

Äänitteen nimi: Kausi 2 jakso 2.mp4

Äänitteen kesto: 00:42:01

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Merkkien selitykset:

[?] = sanan kirjoitusasusta ei voi olla täysin varma, mutta merkitys on ainakin sinne päin. Sanan äänityskohta merkitään tekstiin ylös esim. [sana? 00:15:44]

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[**tekstiä**] = äänet tai litteroimatta jätetyt kohdat merkitään tekstiin hakasulkeisiin, esim. [naurahtaa] tai [haastattelu keskeytyy hetkeksi, kun haastateltava vastaa puhelimeen]

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Speaker 1 [00:00:14]: Self-confidence. You feel so dump walking in a sandstorm that was apparently forecast a week in advance. Like, 'this is coming, the stores are closed and everything.' Then, as you are trotting those narrow streets and just thinking like, 'what?' But then, after spending a few minutes there, you get this feeling of self-confidence, like 'it doesn't matter what happens, I'll be just fine!'

Speaker 2 [00:00:50]: Hey there! Today, we are talking about student mobility periods and the Erasmus + programme by the European Union, which has taken us Finns around the world since 1992, a couple years before I was even born! I'm Roosa Veijola, European Policy Advisor at SAMOK, and my co-host here in the studio is Erica Alaluusua, SAMOK's Board Member.

Speaker 3 [00:01:14]: Hello there!

Speaker 2 [00:01:16]: In addition, we have two amazing guests. First, we have Tiina Piipponen, International Relations Advisor at Metropolia.

Speaker 4 [00:01:23]: Hello there!

Speaker 2 [00:01:24]: And our second guest is Taru Hyrkäs, a Bachelor of Hospitality Management from Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK).

Speaker 1 [00:01:31]: Hello there!

Speaker 2 [00:01:32]: [laughs] Welcome to the show, our lovely guests! Indeed. Taru, you are here as an expert by experience, so to speak, to share your thoughts on student mobility. You have participated in a student exchange programme yourself. Would you like to start us off with the reason you decided to go on a student exchange? Of course, you can also share the destination of your exchange period, as that also interests us all!

Speaker 1 [00:01:54]: I was on a student exchange programme. I left for Belgium in 2020 to the City of Mechelen, located between Brussels and Antwerp. My reason for going on a student exchange was pure curiosity. Many of our nature buddies have gone on an exchange, and some of them decided to do their practical traineeships abroad as well. So, I felt I just had to go on one myself. SAMK offered great opportunities for going on an exchange, so I just had to make the most of it. I tried applying for different places. Of course, as a latecomer, I had to go on a supplementary application round, meaning that there wasn't that many spots or different destinations left. So, that road led to Belgium.

Speaker 2 [00:02:31]: That's funny, I've also visited the City of Mechelen, where you did your exchange period. I lived in Brussels for a while.

Speaker 1 [00:02:36]: Yes, it's a small and cute city. [laughs]

Speaker 2 [00:02:38]: [laughs] Yes! Well, Tiina, you work on questions related to mobility of higher education students every day.

Speaker 4 [00:02:46]: Indeed!

Speaker 2 [00:02:47]: In your opinion, why are student mobility periods important?

Speaker 4 [00:02:52]: Well, if we think about the reason why these mobility periods are organised in a general sense, the main reason is for our future professionals to be more prepared for working life. They should have developed and attained international experiences and competences during their studies already, as those skills are needed in working life, in all industries and sectors, more or less. Mobility might be the single most intense, effective, and all-encompassing method to attain that international experience, but it also is an essential growth opportunity and coming-of-age story. Then again, a mobility period can be very versatile. In a sense, our student body is quite heterogenic in a way, as there are people of different ages, family compositions, and study fields, a mobility period can adapt to a variety of objectives and goals.

Speaker 2 [00:03:49]: We already heard some great points we can definitely focus on as we continue our discussion. Erica, you are also a higher education student. This year, you became a board member of SAMOK, and you are also in charge of international relations in your own part. Could you tell us about your stance towards student mobility aspects?

