EUROPEAN STUDENT CARD INITIATIVE

European Student Card Initiative Stakeholder Governance

Looking back at the Erasmus Without Paper forums in 2022

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Prepared by the EWP+ consortium

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About this report

This short report provides an overview of all Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) forums meetings in 2022 and summarises the most important discussion points and findings. In total, 27 EWP governance meetings took place in 2022, bringing together over a hundred stakeholder instituions, organisations and experts in the field of digitalisation in higher education.

Business Process Owners Forum

The forum represents International Relations Officers in higher education institutions. It is comprised of two groups, the Standing Expert Group (nominated by Erasmus+ National Agencies and the project partners) and the EWP User Groups (open discussion forum on Slack). These are the main drivers of Erasmus+ student mobility and the main stakeholders of Erasmus Without Paper as the end-users. Their needs, analysis and feedback are vital for the success of Erasmus Without Paper.

The Standing Expert Group met three times in 2022 where the following topics were discussed:

- Mandatory business requirements for inter-institutional agreements and learning agreements. The purpose of the two documents is to establish a shared understanding about business processes in international relation offices among developers on top of the technical specifications of EWP. The result is available in the technical GitHub documentation for **inter-institutional agreements** and **learning agreements.**

- The EWP state of play for inter-institutional agreements and learning agreements (also see the **EWP Assessment report**) was discussed. Colleagues from the Standing Expert Group support making it more transparent for them to see if a connection is facing problems with exchanging data. This will help end-users navigate EWP especially in the transition phase where the readiness of systems can be uneven.

- Discussion about usefulness of targets to digitalise Erasmus+ processes. Colleagues are in favour of keeping targets to make sure the community is moving forward together step by step. However, it is important to make sure that data exchanges are working without any problems before setting a timeline for institutions to adopt the new digital processes. It is also important to make it clear how the ECHE-monitoring is conducted and how institutions that encounter technical problems are supported.

- Approaches to change and terminate Inter-institutional agreements to inform technical solutions for the Infrastructure Forum. Colleagues are in favour of having a simple approach for changing mobility numbers in inter-institutional agreements, especially if the change is exceptional for a given academic year. Higher education institutions have different needs for this feature in EWP, ranging from having high-

level of flexibility regarding mobility numbers to any change requiring a formal amendment and institutional approval. Several options were discussed on how to meet these different needs in EWP which are feeding into the technical discussions at the level of the Infrastructure Forum

- The colleagues exchanged ideas about what kind of official guidelines from DG EAC could be issued to increase the mutual understanding and interpretation of processes supported by EWP.

Infrastructure Forum

This forum represents the EWP technical community: IT officers in higher education institutions and third-party software providers. Their cooperation is essential to ensure that EWP is implemented across all IT systems used by higher education institutions and with the same standards.

Thirteen meetings took place throughout 2022 bringing together the technical stakeholders where the following took place:

- Summarising technical discussions in **GitHub** and concluding open issues is a recurrent topic in these meetings. Technical discussions are concluded through the decision-making process at the Infrastructure Forum where developers can vote on different options to inform the overall technical development of EWP.

- Discussions about possible and necessary changes to APIs and technical options to accommodate Erasmus+ programme requirements and common business processes and practices based on community discussions through the BPO forum and the EWP User Groups.

- Joint reflection on implementation timelines for agreed changes and new APIs.

- Joint preparation of the technical workshops for developers held in Warsaw in September

- Discussions on the **new joining process for EWP** using the Registration Portal and its implications for technical stakeholders, the **interoperability reinforcement plan** and its impact on providers, the approach towards EWP statistics (resulting in the **EWP Stats porta**l) and the technical approach towards centralised EWP error logging.

Digital Officers Forum

This forum represents Erasmus+ National Agencies and National Authorities in EU Member States and third countries associated to the Erasmus+ Programme. Their focus is to support higher education institutions in their country to implementing EWP.

