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Implementation analysis of the ERASMUS Programme

An exploratory case study of the ERASMUS Programme implementation at the Law and Economics Departments of the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster and its effect on the participation of students from a low socio-economic background.

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ABSTRACT

The ERASMUS Programme is the world's most successful student mobility programme. However, it has been encountering difficulties to successfully address all student groups. The scientific debates about the participation in this programme have mostly focused on the impact of barriers and motivations on students' decision to go abroad. These studies have frequently identified that students coming from a low socio-economic background (low SES) perceive the participation in the ERASMUS Programme as a rather luxurious study experience, which does not fit their socio-economic setting. Yet, the role the implementation has in determining students' participation has not been thoroughly investigated. The aim of this paper is to address this scientific gap by investigating to what extent the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme provides fair access to low SES students. The paper studies the ERASMUS implementation at the Westfälische-Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Germany (WWU), by comparing its implementation at the Law and Economics Departments of this university. The aim is to provide insights into the ERASMUS implementation strategies of the WWU, by taking a closer look at the ERASMUS practices in two of its biggest departments. This paper delivers some interesting findings regarding the relationship between the ERASMUS implementation and students' participation.

„Erasmus has created the first generation of young Europeans."

Umberto Eco

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List of Abbreviations

In order of appearance in the text:

WWU	University of Münster (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
HEI	Higher education institutions
HE	Higher education
EU	European Union
ERASMUS	European region action scheme for the mobility of university students
SES	Socio-economic status
PPMI	Public Policy and Management Institute Vilnius
IO	International Office of the University of Münster
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to investigate to what extent the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme provides fair access to students coming from a low socio-economic background. This research project focuses on the policies belonging to the outgoing flows of study mobility. The paper researches the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme at the Westfälische-Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Germany (WWU), i.e. it will compare its implementation at the Faculty of Law and the School of Economics and Business of this university. It aims to provide insights into the ERASMUS implementation strategies of the WWU, by taking a closer look at the ERASMUS practices in two of its biggest departments.

This chapter presents the problem this study is addressing, gives an overview of the literature that deals with the topic, and finally formulates the research question.

1.1. Problem statement

According to the OECD (2013, p. 4), between 2000 and 2011 the number of international students has more than doubled. Over 4 million tertiary students were enrolled outside their country of citizenship. The process of internationalization in higher education institutions (HEI) is an ongoing phenomenon, strongly connected with the globalization process. As van der Wende (2007, p. 275) explains, the internationalization can be understood as a possible answer to globalization, as an effort of HEI to face the new requirements of the global society. Internationalization is, therefore, an inevitable reaction of HEI because it answers to a phenomenon that challenges their role in the international context. The concept of intellectual exchange of information and ideas has been dominating the international function of the HEI from their very beginning (Rizvi, 2011, p. 693), but in the era of globalization, this concept is mainly associated with the notions of market-driven and intercultural intellectual exchange and education. Thus, the focus of HEI turns towards the commercial value of knowledge (p. 696), to answer more effectively to the new globalized, multicultural societies, economies and labor markets (van der Wende, 2007, p. 275). The HEI are therefore challenged to adapt their targets on the globalized market.

The global trend of HEI internationalization has also increased the need for new regulations on the European level. The European region action scheme for the mobility of university students (ERASMUS) and the Bologna Agreement are the main instruments to support the Europeanization of the higher education (HE) policies of both the European Union`s (EU) member states, and its partner states (Litjens, 2005, p. 208).

The ERASMUS Programme, adopted through the Decision of the Council of the European Communities (87/327/EEC) on June 15, 1987, intends to encourage the students' mobility between the countries participating in this programme. It was originally designed as an impulse to overcome hurdles of different regulations in the different national systems of higher education. Later on, having been properly resourced and designed, it became a Community cooperative programme (Corbett, 2003, p. 326). Since its creation, the ERASMUS scheme allows more and more young people to gather international experience and develop their intercultural skills, widen their horizons and thus to improve their prospects in the labor market. The programme's main aim is to encourage students' mobility, by enabling cooperation between HEI and promoting an inclusive approach towards the temporary study period abroad, in order to guarantee the recognition of students' academic achievements. Furthermore, it was designed as a partial and incentive funding scheme for both institutions and students participating (Teichler, 1996, p. 156).

These characteristics have been perpetuated in the three decades since the programme has been initiated. A major reform took place in 2014 when the programme was changed to ERASMUS+. Through this reform, the EU aims to strengthen the support for education, training, youth, and sport in Europe. Currently, the programme is designed for the period until 2020. ERASMUS+ aims to offer more opportunities for millions of Europeans to study, train, volunteer or gain professional experience abroad, and to strengthen the international dimension through an even wider range of opportunities for participants to study abroad (EC, 2017).

Ever since its initiation, the ERASMUS Programme has been encountering difficulties to successfully address all groups of students - despite its success and its further ambitions in promoting international study experiences. Scientific debates regarding the question of participation in the ERASMUS Programme and its implementation have not yet thoroughly investigated the nature of the relationship between these variables. The focus of this debates lies more on assessing the impact of different barriers and motivations for students' decision to go abroad (Teichler and Maiworm 1997, Vossensteyn et al. 2007, Beerkens et al. 2017, Souto-Otero and McCoshan 2006, Souto Otero 2008). To date, research has identified several barriers that hinder students' coming from a low socio-economic background to consider a study abroad. They often perceive it as a rather luxurious study experience which does not fit their socio-economic setting. To assess how the implementation affects students' decision-making process on the participation in the ERASMUS Programme, it is highly important to determine whether the way the ERASMUS scheme is implemented, has an impact on tackling the barriers and reinforcing the motivations of the ERASMUS-Programme.

The German HE system is probably one of the most adequate environments to investigate inequity in student international mobility because it is characterized by a relatively low HE enrollment rate and a highly socially selected student population . This phenomenon can be explained mostly by the very early distribution of students into different secondary education tracks which not always provide an HE accesses certificate. Furthermore, the highly selective character of the German HE system also relates to the German vocational training system, which often appears more attractive for low socio-economic status (SES) students than higher education which can turn to be more expensive in terms of money and time (Middendorff et al., 2017, p. 9).

In Germany, the University of Münster (WWU) holds rank six with regard to the number of students. In the academic year 2016/2017, the WWU had a total of 44.016 students (WWU, 2017b, p. 20). According to its Strategic Development Plan, the WWU considers diversity and equity issues as a challenge and aims to tackle them through an active diversity policy which promotes gender and social equality and supports groups of disadvantaged students, such as students with children, students caring for relatives in need or students with disabilities (WWU, 2017a, pp. 5, , 27, 43). Situated in a region with a relatively high income and living expenses , the WWU is considered to have a relatively homogenous students population, where the group of low SES students is in minority. Despite its strategic focus on diversity and equity, the WWU does not have explicit policies to support the group of low SES students. This raises the question, whether the implementation of central policies, such as the internationalization policy reaches all students of this university.

To asses in how far the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme manages to address low SES students, the analysis focuses on two of the biggest departments of the WWU. At both the Law and the Economics Departments more than 5000 students were enrolled in the winter semester 2017/2018. All these students have the theoretic possibility to participate in the ERASMUS-Programme, and some of the students even have the possibility to also apply for an ERASMUS mobility at other departments, if they are enrolled in an interdisciplinary study programme. However, the way the ERASMUS Programme is implemented at these departments might have a big contribution to the successful participation of students. Therefore, the analysis focuses on how the ERASMUS implementation strategies at these departments influence the participation of low SES students in the ERASMUS Programme.

1.2. Literature review

There is extensive research on the issue of inequity in student mobility (Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017). Regarding access inequity within the ERASMUS Programme, studies mainly focus on the barriers and motivations students perceive when they decide about their participation.

In one of the European Commision's first reports evaluating the participation in the ERASMUS-Programme, Teichler and Maiworm (1997) identified a remarkably high proportion of ERASMUS students (1990/1991 ERASMUS students survey) with parents who had only completed compulsory or secondary education. 54% of the students surveyed reported that their father had not attended HE, while 68% stated that their mother either has completed an HE degree (p. 39-40). Consequently, the authors suggest that ERASMUS did not merely serve the students from privileged educational backgrounds (p. 39) The study also evaluated the parental SES. Even though this might have been best indicated by parental occupation, this does not necessarily have the same meaning in all European countries. Therefore, the parental SES has been assessed in this study by considering the parental income. Most ERASMUS students estimate their parents' income status above average (41%) and average (46%), while only 13% reported a parental income status below average (p. 40) Despite these inequity aspects, Teichler (1996, p. 160) states that there is no clear indication that ERASMUS students are a socially selected group among European students. However, he underlines that ERASMUS students might encounter financial problems (pp. 161, 164).

Further research on the access inequity in the ERASMUS Programme focused on determining more indicators for this issue. The relationship between the socio-economic background of students and students' access in the ERASMUS Programme was one of the main concerns that prompted the survey launched by the European Commission in the academic year 1998/1999. This report claims that parents of ERASMUS students are on average rather more highly-qualified than the parents of other HE students in Europe and that this is indeed a significant factor in the selection of ERASMUS students. (EC, 2000, p. 6).

In the report on the Survey of the Socio-Economic Background of ERASMUS Students, Souto-Otero and McCoshan (2006) confirm this trend, not just in terms of parents' qualification but also in terms of parental occupation and parental income. About 58% of the students surveyed (ERASMUS students during the academic year 2004/2005) had at least one parent who had experienced HE. Also, 48% of students reported the income status of their parents as being average, 31% above average while only 14% of students reported their parents' income status lower or considerably lower than average (Souto-Otero & McCoshan, 2006, p. 5). According to Souto-Otero and McCoshan (2006, p. 5), ERASMUS students are more likely to come from households with parents in high-level occupations: around 61% had one or both parents who worked as executives, professionals or technician. They explain that parents with HE more often encourage their children to study abroad to ensure that their children will reach better results than the parents have reached during their studies. In contrast, parents with no HE degree consider such a degree as already satisfying (p. 15). Furthermore, the academic level of the parents is also related to the income factor, and thus explain why, not surpassingly, a large majority of ERASMUS students reported the income status of their parents as being average or above average (p. 5). Comparing the results of this survey with the results of a survey on the same topic conducted in 2000, the authors conclude, that there are still important socio-economic barriers in relation to the take-up of the programme (p. v.) Furthermore, they find, that barriers to take-up of the programme are not only economic but more socio-economic (p. vi.) However, there seems to be some progress in attracting students from less well-off backgrounds, especially when measured by parental income (p. 13). Therefore, they recommend putting more emphasis on the students' funding to enable more people who cannot participate due to financial reasons (p. v). Furthermore, Souto Otero (2008) confirms these findings in another study based on the same set of data (ERASMUS students in the academic year 2004/2005). He claims that the focus of stakeholders has been to expand the number of participants in the ERASMUS Programme without putting much attention on the composition of the student population accessing it. This strategy can hinder providing the same opportunity of participation to all students, regardless of their socio-economic background (pp 150-151).

In their study, Vossensteyn et al. (2010) also state that most ERASMUS participants come from privileged socio-economic backgrounds, in particular regarding their parents' educational background (Vossensteyn et al., 2010, p. 10). Moreover, the study emphasizes that the ERASMUS Programme does not respond well to the financial worries of students from a low socio-economic background because students consider supplementary financial implications of studying abroad as a hindrance (p. 11). However, they do not perceive the availability of the grant as a barrier to participation.

Rodríguez González, Bustillo Mesanza, and Mariel (2011) also underline the relevance of the socio-economic background of students. They argue that parents with a high level of education may exert a positive impact on the students' decision to participate in the ERASMUS Programme. They follow the argument of Souto-Otero and McCoshan (2006) on parents' influence on the decision of participating in the ERASMUS Programme and explain that the rationale for the participation in this programme is often oriented on the cost-benefit relationship (Rodríguez González, Bustillo Mesanza, & Mariel, 2011, p. 421).

Also, Lörz, Netz, and Quast (2016) argue that social selection plays a role for participating in student mobility. In their study on international mobility of German students they investigate the process leading to social selectivity of international student mobility and conclude that two factors bring about a negative decision regarding a study abroad: first, the worse performance-related preconditions of unprivileged students; second, the fact that they perceive a stay abroad as less beneficial. Furthermore, the financial factor has a comparatively moderate impact on their decision (Lörz et al., 2016, p. 166).

Beerkens et al. (2016) take a closer look at the specific incentives and barriers involved in the decision on whether to participate in the ERASMUS Programme or not. They analyze how students judge participating in the ERASMUS Programme and assert that there is no clear causal link between negative decisions and perceiving a barrier. They argue that the barriers reported by students do not seem to be the main reasons against studying abroad, but rather that those barriers are set down in home ties and the lack of interest (Beerkens et al., 2016, p. 10). The authors suggest that negative decisions might be the result of a policy's incapacity to address certain barriers. Consequently, they stress the need for developing studies which focus on the policies' efficiency in addressing such participation barriers. Furthermore, they suggest that the key to overcoming the barriers of participating in the ERASMUS Programme, such as low socio-economic settings, lies in policy implementation.

In the literature dealing with the ERASMUS Programme, implementation has so far not received extensive attention. In 2017 the Public Policy and Management Institute Vilnius (PPMI) published an interim evaluation of the ERASMUS+ implementation in Lithuania. The report analyzed the implementation by focusing on five main criteria: relevance and accessibility, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and complementarity, European added value and sustainability. However, the study's focus lies on the contribution of ERASMUS+ to the quality of Lithuanian education and training system and refers only briefly to its specific implementation within HEI and how this impacts on the students' participation in the ERASMUS Programme. However, this addresses the issue that implementation can deteriorate the accessibility of the programme for groups with lower opportunities and gives an example of good practice how to better reach out this target group (PPMI, 2017, p. 34). Also, the Country Reports of the ERASMUS+ midterm evaluations published by the Netherlands House for Education and Research (Nether, 2018) recommends that specific initiatives should be set up to create a better outreach to the disadvantaged groups (p. 4). The report also underlines that the accessibility and efficiency of the programme are limited by the great administrative burden of the application process (p. 10).

