

2026-04-01

PhD International Mobility Opportunities Meeting

Summary of the presentation

The presentation focused on international mobility opportunities for PhD students, with particular emphasis on the Erasmus+ Traineeship as the main long-term funded option. The speakers stressed that international experience is not only valuable for personal and scientific growth, but also important for academic networking, career development, and doctoral program evaluation. Students were encouraged to start planning early, since mobility should be considered an integral part of the PhD path rather than a last-minute addition.

A central point was that there are no mobility calls dedicated exclusively to PhD students. Instead, doctoral candidates should mainly look at the standard Erasmus+ Traineeship opportunities and other international calls available through the university. For Erasmus+ Traineeship, physical mobility is the key condition for receiving funding; virtual or hybrid formats may exist, but they do not provide the same grant support. The speakers also noted that destinations now include the UK, which widens the range of possible host institutions.

The presentation explained that the Erasmus+ Traineeship is organized in two editions per year. The first edition, currently open, has a deadline of 12 May and is relatively flexible: applicants can propose their own destination institution and host supervisor, provided they prepare the required documentation in advance. The second edition, usually in autumn, is different because it is based on a predefined list of institutions with existing agreements. In Computer Science, this list has historically been limited, although one doctoral destination mentioned for the previous cycle was Charité in Berlin. Students were therefore invited to suggest additional institutions for future inclusion, typically through their local advisor and Professor Rocchesso.

Another important practical aspect concerns the application materials. For the first Erasmus+ Traineeship call, students must identify a host institution, define a research project, and obtain a commitment letter or equivalent confirmation from the foreign host. The speakers clarified that a template for this letter is available among the call materials, which is useful when a host institution does not already have its own standard form.

Beyond Erasmus+ Traineeship, the meeting also reviewed shorter international mobility formats. These included Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs), which combine online teaching with a short in-person mobility period and typically amount to at least 3 credits. The speakers distinguished between Erasmus+ BIPs and 4EU+ BIPs, and explained that although many of these initiatives are designed mainly for bachelor's or master's students, some are also open to PhD candidates. The university now organizes multiple calls per year for these activities, and doctoral students may even help propose new initiatives through their academic networks.

The presentation also introduced other 4EU+ opportunities, such as seed projects, international workshops, and cross-university course catalogues. In particular, the speakers highlighted Flagship 3 of the alliance, focused on Digitization, Modeling and Transformation, which covers areas such as computer science, AI, data science, physics, and digital humanities. Examples included workshops such as AI in Medicine and other thematic initiatives. These were presented as additional ways to gain international exposure, even when not undertaking a long-term stay abroad.

A final operational message concerned the university's search engine for international opportunities. Students were explicitly warned not to rely on it blindly, because it may fail to display some available calls. The recommendation was to use the search tools, but also to verify opportunities manually by browsing the relevant university and alliance pages directly. The overall tone of the meeting was therefore strongly proactive: students were encouraged to explore options early, contact professors, leverage existing academic networks, and take initiative in shaping their own international experience.

Main questions raised during the meeting and summary of the answers

- One participant asked whether applying by 12 May means that the mobility must take place immediately, or whether it can also be scheduled later, for example in 2027. The reply clarified that there is indeed a time limit, and that the stay must be completed by 31 December 2027.
- Another participant asked what to do if a foreign institution is interested, but does not have its own confirmation format and suggests receiving a template from the applicant's side. The answer was that this situation is normal for the first Erasmus+ Traineeship call: the student can still apply, and a commitment letter template is available in the call materials to be sent to the host institution.
- A further question concerned the case in which a student applies for the Erasmus+ Traineeship but does not receive funding. The answer was that the period abroad could still take place, but it would no longer count as Erasmus+ Traineeship. In that case, it would become an independent stay, and the student would have to handle funding, insurance, and related arrangements autonomously, without the benefits attached to the official programme.
- Another question asked how a student can suggest adding a new host institution that is not already included in the programme. The clarification was that this mainly concerns the second, autumn edition, which is based on formal agreements. In that case, the student should work through their local professor or advisor, and proposals can then be passed to Professor Rocchesso, who will coordinate with the relevant office.