Speaker 3 [00:04:09]: Sure, I thought Tiina's mention about the growth opportunity was quite funny. I haven't experienced that growth opportunity yet. That sounds very tragic somehow.

Speaker 2 & 4 [00:04:16]: [laughs]

Speaker 3 [00:04:18]: Back to the topic. I started my studies in 2017, and we were told so much about mobility periods, and we were introduced to many programmes. But, especially participating in a student exchange felt more like a threat than an opportunity. Then, I later familiarised myself with the activities of Erasmus Student Network through student

association activities. This brought questions related to exchange students closer and more topical to me. Then, I got more acquainted with the Erasmus+ Programme at a later stage, more through work-related tasks. Roosa, would you like to tell us more about the Erasmus+ Programme and what it's all about?

Speaker 2 [00:04:58]: Erasmus+ is an EU funding programme that aims to support European education, training, youth, and sport. Erasmus is often titled the flag-ship initiative of the EU and credited as one of the most successful EU initiatives. Indeed, Erasmus programme offers training, education, and traineeship opportunities abroad for young people, students, and adults. In addition, organisations have the opportunity to work with international partners through the programme. The most important activity for us at SAMOK is, of course, the promotion of student mobility and offering of exchange and training periods overseas. The programme funds exchange periods, and it is the most important funder of international operations in the entire Europe, and, evidently, the most popular exchange programme in Finland. I'm certain that quite a few students have heard the term 'Erasmus' and know that it is, indeed, an exchange programme, although there are others out there, too. The current long-term budget that lasts until the year 2027 nearly doubled the funding for Erasmus+ Programme, which is a great thing. Although, we as a student movement naturally supported a larger increase, but we are happy with this. Indeed, the goal of the current programme is to increase the number of participants in mobility periods and pay more attention to under-represented groups, so that they could have genuine and proven opportunities of participating in a mobility period. That was a short summary.

Speaker 3 [00:06:32]: Thank you! It was nice to hear a more comprehensive perspective on the significance of Erasmus+ Programme. Naturally, we are especially interested in Finnish students. So, how are Finnish students participating in the Erasmus+ Programme, or in mobility periods in general?

Speaker 2 [00:06:47]: Well, as a short summary of mobility periods in Finland, the Covid-19 pandemic had its impact on them, as it cancelled and interrupted student mobility periods. However, there was a declining trend even prior to Covid. So, the decline steepened when the pandemic hit. There was a slow, but steady decline already. I'm going to mention a few numbers here. In 2016, nearly 10 500 higher education students participated in a training, exchange, or other mobility period as a part of their studies. Two years later, that is, in 2018, the number had gone down to 8 800, which is a decline of about 20 percent. As a special mention for students of Universities of Applied Sciences, in 2018, just before Covid-19, the number of students participating in an exchange period was at its lowest in ten years.

Speaker 3 [00:07:42]: That's quite a dramatic and shocking decline. It's also quite contradictory, because at the same time we would like to strengthen international skills as a part of studies. Now, I'll give you a little historical overview. The decline started immediately after the cuts on education when the amount student grant for higher education students decreased and the amount of student loan increased in terms of financial aid for students in 2017. Naturally, this is a theme we at SAMOK wish to promote. It is about providing student with international skills and making the departure to a mobility period abroad as easy as possible for everyone, together with turning the trend on the amount of mobility. I'd like to

hear Taru's perspective on this, and specifically ask if you had anything that made you think or question your participation on a mobility period?

