A BALANCE OF THE ERASMUS PROGRAMME IN GEOMORPHOLOGY 1991-97

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Abstract

This paper makes a balance of the teaching activities carried out in the frame of the Erasmus Programme in Geomorphology 1991-97 funded by the European Union which included student mobility within a network of twelve universities and intensive courses of Applied Geomorphology held every year in a different country of Europe.

Key words: Erasmus, student mobility, intensive courses.

Riassunto

Un bilancio del Programma Erasmus in Geomorfologia 1991-97. La presente nota riporta un bilancio delle attività svolte nell'ambito del Programma Erasmus in Geomorfologia 1991-97 finanziato dall'Unione Europea. Tale programma ha previsto una mobilità studentesca all'interno di una rete di dodici università e una serie di corsi intensivi di Geomorfologia Applicata tenuti ogni anno in un diverso paese europeo.

Parole chiave: Erasmus, mobilità studentesca, corsi intensivi.

1. INTRODUCTION

The ERASMUS ICP (Inter-Cooperation Programme) in Geomorphology (ICP-91/97-I-1226/07) was held between the academic years 1991-92 and 1996-97 and co-ordinated by the University of Modena (namely by Prof. Mario Panizza). The Programme, funded by the European Union, consisted of a Student Mobility Programme and of an Intensive Programme, which has been a peculiar aspect of this Erasmus programme in Geomorphology. The Erasmus network set up in 1991 included 7 universities but the number of partner institutions gradually increased through the years and at the final stage 12 Universities of 9 different countries were part of the network (Tab. 1; Figs. 1 to 7).

2. STUDENT MOBILITY PROGRAMME

More than 100 students have been involved in the *Student Mobility Programme* attending courses, giving exams, preparing theses or dissertations as well as participating in research activities of the host institution mainly in the field of Geomorphology and Physical Geography. In particular, the students' activities consisted of attending lessons and practicals at the host University, taking part in excursions and carrying out field-work. The training courses abroad gave the students the opportunity to experience research methods to which they were not accustomed, learn new laboratory techniques, compare different geomorphological approaches including those connected with Geographical Information

* With collaboration of Alessandro GHINOI (Institut für Geographie, Universität Wien) for the graphical part.

Soldati M. (1999) - A balance of the Erasmus Programme in Geomorphology 1991-97. *In: M. Panizza, M. Soldati, M. Bertacchini, Th.W.J. Van Asch & S. Malmusi (eds.), The Erasmus 96-97 Programme in Geomorphology: Intensive Course in the French Alps and Students' Mobility. Dipartimento di Scienze della Terra, Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia, 1-9.*

Tab. 1 - The Institutions participating in the Erasmus ICP in Geomorphology.

Institution	Country
Universiteit van Amsterdam	The Netherlands
Università degli Studi di Ferrara	Italy
Universität Heidelberg	Germany
Universidade de Lisboa	Portugal
King's College, University of London	United Kingdom
Università degli Studi di Modena	Italy
Universidad de Cantabria, Santander	Spain
Université Louis Pasteur - Strasbourg I	France
University of Turku	Finland
Universiteit Utrecht	The Netherlands
Universität Wien	Austria
Universidad de Zaragoza	Spain

Systems. Life and work at a foreign University enabled the students to be integrated with young people with different scientific and cultural backgrounds. This has been particularly appreciated by the students since it represented an invaluable source of personal enrichment. The participants regularly submitted written reports concerning their stays abroad, which are collected in a series of ten volumes published to give a record of their scientific and human experience and a useful information for students interested in participating in future exchange programmes (see list of references).

A series of graphs outlines the student yearly mobility with respect to each participant university, in terms of both students hosted ("In") and students outgoing ("Out"). The period considered ranges between the academic years 1991-92 and 1996-97 (Figs. 1 to 6).

A summary of the student mobility for the total period during which the programme ran is given by another series of graphs (Figs. 7 to 11).

