



Implementing EWP: University of Iceland

“Digitisation is the way forward, we never considered it to be optional”

Location: Reykjavík, Iceland
Students: 14,000 (2022)

EWP Stats (02/2023)

IAs approved: 12%

LAs (out) approved: 46%

LAs (in) approved: 60%

System: EWP Dashboard

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 the University of Iceland, which connects to the EWP network via the EWP Dashboard, for both inter-institutional agreements and online learning agreements. We are meeting with Nanna Teitsdóttir, who is Project Manager at the International Division.

State of play

Is your institution approving IIAs via Erasmus?

Nanna: We use EWP for both LAs and IIAs. We have used EWP for LAs for over three years. Using the IIA manager is something more recent (August 2021). Our intention is to renew all IIAs digitally, but that has not been possible for some partners. It has been a bit of a headache but things are working much better now than they did a few months ago. Given that most universities experience similar issues, they are very flexible to make sure students are able to leave on Erasmus.

Is your institution approving LAs via Erasmus?

Nanna: Yes. There are still some incoming students who join us with paper-based LAs. When partners cannot receive LAs from our outgoing students, we still set everything up digitally. The students then download a copy after the faculty coordinator has signed the final version of the learning agreement.

We try to make it as manageable for students as possible, as we realise it is quite hard to understand all the paperwork. Still, there are definitely some changes that would make it easier for students to manage it themselves.

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

Nanna: We are connected via the EWP Dashboard, and we have been using it for OLAs since 2019. In the beginning, it was only for a small group of students who were willing to participate in the experiment.

There were definitely a lot of hiccups, and there was no ESCI Service Desk at the time. So we were sending emails to the Consortium, asking about fixing things, and not getting a lot of replies. The support options have improved a lot over the years, and we try to make use of them as often as possible.

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

Nanna: Our university has been on board with EWP from the beginning. You rarely receive a programme that works perfectly right away. There are always going to be issues, and we saw it as an opportunity to influence the adjustments that were inevitable going to be made during the course of the project.

Currently, we are using the EWP Dashboard for all Erasmus-related mobilities as well as our own application system to meet the needs of all new types of opportunities in the area of mobilities and internships.

How well informed do you feel the staff of your institution is about EWP?

Nanna: For outgoing mobilities, the LAs are approved at the faculty level, not in the International Division. So, a lot of people are quite aware of EWP+ and the changes it brings. We get a lot of questions from the faculties regarding the state of play and ongoing struggles. But we do never give them the option of doing it another way. We think it is important to send a clear message about the way forward.

Success factors and experiences

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

Nanna: We mainly struggled with partners not being connected to any system. So, some students were using paper-based LAs, while others enjoyed the benefits of the digital LAs. The connection between the Dashboard and other systems has been unpredictable. Especially with certain third party providers. This caused issues as we have not always been able to provide the support the students need.

Another challenge was using the bulk import function for the IIA Manager. The function worked for a while, but stopped working after some system updates. To put it mildly, adding all agreements individually is inconvenient.

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

Nanna: Because we started right away, we have a lot of experience of working with the EWP Dashboard. We see what works well and what doesn't and try to voice our concerns via the possible channels. As mentioned, waiting for something to be perfect before you start to participate takes away opportunities to shape the process as an end user.

Our general attitude was always to move forward. This means trying to exchange as much LAs via EWP and renew our IIAs digitally, even if the system is still not working properly for all HEIs.

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

Nanna: We try to be very active in attending EWP events, such as town halls, the Slack platform ([User Groups](#)) and webinars. It is important to stay informed and be aware of the state of play, any changes to the way forward, etc.

Vision on digitisation

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

Nanna: We always saw this as the future of Erasmus mobilities. We just need to forge ahead and hopefully, the kinks and inter-

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operability issues will be ironed out. Why? Because the alternative is a paper-based process, which is by no means a better approach. Human errors like putting in the wrong email address, or forgetting the signature, will always be part of this process.

As for the IIAs, we envision EWP as a huge time saver. It is a lot smoother to not having to copy/paste into the old paper form, printing out, signing, scanning and sending to the partner institution.

Even though there are issues with EWP, we never considered it to be an option to do it any other way. That was the message we received from our national agency and from the Commission. We have to do our part and we hope the Commission and the Consortium do the same. Only then will these issues get resolved as the programme moves along.

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

Nanna: Sometimes it feels like there is a lot of focus on the timeline and making sure milestones are being reached. While we feel there are specific issues that need to be addressed in terms of the current state or current processes. I think it is a good approach that content (webinars, etc.) is split between Dashboard users and institutions that connect via a different way. We do not always have the same interests or issues, so this makes it easier to address them and understand what the plan is.

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

Nanna: I am not very familiar with how things were done before EWP, but I do think there are certain issues with the system. If a student makes an error while sending the LA to the partner, that LA is just ruined, and they have to initiate a new version. We see a lot of errors along the way that result in having to restart the process from the very beginning. If versions could be deleted or altered, a lot of time could be saved.

