MOBILITY WINDOWS (MWs)
From concept to institutional practice

Irina Ferencz, ACA Deputy Director

“Mobility and recognition since Lisbon and Bologna”

HRK seminar, 28 November 2018, Berlin
Outline:

1. Policy context – why “mobility windows” in 2011?
2. Mobility windows – a definition
3. Mobility windows – a new phenomenon?
4. A typology of mobility windows
5. Characteristics of mobility windows – MWs in real life
7. Ensuing policy developments & debates in Europe
8. Summing-up
1. Policy context – why ”mobility windows” in 2011?

- Student mobility was (is) high on the European higher education policy agenda – continuous push to increase mobile student numbers:
  - EU and Bologna Process 20% benchmarks
  - Even more ambitious national or regional goals (50% - AT & DE; 33% Flanders; EE – 4-5% every year in exchange programmes)

- “Mobility windows” – in Brussels-circles, often quoted as a solution to overcome mobility obstacles

- BUT, highly unclear what “mobility windows” were precisely – lack of precision, user-driven definition(s) → need for some clarity and for a rational discourse
1. Policy context – why "mobility windows" in 2011?

- **MOWIN Project: Mapping "mobility windows" in European higher education. Examples from selected countries**

- Duration: October 2011 – September 2013
- Co-funded by the EU (ERASMUS Multilateral Projects)

- Aimed to:
  1) propose a clear **definition of mobility windows**;
  2) create a **typology of mobility windows** that reflects the variety of practices and models in Europe;
  3) investigate **how the different types are implemented** (programme visits at HEIs in five countries – Germany, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania – and interviews with staff and students in programmes with mobility windows).
2. Mobility windows – a definition

- BIG assumption – consensus on the definition would emerge from the field/from practice.

- Survey of HEIs – mobility windows as ‘everything under the sun’, from free-mover mobility to mobility exclusively facilitated via joint degree programmes.

- Practice drove definitions – need to come to a joint understanding.

- Developed and proposed a definition after further surveys and a consultation with experts in international HE.
2. Mobility windows – a definition

A mobility window is a period of time reserved for international student mobility that is embedded into the curriculum of a study programme.

- “Curricular embeddedness” =
  - The mobility period is an explicit part of the home curriculum, the study plan and the study programme.
  - The home curriculum and study plan create transparency about the possibility of recognising the stay abroad (full recognition).

- Other names: integrated mobility, structured mobility, partnered mobility, etc.
2. Mobility windows – a definition (2)

- Mobility windows – a paradigm shift → looking at international student mobility from the study programme and institutional perspective
  - Why does the programme ‘want’ international mobility?
  - What does this mean for the home curriculum?
  - What impact beyond the mobile student, at programme and institutional level?

Mobility windows vs. other arrangements for facilitating mobility

- Beyond the ‘standard ERASMUS mobility’
- Physical, international mobility
- MOWIN: visited programmes with mobility windows with min. ‘duration’ of 3 months (15 ECTS)
- Project focus: OUTGOING mobility (but incoming implicit)
2. Mobility windows – a definition (3)

- Mobility window
- Project focus

- (1) conference, workshop, seminar
- (2) summer school
- (3) internship
- (4) temporary enrolment abroad
- (5) joint/double degree
- (6) entire degree abroad
3. Mobility windows – a new phenomenon?

- Old model (structured, integrated mobility), new label
- “Mobility windows” – name traced back to mid-2000s
- Linked to the new degree architecture introduced by the Bologna Process – assumption that the Bachelor is too short for international mobility and ‘mobility time’ needs to be built within.

- Some examples
  - CRUS (2004)
  - DAAD national conference – “Mobiliteit Fenster” (2005)
  - EU level – Jan Figel (2008) as a “remedy […] for the overloaded study programmes” created through the Bologna reforms.
  - LERU paper (2013) – windows used to describe „networked mobility“
  - 2013 – regional level discussion in Flanders, Belgium, on mobility windows
4. A typology of mobility windows

- Easier said than done – initially approx. 40 types

- Typology generated by crossing 2 main characteristics of mobility windows:
  
  (a) the **status of a mobility window** within the study programme: mandatory or optional, and
  
  (b) the **content of the window – degree of curricular standardisation** of the mobility experience facilitated during the window: highly-prescribed curriculum abroad or loosely-prescribed curriculum abroad.

- **Other characteristics**, e.g.:
  - purpose of mobility (e.g. study vs. internship),
  - number of partners,
  - types of degree: traditional vs. joint or double,
  - funding arrangements, etc.

  deemed of secondary importance for the definition, but explored in the **How?** part.
4. A typology of mobility windows (2)

- **Mandatory (Ma)**: Requires participation.
- **Optional (Op)**: Voluntary participation.