Speaker 1 [00:08:31]: I had indeed. The first thing was the money. I was in a nice situation, as I've always worked alongside my studies, so I haven't had to take out all the loan and so on to just manage my daily life. But then, when we started to think about the possibility of going overseas... As a student, you aren't going to have the same amount of money saved as you'd have as a regular worker. When you don't have money saved... Everything from plane tickets must be paid. Then, you are still paying... If you are lucky, you might have gotten a subtenant, but you are still going to have an apartment in Finland, and you have to rent out another apartment so that you can go overseas. So, my biggest hurdle was the loan that I didn't want to... You can raise even a larger student loan. Normally the amount of loan you can raise is 600 a month, but during your exchange period, you can raise even more. So, I already decided, even before considering an exchange period, that I would not raise the maximum amount of loan. I'll just cut down on something. Money was the first thing that got me to question my decision. I almost decided not to participate after we were informed about the destination for our exchange periods. I started to check out the prices, and the price range for renting an apartment and so on. At that point, the reality hit me in the face. The reality that it was expensive. However, our university provided us with a great amount of information on Erasmus grants and so on, on the amount of financial support we could still apply for. A student can receive surprisingly a lot... Even Kela supports the departure quite well. I was also allowed to apply for housing allowance for both my flat in Pori and to the rented apartment in Belgium. I had to clarify aspects, but after that, I wasn't that nervous about the money.

Speaker 3 [00:10:26]: It also might be that many people are not aware of the financial support they could receive, and they don't have the energy to clear things out, the intention stays at the level of an idea. But Tiina, you have perspective on the higher education sector. You work with several people leaving for a mobility period, and also with those considering it. What kinds of hurdles or sine qua non aspects for participating in a mobility period have surfaced in your higher education institution? What kind of support does Metropolia offer those considering a mobility period?

Speaker 4 [00:11:00]: Yes, that is a great question. We try to find and identify those thoughts and estimations of those at the brink of deciding and pondering some things before they come out and say that they want to participate. A part of our students has known from the beginning that they want to participate, but the larger crowd is still considering. Money is one thing our students want to know more about, and we attempt to explain those opportunities as soon as possible. Then, of course, there are studies and recognition of prior studies, as those play an important role in student exchange, meaning that the studies and effort you put in the receiving institution will benefit your degree. You've worked for your degree during the exchange. Then, living is another thing that causes concern for first-year students, like 'how is accommodation organised?' Then, we also have students that have started their own families, they have dogs, mortgages and so on. We organise introduction events on internationalisation for our first-year students, during which I, together with my colleagues, go through all of our freshmen. Student exchange is one aspect we talk about. For example, when I meet with my student group, I

have this advance questionnaire the students can fill in anonymously and send in those pondering questions. Then, I can answer those questions when we meet. We try to explain those aspects during our exchange briefings and promotions, and, naturally, we go into more detail after the decisions have been made. So, we try to clarify things, and we want to know what is causing concern, too, so that we can answer those questions. Often times the information is ready, but this helps us to share it in correct channels and forums. As you can tell, it's about similar things that Taru already mentioned.

Speaker 3 [00:13:20]: It's nice to hear that this is being done. I'll agree with Taru here. I had similar reasons to why I decided not to participate on a student exchange at all. One of my reasons, especially, was related to the lack of information on the kinds of financial aids available. Money became the greatest hurdle for me. As a student, financial worries and struggles are a daily occurrence, and I have financed the majority of my studies by working alongside my studies. But then, as I've worked part-time, my income was mainly quite low, which naturally leads to little to no savings. That, naturally, raises the hurdle for going abroad, when your own financial situation is quite uncertain, and you don't know when you are in a paid employment that allows you to pay back your student loan. And I'm not alone with these thoughts, and there are more of us than just me and Taru. [laughs] According to EUROSTUDENT survey from 2019, financial reasons are the most common reasons for not participating in mobility periods. Financial costs have been the single most significant obstacle for participating in student mobility periods. The majority of participants also mentioned that they financed their stay through financial aid for students, student loans, and salaries or savings from paid employments. Unfortunately, paid work alongside studies or savings are not easy options that many students can carry out.

Speaker 2 [00:14:56]: Yup. Here's an interesting observation that was mentioned in our previous episode on European Education Area. Indeed, not all participants of Erasmus+ mobility period utilise the Erasmus grant, which feels a bit odd, as essentially everybody is entitled to it. This might be a testament to the development need regarding communication on the Erasmus+ Programme and the offered aid to students. Indeed, the financial aid offered by the Erasmus+ Programme is one method for closing social gap and the obstacles these social gaps impose on participation to mobility periods.