1.3. Research questions and relevance

The aim of this paper is to address the role of the ERASMUS Programme implementation in overcoming participation barriers for students coming from a low socio-economic background. To date, the role of the implementation has hardly been addressed in the literature. However, also prior research clearly identifies that the lack of studies on programme implementation is a scientific gap that needs to be addressed. Therefore, this papers' aim is to determine the role of the implementation in students' decision and how it determines their participation.

This thesis wishes to close this gap and offer further knowledge about the relationship between implementation and participation in the ERASMUS Programme. According to the literature analyzed, the ERASMUS Programme seems to have distinct meanings for students coming from different social environments. Therefore, it is important to identify barriers and motivations for participating in the ERASMUS Programme for all socio-economic groups. Furthermore, when addressing the relationship between implementation and participation, it is relevant to investigate, whether the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme answers the challenges of equity and how. If differences in the implementation of the programme do have an impact on the participation in the ERASMUS Programme, it can be better explained how a fairer distribution of the access to a study abroad can be achieved. Findings on this problem offer a good input for policy adjustment and inclusion. Looking at the role of implementation strategies adds a new perspective on the ERASMUS equity issue. It also offers a contribution on a less discussed aspect of the implications of the participants' socio-economic profile, emphasizing that it is crucial to have a fair approach towards the impediments to student mobility.

To address all these aspects towards delivering new valuable knowledge, this thesis sets in the middle of its analysis the following question: What effect does the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme at the Law and Economics Departments of the WWU have on the participation of low SES students?

This thesis addresses the implementation and participation and investigates the nature of their relationship, setting with a focus on the two following sub-questions:

1) How is the ERASMUS Programme implemented at the chosen departments?
2) What effect does the implementation have on the participation of low SES students in the ERASMUS Programme?

1.4. Structure of the thesis

In the following, this paper is organized into four sections. The first section develops the theoretical framework that will guide the analysis. This section offers an overview of the different theoretic approaches on policy implementation, then presents how these are extended in the field of education policy. Finally, a theoretic framework for the analysis is set, following the features of the ERASMUS Programme, and propositions for the analysis are generated. The second section presents the research design and the methods used for the analysis to answer the main question of the research project. This section is followed by the analysis chapter, which reflects the theoretic framework. For each unit under review, the analysis is structured into three sub-sections: the policy implementation outcome, the policy implementation process and its output and a final section which presents the main findings for each department. This section is closed with a cross-case comparison. Finally, the last section presents the conclusions of this research project, answering the research questions.

2. THEORY AND CONCEPTS

This paper focuses on the relationship between ERASMUS policy implementation and the decision of students coming from a low socio-economic background regarding their participation in the ERASMUS Programme. In evaluating this relationship, much attention has to be paid to the dimensions of the concepts of policy implementation, policy output, and policy outcome. The aim of this section is to clarify how the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme relates to the theoretical implementation frameworks, as well as how this framework can help investigate the relationship between the implementation and the participation in the ERASMUS Programme.

2.1. Policy implementation

Policy implementation is one of the stages belonging to the public policy cycle (Newton & van Deth, 2010, p. 319). This stage is responsible for putting the plan of dealing with a problem into action. Its results are specific consequences, namely the outputs and their effects, or outcomes. Newton and van Deth (2010) claim that within the implementation stage, policies often get changed with regard to practical aspects which can be understood as policy optimization. Also, the different interest of stakeholders involved can influence the policy implementation. However, any change of the original policy that intervenes during the implementation stage can hinder the targeted outcomes (Newton & van Deth, 2010, p. 324). Thus, the implementation stage has a crucial role in reaching the desired policy results.

For further analysis purposes, it is necessary to thoroughly describe the implementation stage of a policy. In this sense, a conceptual line between the policy implementation process, policy output, and policy outcome has to be drawn. Newton and van Deth (2010) argue that the policy outputs are the first results of the implementation and can be understood as actions applied towards a certain result, while the outcomes refer to the consequences of the outputs, i.e. the ultimate results (p. 324). This distinction reflects the difference between the application of the policy, what it actually achieves. According to DeGroff and Cargo (2009), the implementation process involves action on behalf of the policy and is most frequently manifested as programs, procedures, regulations or practices, whereas policy outcome refers to the ultimate effect on the problem addressed by the policy (p. 49).

In a literature review on policy implementation, Najam (1995) identifies three approaches to explaining policy implementation and ascribes them to three main generations of implementation scholars. The classical school states that implementation would happen “automatically” once the appropriate policies had been authoritatively proclaimed (Najam, 1995, p. 8). The second generation has a rather empirical approach and focuses on implementation failure in order to explain that the implementation process is not less complex than the process of designing policies. The third generation shifts towards a more analytical view and looks at policy implementation in terms of how it functions and how it can be improved. All these scholars, who according to Najam (1995, pp. 3-4) focused on implementation in many different domains, draw their research on five general variables: the content of the policy, the nature of the institutional context, the commitment of those carrying the task of implementation, their administrative capacity and the support of the clients and coalitions affected by the implementation. By analyzing the nature of these variables, Najam determines three claims generated by the variables: a claim to general acceptability, a claim to general applicability and a claim to specific relevance.

Another extensive review of the policy implementation models and frameworks is delivered by Nilsen (2015). His aim is to identify the differences between the implementation models and frameworks, in order to translate policy implementation research into practice (Viennet & Pont, 2017, p. 15). For this purpose, he summarizes specific determinants that are significant for policy implementation: characteristics of the implementation object, characteristics of the user/adopters, characteristics of the end users, characteristics of the context, and characteristics of the strategy or other means of facilitating implementation (Nilsen, 2015, p. 6).

There are, however, only very few models of policy implementation frameworks, which have been developed explicitly for specific policy domains. One of the most relevant studies focusing on a certain policy field is delivered by Viennet and Pont (2017). They draw on Nilsen’s model to develop a generic framework for education policy implementation and focus on the policy implementation processes in school education. Nevertheless, the main questions of their analysis are applicable also for answering policy implementation questions within HE. Therefore, their work represents the core of the analytical framework that will be used to answer the research question of this thesis.

The model of Viennet & Pont looks at what education policy implementation entails in both theory and practice and which determinants are involved in the process of education policy implementation (p. 6). At the heart of these questions lies the definition of education policy implementation as a purposeful and multidirectional change process, aiming to put a specific policy into practice and which may affect an education system at several levels. There are three main characteristics of education policy implementation, which can be identified: purposeful, multidirectional and contextualized. These characteristics meet Najam’s claims of general acceptability, applicability, and specific relevance. The implementation process is purposeful if it meets the policy objectives. This process is multidirectional because it can be influenced by several stakeholders at various levels, and it is contextualized as it faces different societal and institutional environments, which it has to adapt to (Viennet & Pont, 2017, p. 10).

Following this definition of education policy implementation, Viennet & Pont inflect Nilsen's framework on policy implementation determinants and identify four independent variables that affect the outcomes of education policy implementation: the policy design, the stakeholders and their engagement, the institutional, policy and societal context and the implementation strategy. The policy design determines mainly whether a policy can be implemented and how. In a narrow sense, it can be understood as the object being implemented (Viennet & Pont, 2017, p. 28), a process which involves a policy justification, a policy logic in terms of goals, targets and causality, and policy feasibility. Thus, the policy design must be based on a clear reasoning. It also has to have clear goals that consider a specific target group and must consider the causality relationships between the policy problem and the impact it is designed to have on the targeted group (p. 29). However, in order to put it in practice, the policy has to be designed in a realistic manner, which considers available resources and aims. The feasibility of a policy is therefore indispensable in order to ensure that it is applicable. All of these aspects must be internalized by the actors involved in applying the policy. Therefore, in order to engage the stakeholders in the implementation process as desired, it is necessary to identify and investigate their views, interests, and capacities. Their interests and capacities form the capital, which determines how actors react to a policy (pp. 32-34). The context in which the implementation unfolds is also important. It is determined by the institutional setting, the existing policies and how compatible these are with the newly implemented ones as well as with societal trends, which might shape the dimension of the issue tackled by the policy and the solutions offered (pp. 34-37). Thus, an effective policy implementation requires all these three necessary conditions: a smart policy design, an inclusive stakeholder engagement, and a conducive context.

All of these variables are related to each other, and their relationships are enforced by the implementation strategy variable. The variables must be put into effect by a coherent implementation strategy which is an operational plan that guides the process to make the policy happen in effect (Viennet & Pont, 2017, p. 28). While the policy design includes mostly its theoretical underpinnings, the strategy is seen as the plan explaining how to make the policy happen in effect (p. 37). It is rather action-oriented and includes the following five elements: task allocation and accountability, objectives and tools, resources, timing, and communication and engagement strategy with the stakeholders. Therefore, a coherent policy implementation strategy must reflect the key stakeholders and identify their responsibilities. Also, it involves several goals and initiatives to reach them, which need to be refined in operational terms and policy tools (p. 39). Further, the role of the stakeholders is very important, because the coherence of the strategy depends to some extent on the way they internalize the design and the aim of the policy. The coherence of the implementation strategy is also influenced by the resources available to the actors, such as the funding, technology, and knowledge. The amount, quality and distribution of the resources allocated determine to some extent whether and how the policy is implemented (p. 39). To achieve effectiveness and coherence in the implementation it is also important to collect information about the implementation process and its impact and to disseminate it. This facilitates an effective monitoring of the implementation processes and holds the actors accountable (p. 40).

Considering the distinction made by the policy implementation literature between the implementation process and the policy output, a coherent implementation strategy can be understood as the process which puts into effect a smart policy design, engages the stakeholders in an inclusive manner, and considers the nature of the context where the policy is implemented. Consequently, the policy output is the result of a coherent implementation process towards reaching the final result of the implementation. The outcome is, therefore, the definite result of the implementation, i.e. the effect it has achieved on the targeted problem or/and group.

2.2. Theoretical framework and conceptualization

When looking at the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme, several characteristics identified in the implementation theory can be recognized. Firstly, the coherence of the implementation is highly dependent on the generic design of this students' mobility policy, on the stakeholders and the way they are involved in the implementation, and on the context in which the programme is implemented. Therefore, a coherent implementation of the ERASMUS Programme at a certain university is strongly connected with the internationalization strategy, the actors involved in the internationalization process, and its organizational structure. However, all these factors are present at all institutional levels where the programme is implemented: from the central level of the main International Office (IO) to the "local" level of each department and faculty. A coherent implementation emerges when at all these levels, all factors involved are clearly identified and engaged accordingly, aiming to reach the targeted impact and outcomes.

Since the aim of the ERASMUS Programme is to enable student mobility, it is necessary to understand which are the most important factors that play a role in the students' decision-making process. Literature regarding the determinants of the participation in the ERASMUS Programme identifies a group of decisive factors. Beerkens et al. (2016) synthesize these factors into two opposing groups of motivations and barriers (p. 5). The starting point to explain participation is the motivation of the student. This generates the initial intention to study abroad and helps to overcome the barriers that students face (p. 9). There can be mentioned five motivations: career perspectives, intercultural experience, availability of the ERASMUS grant, available administrative support and a good fit of the programme, which involves the choice and quality of the host institution, the alignment with the curriculum of the home university and the length of the mobility. According to Beerkens et al. (2016, pp. 6-9), next to these motivations, students face the following main barriers: home ties, alternative expectations - referring to some students' interest in a full degree programme, who consider an ERASMUS mobility too short, study disruption, financial constraints, administrative problems, doubts about educational system, language problems, and the lack of interest.

Beerkens et al. (2016) suggest that there is a relationship between the decision of participating in the ERASMUS Programme and the way policies address the motivations and the barriers involved in the decision-making process. Therefore, the barriers and the motivations for participating in ERASMUS can be used to assess the output of the ERASMUS policy implementation process. This is an intermediate step in analyzing the influence of the implementation on the students' decision. Thus, it can be considered, that the ERASMUS policy is coherently and efficiently implemented when it has an impact on strengthening the motivations of this programme and tackling the barriers perceived by the students.

As illustrated in Figure 1. the analysis first investigates the nature of the relationship between the independent and the intervening variables. The analysis of the independent variable focuses on the main four ERASMUS procedures involved in the students' outgoing flow: establishment and administration of partnerships, advisory and guidance work, application and selection process, and recognition of academic results. Each of these procedures can be evaluated through the components of the policy implementation strategy, synthesized in the theory as follows: task allocation and accountability mechanism, objectives, policy tools, communication and engagement strategy with stakeholders, resources, data monitoring and accountability, and timing. It is assumed, that depending on each procedure explored, the relationship between the independent variable – policy implementation process, and the intervening variable – policy output can be either negative or positive.