In particular, Fig. 7 shows the total number of students hosted by each of the twelve participating universities during the period 1991-97. Fig. 8 relates the total number of students hosted to the years of participation in the programme of each university, which is not the same for every institution. This graph clearly shows that the highest number of students hosted per year is reached by universities where English is commonly spoken and where all the courses, or at least part of them, were given in English (London, Turku, Utrecht). Also the universities of Modena and Zaragoza reached a relevant average of students per year due to the fact that also practical work and research activities were carried out there by the hosted students.

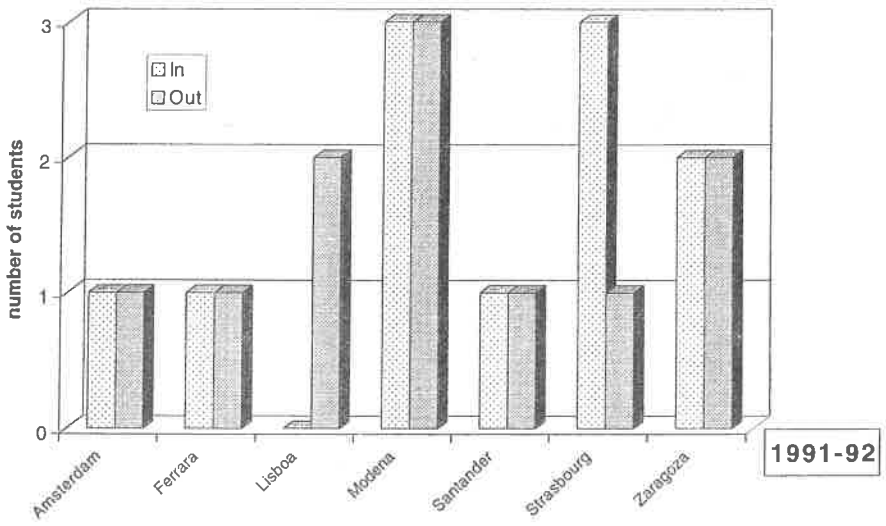

Fig. 1 - Student mobility in the academic year 1991-92.

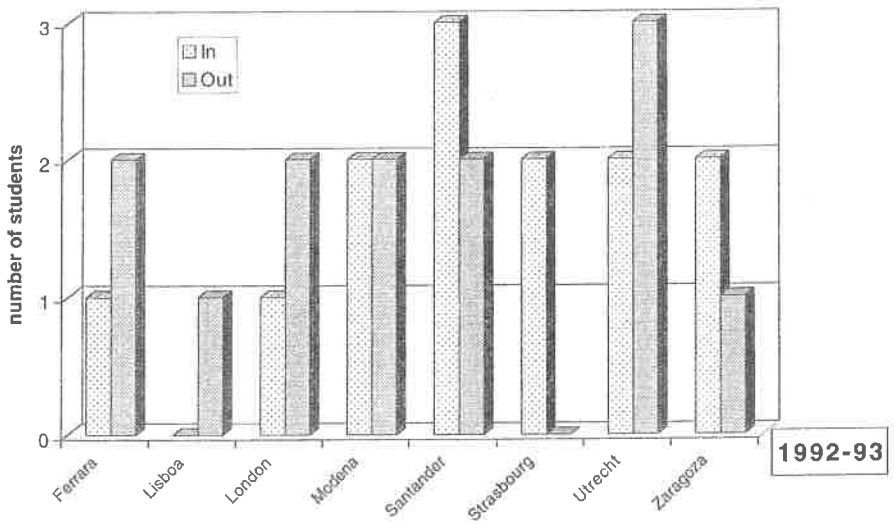

Fig. 2 - Student mobility in the academic year 1992-93.

