



# Implementing EWP: Estonian University of life sciences

“Exchanging paper documents  
is simply not reasonable  
anymore”

Location: Tartu, Estonia

Students: 3 080 (2022)

EWP Stats (02/2023)

IAs approved: 35%

LAs (out) approved: 83%

LAs (in) approved: 98%

System: SoleMove

The EWP project, part of the European Student Card Initiative, is a prime example of European cooperation. A multi-stakeholder collaboration aiming to simplify the administrative procedures and reduce the burden on Higher Education Institutions, and students by digitally exchanging information, boosting student and staff mobility for all.

Institutions participating in the Erasmus Programme play a crucial role in the process of connecting to the Erasmus Without Paper network, either via the EWP Dashboard, their in-house system or via a third party system.

During the years to come, the EWP+ consortium aims to provide further support for HEIs implementing the digitalisation roadmap. But we also want to highlight the accomplishments and success stories from HEIs that are already able to enjoy the benefits of the European Student Card Initiative.

Today, we are visiting in the Estonian University of Life Sciences in Tartu, which is connected to the EWP network for both inter-institutional agreements (IIA) and online learning agreements (LA) via SoleMove. We are meeting with Karoli Kõiv, who is an international relations officer and responsible for the EWP implementation at her HEI.

## State of play

### Is your institution approving IIAs via EWP?

Karoli: We are prepared and ready to do everything via EWP, so it really depends on the partner. We use SoleMove for both processes. In Estonia, the HEI community is split between Dashboard and SoleMove. We did use Dashboard before, and switched to SoleMove in 2021.

### Is your institution signing LAs via EWP?

Karoli: Yes, we can sign LAs for both our outgoing and incoming students. I think we sign around 80-90 percent of our LAs digitally. The completion rate is higher for LAs than IIAs. Again, this has to do with the readiness of the partners with whom we are exchanging students.

## How do you see the state of EWP evolving at your institution?

Karoli: The mobilities are centralised at our university. I manage most facets of the mobility process, and I also have to responsibly inform people. The only other people who have really been involved in EWP, are the three colleagues who are confirming the LAs.

We were using the EWP Dashboard in the past. A few third-party providers approached us with their mobility software. We opted for SoleMove because we felt they could provide better one-on-one support, and many of our regional partners in Estonia, Finland and Sweden use that system.

## How has the interaction been with your provider/EWP support staff?

Karoli: At first, we had a very good interaction with SoleMove regarding EWP. They try to explain everything very detailed. I have called them many many times (laughs), but they are very patient and helpful. SoleMove organised a client day in February 2023. It was an excellent opportunity to meet some of the other HEIs using the same provider software.

Lately, things have been more difficult. EWP things usually work but when they don't, it's quite inconvenient to have to e-mail SoleMove about every issue and then wait for an e-mail back. We feel that the system or platform providers should communicate these things between themselves instead of us having to discuss it with our partner.

## Success factors and experiences

### What was the biggest challenge for establishing your EWP-connection? How did you overcome it?

Karoli: Because of the negative messages surrounding EWP (connections not working, etc.), we stopped using it for a while. Another thing that slowed down the implementation across the community, is the mixed message providers shared with their clients. Some said everything was working, others said EWP was not ready yet to be used. This created a lot of confusion.



Sometimes I feel like I sound like my grandmother, but it was a difficult learning process to understand the correct order for all the steps related to IIAs. For staff at smaller universities, this work comes on top of your daily workload. We do not have additional staff that can take on the implementation. I hope that once everyone has been through this process for a first time, we will start to see the benefits.

#### **What were some of the success factors that supported the implementation at your HEI?**

Karoli: What makes it easier for us, is that I can make all the decisions myself. Before, our rector had to sign everything manually. Now, I also have the authority to sign IIAs. I cannot imagine the workload for faculties if they had to sign and process all documents themselves.

I initiate all the agreements, and I check incoming agreements for mistakes or oversights. For our university, this is the easiest approach and I can make sure I provide correct information and proper agreements to my colleagues.

#### **Do you have tips for your colleagues on how they can better benefit from EWP?**

Karoli: I feel some of us were very naïve. When you hear digitisation, you think it will make everything easier, not thinking about the journey or the amount of work. If that would have been clearer from the start, we could have prepared better. We could have asked for more support, additional staff or an intern, preferably with a tech background (laughs).

I would say to colleagues or people getting started with EWP, be aware of the work and effort it takes, and make enough resources available for your staff to perform the implementation of EWP.

#### **Vision on digitisation**

##### **Why do you think it is important to connect to the EWP-Network for the university?**

Karoli: First of all, it's what we have promised to do to receive the ECHE. But I think in the future, when everyone is connected to the network and the APIs work and everyone knows

***“In the future EWP will significantly reduce the paperwork connected to the programme and will make things easier.”***

what they're doing, it will significantly reduce the paperwork connected to the programme and will make things easier and exchanging paper documents is simply not reasonable at this point anymore. But we're far from this at the moment.

#### **What new priorities do you feel EWP should tackle in the future?**

Karoli: That is a big question, I have to think about it. It would be easier to think about the future if all HEIs were capable of using EWP for IIAs and LAs. That should be the first priority before we look any further. I hope that once everyone has gone through the process of understanding all these mobility processes via EWP, we will start to feel the benefits. I understand things could be easier and a lot faster if it is digitalised, now we just need to get there.

One thing that is been a struggle from the beginning, is that we often do not feel heard. We complain and send messages to our national agency, but they cannot really help us. All initiatives where we can interact directly with the consortium, with DG EAC, our provider or other HEIs, are welcome and contribute to better communication

#### **What factors would make EWP impact even more positively on students?**

Karoli: If students could easily choose a university, apply, sign their learning agreement, grant agreement, receive their transcript at the end of their stay, etc on one platform, then they would simply have a much smoother mobility process and would have more time to enjoy their time and have to stress much less about what they need to do for the paperwork.



Aerial view of the main building. © The Estonian University of Life Sciences