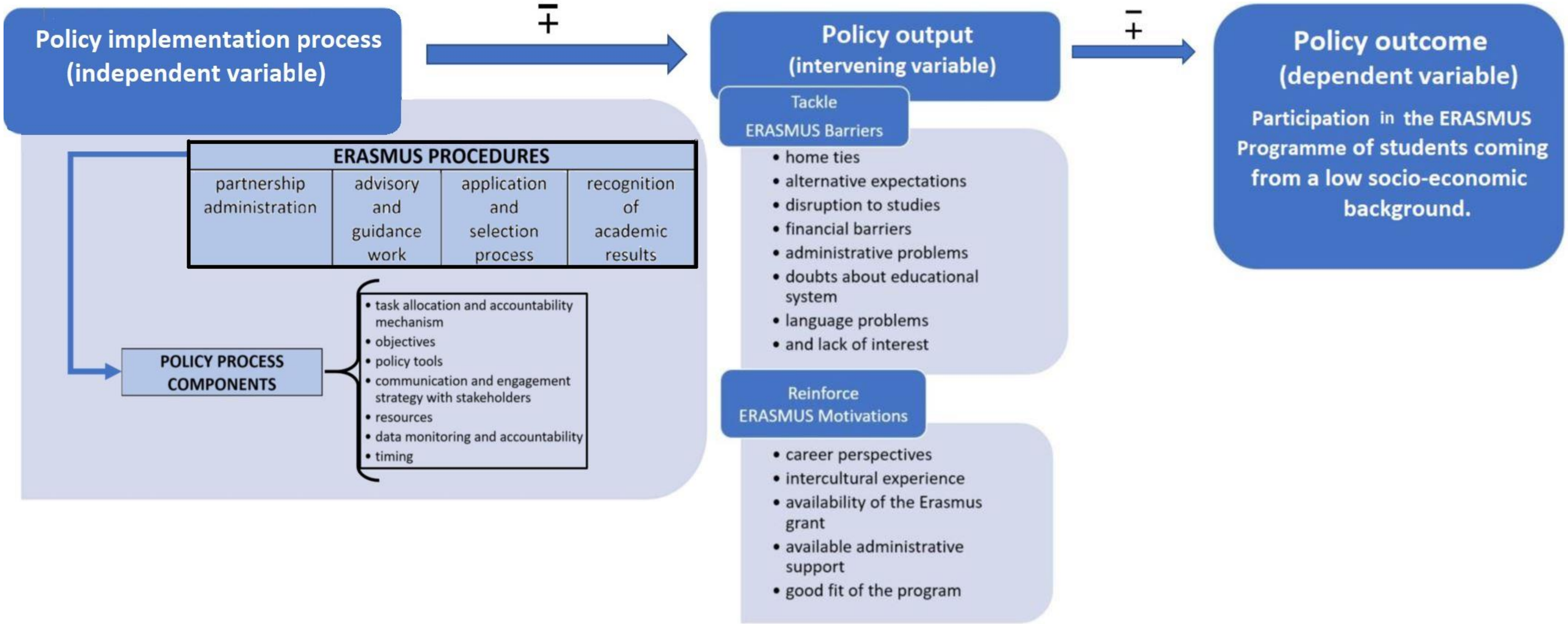


Figure 1. Representation of the policy implementation process and measurements.
Adapted from Viennet and Pont (2017) and Beerkens, Souto-Otero, de Wit, and Huisman (2016)

The conceptualization of the policy output of the ERASMUS implementation process focusses on the impact that the implementation process has on the barriers and the motivations involved in the students' decision-making. The policy output can be seen as an intervening variable because it represents a phenomenon included in a causal theory's explanation (Van Evera, 1997, p. 11). The output is associated with the extent to which the implementation process manages to tackle the barriers of the ERASMUS Programme, while it reinforces the ERASMUS motivations. This model, however, does not exclude further variables which may influence students' decision. Thus, even though the ERASMUS barriers are successfully tackled, and motivations are reinforced, this does not always lead to the participation in the ERASMUS Programme.

The analysis of the policy output and policy outcome focusses on the group of low SES students. As the literature review has shown, students of different SES perceive differently the motivations and barriers of the ERASMUS Programme. It is, therefore, crucial to determining whether the implementation process affects low SES students' perception of these motivations and barriers. Consequently, the relationship between the intervening variable and the dependent variable may also be either positive or negative.

Finally, the policy outcome is understood as the decision towards the ERASMUS Programme and the participation of students coming from a low socio-economic background. This requires special attention to the concept of SES. Dickinson and Adelson (2014) explain why social factors are important in educational research. They state, that educational research typically leans on Coleman's (1966) research work to argue that educational achievements are influenced by social rather than only individual factors (Dickinson & Adelson, 2014, p. 2). They further state that students' SES has been historically regarded as a combination of parent income, parent educational attainment, and parent occupational prestige. They further underline the fact, that the components of SES are conceptually different, and even though these may be highly correlated, each of them plays a unique role in individual outcomes (p.3). This aspect is also mentioned by Cowan et al. (2012), who asserts that SES is measured by different variables in different studies (e.g. Sirin, 2005), which makes it difficult to appreciate exactly what it is, or what researchers and policymakers mean by SES (p. 12). Based on a synthesis of all SES approaches observed in studies published on students' SES, they state that it may broadly be seen as a general variable that indexes resources available to the students, including economic, social, and cultural aspects. They argue, that there is a set of main three variables ("big 3") that can be thought to capture different aspects of resources available to students: family income, parental educational attainment, and parental occupational status (pp. 9-13). Ditton and Maaz (2015) also underline that the basis for determining SES is represented by the class-based models of social stratification. They explain, that in order to determine the SES in the empirical educational research, categorial and classification systems are used. According to them, this method helps to highlight the significant differences between the social groups, in terms of educational participation and success (p. 232). Furthermore, they stress that the economic, social and cultural capital strongly depends on the SES. Hereby, the differences in the family's potential to support students' according to the requirements of the educational system can be clearly highlighted. Also, by looking at the SES, there can be recognized different rationales when deciding on education pathways and careers (235).

Considering these theoretical observations on the SES concept and in order to determine the SES of the students interviewed for this research project, three main criteria have been selected:

- income, here also referred to as a source for study financing, such as BAföG (study grant/loan offered by the German state), "Kindergeld" (child allowance), scholarships (e. g. Deutschland Stipendium, scholarships offered by different foundations), private study credit, extra part-time job or parents' financial support. It is considered that students, whose complete studies are being financed by their parents, belong to the high SES group, while students who have to finance their studies through a study loan or grant, scholarships, study credits or/and extra part-time job are distributed to the low SES group.

- parents' level of education and/or occupation. Either the level of education of the students' parents or their occupation is being considered. In those cases where the gathered data covers both aspects, both the education level and the occupation are considered. If at least one of the students' parents has an HE degree, the student belongs to the high SES group. In regard to the occupation aspect, students whose parents (or at least one of the parents) practice an intellectual profession, are considered to belong to the high SES group, while students, whose parents exert an unqualified work are distributed to the low SES group.

- migration background. This aspect does not necessarily directly indicate high or low SES. It can nevertheless be taken into consideration in correlation with the parents' level of education and occupation. In some cases, the migration background might be associated with both a low level of parental education and unqualified jobs.

2.3. Propositions

Yin (2014) argues that a complete case study design will always benefit from the development of theoretical propositions, whether the case is to be exploratory, descriptive or explanatory (p. 44). Propositions bring an immense contribution in defining the appropriate data collection and analysis methods and can also become the main vehicle for generalizing the findings from the case study (p. 45). In this paper, the propositions emerge out of the necessity to focus on the functionality of the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme. According to Mahoney and Goertz (2006, p. 55), this is a primary orientation of case studies because these studies are often interested in the causes of the effect and centered more on the dependent variable.

Based on the theoretical considerations developed in the theoretical framework it is possible to generate a set of propositions that will guide the analysis of the data. Therefore, the propositions serve as an outline to develop and present the findings of the analysis and to finally formulate well-grounded claims regarding the influence of the ERASMUS Programmes' implementation on the participation of low SES students.

The propositions are formulated starting from the four main ERASMUS procedures involved in the ERASMUS students' outgoing flow: partnership administration, advisory and guidance work, application and selection process and recognition of academic results. The first proposition refers to the partnership administration procedure as follows:

- 1st Proposition: *The more centralized the partnership administration process, the better are the students' doubts about the educational system of the host university overcome. The centralization improves the students' perception about the ERASMUS Programme, thus encouraging the participation of low SES students.*

  The partnership administration is considered to be centralized when there is not more than one person within a department directly responsible for negotiating and managing the partnerships with the partner universities, and the same person offers consultancy to students for each partner-university. The centralization prevents the loss of information regarding the study conditions at the partner universities and provides a more direct access to this information. It is expected that this aspect is especially important for low SES students. That is because low SES students worry more about what expects them abroad considering their limited resources.

The second proposition focuses on the advisory and guidance work:

- 2nd Proposition: *The more structured and specific the advisory and guidance work is, the better the students' lack of interest is surmounted, and the awareness for the better career perspectives is accentuated. Therefore, the low SES students' participation is boosted.*

  The advisory and guidance work is structured, when it adapts to the different features of each group of students it targets, such as BA, MA, or Ph.D. students, 1st semester, or advanced students, as well as students wishing to go abroad during the winter or during the summer term. It is specific when it consistently covers all aspects of an ERASMUS study abroad, relevant to students' decision-making process. It is expected that low SES students are especially influenced by a structured and specific guidance that underlines the contribution which participating in the ERASMUS Programme brings to their career perspective. That is because they are more focused on a career start and reaching financial stability.

The third proposition addresses the application and selection process:

- 3rd Proposition: *The clearer and more transparent the application and selection process, the better the students' lack of interest is tackled, and a higher participation of low SES students is achieved.*

  The application and selection process is clear when there is a logical relationship between the application documents and the criteria considered to evaluate the application. Also, the procedure is transparent when students are given consistent information regarding the evaluation algorithm and the allocation mechanism of mobility places for each partner-university. It is expected that low SES students are rather encouraged to apply for an ERASMUS mobility if the application and selection process is transparent because they can better assess their chances and prepare the application accordingly. Since low SES students might perceive the ERASMUS Programme as elitist or exclusivist, a transparent application and selection process can show them that their application can have real chances, even though they compete with high SES students who might have better applications in terms of grades or internships.

Finally, the last proposition considers the recognition procedure of academic results:

- 4th Proposition: *The more feasible the recognition of academic results from abroad, the better the risk of study disruption is minimized, and the good fit of the programme is amplified, thus better facilitating the participation of the low SES students.*

The study disruption refers to the students' difficulties with credit recognition, by integrating a study abroad in their regular curriculum, and with an incompatible academic calendar. The recognition of academic results is feasible when, even before the study abroad, the student knows in general to what extent the academic results achieved abroad count in the home university's study programme. Low SES students are expected to be especially interested in a high grade of study recognition because this prevents the study disruption. Low SES students might not afford to extend their studies in order to compensate for what their home university did not recognize from their study abroad.

3. Research design and methodology

This chapter offers an overview of the approaches and methods used to adequately answer the research question. The following sub-sections explain and justify the methodological approach adopted for this study, the selection of the cases analyzed, the methods used for data collection and analysis, as well as the threats of the chosen approaches and methods. First, it explains how the research question has been addressed, considering the problem statement and the nature of the research question, as well as the hitherto scientific approaches on the topic and the research gap identified in the literature. The second section of this chapter explores the details of the methods used for the data analysis. In the last section, this chapter explains how the variables analyzed have been measured. It furthermore provides definitions of the variables and of the coding scheme used for the analysis.

3.1. Research design

Given the exploratory nature of the research question and the specificity of the ERASMUS Programme, this study is conducted in a qualitative fashion, using an exploratory case study design. The need for this type of research design arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. This approach allows investigators to focus on a certain situation and context, and retain a holistic and real-world perspective (Yin, 2014, p. 4).

This research project focuses on the relationship between the main two variables involved in the evaluation of the ERASMUS Programme: “implementation” and “participation”. From the literature review on the access and participation in the ERASMUS Programme, one can conclude that much is known about the positive (motivations) and negative (barriers) factors involved in the students’ decision-making regarding a study abroad. However, there is less knowledge available regarding the influence of policy implementation on these factors, on the students’ decision and their access to the ERASMUS scheme. Hence, this study starts with a relatively scarce level of theoretical and practical knowledge regarding the relationship of the variables investigated. Based on observations, this study aims to generate extensive evidence about the variables and their relationship. This justifies opting for an exploratory case study approach.

To conduct this research, two departments of the WWU have been selected. The aim is to establish through the comparison of distinct implementation approaches, whether and how the *“implementation”* variable affects the participation of low SES students. To investigate this phenomenon, both quantitative and qualitative data is being examined. However, the quantitative data covers just a small part of the data considered, representing statistics of the outgoing students’ flow at each department and information regarding the socio-economic status of the students enrolled at each department. The most relevant part of the data used for the analysis is the qualitative data, gathered to the biggest extent through interviews with students and practitioners of both departments and of the central IO of the WWU. Another source of qualitative data are the official documents of the WWU regarding the internationalization strategy, and the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme, as well as information regarding the ERASMUS Programme of both departments. The qualitative data is analyzed by systematically scrutinizing the content and generating sets of categories and codes.

3.2. Methodology

3.2.1. Case study

To answer the research question of this thesis, the case study approach has been chosen as the most adequate investigation path. George and Bennett (2005) define the case study approach as a detailed examination of an aspect to develop or test explanations that may be generalized to other events (p. 5). Eisenhardt (1989) argues that case study research strategy focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings. It can be used to accomplish various aims, such as to provide description, test theory, or generate theory (pp. 534-535). She explains that theory building from cases is particularly adequate when little is known about a phenomenon since theory building from case study does not rely on previous literature or prior empirical evidence (p. 534).

The theoretical framework of this research project relies on the findings from the previous literature, regarding the successful implementation of policies. Also, the theoretical framework considers findings regarding the incentives and impediments that students perceive when deciding about the participation in the ERASMUS Programme. However, little knowledge and empirical evidence is available regarding the relationship, which is the core of this thesis' research question: the influence of the programme's implementation on low SES students' participation. The case study research method fits, therefore, the features of the research question best. The strength of this research method is its ability to discover a wide variety of social, cultural and political factors potentially related to the phenomenon of interest that may not be known in advance (Bhattacherjee, 2012, p. 40). Therefore, the analysis tends to be qualitative in nature, but heavily contextualized and nuanced, which can help derive richer, more contextualized and more authentic interpretation of the phenomenon of interest than most other research methods (pp. 40, 93). Also, this allows that the phenomenon of interest can be studied from the perspective of multiple participants and using multiple levels of analysis.

This is the case in this research paper, since both students' and staff perspectives, as well as both the institutional and departmental implementation approaches, are investigated. However, because of the contextualized nature of the method, the findings that arise from the analysis can be hardly generalized. The generalizability is improved in this research project by choosing two distinct departments of the same institution, which are considered to be two distinct cases.

When selecting the cases for a study, Bhattacharjee (2012, p. 94) warns with respect to the threat of an opportunistic choice, which is based on access and convenience. To avoid this, the WWU and the two departments have been chosen to be analyzed in this paper, have been selected based on theoretical sampling. This mainly considers the fit with the research question, the phenomenon analyzed, and the variables involved. Therefore, this study focuses on two representative departments of the WWU in terms of internationalization and the socio-economic status of the students' population. These departments also feature different implementation designs that can have a different impact on their rather homogenous student's population.

