

Internationalisation at The Law Faculty, Copenhagen University.
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Every place is within reach. We do business all over the world. The technical developments have made fast communication not only possible but also uncomplicated.

It is therefore of utmost importance that we learn to communicate with each other, get an understanding of different languages, backgrounds and cultures.

In Europe internationalisation within universities was kick started in the late eighties. In 1987 The European Commission launched The Erasmus Programme, and in 1988 The Nordic Council decided on a similar programme called Nord-Plus, designed especially for the Scandinavian countries.

ERASMUS/ SOCRATES

The major thrust of Erasmus can be described as follows:

- To promote regional mobility – within Europe of students and teachers
- To support temporary study abroad
- To demand recognition of grades earned abroad as a key criterion for granting support.
- To require networks among universities (Inter-University Co-operation Programmes) and thus creating cooperation among departments and faculties

Erasmus was a partial and incentive funding scheme. Students were awarded grants to cover the additional costs of study abroad and it provided an incentive to networks which received grants for institutional support to be complemented by the networks own resources.

After 7 years the programme was evaluated, and in 1995 ERASMUS became part of the new SOCRATES programme.

Within the Socrates-scheme the financial support has been changed. The students are still receiving a grant, although smaller, but the networks have to function without resources from the programme. The experience of the first years has been so positive that the old partners in the programme are still partners with no grants for cooperation and smaller grants for the students. This has given the European Commission the possibility to re-allocate a major part of the funding to new partners, the coming members of The European Community. A new programme called ERASMUS-MUNDUS starts in the autumn of 2004. It will enable the European universities to establish partnerships with universities all over the world – with some financial support from the programme.

The Bologna process

In 1999 the Bologna process in Europe started. The purpose of the Bologna Declaration is to create a European area for higher education before 2010 for the students and graduates to be able to move freely between the European educational institutions and the national labour markets.

One essential element in the process is to create an educational structure within the states that are if not identical then at least comparable. Roughly speaking the Bologna declaration operates with an overall educational structure with two levels of higher education, undergraduate / first-cycle and graduate /second-cycle.

Another important element is transparency within the educational system which will make it possible to compare similarities and dissimilarities. In Denmark we have started with a “Qualification Framework”, describing the different grades systematically and especially each grades`final qualifications and competences. Thus there is now an addition to the students grading papers, called a Diploma Supplement”.

For every university involved in international exchanges or other forms of international co-operation it is of utmost importance to describe carefully the competences which the student has obtained by passing an exam or completing a degree.

Copenhagen Law School

Since Denmark is a small country and our language, Danish, is only spoken in Denmark and only understood in Denmark, and to some extent also in the rest of Scandinavia, the Faculty was very interested in giving the students the opportunity to study abroad.

In 1989 our first 8 students went abroad to law schools at European universities, in 1995 55 students, and in 2003 158 law students went abroad.

In the beginning of the nineties we joined networks within the ERASMUS –programme and we went into bilateral exchange agreements with universities in The US, Canada and later on in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong and latest in Chile.

To attract international students to Copenhagen we developed an English-taught law programme at the Faculty. In 1990 we offered 3 courses each semester and in 2003 we offered 41 courses. A full-time study-load for a student is 6 courses per year. In addition to the English-taught courses we also offer 1 or 2 courses in German and French.

In 2003 we received more than 200 international students from all over the world.

How are our students qualified to go abroad?

The Danish school education has supplied our students with quite good language qualifications, 8-9 years of English and 4-5 years of German or French at least.

The professional law programme in Denmark consists of a 5-year programme; 3 years to obtain a bachelor's degree, followed by a 2-year master programme.

Our Faculty requires that the students have completed their bachelor degree/first degree before they can go on an exchange.

Moreover, the students are offered a course in Legal English or French, and in the last year 300 Danish law students and 100 international students have attended such a course.

How do we encourage our students to go abroad?

We make sure that the students from the very beginning of their studies are informed of the possibilities of going on exchange, through articles in the faculty magazine about the partner universities, students on exchange or international students at the faculty.

We have meetings with the students informing them of all aspects of an exchange and the students receive any guidance needed.

Courses passed at a partner university are recognized as a part of the Danish degree and the Faculty gives each student on an exchange a small grant. It is also well known among the students that it is highly regarded by their future employers that they have been studying abroad.

Is it possible to take part in the internationalisation without going abroad?

We cannot replace the experience of a year or even a semester in another country, at another university.

- For those of our students who are not able to go on exchange, we encourage them to attend one or more of the international law courses.
- Besides the subject they will meet the international students at those courses.
- About 40 % of the students in the International courses are Danish students.
- We invite international law professors to teach his or her speciality for one semester or as an intensive course for half a semester.
- We encourage our students to take part in the international Moot-court competitions of which our Faculty takes part in 6 different competitions each year.

- And finally, we encourage our students to undertake internships abroad, that may be at an international organisation or at an embassy for example.

The perspective

At the Law Faculty at Copenhagen University we aim at giving as many of our law students as possible the chance of obtaining international experience and international qualifications.

It is our experience that the students returning from studying abroad have gained qualifications both professionally as well as personally in many areas.

The ERASMUS evaluation shows that 75% of the former ERASMUS students felt that their study abroad experience had helped them getting their first job.

A substantial proportion of the ERASMUS students were mobile internationally, 21 % stayed in the host country after the ERASMUS-supported period for further study, and 18 % were employed outside their home country 5 years after graduation.

Source reference: The ERASMUS Experience

Major Findings of the ERASMUS Evaluation Research Project

By Ulrich Teichler and Friedhelm Maiworm.

Qualifications Framework