Speaker 3 [00:15:34]: Yes, and it would be crucial for everybody to know about the aid provided by Erasmus+. Roosa, would you like to give us a practical explanation on how this works?

Speaker 2 [00:15:43]: Yes. I'm sure Tiina has the practical perspective on higher education institutions, but I'm going to talk about the amounts and so on. So, in practice, the Erasmus+ offers grants for international studies or traineeships for students or trainees. You can go on a student exchange or traineeship several times, either as a student or as a trainee. However, the total maximum time spent overseas is 12 months per degree. The amount of grant has increased quite nicely. Currently, it's over 400 euros per month, although it varies per price level of the destination country, from 400 to 500 euros a month. In addition, if you have underaged children and you are their legal guardian, you receive an additional financial support of a couple hundred euros per month, even if your children stayed in your home country. Although this is not in the forefront of everything, it indicates that people are trying

to enable a student exchange period for people in all kinds of situations and life circumstances. Of course, we can always discuss if this is enough. For example, what are the practical obstacles for people with families? Is it the money, or are the practicalities just difficult to manage? Indeed, international mobility services at higher education institutions will advise and assist you with the grant application. In my opinion, the process was quite simple, as I also applied for it. I participated on an Erasmus traineeship abroad twice. So, I wasn't on a student exchange, but on a traineeship. But the fact that the grant was also available for traineeships was news to me. Many people might already know that the grant is available for student exchange, but you can also receive the grant for traineeships, even if you are going on a paid traineeship. So, the grant can act as an additional incentive. But yes, indeed, on the topic of financing mobility periods, Taru, I'd like to know how did you finance your student exchange period? You already explained some aspects about it during our introduction, but were you able to access the information on finance possibilities easily? You mentioned some aspects about that as well, but do you have anything to add?

Speaker 1 [00:17:32]: Well, yes. We have international mobility services at SAMK, and they provided so much information. It's just that... About the Erasmus grant, you first receive... Well, I can't remember the percentage, but right as you leave, or when you are about to leave, you receive a bulk sum. You don't receive the money monthly to your bank account. You get that bulk sum, and the final percentage when you arrive. That was a positive surprise for me. I was thinking that if I receive that money each month, in certain intervals, how can I manage the start... In my opinion, the most expensive thing of student exchange, or with traineeship, too, is the travelling at the start. The first month is the most expensive one. You have to buy so much. Well, of course that depends on how much stuff you can carry over in your luggage, but the majority of flats or rooms for exchange students are, like, 5 times 5 metres, if that. So, you kind of have to visit... Well, the majority of students, especially us, headed to Ikea. We bought bedlinen, towels, basic things that do not fit in luggage. Then, of course, there are the flight tickets, the rent for the first month, rent deposit if you have to pay that. So, in that sense, it was pleasant to have that bulk sum at the start. Then, living through student grant and student loans became a thing, as those two came in each month. The first sum was great, together with the end sum, that is, the last part of Erasmus grant. I was so happy that once you returned home, you didn't have to get straight back to work on that very same day. You can have that small break. And, for most people, especially myself, I was on a student exchange in the spring, meaning that I came back to summer holiday. That means that my student allowance stops right then and there, and, in essence, I kind of should be working already. I have, at least, a month before my first pay check. Therefore, it was great to receive the money in two parts. Those were the largest ones. But I'll say that SAMK had informed us about that so well. We knew what we could apply for, and how the money was coming in, so I knew how to prepare for that.

Speaker 3 [00:19:55]: That sound absolutely super, especially the strong support you received from your higher education institution. You were able to receive enough information on the topic. Therefore, I'm also interested in Tiina's perspective. How are things done in Metropolia? What kind of guidance and instructions are you offering students considering the application for Erasmus+ grant?