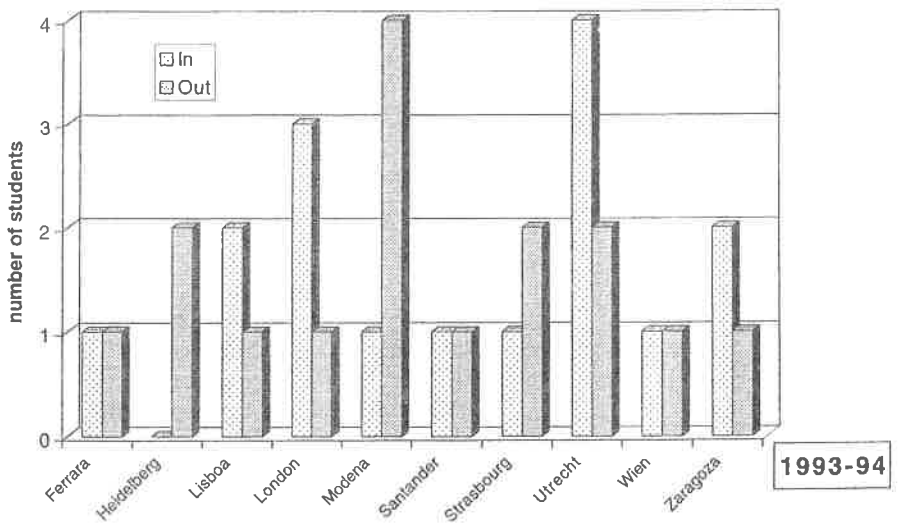

Fig. 3 - Student mobility in the academic year 1993-94.

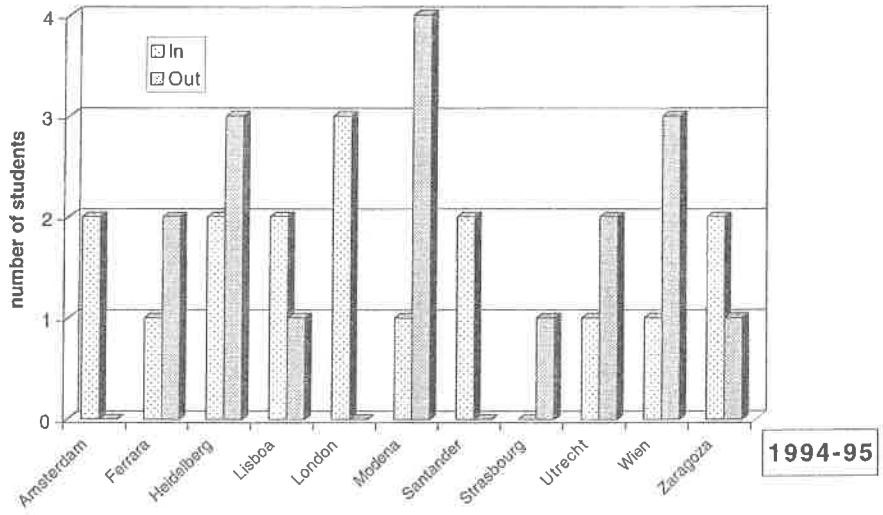

Fig. 4 - Student mobility in the academic year 1994-95.

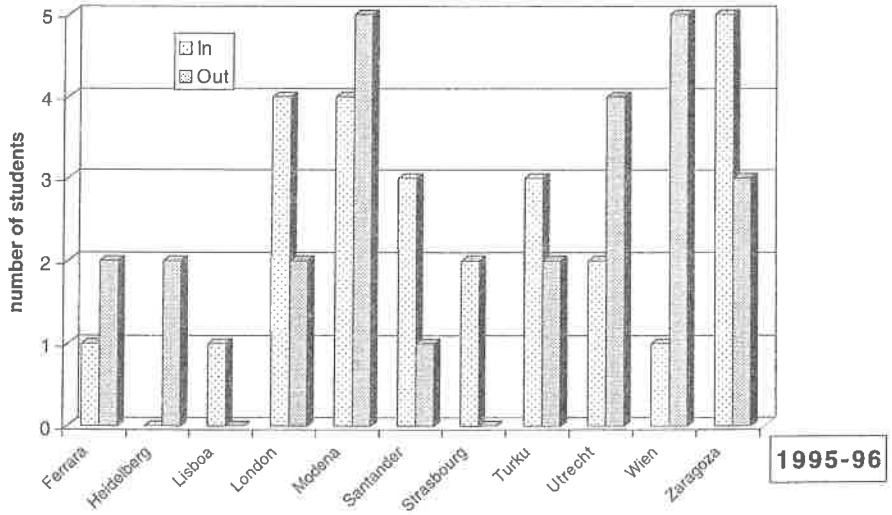

Fig. 5 - Student mobility in the academic year 1995-96.