Eight meetings took place throughout 2022:

- At the first meeting, both the EWP+ consortium (LOT1) and the European Student Card (LOT2) colleagues presented their work plan. The role of the Digital Officers

was discussed. They have a vital role to play in communication about the European Student Card Initiative

- EWP+ communication and outreach highlighting the upcoming events and communication is a recurrent topic in the meeting with Digital Officers

- Important milestones from both LOTs were presented at the DO meeting:

    - EWP Connectivity

    - **Interoperability Reinforcement Plan**

    - **EWP Stats portal**

    - **EWP assessment report**

    - Formal Note for Directors of Erasmus+ National Agencies on the State of Play of the European Student Card Initiative published in October

    - European Student Card country fiches

    - **European Student Card survey**

    - **European Student Card Initiative Portal**

- An update summarising the discussions in other governance bodies was presented at the last meeting of 2022.

University and Students Forum

This forum represents University Networks, European University Alliances and Students. It plays an important role in consulting on the priorities for future and to further enhance communication about the initiative.

The first meeting of the forum took place in November:

- Participants shared their feedback about state of play and perspectives regarding the future steps in the digitisation timeline.

- Previous deadlines set for the implementation of EWP targeted universities too much while the main risk factor has been the technical implementation of third-party providers and in-house systems. There was general agreement among participants to adopt a new strategy where technical implementation is tested first before setting a target for the end-users to adopt digital administrative processes.

- Participants agreed that despite the challenges faced, the importance of digitalisation is not in question. There is clear consensus that moving to a digital environment is necessary and a shared effort by the entire higher education community.

- Several participants remarked that additional effort might be needed to illustrate more clearly the synergies between the European Student Card Initiative as a whole and the development of European University Alliances.

Advisory Board

This forum consists of external experts from around the globe in education and digital technologies. They consult on the project vision, community outreach and IT solutions to ensure that EWP takes into account the latest trends in digitalisation.

The first meeting of the forum took place in November. Despite the different time zones most members were present in this meeting where they reflected on the following topics:

- Authentication of users: MyAcademicID vs. or in complement with other possibilities such as EU-login was discussed

- Interoperability across Europe (the push is also visible in other sectors)

- The possible synergies with other European Policies

- The need for simplicity for the users (User Experience as the point of origin)

- Data models and the importance of standards and benchmarks

- The need for users (and the EU as a whole) to embrace change

- The possible impact of the EU Wallet

A discussion ensued on the pros and cons of centralised vs peer-to-peer IT solutions but this and the other topics covered warrant more in-depth discussion.

Stakeholders and Business Governance Board

The key goal of the Stakeholders and Business Governance Board is to enable feedback from all main governance bodies to inform the steering, planning, decision-making and evaluation of all activities across EWP. It is responsible for monitoring the overall progress and providing input to the European Commission Steering Committee, which is the highest decision-making body for EWP and other components of the European Student Card Initiative.

The first meeting on 1 December centred around an overview of 2022 and planning for 2023. Round-up from other governance bodies and conclusion of the Board:

- the Advisory Board stressed the need for agreed standards (could even be global standards)

- The university networks can play a vital role in helping disseminate useful information. The communication with the European University Alliances and input from students can and must be improved

- The Business Process Owners saw a positive evolution in terms of using inter-institutional agreements via EWP. They indicated that there needs to be a delicate balance between the setting of targets and the need to prepare for clear timelines. The Infrastructure Forum succeeded in having technical issues discussed in a broader community. It was clear there is some tension between the need for further development and the resources available to the developers. Developers also stressed the need for stability.

- The Digital Officers appreciated the DG EAC note issued in October. A considerable number of HEIs still experiences problems with specific nodes. Some DOs regret the lack of a negotiation tool for the inter-institutional agreements.

It was stressed that it is important to fix all key problems in early 2023. The main goal is to rebuild trust and to integrate the higher education institutions that have experienced difficulties to go digital.

Board members argued that nominations would be a big added value for little effort. In some ways, it would have been better not to have tackled inter-institutional agreements first, as they are far more complicated. Digital learning agreements have in fact led to efficiency gains.