Implementing EWP: Lund University

"Having a digital solution to manage all mobilities is a game changer for us"

Location: Lund, Sweden

Students: 46 000 (2021)

EWP Stats (02/2023):

IIAs approved: 15%
LAs (out) approved: 39%
LAs (in) approved: 91%
System: SoleMove

Lund University in spring time. © Lund University

The EWP project, part of the European Student Card Initiative, is a prime example of European cooperation. A multi-stakeholder collaboration aiming to simplify the administrative procedures and reduce the burden on Higher Education Institutions, and students by digitally exchanging information, boosting student and staff mobility for all.

Institutions participating in the Erasmus Programme play a crucial role in the process of connecting to the Erasmus Without Paper network, either via the EWP Dashboard, their in-house system or via a third party system.

During the years to come, the EWP+ consortium aims to provide further support for HEIs implementing the digitalisation roadmap. But we also want to highlight the accomplishments and success stories from HEIs that are already able to enjoy the benefits of the European Student Card Initiative.

Today, we are visiting Lund University in Sweden, which is connected to the EWP network for both inter-institutional agreements (IIA) and online learning agreements (LA) via SoleMove. We are meeting with Martin Charlier who is Project manager at Student Experience and Mobility.

State of play

Is your institution approving IIAs via EWP?

Martin: For the past year, we have been exchanging both LAs and IIAs. The mobility process is decentralised in Lund. I have a full overview of what happens and needs to be done by the faculties, but it is their initiative to renew and initiate agreements. It did start out slow. Luckily, the School of Economics and Management (LUSEM), which accounts for 30 percent of our mobilities, was really on the forefront of using the EWP network. Their new Erasmus coordinator took a full week to focus on renewals.

Is your institution signing LAs via EWP?

Martin: I was expecting more issues with LAs compared to IIAs, but we see the exact opposite across the community. For LAs, things have been running very smooth since the start. Our system, SoleMove, sends out notifications when a LA is not signed. This has the effect that faculties set up their accounts and made sure they were ready to process and initiate LAs.

How well informed do you feel the staff of your institution is about EWP?

Martin: I try to provide as much information and support to the faculties as I can. We notify them which IIAs can be renewed via EWP. In general, people are aware of the EWP-project, and they know where they can get information and support. But without a figurative stick, from the university or the Commission (by setting a hard deadline), I can only remind them to renew their IIAs via EWP as soon as possible.

All things aside, I am fairly confident we will have all IIAs renewed using EWP, sooner rather than later. Swedish people tend to follow rules, so we should be good in that regard (laughs).

Success factors and experiences

What was the biggest challenge for establishing your EWP-connection? How did you overcome it?

Martin: I do not think a lack of communication or information is the biggest challenge, like some institutions like to claim. There is a lot of content available on all aspects of EWP-project, it is a question of effort and priorities from the university management rather than availability.

The biggest challenge is that you need two to tango. Meaning, if your partner is not ready, it does not matter that your system works perfectly. That can be frustrating from time to time. Technical issues you can report, but if there is a lack of knowledge or willingness on your partner's side, you are stuck as well.

What were some of the success factors that supported the implementation at your HEI?

Martin: I think what really helped was getting on board with the project from the beginning. We tried to play an active role in the development of EWP and our system.

Lund university is also the biggest client of Solonovo (the company behind SoleMove). This resulted in us being able to influence the way they developed SoleMove, highlighting potential issues beforehand.

The faculties that started a year ago are now less dependent on me for information. They can explain to partners what they need to do or how to circumvent certain roadblocks. The downside of starting early is that they got to enjoy the emotional rollercoaster together with the rest of us (laughs).

Do you have tips for your colleagues on how they can better benefit from EWP?
Martin: Do not lose hope…(laughs). But more importantly, do not hesitate to ask questions or support. From your partners, from your providers, via the Slack forum, which I think is very underused by IROs.
I see sometimes from partners that there are some misunderstandings about core concepts of the processes, such as the difference between signing and approving. These are things that can be resolved by asking questions.

Vision on digitisation

Why do you think it is important to connect to the EWP-Network for the university?
Martin: Many of my predecessors and colleagues spent way too much time filling in forms and trying to understand the systems used by partners. Digitising administrative processes is the way of the future, even if we are going through a phase of recreating or adding issues for the time being. On the other hand, we should not be overly optimistic about it, because IT does not solve all of our daily problems. Often, the issues were not of a technical nature, so they are not going to be solved with a technical solution.

There is also the size conundrum. A smaller university was perfectly happy with managing everything in an Excel file. Something like that is not feasible for the amount of mobility

> *"Digitising administrative processes is the way of the future, even if you have to go through a phase of initial struggles"*

we experience in Lund. Having a digital solution to manage all mobilities is a game changer for us. It was better to spend more time from the beginning, with trial and error, than go back to a (temporary) paper-based solution.

What new priorities do you feel EWP should tackle in the future?
Martin: Many colleagues feared that the Erasmus app would result in double work. We communicate to all our students, regardless of the destination for their mobility. The inclusion of other types of mobilities is something that is probably in the future. Thinking of a way to integrate internships would also be really helpful, but that is a lot harder to integrate organisations outside of higher education, like NGOs and private sector.

What factors would make EWP impact even more positively on students?
Martin: LAs is of course the one document that students already have to deal with today, and the smoother this document will be integrated and its functionalities enhanced, the better. But this is a job that relies as much on the providers'/developers' shoulders than on EWP, if not more.

Further on, I can think of a current API that is completely underused, is the Fact Sheet API. In SoleMove, fact sheet information is fetched from our partners' systems and accessible to our outgoing students. This makes the information displayed more reliable as it comes from our partners.

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