**STATUS of the window within the programme**

**Loosely-prescribed (Lop)**: Flexibility in program.
**Highly-prescribed (Hip)**: Strict program requirements.

**Increasing “push” for mobility**

**CONTENT of the window**

**Increasing curricular alignment**

**Integration**

Diagram labels:
- Ma-Lop windows
- Ma-Hip windows
- Op-Lop windows
- Op-Hip windows

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### 4. A typology of mobility windows (3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ma-Lop windows</th>
<th>Ma-Hip windows</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• are a hybrid type of mobility window, combining flexible and more rigid elements;</td>
<td>• are the most structured type of mobility window;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the window is a <em>mandatory</em> component of the study programme; and</td>
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<td>• what students study or undertake while abroad is <em>loosely-prescribed.</em></td>
<td>• students have very limited choice, if any, over what to study/do when abroad – the academic content of the window is <em>highly-prescribed.</em></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Op-Lop windows</th>
<th>Op-Hip windows</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• are the most flexible type of mobility window (coming very close to ERASMUS mobility);</td>
<td>• are a hybrid type of mobility windows, combining flexible and more rigid elements;</td>
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<td>• the window is an <em>optional</em> part of the study programme (the mobility window route); and</td>
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4. A typology of mobility windows (4)

- Incidence of the 4 types amongst the study programmes visited in the MOWIN project: 32 study programmes with 42 MWs.

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<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>2. Degree of standardisation of window's (academic) content</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loosely-prescribed (Lop)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ma-Lop</td>
<td>Ma-Hip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Status of the window in the study programme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandatory (Ma)</td>
<td>5a¹, 11a, 11b, 14, 16, 29a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional (Op)</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5b, 6, 9, 10, 15b, 23, 25, 26b, 27c, 28c, 29b, 29c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Characteristics of mobility windows – MWs in real life

- **Number of MWs** per study programme:
  - Usually **one** MW per programme (25 programmes)
  - Very few with 2 or 3 MWs – usually one more structured (Ma-Hip) followed by one or two ‘looser’ MWs types (Op-Lop or Op-Hip)

- **Types of programmes** incorporating MWs:
  - Both ‘traditional’ degrees (18)
  - And double/joint degree programmes (14)

- **Type of mobility (purpose of mobility)** facilitated through MWs
  - Typically: for studies mobility (enrolment abroad)
  - Much rarer for internships, especially the more structured types (Ma-Hip and Op-Hip)
5. Characteristics of mobility windows – MWs in real life (2)

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### 5. Characteristics of mobility windows – MWs in real life (3)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Full programme name / field of study</th>
<th>Bachelor in Tourism Management (Saxion University of Applied Sciences)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration of the programme</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of mobility windows</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Type and purpose of mobility window | 1. ‘Mandatory window-Highly prescribed content’ (**Ma-Hip**) for internship – year 2  
                                  | 2. ‘Optional window – Loosely prescribed content’ (**Op-Lop**) for study and/or internship – year 3 or 4  
                                  | 3. ‘Optional window-Loosely prescribed content’ (**Op-Lop**) for study and/or internship – year 4 |
| Length                              | 5 months for each                                                  |
| Number of foreign partners          | About 30 institutions for study abroad and 300 companies for internships abroad |
5. Characteristics of mobility windows – MWs in real life (3)

- **Setting-up MWs**: very resource-intensive (for ‘Hip’ cases, can take up to 2-3 years and requires very committed academics – most typically built on personal contacts).

- **Curricular alignment**: specialisation abroad or electives vs. curriculum abroad mirroring fully the home curriculum.

- **When?**: Bachelor – 5th or/and 6th semester; Master – 3rd semester.

- **Funding**: essential, but rarely an institutional support framework and policy; most often organised on a voluntary basis, with Erasmus or other grants used to finance the mobility period.

- **Typical duration**: one semester abroad.

- **Students’ expectations**: full support and planning essential for some, but not all.

1) Do many programmes and institutions implement mobility windows?

- Not as many as expected (not a very frequently-used model so far)
- ‘Not for the faint-hearted’, as they require commitment and work, but ensure programme impact of mobility.

2) Do the windows support the mobility of most or just a minority of students?

- Approx. 10-20% of all enrolled students in programmes with ‘Op’ MWs (except programmes with mandatory windows, where all students go abroad).
- But, better quality mobility.

- The benefits not fully window-specific (mix-up between benefits of mobility in general and benefits of MWs), but multiple

  - For the programme/institution:
    - multiplication,
    - quality boost,
    - reputation enhancement,
    - internal change,
    - staff mobility,
    - programme-level impact,
    - better graduates.

  - For the students: same as for other forms of mobility (but seem essential for students less likely to go abroad)
7. Ensuing policy developments & debates in Europe

Revived **interest Mobility Windows**, because of:

- Focus on ’learning mobility’ and ‘better quality mobility’ – more preparation needed
- Strategic partnerships – curricular embeddedness of mobility periods, ‘a must’
- Decreasing interest in study abroad in some countries – more structured approaches needed
- Or the opposite – world citizens, so everybody should do it – standard part of study programmes

**National debates** on mobility windows:

- Hungary – MWs requirement put into the national HE law for all new study programmes; supporting a regional approach (CEE) to develop MWs
- Austria – national-level debate; more widespread in UASs
- Norway – national-level debate
- Estonia – support from the national agency via dedicated funding, under consultation with HEIs
8. Summing up

“A mobility window is a period of time reserved for international student mobility that is embedded into the curriculum of a study programme.”

- Covering a wide-spectrum of types, from mandatory and fully-prescribed stays abroad, to optional and more flexible arrangements (similar to Erasmus+ student exchanges)
- Integrated in ‘traditional’ study programmes as well as in double and multiple degree programmes
- With one or with many international partners
- Integrating mobility of various types: for study, internship, mixed, research…
- Of various lengths
- Typically one per programme, sometimes more
- Getting increased attention in various European countries
Thank you for your attention!

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*Mobility Windows. From concept to practice:*