

STUDENT MOBILITY IN CATALONIA: THE ERASMUS PROGRAMME

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The ERASMUS programme, introduced by the European Commission in 1987, will celebrate its twentieth anniversary in 2007. It is one of the best-known student exchange programmes in the European Union because it allows students to take part of their degrees at any of the participating universities.

At a time when European education systems are facing the challenge of consolidating the European Higher Education Area, student mobility should be promoted because of the fundamental role it can play as a system for improving learning. This article analyses the figures on student mobility in Catalonia from the start of the ERASMUS programme, and comments on the future prospects of student mobility.

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1. Beginnings: the ERASMUS programme

From the outset, the aim of ERASMUS and the other mobility programmes has been to reinforce the academic and personal training of students. The opportunity to combine studies, travelling and relating with persons of other countries allows students to develop their skills and resources in the different areas of education and society. In general, the relation between academic performance and studying and living outside one's country of origin has shown good results. Student exchanges help to acquire skills that will facilitate studying at a higher level and integration in employment, and are an experience that will continue to be useful throughout the graduates' careers. They also involve adapting to new environments with other cultures and ways of living, and acquiring an international perspective on both an academic and a personal level. This should promote and facilitate a good understanding between citizens with different ideologies and beliefs, and help to consolidate a more progressive and democratic European society that fosters cultural, economic and social links with the other countries in the world.

2007 will be an important milestone in the development of the ERASMUS mobility programme: its twentieth anniversary. It is the best-known student exchange programme in the European Union, allowing students to take part of their degrees at any university participating in this programme for a period ranging from three months to a year. By the 2002-2003 academic year, a total of one million students had taken part in the ERASMUS programme since it was set up.

ERASMUS stands for the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students, and is also the name of the distinguished philosopher, theologian and humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam (1465-1536), who lived and worked in several parts of Europe in search of the knowledge, experience and insights that he could only obtain through contact with other countries.

2007 will be an important milestone in the development of the Erasmus mobility programme: its twentieth anniversary.

The ERASMUS programme was introduced by the European Commission in 1987, with the aim of promoting student exchange within the European Union. On 14 March 1995, as a continuation of the ERASMUS programme the European Commission set up the Socrates programme, whose aim is to develop the Europe of knowledge, to promote language learning and to foster mobility and innovation. This programme currently consists of eight different actions aimed at promoting the European dimension in the different areas of education and improving education quality by fostering cooperation between the participating countries. All EU actions regarding higher education are placed within the framework of the ERASMUS programme.

From the outset, the aim of this programme has been to foster mobility of students and teaching

staff of universities in European Union countries, and now also in the candidate countries for accession to the EU in the near future. The new framework of relations within the EU involves establishing new strategies of action in the area of teaching, and one of the requirements for this is to promote and facilitate student mobility. Citizens educated in an open and dynamic space will be able to play an outstanding role in the further construction of Europe.

Citizens educated in an open and dynamic space will be able to play an outstanding role in consolidating the construction of Europe.

The ERASMUS programme is open to:

- The educational establishments and university students of the 25 member states of the EU.
- The educational establishments and university students of the three countries that belong to the European Economic Area: Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway.
- The educational establishments and university students of the candidate countries for accession to the EU: Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey.

The ERASMUS programme is implemented through an institutional contract signed by the universities and the European Commission, in order to guarantee mobility between the European universities with which bilateral exchange programmes have been established. Its coordination and economic management are the responsibility of the international relations units of each of these universities.

In addition to being recognised by the national authorities as eligible for ERASMUS activities, the participating universities have to apply to the European Commission for an ERASMUS university charter, which is a certificate establishing the principles to be respected by the universities. Once a university has obtained the Charter, it is entitled to participate in the ERASMUS programme and to apply to its National Agency for funding for decentralised activities and to the Commission for funding for centralised activities.

2. New challenges for the development of the ERASMUS programme

The Bologna Declaration of 1999 laid the bases for the creation of the European Higher Education Area, whose aim is to strengthen the intellectual, cultural, social, scientific and technological dimensions in order to build a Europe that encourages the progress of persons and the integration of graduates in a far wider professional world. Law 1/2003, of 19 February governing the universities of Catalonia follows the lines laid down by the Bologna Declaration by promoting the construction of a universal and European-based system. The government of Catalonia (Generalitat) contributes to the funding of this programme through the Directorate-General of Universities, which has provided subsidies to supplement the grants of Catalan university students studying in other EU countries and to fund the cultural and linguistic induction activities for students from other countries visiting Catalan public universities.