The Faculty of Law and the School of Business and Economics of the WWU have a high rate of internationalization, managing an important number of partnerships: the Economics Faculty had for the academic year 2018/2019 over 100 ERASMUS Partnerships (School of Business and Economics, Fact Sheet 2017/2018, p. 3), while the Law Department was able to offer in the same academic year ERASMUS mobilities at over 70 partner-universities (Information Centre of the Faculty of Law, List of Partnerships 2018/2019). Also, these are two of the biggest departments of the WWU, with a students' population in the academic year 2017/2018 of over 5000 enrolled students (WWU, 2017b, p. 21). Furthermore, both departments register important flows of ERASMUS outgoing students: over 300 economics students out of over 1600 applications were selected for a study abroad in the academic year 2018/2019[1], while at the Faculty of Law the number of the outgoing students reached 190 students out of over 300 applications[2].

These departments are also known as having a relatively homogenous population of students in terms of socio-economic background. This can be clearly illustrated, especially with reference to the family's educational background. According to INCHER-Kassel (2017), in the academic year 2015/2016, about 73% of the students enrolled at the Faculty of Law had at least one of the parents with an HE Degree, while at the Economics Faculty this group reached 62%. These rates are over the average value calculated for the WWU, which is of about 59% of the whole students' population. Also compared to Germany's whole students' population, the rates of the chosen departments are above average. According to the 21st Social Survey of Deutsches

[1] Statistical overview of applications and mobility places awarded for the academic year 2018/2019, retrieved from: https://www.wiwi.uni-muenster.de/fakultaet/de/international/partner/partnerhochschulen
[2] Official statistic of the Law Department of the WWU. This data was provided on request of the researcher.

Studentenwerk (2017), which assesses the economic and social situation of students in Germany in 2016, at least one of the parents of more than half of the German students' population (52%) has a university degree (Middendorff et al., 2017, p. 27). This trend is even more strongly reflected by the rates registered at the regional level. The statistics calculated for the land North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) indicate that in 2016 just 26% of the students enrolled in a university have at least one of the parents with a university degree. Since most of the students enrolled in the study programmes of the chosen departments come from a rather high socio-economic background, and since their percentage is even higher than the national and regional average level, the selected departments offer very good and stable conditions to analyze whether the ERASMUS implementation relates to the participation of the minority group of low SES students.

The WWU has been chosen for this analysis because it has a long and successful history in implementing the ERASMUS Programme. The WWU was awarded the E-Quality seal in 2006, being one of the first universities in Germany to receive this distinction. This quality seal, awarded annually by the National Agency for Erasmus in the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) since 2005, recognizes universities for a particularly good and innovative implementation of the European Mobility Scheme. The mandatory condition for the promotion of a university by the DAAD is the successful application for the Erasmus University Charter at the European Commission, a condition which the WWU has successfully achieved.[3] The WWU has also developed an internationalization strategy, which provides consistent internationalization guidelines to serve as a strategic basis for all departments. Furthermore, specific guidelines for the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme and the targeted goals are provided by the "*ERASMUS statement on the higher education policy of the WWU*" (*Erasmus Erklärung zur Hochschulpolitik).* Therefore, selecting two distinct departments of the same university allows maintaining stable conditions for the analysis of the two cases, helping to eliminate interfering variables.

Despite the good fit of this research design to the research question of this study and to the rigorous case selection, much attention has to be given to the weaknesses of case studies. Bhattacherjee (2012, p. 94) states that the case study is a difficult research method, which is often prone to error. He claims that many case study research projects start without having a specific research question, thus carrying the risk of not reaching specific answers or insightful inferences. For this thesis, the research question; as well as the variables of the relationship investigated are clearly identified and explained.

[3] Cited from: https://www.uni-muenster.de/international/profil/qualitaet/index.html

In general, the typical threats affect a study's construct, internal and external validity, and its reliability. Yin (2014) argues that the internal validity is not truly applicable for exploratory studies and strongly underlines how challenging the construct validity in generall for case studies is (p. 46). One of the methods suggested by Yin to overcome this threat is to use multiple sources of evidence, in a manner encouraging convergent lines of inquiry (p. 47). This strategy has been applied in the study at hand, by considering several sources of evidence, such as official documents, interviews with all stakeholders involved and direct observations. The application of this strategy is thoroughly explained in the section 3.2.2. Qualitative Data.

3.2.2. Qualitative Data

The main part of the qualitative data selected for this analysis consists of interviews conducted with students of both departments as well as practitioners of the selected departments and of the IO of the WWU. Furthermore, the official documents of the WWU regarding the internationalization strategy and the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme have been analyzed. Documents such as "ERASMUS statement on the higher education policy of the WWU", "University Development Plan of the WWU Münster", and "The Internationalization Strategy of the WWU 2012-2018" are open to the public and have been procured from the homepage of the WWU. Also, important qualitative data offer the homepages of the IO and of both departments.

All interviews have been conducted during the same period of time, from Mai to June 2018. In total, 11 semi-structured interviews have been conducted with students of both departments, enrolled in different study programmes. The interviews included four groups of questions: first, general questions regarding the students' personal background; second, questions regarding the features of students' study programme; third, questions regarding students' socio-economic background; and fourth and the main section of the interview, questions regarding students' experience with the ERASMUS Programme.[4] The structure of the students' sample goes as follows: six law students, two of which have been abroad within the ERASMUS Programme; five economics students, two of which have been studying abroad within the ERASMUS scheme, one of them is going abroad within another type of study mobility and two MA-students are planning to apply for an ERASMUS mobility. The students have been selected randomly with respect to their SES. The number of interviews conducted with students has been partly determined by the logistic limitations of the study as well as by the fact that a population which to some extent provides variable answers and backgrounds has however been reached.

[4] A sample of the questionnaire that served as guidelines for the interviews is attached in the Appendix, Page 61

While the external validity of this research design is improved by performing a two-case study, it is difficult to improve its internal validity, because no experimental control is involved. Yin (2014) even argues, that the internal validity is rather applicable for explanatory or causal studies, and not truly for exploratory studies. However, as the **Table 1.** below shows, for this research project both students of the focus group – low SES students, as well as students from other social groups have been interviewed.

Student	Department	Study level (BA, MA, Law specialization)	ERASMUS (Yes/No/Planning)	Another kind of study abroad	SES
C1	Economics	BA	Yes	-	high
D1	Economics	MA	No	Yes	high
G1	Economics	MA	Planning	-	low
K1	Economics	MA	Planning	-	high
M1	Economics	MA	Yes	-	high
A1	Law	Specialization	No	-	high
B1	Law	Specialization	No	-	low
M2	Law	Specialization	No	-	low
N1	Law	Specialization	Yes	-	high
P1	Law	Specialization	Yes	-	low
P2	Law	Specialization	No	-	high

Table 1. Overview of interviews conducted with students

ERASMUS practitioners of both departments, as well as staff from the central IO of the WWU, have been interviewed with the aim of gaining a good insight into the implementation process of the ERASMUS Programme, as understood and conducted by the involved persons. This is essential in order to have an impartial overview of the perception of all stakeholders involved. Two of these interviews have been conducted individually, with the ERASMUS Institutional Coordinator of the WWU and with the person in charge for coordinating the partnerships and the outgoing student mobility at the International Relations Center of the Economics Department. The two persons interviewed at Students' Information Center of the Law Department have been interviewed with a group discussion.

Staff Position	Department
Institutional Coordinator	International Office, University of Münster
Coordinator Partnerships and Outgoing Students Mobility	International Relations Center, Economics Department
Advisor Study Abroad	Students' Information Center Law Department
Internationalization Officer	Students' Information Center Law Department

Table 2. Overview of interviews conducted with practitioners

In order to evaluate and interpret the collected data, a qualitative content analysis has been conducted. The analysis sticks to the *theory-guided qualitative content analysis approach* developed by Gläser and Laudel (1999, 2010). This approach proposes an open coding, similar to the grounded theory tradition, which is guided by the theoretic framework. Based on the theory, a categorical system is developed, and further sub-categories and sub-codes are added during the analysis. The analysis in this paper is structured in three main categories, corresponding to the main variables investigated: policy implementation process, policy output, policy outcome. Each of these categories has several sub-categories. For instance, the *policy implementation process* implies the four main ERASMUS procedures: *partnership administration, advisory and guiding work, application and selection process* and *recognition of academic results*. The *policy output* presents two sub-categories: *ERASMUS barriers* and *ERASMUS motivations*, while the *policy outcome* focuses on *low SES students* and *participation in the ERASMUS Programme*. A complete overview of definitions, categories, and codes is presented in section 3.3. Operationalization.

Several threats, that might affect the collection and analysis of the data have been considered. First, the reliability of the data collected cannot be guaranteed, if not enough information regarding the data collecting method is offered. This risk has been addressed in this thesis by providing a comprehensive appendix, which includes a protocol of the interviews (list of interview questions) conducted, the transcripts of the interviews, as well as lists of codes used to analyze them. Furthermore, many of the interviews' transcriptions have been reviewed by the interviewees, increasing their reliability. Another threat for the data collected is the biased interpretation, based on responses from biased interviewees (Bhattacherjee, 2012, p. 94) which can occur if the data is not validated or triangulated using multiple means. To avoid this in this research project, an open and multiple coding method has been used. However, the qualitative content analysis couldn't be supplemented by an extensive quantitative analysis because of the limitations of this thesis.

3.2.3. Quantitative Data

The quantitative data used for this analysis refers mainly to the numbers of the ERASMUS students outgoing flows and to the socio-economic background of the students enrolled at the focus departments. This information successfully supplements the observations made on the basis of the qualitative data and helps to make correlations between the general participation in the ERASMUS Programme at each department, and the perception of the interviewees, both practitioners and students, regarding the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme.

Besides the quantitative data regarding the chosen departments, further statistical studies regarding the socio-economic situation of students in Germany and NRW have also been analyzed. These were used in order to better explain the representativeness of the selected cases. In general, the quantitative data considered in this paper provided a better understanding of the cases and of the analysis' context.

3.3. Operationalization

The research question of this thesis focuses on two main variables: implementation and participation, with the aim of analyzing the nature of these variables' relationship. Therefore, the investigation follows two distinct questions, as follows: first, how is the ERASMUS Programme implemented at the Law and Economics Departments of the WWU? Second, what is the effect of the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme at these departments on the participation of students from a low socio-economic background?

As illustrated in the **Figure 2**., on the basis of the theoretic framework, there can be however identified three variables, that must be analyzed and measured, in order to determine what kind of relationship exists between the main two variables. The first one is the "*policy implementation process"*, which together with the second one, the intervening variable "*policy output"* are the two concepts associated with the "*implementation"* variable. The last concept of the theoretic framework, the *policy outcome* corresponds to the dependent variable, "*participation of low SES students".* The analysis thus concentrates on the three concepts that the implementation theory claims to be involved in the policy implementation evaluation: policy implementation process, policy output, and policy outcome. To measure them, these three concepts or variables must be applied to the implementation example of the ERASMUS Programme.

3.3.1. Policy implementation process

The policy implementation process refers to the four main ERASMUS procedures that are involved in the outgoing students flow: partnership administration, advisory and guidance work, application and selection process and recognition of academic results. These are defined as follows:

a. Partnership administration

Actions dedicated to the aim of fostering the existing partnerships and establish new ones, such as: maintaining a close contract to the people in charge at the partner universities, negotiating the terms of the partnerships, updating the information regarding the study conditions, academic calendar and counseling at the partner universities.

b. Advisory and guidance work

Actions meant to provide students' with the necessary information about the ERASMUS Programme at all stages of a study abroad preparation. This includes receiving the first information about the ERASMUS Programme, its characteristics, and conditions, information about the integration of an ERASMUS study in students' regular study programme, information regarding the application and selection process, as well as about the recognition of the study abroad. This information can be provided via special information events, office hours, e-mail exchange or phone call advisory. The advisory and guidance work also includes providing information via the Internet or through printed information material. Advisory and guidance is provided not just during the information stage about a study abroad with the ERASMUS Programme, but also during the application and selection process, during the last preparation for the study abroad, after the selection of the ERASMUS students, as well as during the proper study abroad.

c. Application and selection process

This process refers to the set of actions aiming at selecting the students, that fulfill the conditions to be awarded an ERASMUS mobility place. On students' side, it involves the process of expressing and motivating the wish and the qualification for participating in this programme. On institutions' side, it implies the evaluation of students' arguments and qualifications and distributing the available mobility places to the students on the basis of the requirements. For the application procedure, the institution provides certain specific guidelines that students have to follow. Also, the institution has a particular algorithm for evaluating the students' and distributing them.

d. Recognition of academic results

This procedure acknowledges the quality and compatibility of the academic results students have earned at the host-university, during the ERASMUS study. It implies the assessment of the academic contents, learning objectives and evaluation criteria of the lectures taken at the host-university, and their integration into students' study programme at the home university. The recognition is certified by two ERASMUS documents: the Learning Agreement – which is the students' study plan at the host-university and the Transcript of Records, received at the end of the study abroad, which contains the lectures students have passed and the grades.