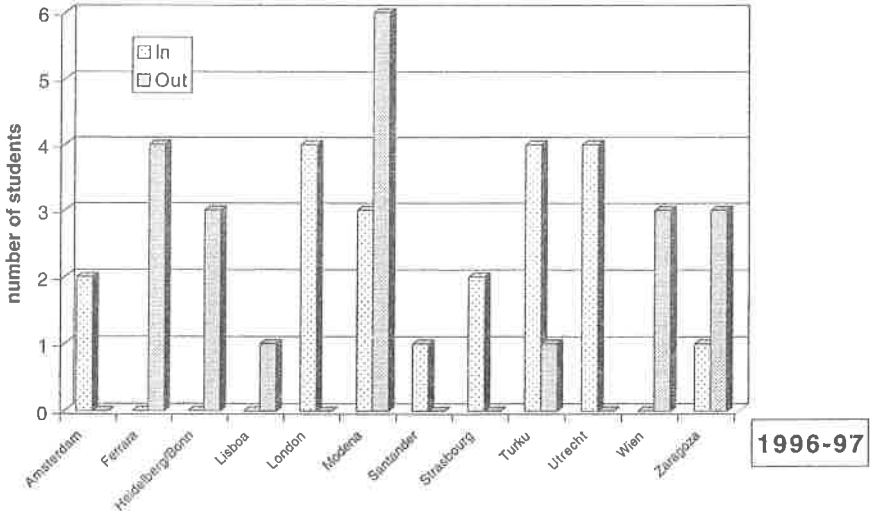

Fig. 6 - Student mobility in the academic year 1996-97.

