

The Participation of Graduates and Students of Social Work in the Erasmus Program: a Case Study in the Portuguese context - the Polytechnic of Leiria

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Abstract : Established in 1987, the Erasmus Programme is a program for the exchange of higher education students. Its purposes are several. The mobility developed has contributed to the promotion of multiple learning, the internalization the feeling of belonging to a community, and the consolidation of cooperation between entities or universities. It also allows the experience of a European experience, considering multilingualism one of the bases of the European project and vehicle to achieve the union in diversity. The program has progressed and introduced changes Erasmus+ currently offers a wide range of opportunities for higher education, vocational education and training, school education, adult education, youth, and sport. These opportunities are open to students and other stakeholders, such as teachers. Portugal was one of the countries that readily adhered to this program, assuming itself as an instrument of internationalization of polytechnic and university higher education. Students and social work teachers have been involved in this mobility of learning and multicultural interactions. The presence and activation of this program was made possible by Portugal's joining the European Union. This event was reflected in the field of portuguese social work and contributes to its approach to the reality of european social work. Historically, the Portuguese social work has built a close connection with the Latin American world and, in particular, with Brazil. There are several examples that can be identified in the different historical stages. This is the case of the post-revolution period of 1974 and the presence of the reconceptualization movement, the struggle for enrollment in the higher education circuit, the process of winning a bachelor's degree, and postgraduate training (the first doctorates of social work were carried out in Brazilian universities). This influence is also found in the scope of the authors and the theoretical references used. This study examines the participation of graduates and students of social work in the Erasmus program. The following specific goals were outlined: to identify the host countries and universities; to investigate the dimension and type of mobility made, understand the learning and experiences acquired, identify the difficulties felt, capture their perspectives on social work and the contribution of this experience in training. In the methodological field, the option fell on a qualitative methodology, with the application of semi-structured interviews to graduates and students of social work with Erasmus mobility experience. Once the graduates agreed, the interviews were recorded and transcribed, analyzed according to the previously defined analysis categories. The findings emphasize the importance of this experience for students and graduates in informal and formal learning. The authors conclude with recommendations to reinforce this mobility, either at the individual level or as a project built for the group or collective.

Keywords : erasmus programme, graduates and students of social work, participation, social work

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