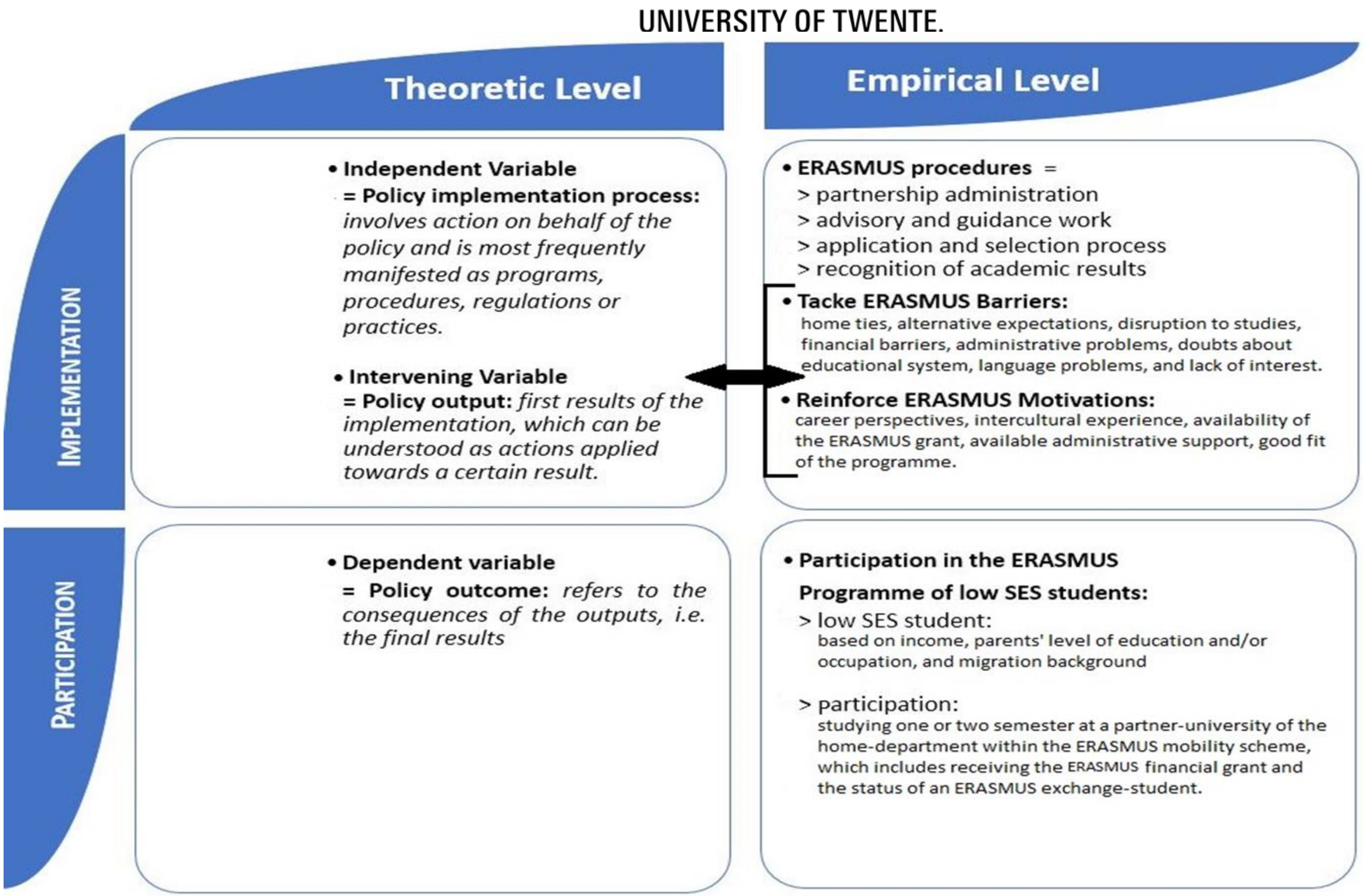


Figure 2. Representation of the operationalization of the main concepts

These procedures have been investigated through the interviews with professionals as well as trough official documents regarding the internationalization strategy of the WWU. **Table 3. *“Coding Policy Implementation Process”*** in the Appendix presents the full list of the categories and codes used to analyze the documents and the interviews used to analyze these procedures.

3.3.2. Policy Output

The intervening variable *“policy output”* illustrates what impact the process of policy implementation has on the problem it addresses. In the case of the ERASMUS Programme, the policies implemented first address the several barriers and motivations perceived by the students. A coherently implemented ERASMUS policy would ideally tackle the ERASMUS Barriers and reinforce the motivations, thus encouraging students’ participation, and accordingly the participation of low SES students.

Therefore the policy output is measured by assessing in the interviews with the students, in how far and in which manner this barriers and motivations have been addressed. For this purpose, it is necessary to explain what the barriers and the motivations represent and what tackling the barriers and reinforcing the motivations means.

a. Tackle ERASMUS Barriers

The barriers represent factors, that hinder reaching an objective. In the case of the ERASMUS Programme, previous studies have shown, that students tend to perceive certain factors as detrimental to a positive decision regarding the participation in this programme. The following barriers have been clearly identified and investigated in the reviewed literature (Beerkens et al., 2016, pp.6-9; Souto-Otero, Huisman, Beerkens, de Wit, & Vuijc, 2013, p. 72):

- Home ties: refers to restrictions caused by family, other personal relations or work commitments that students have at home;
- Alternative expectations: refers to students’ aims for a study abroad, that cannot be covered by the ERASMUS programme, such as a full degree programme;
- Disruption of studies: expresses students’ concerns regarding the study recognition and the integration of the study abroad in the regular curriculum, which could lead to a “dead study-time” in students’ biography;
- Financial barriers: includes worries about the costs of the study abroad, as well as the indirect costs of a study abroad, such as giving up a job, or living with parents. It also refers to the insufficient level of the ERASMUS grant;

- Administrative problems: refers to the application process as well as to the bureaucratic requirements students have to deal with for receiving the grant. Furthermore, this includes also the administrative requirements for study recognition.
- Doubts about the educational system: refer to students' lack of trust regarding the academic and administrative aspects at the host-university, such as academic support, availability and access to lectures, and academic calendar.
- Language problems: refer to the issues with foreign language skills, and the worries about the availability of lectures in Englisch.
- Lack of interest: summarizes students' lack of awareness regarding the benefits and accessibility to the ERASMUS Programme, or in general skepticism regarding a study abroad.

To tackle these factors means to purposely address them in the implementation process, by actively promoting solutions, alternatives and concrete support to overcome them. If students are aware of these issues, but also of their solutions, and thus can overcome them, these barriers are successfully tackled.

b. Reinforce ERASMUS Motivations

The motivations are factors that generate the initial intent to study abroad and help overcome the barriers that students face (Beerkens et al., 2016, p. 9). There can be summarized several motivating factors, as follows:

- Career perspectives: refers to benefits for future employment at home or abroad;
- Intercultural experience: designates the opportunity to live abroad, meet new people, develop inter-cultural skills;
- Availability of the ERASMUS grant: addresses the financial support associated automatically with a study mobility place.
- Available administrative support: indicates the advisory and guidance services provided by the host university. It often implies support for accommodation, students' orientation at the host-universities' campus or the city, academic advisory regarding the study plan, academic calendar and academic certificates (such as the Learning Agreement, the Transcript of Records);
- Good fit of the programme: refers to the choice and quality of the host institution, alignment with the curriculum and the length.

To reinforce these motivations means to actively promote them as strong arguments and advantages of a study abroad in the ERASMUS Scheme. These are successfully reinforced when students are aware of the availability and the positive contribution to a study abroad of these factors. In order to measure how students perceive these barriers and motivations, and in how far and how the policy implementation manages to address them accordingly, the interviews conducted with students have been systematically scrutinized and evaluated through the categories and codes presented in the Appendix, in **Table 4. *"Coding Policy Output".***

3.3.3. Policy Outcome

The policy outcome refers to the ultimate effect on the problem addressed by the policy implemented. The policy outcome designates the consequences of policy output reflected in the final result of the implementation. Thus, the policy outcome represents the dependent variable. In this analysis, the dependent variable measures the decision towards the participation in the ERASMUS Programme of students coming from a low socio-economic background. To measure this, the following two aspects have to be differentiated.

a. **Socio-economic status**

To measure the socio-economic status of the students interviewed, three criteria have been considered: students' income, parents' level of education and/or occupation and students' migration background. In regard to students' income, it is considered, that students, whose study is totally financed by parents, belong to the high SES group, while students whose main funding source is a study loan or grant, scholarships, study credits or/and extra part-time job, are distributed to the low SES group. As for parents' level of education and/or occupation, if at least one of the student's parents has an HE degree, then it is considered, that the student belongs to the high SES group. In regard of the occupation aspect, students whose parents (or at least one of the parents) practice an intellectual profession are considered to belong to the high SES group, while students' whose parents exert an unqualified work are distributed to the low SES group. Finally, the migrational background can be taken into consideration in correlation with the parents' level of education and occupation. Also, in some cases, the emigrational background might be associated with a low level of parental education and unqualified jobs.

b. Participation in the ERASMUS Programme

It is considered that a student has participated in the ERASMUS Programme when he or she has studies one or two semesters at a partner university of the home-department within the conditions of the ERASMUS mobility scheme. This includes receiving the ERASMUS financial grant and the status of an ERASMUS exchange-student.

The coding scheme used to measure these variables in the interviews is presented in the Appendix, in **Table 5.** ***"Coding Policy Outcome".***

4. DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the analysis and the major findings. The analysis focuses on the relationships presented in the propositions and presents in parallel their particularities at the Economics and Law Departments of the WWU.

The data analysis chapter is structured into three sections. First, it presents the context of the ERASMUS implementation at the WWU. This section delivers an insight into the ERASMUS policy implementation process at the WWU. The next two sections then focus on the implementation at each department, including all the three stages of the policy implementation theory and the variables of the research question. While the analysis of the policy outcome measures the dependent variable, the policy implementation process and policy output will measure the independent variable.

4.1. ERASMUS Implementation at the WWU

The WWU has a worldwide network of partner institutions. This has contributed to implementing successfully internationalization activities. The number of international study and doctoral programs has constantly increased: every year around 750 international scholars and 3,500 international students, as well as doctoral candidates from 130 countries, come to the WWU[5]. The WWU develops continuously its international strategies and programs and promotes international exchange actively. It cooperates with 550 partner universities and research institutes that attract about 1000 WWU students each year. At the WWU, the ERASMUS Programme is the oldest programme facilitating international student exchange. It also provides the majority of mobility places to WWU students. In 2006, the DAAD awarded the E-Quality seal to the WWU for good and innovative implementation of the European Mobility scheme. The ERASMUS Programme thus is an important component of the WWU's internationalization strategy.

Internationalization and diversity are at the WWU important principles that underline the improvement and strive for excellence and competitiveness in teaching and research (WWU, 2017a, p. 7). Internationalization has become an integral part of the WWU's development strategy (WWU, 2012, p. 2). In comparison, diversity appears to be a more implicit target among WWU's development principles (WWU, 2017a, p. 7). Thus, internationalization guidelines, such as the ERASMUS Charta present recommendations to ensure fair access for all students regardless of their personal background (EC & WWU, 2014). However, these guidelines do not deliver clarify the instruments by which diversity as an objective is to be achieved.

[5] According to https://www.uni-muenster.de/international/index.shtml.

In general, internationalization and the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme are bottom-up processes (WWU, 2014, p. 1). The central level leaves it to the faculties how they want to implement the programme. The internationalization activity of the faculties is integrated into the institutional internationalization strategy of the WWU and they are supported in pursuing their own priorities and strategies. Thus, the internationalization strategy creates a consistent context for the university and preserves the autonomy of the faculties.

However, when implementing the programme, the faculties have to consider priorities and principles set by the central level. This requirement affects the administrative procedures facilitating outgoing mobility flows. Firstly, it determines the network of partner universities (WWU, 2012, p. 2). Against the background that the WWU strives to develop towards excellence and stronger competitiveness in research, education, and teaching, it also supports faculties in establishing their own network of partner universities (WWU, 2012, pp 5-8). When establishing partnerships the faculties also have to consider the ERASMUS partnership guidelines. These foresee that student exchange can only take place within partnerships that have been fairly negotiated beforehand and confirmed in bilateral agreements. These regulations seek to maintain quality criteria for the ERASMUS procedures (EC & WWU, 2014) such as the recognition of academic achievements, the use of ECTS Credits and documents such as the Learning Agreement and the Transcript of Records. Furthermore, through the ERASMUS Charta, the WWU guarantees that academic activities students have completed abroad are fully recognized.

Second, the central level also determines the application and selection process. While faculties are free in how they want to organize these, they have to commit to equity in access as defined by the ERASMUS Programme. This means that the students' personal background should not play a role in the application and selection process. Rather, selection should be based on other criteria. At the WWU the applicants' language skills are considered important. Students have to prove they meet the language requirements set by the partner universities (EC & WWU, 2014).

The IO has a central role in this as it coordinates internationalization activities at both, the central and the faculty level (WWU, 2012, pp 2-7). The role of the IO mainly is to support and advise the faculties in their implementation efforts (Interview IO, p. 1, lines 10-11). The IO also contributes to the advisory and guidance work, supplementing the offer provided by the faculties. It offers individual consultations regarding the organization of a study abroad and in particular consults students with regard to funding a stay abroad (30-32). However, the IO does not set fix targets for the outgoing flow of the faculties and does not apply any special provisions or targets regarding the participation of low SES students. Its duty is more to promote the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme according to the fair access-principle.

Even though the IO is in charge of achieving the internationalization targets, it is not allowed to interfere in or prescribe the ERASMUS implementation at the faculty level. As a result, the ERASMUS Programme has been implemented in very different ways across faculties (70-76). This has consequences for the work of the IO since it needed to develop different routines when working with the different faculties. This is true for the partnership administration, for the advisory and guidance work and for the application and selection process. It is therefore difficult for the IO to evaluate and control whether the ERASMUS procedures are fairly and effectively implemented across departments. The ERASMUS Coordinator admits that different implementation might have a different impact on the participation of low SES students in the ERASMUS Programme (93-94). However, she also suggests that they represent a minority group at the WWU. Yet, she considers that effective implementation examples might encourage also low SES students to participate in the ERASMUS Programme. Especially the high number of outgoing students and the high recognition rate of the studies abroad are important factors, that can positively encourage the participation (85-87).

Considering these aspects, it can be concluded, that the WWU provides a unitary context for the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme. The departments enjoy autonomy in applying the ERASMUS procedures according to their priorities and resources while they are encouraged to do this according to the principles of the ERASMUS Programme. However, the general implementation guidelines do not stipulate instruments for considering students' socio-economic background. Therefore, the IO focuses more on promoting fair and effective procedures, which generally encourage students' participation in the ERASMUS Programme, regardless of their SES.

4.2. ERASMUS Implementation at the Economics Department

In this section, the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme at the Economics Department and its effect on students' participation is analyzed. The analysis includes five interviews with students at the Economics Department and one interview with the department's ERASMUS coordinator. Also, the interview with the ERASMUS Coordinator of the WWU has been included.