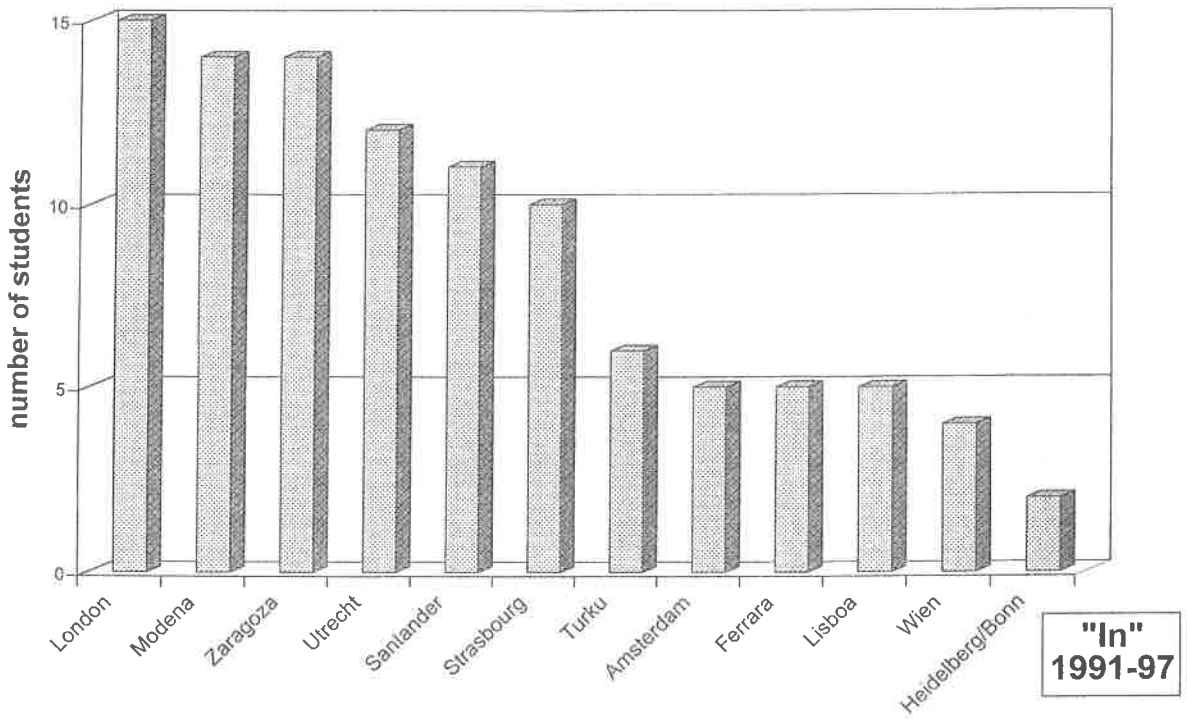

Fig. 7 - Students hosted by each university during the period 1991-97.

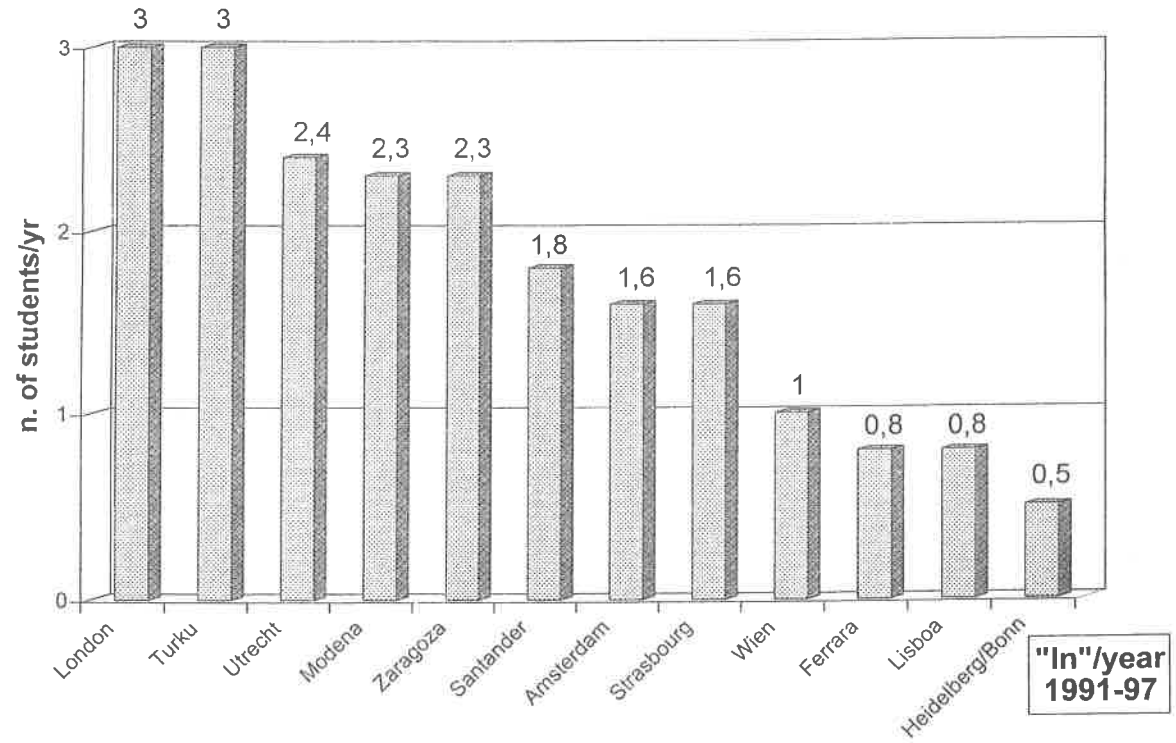

Fig. 8 - Students hosted per year by each university during the period 1991-97.