Speaker 4 [00:20:17]: Well, the grant for Erasmus student exchange is linked to our student exchange, and it has its own application period and information briefing. And, even during the information briefing on student exchange, we want to encourage people to apply for a student exchange. We explain the financial aid and how great they are, for example in Erasmus. However, students have more responsibility regarding traineeship exchanges, as they have to find the traineeship spot themselves, and they must apply for the financial aid they need. In our own intranet, we have this international guide that includes explanations on different internationalisation opportunities, short and long-term student exchanges, traineeship exchanges, and it contains direct information on the amount of grant and how to apply for them. Indeed... We are at the International Mobility Services to explain these things, and we want our students to utilise all available opportunities. Therefore, we attempt to remind our students about them in different kinds of events and channels. Like hey, these are things... We want you all to participate, and there are so many incentives and support, and you have the right for them, as you have been approved for a student exchange programme, for example. I've got to say, it's so nice to hear that you've received the support you need from your institution, Taru. It's also great to understand that for us it's clear that you receive that 80 to 90 percent, it kind of varies according to the calculation methods per institution, but large amount of the grant comes in one bulk. And, indeed, as the start might be the most expensive time, so you are going to need a bit more money. However, there's also a practical side for that. Regardless, it's good to hear that it's a great way of doing things from the student's perspective, too. The first large sum, and then you have that smaller sum waiting for your return in Finland, with your wallet perhaps empty.

Speaker 3 [00:22:26]: [laugh]

Speaker 4 [00:22:27]: But yes, this is beneficial to us, too, so that we can emphasise this, so that people don't need to worry about receiving a certain amount each month when they need more at the start.

Speaker 2 [00:22:38]: That is true, because it's so important for students to know if they are missing like a month [laughs].

[00:22:43: all laugh]

Speaker 2 [00:22:45]: You know, we don't have that much in savings.

Speaker 2 [00:22:57]: Other reasons for skipping a mobility period beside financial ones include the perceived lack of benefit to their own studies, difficulties with integrating the mobility period to one's studies, factual or perceived weak foreign language skills, and lack of information from one's own higher education institution. These are results from the EUROSTUDENT survey. Taru, how does your higher education institute provide information on student mobility? Also, how are student mobility periods integrated into degrees? Was the process simple and easy in your opinion?

Speaker 1 [00:23:29]: Well, first about the offered information at our higher education institute. We had those same information briefings, which are completely voluntary. But, we also have this... Well, maybe that's degree-related, since I'm studying to become a Bachelor

of Hospitality Management, with a focus on tourism. So, we've been told so much about these opportunities to leave, basically 'go, try things out, and do things'. We have those cooperation institutions that make it easy to identify the modules that fit into your degree and so on. And, it was especially easy at SAMK due to the information briefings. We were bombarded with emails like there was no tomorrow. It wasn't like, once a year we received an email saying that we should go on an exchange period or something like that. We got so many. If we knew that an application period for some student exchange programme was starting at X day, we were bombarded like two months in advance. There was no way for you to miss the application date.

Speaker 2 [00:24:26]: Now I'm interested in the percentages. Like, how many of you have participated in a student exchange! [laughs]

Speaker 1 [00:24:32]: But it's just that. I was that latecomer who applied in the supplementary application round. It was not like I missed the date, but rather 'yeah, I'll look at that later'. However, I'm glad I was able to go. That was enabled via the supplementary application. Like... Where did I apply again? I think I applied three months before leaving for the student exchange programme. So, I was, indeed, really late with it. However, I was still getting so much information. Well, I was told that I was, perhaps, teetering on the edge a bit. However, I was told the options I had left, as in, the destination countries, as I was so late. However, things worked out really easily, in the end. Well, of course, this is, again, is very much tied to your degree, the process of fitting in those modules to your own degree. That was really easy for me. I was nearing the end of my studies. I was on a student exchange period on my third year, meaning that I mostly had optional modules and advanced courses left. So, these were easy to link to one another. And, when we were compiling our plans on recognising studies and so on at our UAS, our teacher told us straight away that 'oh yeah, just put it like that and this, it should be fine'. If the modules are not recognised straight away, we will just have to write a report of sorts to go along with it, and we should get our credits. We were encouraged so much. They just wanted us not to ignore the opportunity. If a module does not directly correspond with a course from our institute, it was not enough of a reason to not go. That might have been the biggest factor that pushed me to go. Like, you will not miss this, just go. I think that was something I needed, at least.

