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Throughout the first International Staff Training Week held at Charles University from March 7 until March 11, 2016, sharing ideas and practices was a key theme. On Thursday morning representatives had the opportunity to share strategies which they use in their universities to improve the experience of both incoming and outgoing exchange students. The presentations were highly useful as they allowed for a broader perspective on the Erasmus exchange. As an Erasmus student myself it was fascinating to see the behind the scenes of how Erasmus is organised. Each presentation had useful ideas that could be taken forward and applied to different universities.

Ester Aventin from the University of Sussex discussed '*How to reach students and increase the number of outgoing mobility*'. This presentation covered how the University of Sussex informs their students about study abroad opportunities. Ms Aventin had a lot of practical advice, for instance making sure that emails were concise, clear and graphic. She also encouraged the use of competitions with photos or material submitted by current exchange students which could be used as promotional material with the students consent.

Terry Amsoms from the University of Antwerp talked about how the Faculty of Law hosts its exchange students. The events such as study trips to Brussels and The Hague run by the Faculty seemed to really enrich the experience of students. The 'graduation' ceremony in which exchange students receive their Transcript of Records with a reception afterwards seems like a very sweet way to finish an exchange program.

Rachel Cuddihy for the University of Warwick presented how the incoming exchange and international students are welcomed. The University of Warwick is quite cosmopolitan with 35% of its student population coming from abroad. A five day orientation week allows participants to get to know the campus as well as settle in. Each student is allocated a personal tutor from their department who helps them with module selection and other academic queries. Day trips are run throughout the year to major cities in the UK including Oxford and Cambridge. Fostering an international community is strongly encouraged at Warwick with the World@Warrick society having over 2000 members and a Go Global week which showcases all the things on offer. The aim of the week is to enable students to explore the world without leaving the campus. The week allows international students to showcase their country and aims to inspire home students to explore the world, possibly even to take part in an exchange program.

Lisa Lechner of the Ludwig Maximilian University (LMU) in Munich talked about the winter school which offers a four week intensive program, in English, to medical students in the areas of neurology and oncology. The program offers clinical training, lectures from leading experts and communication workshop. Each incoming student is paired with a buddy who helps them settle in as well as on the wards. The close interaction between both groups is very beneficial for their medical education and personal development.

Nadine Stäcker from the University of Hamburg talked about intercultural competency. In a global and increasingly connected world cultural awareness is an important part of life as well as business. The University of Hamburg have created a certificate in intercultural competencies which their students can obtain whilst studying. They are hoping to expand the program to incoming exchange students and staff. The certificate has four main components, a compulsory course of intercultural competencies as well as three elective components, one of which can be study stay abroad. Apart from this program the University of Hamburg has other important programs which support a multicultural campus. For example the PIASTA society, responsible also for the intercultural competency certificate, runs a regular language café. An interesting point which was made during the presentation was the importance of supporting staff mobility. Though it is important to focus on both incoming and outgoing students, by allowing staff mobility in staff training weeks and language courses the university helps them remain more motivated and allows for new ideas. This point was particularly valuable considering the context of the staff training week whose aim was to bring together and share ideas and practices.

Helena Hradilová from the Erasmus Club of the Faculty of Arts presented Europe Meets School, originally *Europa macht Schule*, a voluntary educational program coming from Germany and run at Charles University since 2008. The program allows exchange students to go into schools and give a presentation about their culture. The aim for the pupils of the participating schools is to learn more about the wider world around them and in this sense gain also from the student mobility in Europe. For example in one past presentation of Europe Meets School a Greek student talked about Greek mythology and then asked the pupils in the partner Basic Arts School to create their own mythical creatures. The program has been running since 2006 in Germany and since 2008 in Prague, even winning the 2nd place of the Charlemagne

Youth Prize in 2012. The enthusiasm with which Helena Hradilová talked about the program really showed how the sharing of culture is an enriching experience for all. Especially for the children who remember their first experience a year after the first visit.

Agnieszka Vojta from the University of Konstanz discussed a program run in Konstanz which aims to help migrants and their children settle in quickly. The program is more than just a language exchange as it aims to help with culture shock and help migrants to navigate in their new homes. The program harnesses the international community of the University by allowing students, if possible from the same home country, to act as mentors. They help out not only with the language but practical matters where they may act more as an interpreter than translator. For instance when enrolling newly arrived children into local schools students can help interpret the language as well as the cultural space between the two. It can help if the student understands the home education system and therefore can explain the new local system better.

These presentations were enriching and really highlighted what Erasmus and student exchange is all about. It is about cooperation, sharing of skills and developing an enriching education for the young people of today.

Margot Abbott studies Anthropology at Durham University and here at the Faculty of Education. Margot's interests are in the arts, entrepreneurship and exploring. Whilst in Prague she hopes to learn the language, make the most of her travel pass and meet new people from all over Europe and the world. She looks forward to sharing her experiences, via the iForum, with you.

[International Staff Training Week](#)