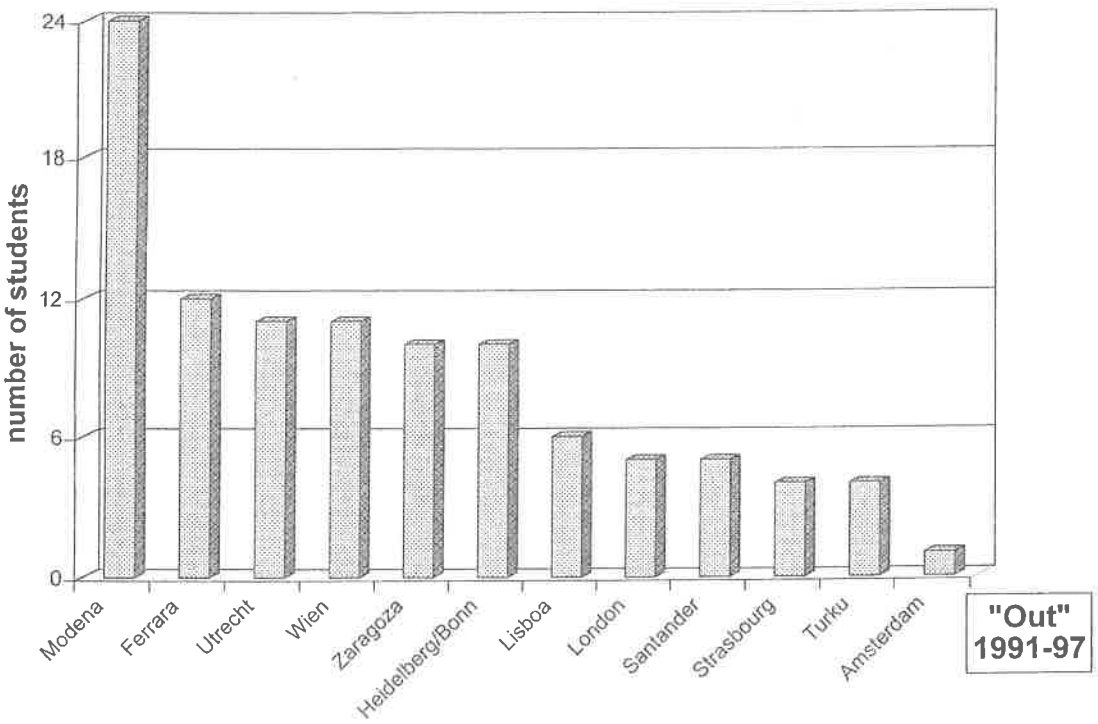

Fig. 9 - Students outgoing from each university during the period 1991-97.