In this new context, in order to increase the mobility of Catalan students, to improve the quality of their education and to contribute to the

internationalisation of the Catalan university system, the system of subsidies existing until the 2004-2005 academic year has been modified. The subsidies were previously awarded only to Catalan public universities to provide partial funding for grant supplements and for cultural and linguistic induction activities. The grant supplements are now awarded directly to the students of both public and private universities, and the total budget assignment has risen sharply from 450,000 euros in 2004-2005 to 1,000,000 euros in 2005-2006, and to 1,550,000 euros in 2006-2007.

The grant supplements are intended for students registered for official university courses at public and private universities in Catalonia who have been selected to participate in the Erasmus programme. They are added to any grant that the students receive from the European Union. The amount of the grants is 200 euros per month, with a maximum of 1,200 euros, though the study period may last for over six months. The grants are managed by the Agency for Management of University and Research Grants (AGAUR). In the 2005-2006 academic year 1,702 applications were received and 815 grants were awarded. In the 2006-2007 academic the figures were 2,705 and 1,434, respectively.

For the 2006-2007 academic year three types of grant have been established that will increase the number of beneficiaries. Grants will now be offered to students of the ERASMUS programme, to students participating in other international mobility programmes with similar characteristics to ERASMUS with regard to the requisites of exchange and academic recognition, and also to students of art schools offering higher education such as the Theatre Institute and the School of Music of Catalonia.

3. Chronological evolution of the ERASMUS programme

3.1. Figures for the universities belonging to the Catalan university system

Now that the ERASMUS programme has been in place for nineteen years, it is interesting to analyse some general figures on the students who have participated in the programme. Table 1 shows the chronological evolution by universities of the number of students who have participated in the programme in Catalonia, from its introduction in the 1988-89 academic year to the 2004-2005 academic year. There was a sharp growth in the number of participating students in the first few years, but the growth was sustained throughout the period. Apart from the first few years in the series and a short period in the late 1990s, the number of foreign students studying in Catalonia has always been higher than the number of Catalan students studying abroad. This imbalance increased sharply in the last four academic years of the period.

In general, the number of European students who have come to study in Catalonia has been greater than the number of Catalan students who have studied in other European countries.

This can be seen in Graphic 1. For example, in the 2004-2005 academic year the total number of students from other countries who studied at Catalan universities was 4,273, compared with

Table 1
Chronological evolution of the ERASMUS programme in Catalonia: student mobility by universities

Year	1988-1989		1989-1990		1990-1991		1991-1992		1992-1993		1993-1994		1994-1995		1995-1996		1996-1997	
	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C
UB	65	91	187	216	293	322	484	496	484	427	698	563	736	676	757	591	721	659
UAB	111	93	128	193	255	231	340	300	338	347	428	369	437	432	486	535	485	521
UPC	-	39	-	50	77	54	180	160	168	129	379	206	469	300	516	400	500	547
UPF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	40	67	123	148	149	192	156	169
UdG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	28	14	30	29	45	29	46	36	37
UdL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	39	24	54	32	65	27	91	31	101
URV	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	12	1	20	10	19	16	31	16	33
URL	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	5	9	19	7	20	14	26	104	115	100	97
UVic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UIC*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	176	223	315	459	625	607	1,007	961	1,037	1,005	1,591	1,329	1,850	1,711	2,084	2,001	2,045	2,164

Year	1997-1998		1998-1999		1999-2000		2000-2001		2001-2002		2002-2003		2003-2004		2004-2005	
	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C
UB	806	677	829	695	943	726	939	732	1,152	652	1,071	742	1,242	804	1,211	775
UAB	608	608	726	640	841	705	899	726	933	699	1,084	803	1,140	789	1,279	909
UPC	535	633	530	683	509	608	442	688	559	640	651	652	636	733	645	700
UPF	234	219	225	272	251	306	269	279	276	329	301	376	363	392	401	401
UdG	27	46	36	75	47	90	63	101	89	101	115	128	125	142	118	167
UdL	42	118	74	144	96	142	95	140	89	127	83	156	133	128	110	118
URV	29	63	49	70	52	78	52	110	78	108	78	124	122	125	150	129
URL	133	115	165	126	164	133	174	158	202	172	228	195	239	188	229	163
UVic	27	49	30	51	37	52	30	56	39	43	37	31	47	46	55	50
UIC*	-	-	-	-	9	3	16	13	33	13	37	7	65	15	75	17
Total	2,441	2,528	2,664	2,756	2,949	2,843	2,979	3,003	3,450	2,884	3,685	3,214	4,112	3,362	4,273	3,429

E: students from other countries who have studied at Catalan universities.

