



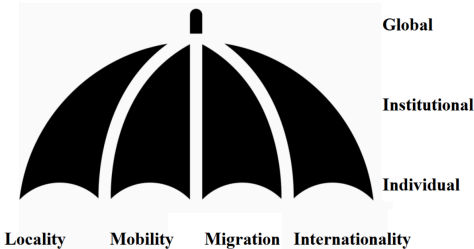
Disrupted Paths: The Impact of COVID-19 on the Academic Mobility of Erasmus Mundus Students

with a focus on the case of EMMIR

INTRODUCTION

In the first quarter of 2020, almost 200,000 Erasmus+ program participants all over the world found themselves in a *stalemate position*, as their mobility was stalled by the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study investigates the multidimensional effects of the pandemic on Erasmus Mundus program participants, focusing on the European Master in Migration and Intercultural Relations (EMMIR).

MULTI-LEVEL UMBRELLA OF TRANSNATIONAL ACADEMIC MOBILITY



“This is a very **u n f o r t u n a t e** situation, there’s **n o p o i n t i n** blaming anyone. **The best thing is to stay as open as possible and offer possibilities. Offer o n l i n e a n d p h y s i c a l [c l a s s e s] both.**” - Pedro, EMMIR cohort 9

Main Findings: The Importance of Firsthand Experiences

- While digital classes and COVID-19 related lockdowns might increase academic quality -at least in the short-term- the agenda of Erasmus programs in granting physical cultural exposure to students surpasses mere academic gains.
- The interviews revealed that the emotional and psychological well-being of students (and others involved in Erasmus programs, including administrators and professors) has been negatively affected by the uncertainties of the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented crisis unlike any challenges faced in the past 40 years since Erasmus+ programs started. As the world faces ‘new realities’ in 2020, the importance of preparing for crises and having counselling services and similar emergency support infrastructures in place in the context of academic mobility programs has become evident.
- The interviews demonstrated that in spite of obstacles to their mobility paths and lack of proper crisis support infrastructure, EMMIR students, as a sample of Erasmus students have shown resilience in facilitating their mobility paths, coming up with alternatives and finding support systems within themselves and/or through other sources.

Methods and Material

- Theoretical analysis
- semi-structured in-depth interviews, conducted throughout the course of the pandemic
- Participant observation