4.2.1. Policy outcome

Internationalization is one of the main priorities of the Economics Department. First, the department has a wide partnership network. Out of a total of 400 mobility places, every year about 300 places are available within ERASMUS Bilateral Agreements. Second, the Economics Department also has a considerable outgoing students flow. Economics students represent one-third of the total outgoing students of the WWU. Every year about 300 students are awarded a mobility place at the Economics Department. This participation rate has been persisting during the last three years, even though after the selection process for the academic year 2016/2017, about 20% fewer students have applied for a study abroad: from 524 application and 310 selected for the academic year 2016/2017 to 434 applications and 305 selected for the academic year 2017/2018. The selection process for the academic year 2018/2019 is not yet finalized, however, considering the high number of application reported by the departmental ERASMUS Coordinator, the number of outgoing students is expected to be higher than in the former year. Only for the winter semester 2018/2019 there have been registered 390 applications, and 278 students have been awarded a mobility place, and the application and selection process for the summer semester of the academic year 2018/2019 is not yet completed[6].

The department does not collect data regarding the socio-economic background of the outgoing students. It is therefore not possible to determine what is the exact percent of low SES students in the total number of outgoing students. However, WWU's statistical data shows, that 62% of the economics graduates have at least one parent with an HE degree[7]. Therefore, at the Economics Department, the group of low SES students is in minority.

Among the interviewed students, the general perception about studying abroad was positive. For the five interviewed students four either already studied abroad or were considering to do so. These four students came from a high socio-economic background. From the two students considering a stay abroad, one was preparing his ERASMUS application. Another student was preparing for a study abroad at a non-European partner university. All four students recognized some of the barriers to participating in the ERASMUS Programme, such as study disruption and administrative problems. However, they all agreed that an international experience is very important for their field of study, and for their future career perspectives. Therefore, they were positive that the ERASMUS experience as a whole, compensates for possible disadvantages, such as disruption to studies or administrative problems. However, this perception can be correlated with the convenient situation of their study funding, since most of them had stable financial support from their parents.

The only low SES student interviewed at the Economics Department presented in general, a more cautious attitude regarding an ERASMUS application. He was aware of the relevance, international experience has for his field of study, but he had serious doubts that he would be able to organize it, especially because of economic aspects. Even though he considered the ERASMUS grant as an important financial support, he was skeptical, that he can afford the extra

[6] See official statistics on the homepage of the Economics Department: https://www.wiwi.uni-muenster.de/fakultaet/sites/fakultaet/files/downloads/international/partner/statistik_ws201718.pdf, and https://www.wiwi.uni-muenster.de/fakultaet/sites/fakultaet/files/downloads/international/partner/statistik_ss2018.pdf
[7] INCHER-Kassel (2017), information provided by the statistical department of the WWU; not available on-line.

costs of a study abroad. For instance, he worried about the possible disruption to his regular studies which can affect his main study financing source - the state student grant (BAföG). This was basically the main impediment he mentioned.

In general, economics students have a positive perception of the ERASMUS Programme. They consider it the first option for studying abroad and appreciate the availability of the financial grant and of the administrative support. Also, they are highly interested in gathering international experience and associate this with better career perspectives. However, low SES students are not always able to overcome barriers, such as disruption to studies or financial issues. Nevertheless, they still consider the ERASMUS Programme a feasible option for studying abroad.

To understand how students of both SES groups decide about their participation and what influence the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme has on this process, one has to take a closer look on the implementation process and its output. The following section concentrates on these aspects.

4.2.2. Policy implementation process and its output

At the Economics Department, most of the ERASMUS procedures are gathered under the responsibility of the same person (Interview IO, lines 60-62). The ERASMUS Officer enjoys total autonomy in the implementation of three procedures of the ERASMUS Programme: partnership administration, advisory and guidance work and application and selection process. Even though the recognition of academic results does not belong to her responsibilities, the ERASMUS Officer at the Economics Department has an important role in providing important information on this issue. This is because the compatibility of the study abroad with the regular study programme is an important criterion of the selection process.

a. Partnership administration

The ERASMUS Officer of the Economics Department is in charge of coordinating all students exchange partnerships within the department. She maintains close contact with all partners, negotiates and signs the Bilateral Agreements. The design of this position allows the responsible person to be very well informed about the study conditions and requirements at each partner university.

This person is also in charge of centralizing the information regarding the mobility places and the conditions under which students can apply for. She also coordinates and performs the guidance work, therefore students have direct access to extensive and specific information regarding all partner universities, both online and during personal consultations (Interview EO, p. 1, lines 17-23, 28-30). Students have therefore fast and effective access to important information that allows them to decide where they should spend their ERASMUS stay (Interview C1, p. 2, lines 56-57, Interview M1, lines 49-52). Thus, the centralized administration of the partnerships allows the students' doubts about the study conditions at the partner universities to be overcome.

b. Advisory and guidance work

The centralization of all procedures allows very structured advisory and guidance work. Students can be provided with extensive information regarding the specifics of each ERASMUS procedure. The relevant information is available online, but specific questions can be discussed during the consultation hours. Further, students are provided with information through special ERASMUS presentation events organized once per year for the whole economics student population. Furthermore, first semester students are also informed during their orientation week about the possibility to study abroad (Interview EO, lines 17-23, 28-33, 33-35). Another good source of information for students are the ERASMUS reports. These are also available online, and offer valuable information from students' perspective regarding the organization of an ERASMUS study and about the partner universities (162-172). Also, the financial aspects receive special attention within the advisory and guidance work. Students have access to information regarding this issue via webpage, but also during the open office hours (144-157).

Regardless of their SES, the interviewed students present a high interest in studying abroad. Also, they were well informed regarding the ERASMUS Programme. Many of them mentioned the ERASMUS promotion events their department organizes and about the possibility to receive advice during the ERASMUS office hours. (Interview M1, p. 1, lines 38-41; Interview K1, p. 2, lines 38-39, Interview G1, p. 1, lines 21-25) However, the notion of the ERASMUS Programme often seemed to be familiar to them from other sources than the information provided at the university: sometimes it comes from friends or siblings (Interview C1, lines 40-42), sometimes they just associated the ERASMUS programme for no apparent reasons with the concept of studying abroad (Interview M1, lines 37-39; Interview D1, lines 32-33). Nevertheless, the motivation of studying abroad is often associated with the special relevance international experience has for their field of study (Interview G1, lines 109-111; Interview C1, lines 28-32; Interview K1, lines 130-135). Economics students also indicate that they are aware of the positive influence on their academic and professional profile (Interview G1, lines 83-85).

c. Application and selection process

Structured and comprehensive advisory and guidance work is also necessary at the Economics Department because of the specificity of the application and selection process that has been implemented. For the evaluation of the applications, clear criteria and percentages are applied. This guarantees that the application and selection procedures are transparent but requires that students become aware of how their applications are evaluated (Interview EO, lines 60-65, 99-107). Since their reasoning in their motivation letters should be based on a good knowledge of the universities they apply for, students are provided with extensive information regarding the organization of their study abroad (lines 91-94, 99-107). A detailed overview of the partner-universities and of their application requirements is available online. An overview of the lectures offered by the partner universities and their recognition rate is also available on the webpage of the department (lines 80-86).

Among the problematic aspects of the ERASMUS procedures, students mention the application process. This refers mostly to the chances to receive a mobility place at a university of their priority list (Interview C1, lines 64-66, 70-71; Interview M1, lines 67-71). This, however, is not perceived as a strong impediment, but rather as an uncomfortable bureaucratic hurdle to their struggle to study abroad. Yet, regardless of their SES, all interviewed students knew how the application and selection process is organized and found it transparent and fair.

d. Recognition of academic results

The academic value of the study abroad receives much attention at the Economics Department. For students, this is an important factor that influences their participation decision. This is also an important criterion in the evaluation of the application. Therefore, the recognition of academic results is a very structured procedure in the Economics Department. It allows a high level of recognition of students' results and provides students with high certitude regarding the lectures compatible with their study programme at home (Interview EO, lines 78-80, 85-86).

The issue of the recognition of the academic results has an important role in the students' decision to study abroad. It is perceived as a condition "sine qua non" in order to not delay the regular duration of the study. The recognition of academic results turned out to be one of the biggest worries of the economics students (Interview K1, lines 120, 46-48; Interview M1, lines 85-88). Therefore, the search for the most suitable host universities was often guided by the compatibility of the academic offer at the partner universities to their own study programmes. In general, all students regardless of their SES had a positive attitude regarding the recognition rate (Interview C1, lines 147-148; Interview K1, lines 133-135; Interview M1, lines 86-88).

4.2.3. Conclusions

The analysis of the ERASMUS implementation process at the Economics Department of the WWU reveals a comprehensive set of policy tools. These are centrally coordinated by one person, in charge of the partnerships' administration, the advisory and guidance work, and the application and selection process. This centralized implementation design provides an optimal context for guiding the students adequately. Also, it allows a highly structured and transparent application and selection process. The interdependence between all ERASMUS procedures finally generates a high probability for the recognition of students' academic results.

Unfortunately, neither the Economics Department nor the International Office of the WWU can provide any data regarding the SES of the ERASMUS outgoing students. It is, thus not possible to establish what is the representation of low SES students in the total outgoing flow of the Economics Department. However, based on the qualitative data, one can identify at the economics students a positive perception towards participation, regardless of their SES. Nevertheless, correlating the SES of the interviewed students with their decision regarding the participation in the ERASMUS Programme, it can be observed that all high SES students are more flexible in taking a positive decision regarding a study abroad. The only low SES economics student interviewed was more cautious and needed more information for taking a decision. He was however clearly aware of many incentives of the ERASMUS Programme. Therefore, the transparent, fair, and structured implementation of the ERASMUS procedures provides a good context for low SES students to seriously consider participating in the ERASMUS Programme.

4.3. ERASMUS Implementation at the Law Department

This section deals with the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme at the Law Department of the WWU. First, it presents what effect this has on students. In a second section, it shows how this policy outcome has been influenced by the programme implementation. For this purpose, the analysis considers three data sources: the interview with the WWU's ERASMUS Coordinator, the group interview conducted with the ERASMUS staff working in the Law Department, and six interviews with law students.

4.3.1. Policy outcome

The Law Department is the third biggest department of the WWU. In the academic year 2017/2018, 5163 students were enrolled in a law study programme. Law students often originate from families with tradition in this professional field or at least have an academic background (Interview IO, lines 37-44). The WWU statistics indicate, that the majority of law students belongs indeed to this socio-economic group: 73% of the law graduates from 2015 have at least one parent with an HE degree[8]. Thus, it can be assumed, that the low SES students represent a minority at the Law Department.

[8] INCHER-Kassel (2017), information provided by the statistical department of the WWU; not available on-line.

Since the Law Department has such a large students' population and an extensive partnership network, it is considered to feature a considerable outgoing students potential. Annually about 233 ERASMUS places are provided to law students. The number of outgoing students kept raising during the last three years, from 134 students in the academic year 2016/2017 to 170 students selected out of 300 applications for the academic year 2018/2019. However, during the last years, the department did not deploy all available places: about 20% to 40% of the available places were not allocated. Nevertheless, the WWU's International Coordinator underlines, that these are very good results for a law department since the numbers of outgoing students among law departments at German universities is in general modest (lines 78-80).

The statistical data about the ERASMUS outgoing students at the Law Department does not provide information regarding students' socio-economic background. Therefore, it is not possible to establish how many of the outgoing students belong to the low SES group. In this sense, the persons responsible for outgoing students at the Law Department indicate, that many students interested in a study abroad seem to come from a high socio-economic background. This is because they often signalize, that the economic aspects do not represent a barrier to studying abroad to them. However, one has to keep in mind, that some low SES students receive special scholarships, which reduce their financial worries (Interview LO, lines 258-269).

Among the six interviewed students there were three students with a low SES and three students with a high SES. From the group of the low SES students, one student was enjoying his ERASMUS semester at the moment when the interview was conducted. Among the high SES students, one was selected for an ERASMUS mobility but renounced during the first days of the study period abroad. Also, another one was considering to apply for an ERASMUS mobility. For all students, the participation in the ERASMUS Programme was almost not an option.

All students suggested that for their field of study, a study abroad is in general not academically relevant. This is because the German law study programmes are nationally oriented, and students' assessment is based on the knowledge of the German law system. Therefore students prefer to concentrate on knowledge relevant to the examination, which can not be gained abroad. However, the interviews reveal two major determinants for their decisions to study abroad. On the one hand, high SES students often focus on the relevance of an international study experience for their academic and professional profile. On the other hand, low SES students concentrate more on the implications a study abroad might have on their further course of study. These students are mainly concerned about to what extent their academic achievements will be recognized and how their study abroad will fit into their study programme.

Further, most students indicated, regardless of their SES, that they do not find the schedule of their study programme flexible enough to easily integrate a study abroad. They also reported that the effort organizing a study abroad would not worth the academic and professional advantages it provides to law students. Therefore, the majority of the students perceived a study abroad as quite exceptional and found that it would be only feasible if one could afford it academically and logistically. Therefore, academic and organizational aspects are the decisive factors. The financial aspect is a surprisingly minor factor in the decision-making process.

For understanding what influence the implementation has on students' decision rationale, the following sections analyze the particularities of the ERASMUS implementation process and its output.

4.3.2. Policy implementation process and its output

The ERASMUS implementation at the Law Department involves several parties. First, within the Study Information Center, there is one contact person responsible for the ERASMUS Programme and study abroad in general. This person is also mainly in charge of the advisory and guidance work, for administrating the application process and for the recognition of study results. Second, this person's work is supplemented by the Internationalization Officer of the Law Department. She is mainly involved in the partnership administration but also contributes to the guidance and advisory work. The third entity involved in the ERASMUS procedures at the Law Department is the department chairs. The chairs are important stakeholders of the partnership administration process and also provide specific information for the advisory and guidance. This decentralized implementation approach determines both advantages and disadvantages for students, thus influencing students' decision on the ERASMUS participation.

a. Partnership administration

The partnership administration at the Law Department is determined by the joint work of the Internationalization Officer and the department's chairs. The Internationalization Officer is mainly responsible for the bureaucratic aspects of the partnerships' administration (Interview LO, lines 275-279). She overviews all partnership Agreements and prepares and formally prepares changes or extensions. In doing so, she holds close contact with the department's chairs. These maintain close contact with different partners and negotiate the partnerships' conditions (279-280). However, the chairs are not allowed to sign Bilateral Agreements. Finally, also the dean of the department is formally engaged in the partnership administration.