C: students from Catalan universities who have studied at universities of other EU countries.

Figures provided by UB, UAB, UPC, UPF, UdG, UdL, URV, URL, UVic and UIC.

* The International University of Catalonia (UIC) was created in the 1998-1999 academic year.

The Abat Oliba University (UAO) was created in the 2003-2004 academic year.

3,429 Catalan students visiting universities of other European countries.

According to the figures for the 2004-2005 academic year, which can be seen in Table 2 and Graphic 2, the countries from which the highest number of students have visited Catalonia are Italy, France, Germany, Portugal and the United Kingdom. The most popular countries for Catalan exchange students are also Italy, France, the United Kingdom and Germany, in addition to the Netherlands (Table 3, Graphic 3).

By gender (Graphic 4), considerably more than half (63%) the students from other countries

visiting Catalan universities were women. Women were also the majority (60%) among Catalan students visiting other countries (Graphic 5).

According to the figures for the 2004-2005 academic year, the areas of study with the greatest number of exchanges in the two directions are Social Sciences, Humanities and Technical Sciences.

3.2. Figures for Spain

According to figures provided by the ERASMUS National Agency for the 2004-2005 academic year (Table 5), the number of students from other

Graphic 1
Chronological evolution of the ERASMUS programme: general mobility of students in Catalonia