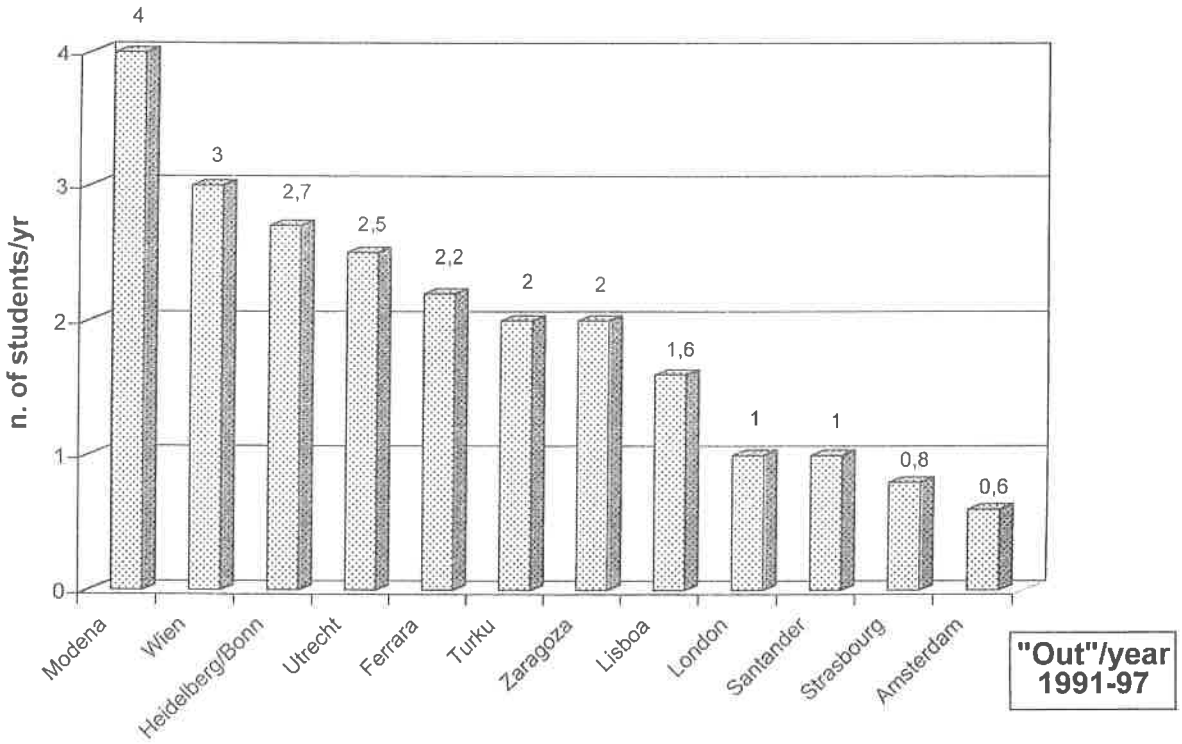

Fig. 10 - Students outgoing per year from each university during the period 1991-97.

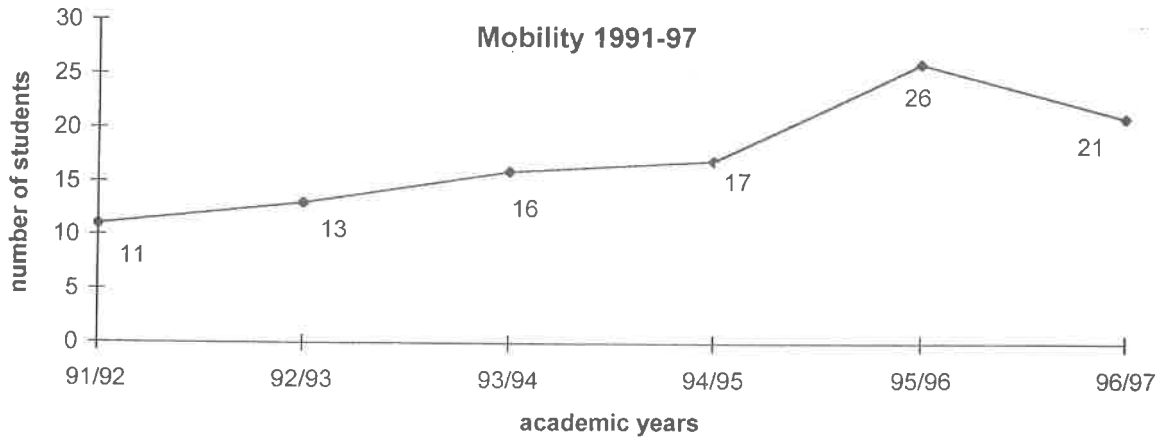

Fig. 11 - Trend of student exchanges during the period 1991-97.

The total number of students outgoing from each university over the period considered is outlined in Fig. 9, while Fig. 10 shows the total number of students outgoing in relation to the years of participation in the programme of each university. The top position is taken by Modena with an average of four outgoing students per year, which is not surprising since the University of Modena co-ordinated the programme and thus put big emphasis on student mobility.