Speaker 2 [00:26:15]: It's so amazing to hear that things have gone so well for you, and you truly have received information. I'm also under the impression that Metropolia is in an excellent position regarding mobility periods. How have you set out in solving the problem regarding the students' experience of receiving too little information on mobility periods in general? It seems that things are working exceptionally well at Metropolia.

Speaker 4 [00:26:35]: Well, we do attempt... It's nice to hear the same from you, Taru, that it's nice that you've been pushed. Sometimes I get the feeling that maybe I shouldn't yap about it too much [laughs]. I do get messages like 'oh my god, we have heard this so many times, and I'm still not going, it just doesn't fit my plans.' But then again... We have aimed for systematic marketing, starting with the information briefings for our first-year students regarding the first introduction to student exchange periods. In addition, we do indeed practice this email bombarding as the application periods approach. Then, one thing I find important, and it's something Taru also mentioned, is about the degree programmes and

heads of degree programmes, education coordinators, and teachers having that required experience. 'Hey, students, go and participate on a student exchange! This is such a great opportunity for you!' It's just like you said, we want to make recognition of studies and integrate them as the student's degree as smooth and easy as possible, in one way or another, so that the process does not force the student to extend their studies. So, that does play an important role. And, in my experience, our degree programmes have a strong support towards mobility, and the communication from our degree programmes towards our students means a lot. 'This is a great thing! We will match your studies in one way or another.' We have also spent a lot of time building a network of partner institutions. We have examined them and come to the conclusion that it's beneficial of spending a mobility period with one of our partners, and they support the graduation of our students. But then again, aunties at International Mobility Services are free to send as many messages as they please, but the support from degree programmes, especially regarding the recognition of studies and learning, is important.

Speaker 2 [00:28:43]: And, to my knowledge, there are significant differences between higher education institutions regarding the integration process of internationalisation to degrees. Some institutions put a lot of effort in it. And, I can say this based on personal experience. I have studied international relations, meaning that every student going on an international period has been a self-evident fact just based on the subject. The staff did encourage us to go, too. We were fed information, and there was this positive push, like you can go if you want to. Easy recognition and integration to one's degree is a great and important point, together with the support and encouragement from the teaching staff. Actually, we have done a great job by entering and discussing the root causes, at least in part. We could, of course, discuss the topic for three hours or even longer than that. We have also found some solutions and great practices, as well as successes. Therefore, you sort of answered our following question to an extent, but I'm going to ask it anyway from our guests Tiina and Taru. Which methods and ways have especially promoted participation to mobility periods in your higher education institutions? How could we turn the trend and increase the number of participants? This is a tough question, but how would you start us off?

Speaker 1 [00:30:08]: If you are encouraged to participate from the perspective of avoiding FOMO, that is, fear of missing out. Like, 'I'm going to miss all these experiences and activities.' If you have those teachers and staff members encouraging you to leave, saying that all will be fine regarding your studies, I think that will push people to participate. If you have just that one person, that one teacher going like 'do you think you should go? Your studies are going to be pushed back', that will make people remain at home. Without a doubt.

Speaker 2 [00:30:46]: How about you, Tiina?

