



AUTHORS

Gabriela BILIGA-NISIPEANU

CONTACT

For further information, please contact us at:

EMAIL:

ahe-ro@unibuc.ro

WEBSITE:

ahe-ro.unibuc.ro

This paper is supported by a grant from the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research (CNCS – UEFISCDI), for the project "Access to Higher Education in Post-Communist Romania" (PN-III-P4-PCE2021-0981)

ACCESS TO INTERNATIONAL MOBILITIES – EXPERIENCES FROM ROMANIA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE TEMPUS AND ERASMUS PROGRAMS

A b s t r a c t

Romania became eligible for ERASMUS funds in 1997, together with other candidate countries in Central and Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary). However, this was not a completely new experience as students and academics in these countries already had some prior mobility experience within the TEMPUS program. Following the formal accession into the program, the first flow of students was sent in 1998/1999, when 1,250 Romanian students became mobile, most of whom chose France as their destination (406 participants). Given this framework and the complexity of this milestone, our intention for this year was to assess the quantitative presence of Romania within the ERASMUS Program, identify flows and patterns occurring over the last 25 years, and discuss any particularities that might appear compared with the European trends and other countries within the region. Some of the results from this analysis are given below.

In 2020/2021, Romania reached the benchmark of 100,000 ERASMUS ERASMUS participants. However, this accounts for approximately 2% of all ERASMUS mobile students. Across the entire program, the countries with the highest share of participants remained constant since its inception, with France (747,120 participants), Germany (730,301 participants), Spain (712,050 participants), and Italy (564,246 participants) dominating the flows, and representing over 50% of all participants. Poland is the country with the best performance among former communist countries, becoming in recent years a net importer of ERASMUS students.

In terms of destinations, most of the Romanian participants chose a French institution (20,848 students). Nonetheless, in more recent years, there was a decline in the preference of students, with Hungary replacing France as the top preference. Other destinations include Germany (11,243), Italy (11,165), and Spain (10,604). It is interesting to note that these are not only countries that generally attract large flows of ERASMUS students but also countries that host a significant Romanian diaspora. Overall, within the larger framework of the program, Spain, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Italy are the most preferred destinations for a semester/ year abroad.

Depending on their student flows and the balance between incoming and outgoing students, we could conclude that Romania is an exporting country, given that overall outgoing values are higher than incoming values for the entire participation in ERASMUS. We could observe a slight improvement in the performance of Romania as a study destination. To this point, if in 1998/1999, 11 Romanian students went abroad for every international student coming to Romania, by 2019/2020 this ratio dropped to 2.24. Finally, Romania has, with most countries participating in the program, asymmetric flows, meaning that it sends more students than it receives from those destinations. 33,947 students choose Romania as a study destination.

Concerning the performance of Romania within the larger region of Central and Eastern Europe, in terms of quantitative results, Poland was the highest contributor, while Romania came third. The Czech Republic came second, with 119,208 participants, outnumbering Romania, even though the latter has almost double the population of the first. More outstanding, given if we consider the overall population, smaller countries of the region were the most successful. For this, the cases of Lithuania and Slovakia are representative. Romania has a 6.8 times larger population than Lithuania and a 3.5 times larger population than Slovakia, but it sent just about double the number of participants. Regarding this situation, although we do not want to insist on the idea of growth potential, but most probably, given Romania's population, it has not yet been reached. Furthermore, we know that not only the population size matters but also tertiary education enrollment, and because Romania still lags on this indicator, it might take more time to see better overall results.