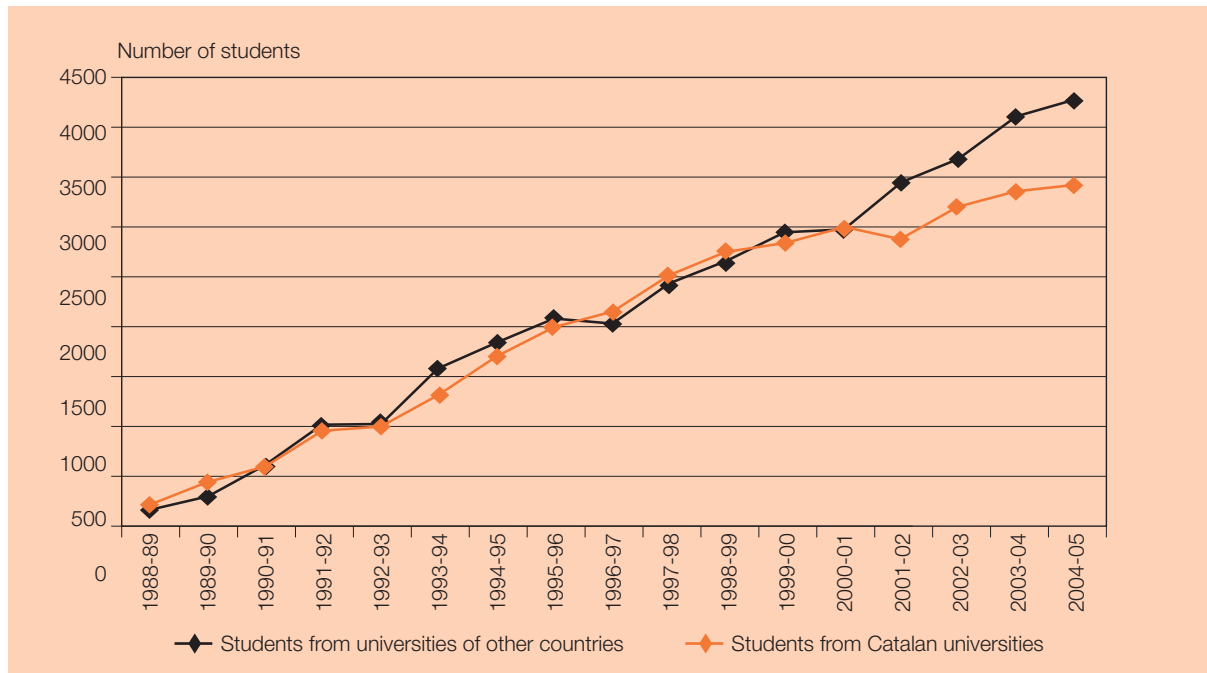


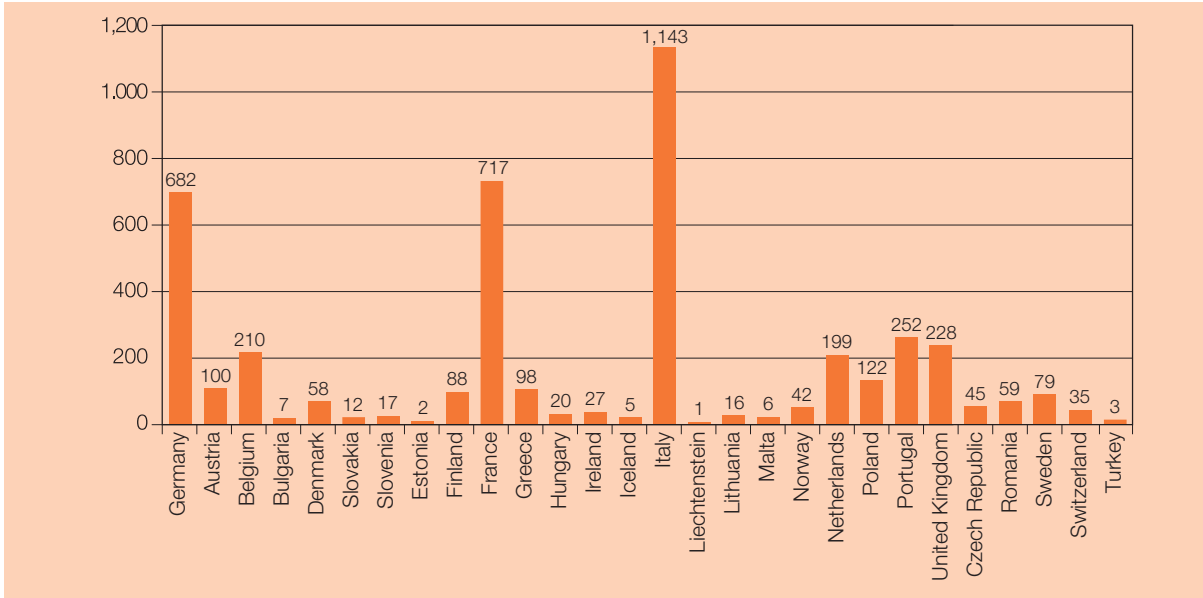
Table 2
ERASMUS programme: student mobility from other countries to Catalan universities, by country of origin.
2004-2005 academic year

Country	UB	UAB	UPC	UPF	UdG	UdL	URV	URL	UVic	UIC	Totals
Germany	230	197	86	86	7	11	18	24	6	17	682
Austria	32	34	16	7	-	1	5	5	-	-	100
Belgium	51	51	30	20	20	-	3	31	-	4	210
Bulgaria	-	1	4	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	7
Denmark	15	24	2	4	-	-	-	12	1	-	58
Slovakia	1	3	5	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	12
Slovenia	6	4	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17
Estonia	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Finland	19	31	16	1	2	6	1	10	2	-	88
France	176	226	136	71	20	18	26	31	10	3	717
Greece	36	37	14	3	6	2	-	-	-	-	98
Hungary	6	2	2	-	4	1	-	4	1	-	20
Ireland	8	8	-	2	4	-	5	-	-	-	27
Iceland	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	5
Italy	356	337	163	78	29	39	50	43	13	35	1,143
Liechtenstein	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Lithuania	4	-	5	-	2	1	4	-	-	-	16
Malta	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	-	-	-	6
Norway	7	9	7	2	2	-	1	14	-	-	42
Netherlands	69	44	23	32	1	3	-	19	6	2	199
Poland	39	27	9	2	4	10	11	2	6	12	122
Portugal	52	106	51	13	5	-	9	12	2	2	252
United Kingdom	64	68	18	47	1	8	7	7	8	-	228
Czech Republic	3	9	18	3	2	4	3	3	-	-	45
Romania	19	23	8	-	4	4	-	1	-	-	59
Sweden	17	22	22	15	-	-	-	3	-	-	79
Switzerland	-	14	-	15	-	-	-	6	-	-	35
Turkey	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	3
Totals	1,211	1,279	645	401	118	110	150	229	55	75	4,273

