and colleagues), Students can build meaningful professional relationships, access valuable resources, and expand their career opportunities in the long term. Alumni networks can be valuable sources of professional opportunities, industry insights, and ongoing learning.

Activity: Building your network

- Seek mentorship from experienced alumni who can provide guidance, support, and valuable career advice based on their experiences in the industry.
- Similarly, you may conduct informational interviews with alumni who are in roles or industries of interest to you. Seek advice, gather insights, and expand your professional network through these conversations.
- Collaborate with alumni on projects or research relevant to your career goals. Working together not only strengthens your professional network but also fosters collaboration and knowledge sharing. Former Erasmus students and interns mentioned in focus groups conducted in this project that they had offers to either remain or work for other projects from their Erasmus network.

- Attend alumni networking events, seminars, conferences related to your field of study or even social gatherings and reunions. These events provide excellent opportunities to reconnect with former professors, supervisors, and colleagues.
- Become an ESN buddy for other Erasmus students in your institution and share your experience in smoothing the relocation and adaptability of other Erasmus students in your university and country. In this way, you remain connected to your Erasmus experience but also connect to the world!



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