Speaker 4 [00:30:48]: Well, this is just the question we are discussing at higher education institutes, International Mobility Services, all the way to the Finnish National Agency for Education. The question of how to increase those numbers. Of course, we have clear room for increasing and growing the numbers regarding mobility periods, such as student and traineeship exchange periods. We are keen on observing what is going to happen now, as it

seems like we might be moving on from Covid-19. Is there this built-up lack-of mobility that leads to a record number of applications, which would be just amazing, or are we going to have a few years, during which students are exhausted and they want to focus on finishing their studies? I was just discussing the methods on delivering information on a more systematic way to students with my colleagues. We also discussed these encouraging examples. I mean, of course there is the utilisation of fresh returnees from student exchange programmes in information briefing, but I still feel like we should collect information in a more systematic way and turn that into a more encouraging and invigorating forms. We should also reach a variety of participants. Since students are very different, and they might have different goals. Different things regarding a student exchange might fascinate and encourage different students. Sometimes the information we provide might contradict other's perspectives. So, we should try to establish a segmentation for our marketing, or something like that. Focusing on that, in a way. Furthermore, the basics must be under control. The support from degree programmes, and available support and help, together with these funding mechanisms that are easy and accessible for students.

Speaker 2 [00:32:49]: Yes. I just have to mention something about the Covid-19 pandemic. It's interesting to see how these mobility periods are going to react now that the pandemic is 'over', so to speak, although it's not really just yet. However, since we've had that gap, does it mean that we have that built-up need? I'm sure we do, meaning that the numbers are going to skyrocket, but it might also be that we are used to not travelling all that much anymore. Furthermore, there might not be any examples from previous student year group. There's this gap due to the strong decrease in the number of participants.

Speaker 4 [00:33:23]: There's also the perspective of distributing the experience in a more efficient way. The power of example is absolutely essential. I can recall that from my own times as a student. This is especially true for groups that have participated on a student exchange despite having less opportunities or their own examples within their own growing environment and family. That is also a thing.

Speaker 2 [00:33:47]: Yes, environment has such a large impact.

Speaker 4 [00:33:49]: Yes. That is something we are trying to focus on next. It's just like you've said here on the show, Taru. The power is immense and very essential.

Speaker 2 [00:33:59]: Yes. Erica, do you have anything to add on getting the numbers to increase?

Speaker 3 [00:34:03]: Well, you raised some amazing points. I think the power of example was a great way of describing this. Based on this conversation alone, I got this feeling that I still have time for a mobility period! [laughs]

Speaker 4 [00:34:18]: There you go!

[00:34:18: all laugh]

Speaker 3 [00:34:19]: Somehow, I became more interested. Well, I'm going to be repeating some things, but there is, naturally, the support and information by the higher education institution, then... There's also the factor of sufficient offering of mobility periods. Having those short-term mobility periods, having the opportunity to participate in an easy manner and a sufficient number of traineeships abroad in addition to these traditional student exchanges. Then, there is also the matter of increasing the number of months for financial aid for students as well the amount of student grant. If one's studies end up being delayed due to a student exchange period, people would not have to panic over running out of financial aid months and end up blaming the student exchange period. This might also be connected with the power of examples. If you've heard that your friend went on a student exchange and now, they have ran out of financial aid months, you might not be encouraged to participate. However, financial security is, in general, absolutely crucial. Now, we have discussed the methods for turning the trend and increasing the number of mobility periods for higher education students. We also received excellent examples on how things have worked just tremendously. Now, I'd like to encourage everybody to go and experience the world, as I'm also so keen on doing that. When I was preparing for this episode, I collected some benefits that participating on a mobility period might provide. Participants have made the following observations: appreciating other cultures, ability to adapt and function in new situations, skills for working in an international company or abroad, self-confidence, ability to work with people from different backgrounds, a broader perspective, increased tolerance, new work possibilities, and, of course, better success regarding job markets. Does any of these resonate with Taru? Were you able to identify yourself among these examples?

Speaker 1 [00:36:12]: Self-confidence.

Speaker 3 [00:36:14]: [laughs]

Speaker 1 [00:36:15]: It's... You feel so dump walking in a sandstorm that was apparently forecast a week in advance. Like, 'this is coming, the stores are closed and everything.' Then, as you are trotting those narrow streets and just thinking like, 'what?' But then, after spending a few minutes there, you get this feeling of self-confidence, like 'it doesn't matter what happens, I'll be just fine!' You get that Finnish 'sisu' that just increases as you spend time overseas. It's just amazing.