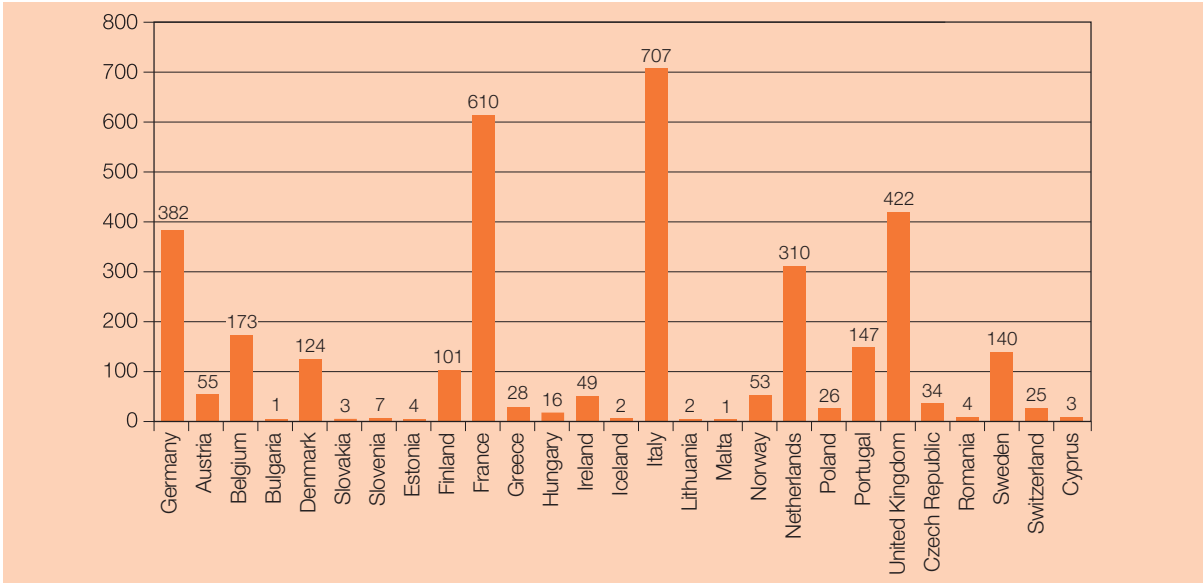
Table 3
ERASMUS programme: student mobility of Catalan universities, by host country.
2004-2005 academic year

Country	UB	UAB	UPC	UPF	UdG	UdL	URV	URL	UVic	UIC	Totals
Germany	90	88	97	55	14	5	16	9	7	1	382
Austria	12	12	19	5	1	1	5	-	-	-	55
Belgium	34	26	32	19	30	6	1	24	1	-	173
Bulgaria	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Denmark	34	25	38	7	6	3	4	5	2	-	124
Slovakia	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Slovenia	-	-	5	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	7
Estonia	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	4
Finland	15	39	17	3	6	13	3	3	2	-	101
France	141	138	172	69	25	10	26	24	2	3	610
Greece	11	11	1	-	2	1	2	-	-	-	28
Hungary	5	2	1	-	4	1	-	1	2	-	16
Ireland	8	15	6	4	10	-	4	2	-	-	49
Iceland	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Italy	159	230	105	69	31	38	22	39	2	12	707
Lithuania	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Malta	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Norway	17	11	14	1	3	1	3	3	-	-	53
Netherlands	103	83	47	30	13	9	8	11	6	-	310
Poland	9	8	1	-	1	4	1	1	1	-	26
Portugal	21	62	21	4	9	9	7	13	1	-	147
United Kingdom	81	106	65	95	4	6	18	22	24	1	422
Czech Republic	1	10	9	3	1	5	2	3	-	-	34
Romania	1	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	4
Sweden	29	31	47	22	3	2	3	3	-	-	140
Switzerland	-	9	-	15	-	-	1	-	-	-	25
Cyprus	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	3
Totals	775	909	700	401	167	118	129	163	50	17	3,429

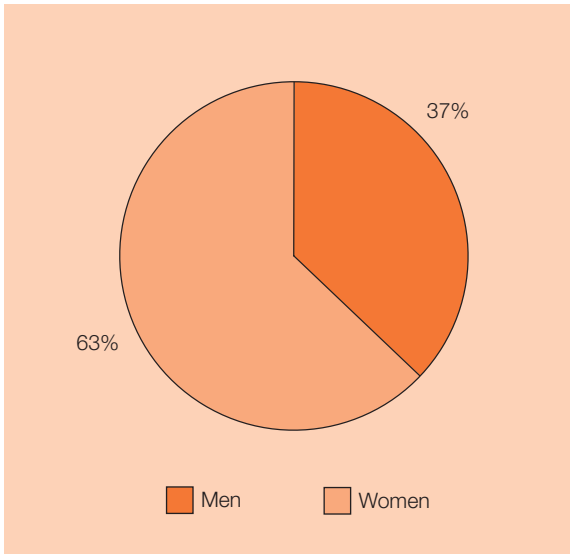
Graphic 2
Country of origin of students visiting Catalonia (2004-2005 academic year)