Among all parties involved in the partnership administration, the chairs have access to the most information about the partner universities and the conditions to study abroad. These maintain close contact with each university, which often is based on old, personal relationships between the professors or chairs' staff. Hence, the Internationalization Officer has more overview of the partnerships and their general conditions but does not have extensive information about the particularities of each partner university and their study conditions (54-56, 65-66). Finally, the ERASMUS Officer of the Law Department, who is in charge of consulting the students, is actually not involved at all in the administration of the ERASMUS partnerships.

This design of the partnership administration thus makes it, difficult for students to have easy access to details about the study conditions at the partner universities. Students are foremost provided just with general information (Interview P1, lines 77-78, 90-94, 111-112; Interview N1, line 80-82). Specific information about the study conditions at the universities and their requirements for the application can be obtained in a further step by consulting with the chairs that are responsible for the partner university. However, in some cases, this is not sufficient to overcome students' doubts about the study conditions at the partner universities (Interview N1, lines 30-33, 88-89). Also, students are often not aware that information is available at several different sites. Just two of the interviewed students were aware that detailed information about the study conditions at the partner universities can be obtained from the chairs' staff. Students had different perceptions about this approach. For instance, the student who was completing the ERASMUS Mobility, found it very useful, despite the extra effort he had to contact all relevant staff (Interview P1, lines 114-115, 122-124). In contrast, the student who canceled his study abroad was unpleased with the information he received before going abroad. Nevertheless, the fact that different persons are responsible for different aspects of the ERASMUS Programme confused most students and generated a skeptical attitude towards the feasibility of a study abroad. Consequently, this might even hinder them to gather the information necessary for a positive decision about an ERASMUS mobility.

b. Advisory and guidance work

Also, the advisory and guidance work is at this department divided between the staff of the Study Information Center and the departments' chairs. Each year, before the application period begins, the Study Information Center organizes ERASMUS information events for the whole law students' population. The aim of these events is to provide students from all law study programme with information regarding the application process. Furthermore, special information events are organized for new students at the beginning of each semester. (Interview LO, lines 38-44, 46-50). These information events are the first source of information about studying abroad. Their purpose is to raise students' interest in studying abroad and to deliver basic information about the conditions and the procedures of the ERASMUS Programme as well as the partner universities. Besides explaining how to plan and prepare for an ERASMUS application, these events inform students in particular on how to integrate a study abroad in their further course of study (50-54).

However, the Study Information Center and the department chairs share the information work. While the Study Information Center provides general information, the chairs are in charge of answering specific questions regarding the partner universities. All interviewed students' had information about the ERASMUS Programme. Just a few of them gathered this information from the sources provided by their department, but rather from other students (Interview B1, lines 116-118; Interview M2, lines 41-45; Interview N1, lines 60-62; Interview P1, lines 78-81). Their information mostly concentrated on the academic relevance of a study abroad. Regardless of their SES, most students were skeptical about its relevance for their academic and professional profile. Some believed, that a study abroad is a valuable life experience, but would not yield a big advantage with regard to their career perspective (Interview P2, lines 92-94; Interview B1, lines 160-161). Other students argued, that a study abroad is more relevant to students who have chosen an international orientation in their study (Interview A1, lines 107-109, 116-119; Interview M2, lines 47-51). This is confirmed by one student who was completing his study abroad when he was interviewed. He chose an international law field for his specialization and was able to complete a part of it abroad (Interview P1, lines 98-100, 106-107). Besides this, students did not recognize any further advantage of studying abroad but to improve their language skills. (Interview B1, lines 98-100, Interview N1, lines 68-69).

In general law students who decided to study abroad were mostly motivated by their interest in an international experience. The guidance and advisory work of the department helped students to develop a concrete idea about what a study abroad involves, but did not activate students' motivation to study abroad. Since students often connect this with its contribution to their professional profile, one can conclude that the guidance work does not sufficiently address students' skeptical perception about the ERASMUS Mobility.

c. Application and selection process

Just as the other two ERASMUS procedures, the responsibilities for the application, and selection process are shared by the departments' chairs and the Study Information Center. The latter administrates the application procedure and students' applications. According to the ERASMUS Officer, the department follows a standard application process. Much importance is given to the language certificates, because each partner university requires a certain language level, to be proven through a certain certificate (Interview LO, lines 77-82). However, the applications are evaluated by the chairs' staff, that also selects the successful applications and distributes the ERASMUS Mobility places. The evaluation criteria are established within the chairs and might, therefore, differ, especially when weighing the evaluation criteria (96-98, 100-111). Hence, the Study Information Center does not hold extensive information about the selection processes and cannot provide students with many details regarding the application's preparation. Also, the WWU ERASMUS Coordinator considers the application and selection process at the Law Department to be less formalized, but therefore more flexible, which could be in favor of students. (Interview IO, lines 95-97).

Some students presented a rather skeptical perception regarding the application process. They doubt, that they can receive a mobility place at their favorite university, and believe that for some universities, there is a though competition with regard to mobility (Interview B1, lines 121-125). One of the low SES students explained that she decided not to apply for an ERASMUS Mobility, considering that this would not have been successful, especially because of her supposedly low grades and insufficient language skills (Interview M2, lines 74-78). She was not willing to put much effort into the ERASMUS application, because she considered her chances to be anyhow limited.

High SES students also suggested that the application process is intransparent and unfair. (Interview N1, lines 117-121). They have criticized the unclear evaluation criteria and the fact that each chair sets different evaluation priorities and percentage for the criteria. However, in contrast to the low SES students, they were more optimistic about the potential of their application and were more flexible regarding their target university.

d. Recognition of academic results

In general, the Law Department has difficulties to recognize the academic results students have completed abroad. This is mainly because of the curricular limitations of the German law study programmes. According to the Study Information Center staff, the recognition of academic results is actually for law students, not such a relevant factor when deciding to study abroad (Interview LO, lines 201-203). Indeed, most interviewed students confessed that study recognition is rather a secondary aspect of a study abroad because of the strong study recognition limitation (Interview A1, lines 107-119; Interview B1, lines 154-167; Interview N1, lines 93-96). They were all aware, that the recognition of a study abroad is so complicated and limited for their field of study, that they almost did not count with it at all. However, many of them mentioned some options to increase the possibilities of study recognition. One is to choose a law specialization with international relevance which gives them the possibility to do a relevant part of their specialty lectures abroad (Interview M2, lines 47-51; Interview P1, lines 16-18). Another possibility is to do an extra language specialization for law students, which also allows recognizing academic results from abroad (Interview LO, lines 231-233; Interview B1, lines 98-103).

However, the impact of study recognition on students participation differs across the socio-economic groups. Low SES students have a strong interest in the recognition of their academic achievements. This is mostly because they worry a study disruption if they can not integrate the results of their study abroad into their regular study programme. The low SES student who was participating in the ERASMUS programme underlined that the insecurity in the recognition of study achievements is a barrier to this programme (Interview P1, lines 137-149). Another low SES student mentioned this as a hindrance to her participation in the ERASMUS programme (Interview M2, lines 66-69). While for low SES students, a high rate of recognition of academic achievements was a “must” for their participation in the ERASMUS Programme, this was less important to high SES students. They were rather aware that the recognition of academic results is limited, and resign to this. Hence, their decision of participating in the ERASMUS programme was not determined by the recognition procedure.

Nevertheless, the Law Department pays much attention to increasing the study recognition. The WWU’s ERASMUS Officer considers that this is one of the most important ERASMUS procedures at the Law Department. She states that increasing the possibilities of recognizing the study abroad influences the general perception of law students’ about studying abroad (Interview IO, lines 194-195). Also, she considers that the recognition procedure is flexible at the Law Department of the WWU. According to her, among law departments across German universities, the WWU’s Law Department has a very good recognition rate, which is believed to encourage students’ participation (Interview IO, lines 81-83).

4.3.3. Conclusions

The ERASMUS implementation at the Law Department is a complex, mostly decentralized process. This approach has different influences on each of the ERASMUS outgoing procedures, causing both advantages and disadvantages for students. First, the decentralized administration of the partnerships induces a loss of information about the study conditions at the partner universities. Since several parties are involved in the partnership administration, the specific information about the study conditions at each department is available at different places. From the Departmental ERASMUS Officer students can receive only general information about the partner universities. Therefore they often miss specific information that is mostly provided by the chairs’ staff. This practice does not effectively encourage students’ participation in the ERASMUS Programme.

Second, the partnership administration approach has also a direct impact on the advisory and guidance work. This is concentrated on the formal aspects of the application, but less on the relevance of a study abroad for law students. Law students are rather reluctant to find an international study experience important for their careers. Regardless of their SES, law students generally believe that studying abroad is rather a life relevant than a career-relevant experience. This issue is not successfully addressed in the guidance work. Therefore, law students can hardly be motivated to study abroad for academic and career-relevant reasons.

Third, the application and selection process underlines the impact of the departments' chairs on the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme. These are directly responsible for evaluating the applications and distributing the mobility places. While the application procedure is valid for all applicants, the selection process varies across chairs. This creates mistrust among students and in some cases hinders them to apply for an ERASMUS mobility. Also, this reaction has a high incidence in the low SES group.

Finally, the impact of study recognition procedure on students' decision varies across the socio-economic groups. High SES students accept that the study recognition rate is rather limited, but are still likely to decide to go abroad. Low SES students are, in contrast, more likely to not go abroad, if their academic achievements abroad cannot be recognized at their home university. The recognition procedure is therefore not able to respond to the doubts of low SES students and encourage their participation.

4.4. Cross-case comparison

This section presents differences and commonalities in the ERASMUS implementation at the analyzed departments. Its aim is to identify how different implementation approaches influence the participation of low SES students.

The Economics and Law Departments of the WWU provide a comprehensive basis and similar conditions for the analysis. Both departments have extensive ERASMUS partnership network and large students' populations. Furthermore, the WWU graduates statistics[9] show that the majority of the students' population come from families with an academic background. Therefore, it is assumed that the low SES students group is in minority at both analyzed departments.

Both departments had during the last three years considerable numbers of outgoing students. Even though the Economics Department registered 20% fewer applications for the academic year 2017/2018, the outgoing students' number remained stable during the last three academic years, at about 300 students. At the Law Department, the number of outgoing ERASMUS

[9] INCHER-Kassel (2017), survey of the 2015 WWU graduates.

students raised from 134 students reported in the academic year 2016/2017, to 144 students in 2017/2018, and 170 students selected for the academic year 2018/2019.

Unfortunately, none of the departments collects information regarding the SES of the outgoing students. It is therefore difficult to determine which is the rate of low SES students among the outgoing students of these departments. Nevertheless, the ERASMUS Coordinators of both departments, as well as the WWU's ERASMUS Coordinator suggested, that ERASMUS outgoing students feature in general characteristics of high SES students, such as a stable financial situation. It is, therefore, highly relevant to determine whether the ERASMUS implementation at the analyzed departments favors the participation of a minority group.

In general, the ERASMUS implementation at the analyzed departments is different. At the Economics Department, the ERASMUS procedures are strongly centralized. The responsibility for the partnership administration, the students' guidance, and the application and selection process are gathered under the competences of the same person. This person also has a big contribution in delivering information about the recognition of students' academic achievements, even though this procedure is mainly executed by a departmental study advisor. In contrast, at the Law Department, there are three parties involved in the ERASMUS Implementation. The Internationalization Officer and the department chairs are in charge of the partnership administration. The students' guidance is conducted mainly by the ERASMUS Officer. The department chairs also provide guidance, however, just for specific questions regarding the study conditions at the partner universities. Also, the chairs are exclusively in charge of the selection process. Finally, the study recognition lies solely under the competences of the ERASMUS Officer.

These implementation designs influence differently students' perceptions of the ERASMUS participation. First, a centralized approach of the partnership administration is more likely to positively influence students' decision to participate in the ERASMUS Programme. Thus, it can also favor the participation of low SES students. A centralized partnership administration allows students to have easy access to important information about the partner universities, and decide more easily where they should spend their ERASMUS mobility (Interview C1, p. 2, lines 56-57, Interview M1, lines 49-52). This is because this information is administrated by the person in charge both for the partnerships administration and for students' guidance. Thus, the centralized administration of the partnerships favors students, regardless of their SES, to overcome doubts about the study conditions at partner universities. This is, however not the case at the Law Department, where the partnership administration belongs to the duties of both the Internationalization Officer and the department chairs. Since students advisory is mainly performed by the ERASMUS Officer, who is not at all involved in the partnership administration, students have to contact the chairs to receive specific information about the partner universities. For most students, the fact, that several persons are responsible for different aspects of the ERASMUS Programme causes confusion and a skeptical attitude towards the feasibility of a study abroad. Consequently, this hinders them to gather the information necessary for a positive decision about an ERASMUS mobility.

