

Participation Expands Dramatically

Some 232 students intend to take part this academic year in the European Mobility Scheme for Physics Students (EMSPS) in the sense that they have been accepted by a host institution subject to financial support being available. Only about 10 students have not been found support. They mostly come from Romania and Slovenia, two of the five countries for which applications for European Community TEMPUS programme mobility grants were unsuccessful. All hope is not lost because the scheme's regional and national coordinators are presently approaching national sources. There is also a new potential source of support, namely the Central European Exchange Programme for University Students (CEEPUS) — see insert. An application for grants on behalf of the 24 EMPS institutions in these countries has been filed by H. Latal from Graz who chairs the EPS Mobility Committee that runs EMSPS. Whatever the outcome, the number of students participating in the scheme during its second year will have increased dramatically relative to the 103 for the 1993/4 academic year.

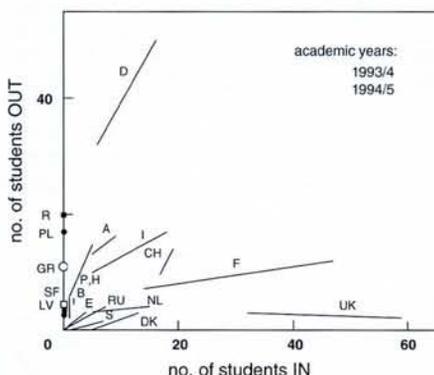
The accompanying figure compares the intended student flows for 1994/5 with the actual flows for 1993/4. It shows that some major countries (notably Greece and Spain) which neither received nor sent out students last year now have significant numbers of students participating, thanks to vigorous promotion by the Mobility Committee.

Adjusting the Rainbow

The figure also illustrates that the overall pattern of student flow for the scheme resembles a rainbow whereby the ratio of incoming to out-flowing students for a given country remains more or less constant as the overall number of participating students increases. This pattern stems partly from the availability of some 30 mobility grants sponsored by The Soros Foundations to help students from east and central Europe move to the rest of Europe. In addition, there are close to 40 TEMPUS grants for Poland, Hungary and Latvia (P. Sauer from Hannover coordinated a total of eight country-by country TEMPUS applications). The result is that some countries will have many more out-flowing students than last year. Second, traditional patterns are tending to be reinforced, with popular host countries such as France and the UK continuing to remain preferred destinations and some countries (notably Germany) continuing to send out more students than they receive.

The Mobility Committee realizes that modifying the overall pattern of mobility by encouraging, for example, more students to leave

The EPS Mobility Committee met in Geneva last October.



A comparison of the in- and out-flows of students to and from the 28 countries that participated in the EMSPS in academic years 1993/4 and 1994/5. The numbers for 1994/5 are the intended student flows, which may be slightly larger for some countries than the eventual flows if additional mobility grants do not become available.

countries which are popular destinations also requires vigorous action. Including in the scheme's on-line database details of courses that are given in major languages such as French, English and Italian is one measure that should help improve the balance between in- and out-flows for some countries.

The majority of the 252 applications to the EC's ERASMUS programme for a mobility period within the European Union countries were successful, but only 140 have been taken up. The percentage of grants taken up decreased slightly relative to last year. H. Ferdinand from Gent, who coordinates the ERASMUS applications, clearly hopes that with time more ERASMUS-type grants can be used, particularly by countries that presently do not send out many students. But it is difficult to take concrete steps as few operational details have been announced so far for the ERASMUS follow-on programme called SOCRATES which begins in 1995.

The number of participating institutions has also increased (to 161 in 28 countries from 121 in 25 countries for the 1993/4 academic year), the most recent being Jyväskylä University (Finland), Ecole Normale Supérieure - Paris, INSA-Toulouse, Free University - Berlin, University College of Wales, University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, Amsterdam University, Moscow M.V. Lomonosov State University, St. Petersburg State Institute of Fine Mechanics and Optics, Universitat Autoñoma de Barcelona, Cantabria University, and Uppsala University.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead involves not only possible EC initiatives as the Mobility Committee needs to start thinking about the 1995/6 academic year. There are European university-level institutions granting degrees and diplomas in physics that have not yet joined EMSPS (by signing the scheme's convention), and some participating institutions have still not sent out or received students. The maximum number of students an institution may send out in 1995/6 is limited only by the

number of places it offers. However, there needs to be some strategy in applying to the EC for mobility grants. The Mobility Committee agreed at its last meeting in September that the number of ERASMUS grants assigned to an institution for the 1995/6 renewal of the 1994/5 ERASMUS application will be based on the number of grants taken up for 1994/5, with each newcomer being allocated two grants. One should also not forget that students can apply for a mobility period for the second half of the academic year.

M. James who manages the EMSPS database in Manchester hopes to have a user-friendly WWW interface running next year. Meanwhile, there is some information about the scheme available by telnet at 130.88.20.113 (logon = "student"; password = "student1"), which is the access route for students seeking information about courses.

CEEPUS

The Central European Exchange Programme for University Students (CEEPUS) is a new initiative (and not simply a re-packaging of established mobility schemes) that was originally launched by Austria. It involves an agreement between the governments of Austria, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia whereby the host country will cover accommodation and the home country the travel costs for a mobility stay by a university student in science. To reduce the language barrier, participating institutions must offer courses in English, French or German. There is a CEEPUS bureau in each country with a central bureau in Vienna. The participating countries agree on the number of student-months each is prepared to support. There are currently 1350 student-months available (equivalent to 135 students for a full academic year) and the scheme will start next year.

Scheme Satisfactory

The EMSPS in its first year (1993/4) involved 103 students. A survey by E. Heer this summer of the 78 who received ERASMUS grants indicates that the scheme is operating very satisfactorily. Essentially all (97%) of the 35 host institutions replied to a questionnaire, as well as 82% of the 34 home institutions on behalf of 82% of the ERASMUS students (the rest could not be contacted). In general, studies abroad fitted well into each student's curriculum (87%), with 84% having no academic difficulties (all of the 11% of students with "some" difficulties had their problems sorted out). Many students (30%) needed no linguistic preparation, which was usually given by the host institution (37% of the students as opposed to 19% for the home institution). Accommodation was generally arranged by the host institution (88%) and not by the student (3%). Assessment was considered satisfactory (81%) with students receiving a transcript of courses attended and examinations passed (44%), information on exams taken (27%), or a general statement with an overall assessment (19%). Home institutions were generally not involved in the assessment (75%). ERASMUS, unlike EMSPS, does not aim to have course credits transferred home, which helps explain why 44% of the students simply received an attestation of study abroad, and 25% received nothing.