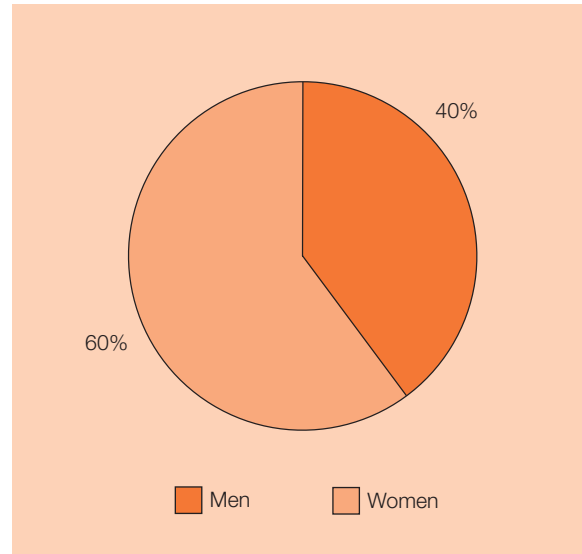
Graphic 3
Host countries of students from Catalonia (2004-2005 academic year)



Graphic 4
Student mobility from other countries to Catalan Universities, by gender. ERASMUS programme (2004-2005 academic year)



Graphic 5
Student mobility from Catalan Universities to other countries, by gender. ERASMUS programme (2004-2005 academic year)



countries visiting Spain was 25,511, of whom the largest group were the Italians (6,005), followed by the French (5,167) and the Germans (4,710). The number of Spanish students visiting other European countries was 20,819, of whom 4,631 chose Italy, 3,362 chose France, and 2,844 chose the United Kingdom. Spain was again a net recipient of mobility students within the programme.

In the 2004-2005 academic year two new countries were incorporated in the programme: Turkey and Liechtenstein.

3.3. Figures by autonomous communities

The figures of exchanges for the 2004-2005 academic year by autonomous communities (Table

6), show that Catalonia ranks third in the number of students visiting its universities, after Madrid and Andalusia, and second in the number of students visiting other European countries, after Madrid. However, in order to assess the relative weight of these exchanges for each autonomous community, the exchanges must be related to the number of students in each university system. This information can be seen in Table 7. In the 2004-2005 academic year, 1.79 of every 100 students

In the case of Catalonia, in the 2004-2005 academic year, 1.79 of every 100 students studied in other European countries.

Table 4
ERASMUS programme: Student mobility from Catalan universities, by area of study. 2004-2005 academic year

Area of study	Students from other countries who have studied at Catalan universities	Students from Catalan universities who have studied at universities in other countries
Sciences	204	253
Health Sciences	270	206
Social Sciences	1,709	1,151
Sport Management and Practice	55	22
Humanities	1,240	773
Technical	791	951
Unspecified	4	73
TOTAL	4,273	3,429

Table 5
ERASMUS programme: student mobility by countries. 2004-2005 academic year

Country	Students from other countries visiting Spain	Students from Spain visiting other European countries
Germany	4,710	2,509
Austria	646	331
Belgium	1,325	1,151
Bulgaria	48	27
Denmark	296	599
Slovakia	96	25
Slovenia	94	31
Estonia	43	14
Finland	508	547
France	5,167	3,362
Greece	413	173
Hungary	157	87
Ireland	271	545
Iceland	26	19
Italy	6,005	4,631
Latvia	21	5
Liechtenstein	4	0
Lithuania	81	19
Luxembourg	12	0
Malta	17	17
Norway	220	231
Netherlands	926	1,198
Poland	764	246
Portugal	989	1,130
United Kingdom	1,651	2,844
Czech Republic	354	222
Romania	316	76
Sweden	314	769
Turkey	32	1
Cyprus	5	10
TOTAL	25,511	20,819

studied in other European countries. The proportion is higher for Navarre, Aragon, the Valencian Community, Cantabria and Castilla y León. With regard to the proportion of foreign students in each autonomous community, Catalonia is slightly better situated at 2.18%, after the Valencian Community, Castilla y León and Aragon. The total relative impact, which gives an overview of European student mobility through the Erasmus programme, provides the total proportion of Catalan students visiting Europe and of foreign students visiting Catalan universities: 3.98% of all the students in the Catalan system. In this case Catalonia ranks fifth among the autonomous communities.

Table 6
Student mobility from other European countries to Spain
by autonomous communities
ERASMUS programme. 2004-2005 academic year

Autonomous community	Number of students	Percentage
Madrid	4,448	18.10 %
Andalucía	4,438	18.06 %
Catalonia	4,109	16.72 %
València	3,835	15.61 %
Castilla y León	2,162	8.80 %
Galicia	1,117	4.55 %
Basque Country	834	3.39 %
Aragón	787	3.20 %
Canary Islands	683	2.78 %
Murcia	544	2.21 %
Asturias	422	1.72 %
Castilla-la Mancha	297	1.21 %
Extremadura	296	1.20 %
Navarre	250	1.02 %
Cantabria	208	0.85 %
Balearic Islands	94	0.38 %
La Rioja	49	0.20 %
TOTAL	24,573	

4. Academic accreditation of the study period

Before starting the study period, the students must reach an agreement with their tutor on the work plan that they will carry out during the academic year. Within six weeks after reaching their destination, they can modify the work plan if changes arise in the conditions agreed with the host university.