Speaker 3 [00:36:48]: That's just amazing. I just have to ask; how does the increased self-confidence materialise in your present daily life? Have you noticed a tangible difference between before and after student exchange period?

Speaker 1 [00:36:58]: Umm, I think it's the courage to do things. If I think back to the scaredy-cat I used to be before participation, like 'do I dare to go?' 'What if I don't go?' 'All my friends are staying here.' 'What if I return and nobody is here?' Thinking about it now, like 'can I do something', I just go like 'well, I sure can'. Just go and do it. Win or lose, usually everything goes. I have this way of life, like everything will just go and fall into place in one way or another. That is somehow, it's just lovely.

Speaker 2 [00:37:31]: That's amazing. I have just one more question to end our episode. Tiina, you can go first. Why should everybody participate on a mobility period?

Speaker 4 [00:37:39]: Hey now, did you hear what Taru just said?

[00:37:43: all laugh]

Speaker 3 [00:37:44]: No, we weren't listening at all.

Speaker 4 [00:37:47]: Well, to every single one of you that has the opportunity, and please note that it might be possible to the absolute majority of you, it's just often up to your own decision. There's this feeling that is like 'hey, it's not all that weird, dangerous, nor scary', and 'oh my, I have these amazing skills, competences, and strength within me.' The life and world carry on, and even if you've encountered some challenges, these challenges are, in a way, a part of that growth process. You have such great and accessible opportunities to participate on an exchange period as a higher education student, either for a term or, as briefly mentioned here, these Erasmus Blended, opportunities for short-term exchanges. If for nothing else than a change of scenery and a fresh perspective, having another perspective on things. You'll see things from another perspective, no matter the age you decide to participate. It'll always nudge things a bit off track inside your head.

Speaker 2 [00:39:05]: Yes, dust out those pines and birches.

Speaker 4 [00:39:08]: [laughs]

Speaker 2 [00:39:08]: How about you, Taru? Why should everybody participate on a mobility period?

Speaker 1 [00:39:12]: I would say the same thing. Even if it's just the change of scenery. Then, I'm absolutely going to highlight networking. As many have noticed, when we receive exchange students, pupil, trainees or what have you in our higher education institutions, you notice how tight of a group they become. The same applies to you if you decide to participate on an exchange period. There are so many people under the same circumstance as you, you will make life-long friends. If you spend six months together, you will make new best-friends. You'll be able to achieve so much if you just try out a little bit. So much.

Speaker 2 [00:39:58]: When you enter a situation that only those experiencing the situation with you can understand it, it unifies people. It's such an amazing experience on itself. I have to say, I was really touched by your contributions. It's just wonderful, we have all these crises going on in the world, the energy crisis and what not, and now, I just feel so empowered by this [laughs].

Speaker 4 [00:40:23]: But do you know what? The things we just listed, although it is about the personal growth, experience, change of perspective and networking, these are things that employers also appreciate. When people are looking for great professionals, the candidate must have the professional skills needed, but networking skills, being able to approach things from several perspectives, and self-confidence. Self-confidence means that I know myself better. I know my strong suites, and the aspects I'm not that great at just yet,

but I can improve them. Those important personal aspects are also crucial in finding employment.

Speaker 2 [00:41:09]: Yes, indeed. I'd love to continue our discussion, but I think it's time for us to call it a day. It was so nice talking with you that I almost feel bad about having to end the episode here, but thank you so much, Tiina and Tarja, for being our guests for the day. And thank you, my co-host, Erica!

Speaker 3 [00:41:29]: Wohoo, let's all head out to the world!

Speaker 2 [00:41:32]: Thank you.

Speaker 1 [00:41:32]: No, thank you! It was nice to talk from personal experience.

Speaker 4 [00:41:36]: Yes. I still get the chills, despite working on this for twenty years.

Speaker 3 [00:41:41]: That's lovely!

Speaker 4 [00:41:41]: It's just such a lovely time, every time.

Speaker 2 [00:41:45]: Bye!

Speaker 3 [00:41:47]: Bye all!

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