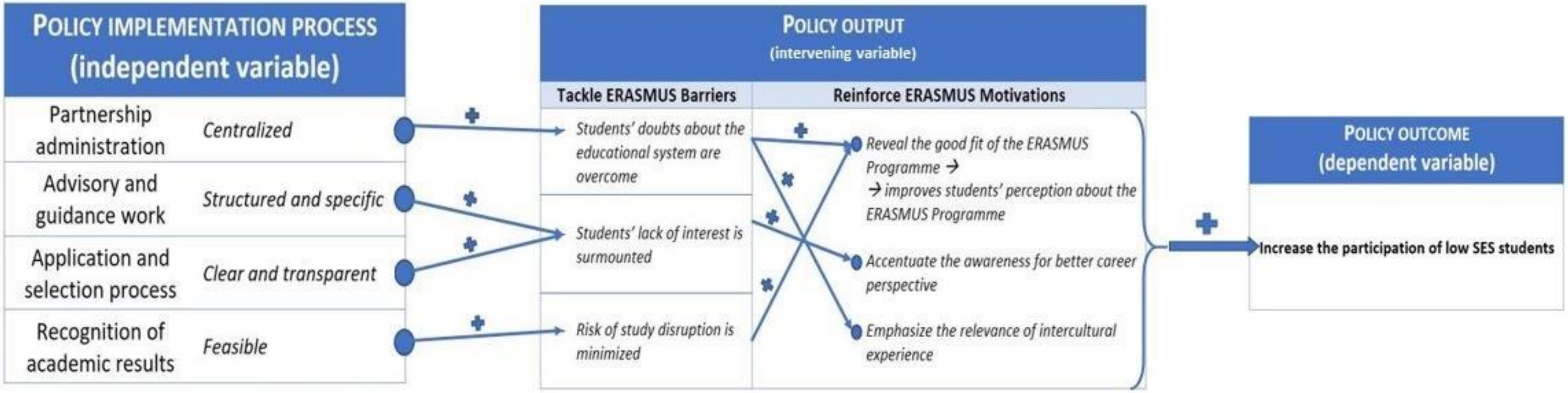
Second, the advisory and guidance work is also influenced by the different implementation approaches. A structured and specific advisory and guidance work are more likely to encourage the participation of low SES students. At the Economics Department, this is performed by the same person, who is also in charge of the partnership administration and the application and selection process. This allows a more structured and specific guidance. Therefore, economics students presented in general a high interest in studying abroad. Also, they were well informed regarding the ERASMUS Programme. Regardless of their SES, economics students were interested to gather international experience, because they considered it very relevant for their field of study (Interview G1, lines 109-111; Interview C1, lines 28-32; Interview K1, lines 130-135). Also. they are aware of the positive influence this has on their academic and professional profile. At the Law Department, however, the students’ guidance is executed by the ERASMUS Coordinator, with the support of the department chairs. In general, the guidance and advisory work at the Law Department helped students to develop a concrete idea about what a study abroad involves and how to organize it, but did not particularly activate students’ motivation to study abroad. For law students, this motivation is often dependent on the contribution a study abroad has to their professional profile. The guidance work, however, does not sufficiently address this aspect, and consequently, students' skeptical perception about the ERASMUS Mobility is not tackled. Thus, law students of both SES groups are not sufficiently motivated to study abroad.

Third, the application and selection process strongly differs at both departments. To encourage the participation of low SES students the application and selection process has to be clear and transparent, and students have to have access to sufficient information regarding the criteria used to evaluate their applications. At the Economics Department, this is very clear and transparent, involving explicit criteria and an evaluation algorithm. Regardless of their SES, all economics students knew in general how the application and selection process is organized and found it transparent and fair. On the contrary, at the Law Department, this is an opaque procedure, fully under the responsibility of the chairs. These have different evaluation criteria, which often are not familiar to the ERASMUS Coordinator. Therefore, students cannot be provided with clear information regarding the selection process. Hence, law students of all socio-economic groups suggested that the application process is intransparent and unfair. (Interview N1, lines 117-121). However, in contrast to the low SES students, high SES students were more optimistic about the potential of their application and were more flexible regarding their target university. Consequently, the application and selection process of the Economics Department is more likely to encourage the participation of low SES students than the procedure at the Law Department does.

Finally, the study recognition process is at both departments an important element of the ERASMUS implementation. Also, the study recognition is for students planning a study abroad an important factor. In general, a high rate of study recognition encourages the participation of low SES students. However, the recognition rate depends strongly on students' field of study. At the Economics Department, the study recognition is also an important criterion in the evaluation of the application. Therefore, the recognition of academic results is a very structured procedure at this department. This allows a high level of recognition of students' results and provides students with high certitude regarding the lectures compatible with their study programme at home (Interview EO, lines 78-80, 85-86). On the contrary, at the Law Department, the recognition of academic results is very limited because of the curricular limitations of the German law study programmes. Depending on students' SES, this aspect influences differently students' decision on the ERASMUS participation. High SES students accept that the study recognition rate is rather limited, but are still likely to decide to go abroad. Low SES students are, in contrast, more likely not to go abroad, if their academic achievements cannot be recognized at the home university. The recognition procedure at the Law Department is, therefore, not able to answer the doubts of low SES students and encourage their participation.

To sum up, the ERASMUS implementation at the Economics Department presents more aspects, which favor an ERASMUS participation. Even though the low SES students are a minority at this department, the centralized implementation approach manages to successfully address the ERASMUS barriers perceived by this group, and encourage their participation. This is not the case at the Law Department, where students of all socio-economic groups are in general more skeptical about studying abroad. The ERASMUS implementation at this department is not successful in addressing the general participation barrier imposed by the nature of the German law study programmes. Low SES students are not motivated enough to make the effort of organizing a study abroad, and thus more likely not to participate in the ERASMUS Programme. Therefore, the relationships anticipated by the propositions are confirmed. A centralized implementation approach that provides structured and specific advisory, a transparent and clear application and selection process, as well as a high rate of study recognition, encourages the participation in the ERASMUS Programme of low SES students.

ERASMUS Implementation at the Economics Department of the WWU



ERASMUS Implementation at the Law Department of the WWU

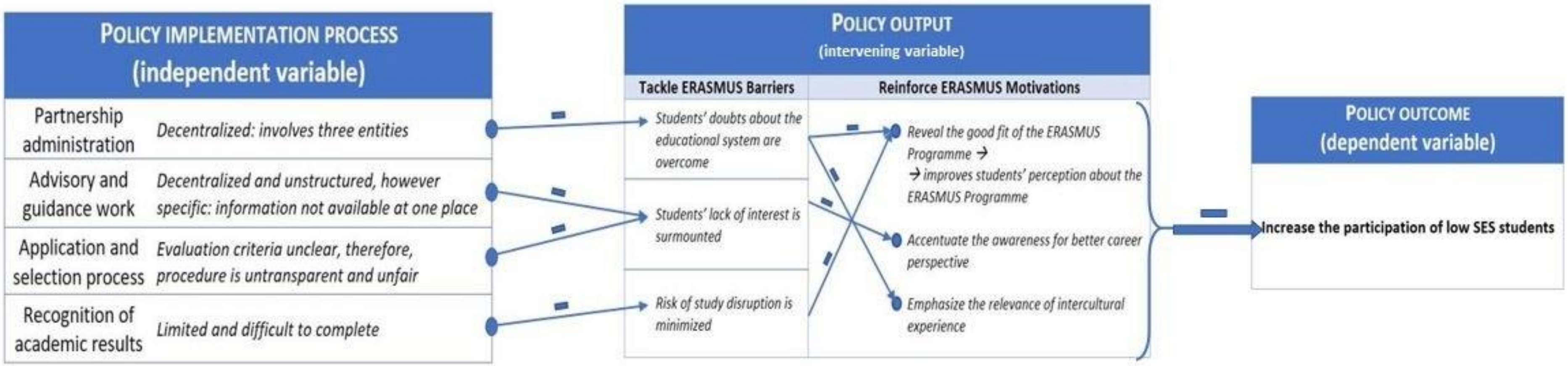


Figure 3. Representation of the ERASMUS Implementation at the analysed departements

5. CONCLUSIONS

The ERASMUS Programme is the world's most successful student mobility programme. It is considered a "European Success Story", being unique in its form and targets. Since its initiation, the programme has been facilitating to over three million students the possibility to experience internationality, and develop a European identity, by studying and living abroad (EC, 2015, p. 6). However, the ERASMUS Programme has been encountering difficulties to successfully address all students' groups, ever since its initiation. Despite the availability of the ERASMUS grant, which contributes at balancing students' financial situation, the ERASMUS Programme does not have special further instruments to provide equal access to low SES students.

The scientific debates about the participation in the ERASMUS Programme have mostly focused on the impact of different barriers and motivations on students' decision to go abroad. These studies have frequently identified that low SES students perceive the participation in the ERASMUS Programme as a rather luxurious study experience, which does not fit their socio-economic setting (Teichler and Maiworm 1997, Vossensteyn et al. 2007, Beerkens et al. 2017, Souto-Otero and McCoshan 2006, Souto Otero 2008). Yet, the role the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme has in determining students' participation has not been thoroughly investigated. Therefore, in order to increase the participation of low SES students in the ERASMUS Programme, it is highly important to assess whether the implementation of the ERASMUS scheme has an impact on students' decision-making processes about participating in the programme. To this end, this thesis addresses the question: ***What effect does the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme at the Law and Economics Departments of the WWU have on the participation of low SES students?***

This question has been investigated on the example of the ERASMUS implementation at the University of Münster, focusing on the departments with the biggest flow of outgoing students: Economics Department and Law Department. The relationship between the variables "ERASMUS implementation" and "participation of low SES students" has been investigated, by answering two sub-question, as follows:

a. How is the ERASMUS Programme implemented at the chosen departments?

The WWU provides all departments with standard guidelines for the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme. These guidelines, however, do not stipulate any kind of targets or provisions for encouraging the participation of low SES students. The departments enjoy autonomy in applying the ERASMUS procedures according to their priorities and resources, while they are encouraged to do this according to the principles of the ERASMUS Programme and the strategic priorities of the WWU. Also, the analyzed departments face similar conditions when implementing the programme: both have extensive ERASMUS partnership networks and large students' populations. Furthermore, WWU graduates' statistics show that more than the half of these departments' graduates come from families with an academic background. However, the analyzed departments have implemented the ERASMUS Programme differently.

The analysis of the ERASMUS implementation at the Economics Department of the WWU reveals a comprehensive set of policy tools. Most of the ERASMUS procedures are centralized under the responsibility of the same person. The ERASMUS Officer enjoys total autonomy in the implementation of three procedures of the ERASMUS Programme: partnership administration, advisory and guidance work and application and selection process. Even though the recognition of academic results does not belong to her responsibilities, the ERASMUS Officer at the Economics Department has an important role in providing important information for this issue. This is because the compatibility of the study abroad with the regular study programme is an important criterion in the selection process. This centralized implementation design provides an optimal context for guiding the students adequately. Also, it allows a highly structured and transparent application and selection process. The interdependence between all ERASMUS procedures finally generates a high probability for the recognition of students' academic results.

In contrast, the Law Department adopts a more complex, mostly decentralized ERASMUS implementation design that involves several parties. Several stakeholders are involved in different procedures of the ERASMUS implementation. Therefore they hold and provide only information regarding their action field. For instance, within the Study Information Center which is responsible for the general students' advisory, one person is in charge of providing students with general support for studying abroad. This person is also mainly in charge of the advisory and guidance work for the ERASMUS Programme, for administrating the application process and for the recognition of study results. The work of this ERASMUS Officer is supplemented by the Internationalization Officer of the Law Department. She is mainly involved in the partnership administration but also contributes to the guidance and advisory work. The third entity involved in the ERASMUS procedures at the Law Department is the department chairs. The chairs are important stakeholders of the partnership administration process and also provide specific information for the advisory and guidance.

b. What effect does the implementation have on the participation of low SES students in the ERASMUS Programme?

The different ERASMUS implementation approaches at the analyzed departments have different influences on each of the ERASMUS outgoing procedures, causing both advantages and disadvantages for students.

The statistical data about the ERASMUS outgoing students as collected by both departments do not include information regarding students' socio-economic background. Therefore, it is not possible to establish how many of the outgoing students belong to the low SES group. However, the detailed analysis of the ERASMUS procedures revealed that some aspects do encourage the participation of low SES students, while others rather daunt them to seriously consider studying abroad.

At the Economics Department, the analysis of the qualitative data, reveals a generally positive attitude of students towards participation, regardless of their SES. Nevertheless, correlating the SES of the interviewed students with their decision regarding the participation in the ERASMUS Programme, it can be observed that all high SES students are more flexible in taking a positive decision regarding a study abroad. The only low SES economics student interviewed was more cautious and needed more information for taking a decision. He was however clearly aware of many incentives of the ERASMUS Programme. Therefore, the transparent, fair, and structured implementation of the ERASMUS procedures provides at the Economics Department a good context for low SES students to consider participating in the ERASMUS Programme.

This is not the case at the Law Department, where students of all socio-economic groups are in general more skeptical about studying abroad. The ERASMUS implementation at this department is not successful in addressing the general participation barrier imposed by the nature of the German law study programmes. Especially the impact of study recognition procedure on students' decision varies at the Law Department across the socio-economic groups. High SES students accept that the study recognition rate is rather limited, but are still likely to decide to go abroad. Low SES students are, in contrast, more likely to not go abroad, if their academic achievements abroad cannot be recognized at their home university. The recognition procedure is therefore not able to respond to the doubts of low SES students and encourage their participation. Low SES students are not motivated enough to make the effort of organizing a study abroad, and thus more likely not to participate in the ERASMUS Programme.

Answering this research question has shown, that in absence of special measurements targeting the participation of low SES students, a structured, standardized and transparent implementation approach is more likely to positively influence the participation of low SES students. Furthermore, the analysis' results also revealed important aspects regarding the implementation of the ERASMUS Programme, and its impact on students' participation that were not well covered by the theoretical approach. First, the role of the IO can be crucial in promoting an implementation approach that is more convenient for low SES students. Nevertheless, it is important that the implementation approach of the IO further preserves the departments' autonomy, which allows adapting the implementation strategy to their particularities. Second, the implementation approach is highly dependent on the nature of the departments' academic field. This determines whether the internationalization belongs to departments' priorities and how it is promoted and implemented. In a more internationally oriented discipline such as economics, it is more likely to encourage the participation of low SES students' than in a more nationally oriented discipline such as law.

Because of scarce data regarding students' socio-economic background, it was not possible to establish through this analysis which is the rate of low SES students in the total outgoing student's flow. Further research is needed to determine an exact correlation between the implementation and the participation of low SES students. However, this is possible only if enough data regarding students SES is available. The limited resources of this research project did not allow to interview a representative sample of low SES students. Nevertheless, this paper delivered some interesting findings regarding the relationship between the ERASMUS implementation and students' participation in this programme. The theoretical model developed on the basis of the classical policy implementation theory has proven to function in case of the ERASMUS programme. Yet, this has not considered the influence the field of study can have on the implementation. Therefore, this model can be better applied after establishing the internationality dimension of students' field of study. In this manner, the components of the policy implementation process can be better analyzed and clear recommendations towards optimization can be delivered.

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