The regulations of exchange programmes establish that participating students must be able to take at least 20 free-elective credits at the host

Student mobility from Spanish universities to other
European countries
ERASMUS programme. 2004-2005 academic year

Autonomous community	Number of students	Percentage
Madrid	4,215	20.25 %
Catalunya	3,371	16.19 %
València	3,029	14.55 %
Andalucía	2,970	14.27 %
Castilla y León	1,617	7.77 %
Basque Country	1,023	4.91 %
Galicia	993	4.77 %
Aragón	808	3.88 %
Canary Islands	572	2.75 %
Murcia	457	2.20 %
Navarre	431	2.07 %
Castilla-la Mancha	413	1.98 %
Extremadura	310	1.49 %
Asturias	265	1.27 %
Cantabria	211	1.01 %
Balearic Islands	89	0.43 %
La Rioja	45	0.22 %
TOTAL	20,819	

Table 7
Erasmus programme: student mobility by autonomous communities in relation to the total number of students of each community, 2004-2005 academic year.

Autonomous community*	Students visiting other EU countries	Total number of students in the autonomous community	% of students of the community participating in exchanges in the ERASMUS programme against the total number of students of the community	% of students from other European countries visiting the autonomous community in the ERASMUS programme against the total number of students of the autonomous community	% of students of the autonomous community and other European countries carrying out exchanges in the ERASMUS programme against the local number of students of the autonomous community
Madrid	4,215	238,590	1.77%	1.86%	3.63%
Catalonia	3,371	188,159	1.79%	2.18%	3.98%
València	3,029	139,792	2.17%	2.74%	4.91%
Andalucía	2,970	235,121	1.26%	1.89%	3.15%
Castilla y León	1,617	88,884	1.82%	2.43%	4.25%
Basque Country	1,023	62,596	1.63%	1.33%	2.97%
Galicia	993	79,074	1.26%	1.41%	2.67%
Aragón	808	34,009	2.38%	2.31%	4.69%
Canary Islands	572	46,274	1.24%	1.48%	2.71%
Murcia	457	38,732	1.18%	1.40%	2.58%
Navarre	431	16,810	2.56%	1.49%	4.05%
Castilla-la Mancha	413	28,292	1.46%	1.05%	2.51%
Extremadura	310	24,861	1.25%	1.19%	2.44%
Asturias	265	31,619	0.84%	1.33%	2.17%
Cantabria	211	11,260	1.87%	1.85%	3.72%
Illes Balears	89	12,431	0.72%	0.76%	1.47%
La Rioja	45	6,756	0.67%	0.73%	1.39%
UNED**		146,330	0.00%		
UOC**		33,307	0.00%		
Total for Spain	20,819	1,283,260	1.62%	1.91%	3.54%

* Students of the autonomous communities in face-to-face universities.

** Students of UNED and UOC (non-presencial universities) do not participate in the Erasmus Programme.

university. They may not take subjects at the host university that they have failed at the university of origin. At the end of their study period, the students must deliver a certificate with the list of the marks they have obtained to their university of origin.

5. Other mobility programmes organised by the European Commission¹

Though the ERASMUS programme is one of the best-known programmes in the European Union,

¹ Further information on the objectives, participation and requisites of the exchange programmes analysed above can be found on the web page of the Ministry of Innovation, Universities and Business under the heading "Universities": <http://www10.gencat.net/dursi/uk/un/estudiarfora.htm>

student mobility also includes other international mobility programmes whose aim is to contribute to a quality education and to foster the development of the international dimension in the field of education. Accordingly, the Catalan universities offer their students the possibility of participating in programmes that allow them to study and do practicals at universities outside Catalonia. The international relations offices of the universities manage and coordinate the exchanges in the framework of the programmes for which each university establishes collaboration agreements.

Without wishing to be exhaustive, below is a brief description of the most important mobility programmes offered by the European Commission to promote mobility of students and teaching staff at different levels of education.

Tempus

The Tempus programme promotes mobility of students and teaching staff between the higher education institutions of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Mediterranean countries that are members of the European Union. Its objectives are to allow students to go on work placement through cooperation between companies and universities, to promote life-long training and to provide support to the European dimension of vocational training systems.