Finally Fig. 11 outlines the mobility trend in terms of number of students exchanges over the period 1991-97. The number of students involved increased from 11 in 1991-92 to 26 in 1995-96 with a slight decrease to in 1996-97 due to the announced end of the Erasmus Programme and being much energies devoted to the preparation of proposals and understanding of rules of the forecoming Socrates Programme. The latter started in the academic year 1997-98 with bilateral agreements between universities and with no more networks.

3. INTENSIVE PROGRAMME

The *Intensive Programme* consisted of 6 Intensive Courses lasting from 10 to 15 days: five were held in different parts of Europe and one in the French Antilles. The premise for the organisation of intensive courses was made in 1990 when a smaller number of Universities got together in Italy for an experimental course on applied geomorphology, which showed already the importance of bringing together students and professors in the field for excursions and field-work. This kind of intensive course immediately turned out to be as an unreplaceable support for the training of young geomorphologists and the following courses confirmed this opinion. In addition, the involvement for lectures and field-guiding of specialists belonging to local authorities and public companies provided the students with a practical approach which is not easy to get during university courses. The intensive courses dealt with very different topics in the field of geomorphology, from high mountain

Tab. 2 - The Erasmus Intensive Courses in Geomorphology.

YEAR	ORGANISER	COURSE TITLE	SITE	STUDENTS	PROFESSORS
1990	Modena	European Experimental Course on Applied Geomorphology with special reference to Environmental Risk and Human Impact in the Dolomites	Modena and Cortina d'Ampezzo (Italy)	31	13
1992	Modena	First European Intensive Course on Applied Geomorphology	Modena and Cortina d'Ampezzo (Italy)	26	15
1993	Zaragoza	Second European Intensive Course on Applied Geomorphology: Arid Regions	Zaragoza (Spain)	36	15
1994	Strasbourg	Third European Intensive Course on Applied Geomorphology: Tropical Regions	Martinique and Guadeloupe, French Antilles (France)	26	13
1995	Wien	Fourth European Intensive Course on Applied Geomorphology: High Alpine Environment	Innsbruck and Obergurgl, Tyrol (Austria)	34	11
1996	Lisboa	Fifth European Intensive Course on Applied Geomorphology: Mediterranean and Urban Areas	Lisboa and Algarve (Portugal)	32	14
1997	Utrecht	Sixth European Intensive Course on Applied Geomorphology: from the lower to the higher Alps	Serres and Barcelonnette (France)	33	9

geomorphology to coastal geomorphology, from tropical environment geomorphology to arid region geomorphology (Tab. 2). Nevertheless special attention has always been given to natural hazards and risks as well as to human impact on natural resources and assets. A special effort has been made by the Universities organising the courses and by the coordinator of this Erasmus Programme to provide the students with publications including both field-guides and course proceedings. The courses also benefited of the collaboration of public institutions and private companies.

4. CONCLUSION

The Erasmus Programme in Geomorphology has been an invaluable source of experience and knowledge both for students and teachers.

The Student Mobility Programme, which involved more than 100 students in six years, and the Intensive Courses held in different countries of Europe, with the participation of more than 200 students and 70 professors, strengthened the relationships between the institutions and research groups belonging to the network and encouraged participation in European-funded research programmes.

Finally it should be emphasised that the number of former Erasmus students who are now involved in geomorphological research at a European level is quite high. These young researchers are generally well suited both scientifically and psychologically to work at an international level. For this reason they have been successfully involved in other training activities, such as Comett and Leonardo and in research programmes of the European Union, such as Epoch, Environment, Environment & Climate, Human Capital and Mobility, Training and Mobility of Researchers etc.

A series of 11 volumes (listed in chrono-

logical order in the references), collecting articles by teachers and students, witnesses all the activities carried out within the Erasmus Programme in Geomorphology.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Prof. Mario Panizza (Co-ordinator of the Erasmus Programme in Geomorphology, ICP-91/97-I-1226/07) for having given me the chance to collaborate with him in the co-ordination of the Programme. It has been an enriching experience, not only from the teaching and scientific point of view, but also from the human point of view.

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