Leonardo da Vinci

The Leonardo da Vinci programme promotes higher education and vocational training in Europe. Its objectives are to adapt the systems of education and training to life-long learning, to promote integration in employment and society through an investment in knowledge and skills,

to create an information society for everyone, and to foster mobility.

The countries participating in the programme are the fifteen members of the EU, plus the three members of the European Economic Area (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway), Cyprus, the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe (PECO: Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic and Romania), Malta and Turkey.

The Leonardo da Vinci programme aims to promote higher education and vocational training in Europe.

Erasmus Mundus

The aim of the Erasmus Mundus programme is to improve the quality of European higher education and to favour intercultural understanding through cooperation with third countries. It is intended to strengthen international links in higher education in order to allow university students from all over the world to engage in postgraduate study at European universities, and to encourage the outgoing mobility of European students towards third countries.

It is open to the 25 member states of the European Union, the candidate countries for accession to the European Union (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey), the countries of European Free Trade Association / European Economic Area and the rest of the countries of the world (third countries).

Alfa

Alfa is a programme of cooperation between higher education institutions of the European Union and Latin America. Its main objectives are to foster cooperation between higher education institutions of Europe and Latin America in the areas of institutional management and scientific training.

The participating countries are the member states of the European Union and the following eighteen countries of Latin America: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Youth for Europe

This is an education programme outside the formal and regulated structures that is aimed at persons between the ages of 15 and 25 and open to 31 European countries (the member countries of the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and the candidate countries for accession in the future: Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey). It offers young people the possibility of going on transnational exchanges within the community with the associated countries, or with third countries, and encourages individual volunteer work and activities of support related to youth.

6. Advantages of mobility

In addition to the advantages mentioned above, another factor that leads students to participate in the mobility programmes is the desire to learn a language in the host country. The knowledge of

the language of the country facilitates communication and integration in the host university system, and is considered to be especially important by the Commission for Universities and Research of the Ministry of Innovation, Universities and Enterprise of the Generalitat of Catalonia. Therefore, in the framework of the offer of subsidies for developing the language policy programmes of universities, an annual assignment is planned for cultural and linguistic induction activities of students from other countries who visit Catalan universities. Furthermore, one of the requisites for obtaining mobility grants for the Erasmus programme and others awarded by the Commission for Universities and Research of the Ministry of Innovation, Universities and Enterprise of the Government of Catalonia is the certification of sufficient knowledge of the language of teaching in the host country.

The European university systems now face a new challenge: the consolidation of the European Higher Education Area, a project that emerged from the Bologna Declaration signed by the ministers of Education of 29 European countries at a meeting in Bologna in 1999. This declaration marked the start of a process of construction of the European Higher Education Area, of which all the member states of the European Union, and other European countries that will soon become members, form part.

This process, which should conclude in 2010, involves establishing a new structure of university studies that will be divided into undergraduate and postgraduate level. It also involves the application of a new teaching methodology in which student mobility can play a fundamental role as a system for improving learning. It must therefore be promoted in order to achieve a

considerable increase in the number of students participating in exchange programmes.

7. Mobility promotion policies of the European Union and future prospects

One of the objectives of the Bologna Declaration is that this process should be developed harmoniously and through agreement, in a context in which institutions and organisations will hold meetings and seminars in different parts of Europe in order to establish a common education policy. The aim of this is to unify the aspects that will improve the transparency and comparability of university qualifications within the European Union.

In order to achieve and guarantee the promotion of mobility for students as well as for the teaching, research and administrative staff of higher education establishments, international, national and regional institutions must improve the current policies concerning grants and subsidies. The new Lifelong Learning Programme for 2007-2013 is a step forward in this direction. It proposes to include the Comenius programme for school teaching, the Erasmus programme for university teaching, the Leonardo da Vinci programme for

work placement, and the Grundtvig programme for adult education.

The Lifelong Learning Programme emphasises the need to improve the requirements of the ERASMUS university charter, which should place emphasis on the quality of the organisation of mobility, recognition of studies, agreements for learning, language training and services to students. The new programme provides special, more flexible conditions with higher grants for students registered in interuniversity master's degrees developed within the framework of the European Higher Education Area. It plans to promote the mobility of the teaching and administrative staff of higher education establishments in the framework of the European Higher Education Area. Finally, it plans to improve and increase cooperation between universities and companies by reorganising the Leonardo da Vinci programme and evaluating the possibility of including it in the new ERASMUS programme.

This new approach to mobility programmes should help to improve and increase student mobility in the European Union, in order to guarantee the adaptation of the university studies to the new structure that is taking shape within the European Higher Education Area.