

**HOUSERASMUS+ PROJECT EVALUATION:
Uniplaces as Case of Study
Relatório de Estágio**

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Abstract

Due to the widely acknowledged positive impacts that student mobility has on the higher education sector and society at large, Europe has seen a rapid increase of student mobility in the past years. The European Union has set the target of having 20% of all higher education graduates take part of a mobility experience by 2020. Unfortunately, the infrastructure required to further increase student mobility is often not sufficient. Finding accommodation has become a major obstacle to student mobility and it is a real challenge for those that decide to study abroad during their studies. Thus, the HousErasmus+ project was created to improve this situation (Kuzmane, Jahnke, Encinas, Alfranseder, & Fellingner, 2017).

The HousErasmus+ project in its attempt to magnify its reach also included associated partners to better achieve its objectives, one of those Partners is Uniplaces, a Lisbon-based startup which business model focuses on providing accommodation for students done solely via online. According to their website “*Uniplaces is trying to change a difficult, bureaucratic and old-fashioned process of booking accommodation, into an easier, enjoyable and modern one, by doing it online*” (Uniplaces, 2020).

In this Report, I aspire to evaluate Uniplaces actions and behavior regarding the Recommendation & Good Practice Booklet created by the HousErasmus+ project in 2017, in which the project offered to create a platform for exchanging experience and good practices for stakeholders in the student accommodation business. I aim this by using the knowledge, skills and attitudes learned during the master's and the internship I did in Uniplaces, within the Customer Experience Team. Therefore, I aspire to research and analyze the disparities between

the design and implementation of the HousErasmus+ Program within the company using the lens of Corporate Social Responsibility.

The internship allowed me to gain analytical experience within the company and built an integrated project related to help reinvent the accommodation marketplace in which Uniplaces works, mainly analyzing the HousErasmus+ project a European Union initiative, with Uniplaces as one of its partners.

To accomplish this objective I tried to understand the company's dynamics, assess the commitment of the company to the project, use qualitative research to analyze the views from several different departments regarding the practice of the booklet and evaluate the feasibility of adopting the recommendation and good practices Booklet of the HousErasmus+ project. In conclusion, I am aiming to evaluate and keep track of the impact of acting accordingly to the booklet teachings.

Along my traineeship I was able to interact with students and landlords via phone and email, making sure any issue and complaints regarding their accommodation was dealt with and solved according to internal policies. I often liaised with other teams to come up with solutions and trained newcomers in specific job-related subjects. Also, contributed to the internal knowledge base with written updated content about processes and sales best practices. This helped me audit Uniplaces performance through the lenses provided by the HousErasmus+ program.

Keywords: Uniplaces, Student accommodation, Student mobility, Public Policy, Evaluation.

Introduction

HousErasmus+ is a two-year project (2015 –2017), co-funded under the European Commission, specifically the Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency program Key Action 3: Forward-Looking Cooperation (HousErasmus, 2020). The project aimed to tackle one of the main obstacles to student mobility: accommodation. With this aim in mind, HousErasmus+ provided a comprehensive mapping of the national, regional and local situation of accommodation for mobile students and trainees in Europe through their research. Furthermore, the project created good practices and a recommendation booklet to be shared between all stakeholders involved to raise awareness on these issues.

The project was conducted by a selected group of partners working in the field of Higher Education and who have a particular interest in quality mobility for students and trainees. The partners involved in the project included partners from 2 specific domains: students (ESN) and a wide range of universities across Europe (UNICA, EUF and CGU). Each involved in work packages according to their specific expertise and capacity. In addition to the core partnership, a range of associate partners have been invited to contribute to the project and undertake quality assurance activities by constituting the Advisory Board, the list of associates being: the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), the French Association of Student Services Organizations, the German Association of Student Services Organizations (DSW), the German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies, Housing Anywhere and Uniplaces (HousErasmus, 2020).

According to Uniplaces, the company is an “*online marketplace for booking properties with thousands of verified places that aims to create a trusted, global brand for student*

accommodation” (Uniplaces, 2020). In other words, they aim to make accommodation easier for students and accommodation providers. Thus, the company wants students to feel safe when booking and want everyone to understand the value of having good accommodation providers. With this purpose in mind, Uniplaces decided to partner with the HousErasmus+ project and pledged to act by its rules to support their initiative to try to change the Market and help students migrate to another country (Ibid.).

That’s why, as explained before, my aspiration is to evaluate Uniplaces actions and behavior regarding the Recommendation & Good Practice Booklet (HousErasmus+, 2017), consequently, researching and analyzing the disparities between the design and implementation of the HousErasmus+ Program within the company.

In order to achieve my purpose, I’ll divide this document in the following chapters:

1. First, I will explain to the reader what it means to evaluate a public Program inside a company, through the Corporate Social Responsibility lens, and also discuss the methodology chosen for the assessment.
2. Second, I shall portray the Program itself to have a general narrative of its main features.
3. Third Chapter, I will describe the company in which I worked during my internship, Uniplaces, that partners with HousErasmus+.
4. Fourth, I will explain the findings of the evaluation of Uniplaces Processes for the compliance of the program.
5. Fifth, I will take the liberty to present the conclusions reached, which aim to achieve a comprehensive diagnosis of the program within the company and refer a revision of its strengths and weaknesses.

6. Finally, Sixth, I will try to provide appropriate recommendations to offer innovation to both the company and the Program.

Theoretical Framework

This chapter aims to explain the reader what it means to evaluate a Program inside a for-profit company. Also, it will aspire to clarify what an Evaluation entitles and some of its limitations we have on this case, because we must go beyond what individuals and organizations states of themselves and look into the deeper meaning of their actions and discourses, in this case using the Corporate Social Responsibility concepts into account.

Political Science throughout its history as a social science has experienced difficulties in determining its identity and its limits of study (Kaufman-Osborn, 2006) and, has been framed in a clear distance between policy makers and the academy. However, over time these differences have been reduced and the dialogue between the two sectors is becoming stronger to the point that now the same policy makers subject the latter to problems in the matter of decision making and creation and implementation of public policies (Pearson, 2005).

Hence, the American Political Science Association ensures that in relation to studies of public policy, the discipline has the purpose of generating alternatives of policies in such a way that their ends can be maximized, in that sense, they must integrate normative and descriptive frameworks (Prewitt, 2005). Therefore, the political scientist, with his theoretical and scientific knowledge can give an informed view of the possible short comings in the interactions that the policy has with states, bureaucracy, and society.

Consistent with this thought, it can be admitted that political perspective can help overcome the disconnection that traditionally go through public policies and the beneficiary society. That is, the Political Science using theoretical and empirical developments, and in this case with the

evaluation of Uniplaces, it is capable of generating knowledge that allows the company to improve and more importantly to actually implement a program to help the public and not only serve as a way of branding.

Finally, it is possible to state that evaluation is part of Political Science to the extent that states and organizations give political scientists tasks to evaluate processes and suggest recommendations for improving them. For this reason, the political scientist study how problems appear, how they are included in the decision agenda of governments, also, how officials implement decisions and finally how policies are evaluated (Ibid.).

Now, it is appropriate to put Dunn's definition of evaluation into context, for him it is “a social science discipline that employs multiple research methods, in the contexts of argumentation and public debate, to create, critically evaluate and communicate relevant knowledge of the policy” (Dunn, 1994). The author considers it to be important to investigate causes, consequences and performance within a complex structural framework in order to build formulas that illustrate problems and facilitate the establishment of the corresponding solutions using a methodology appropriate to adapt five general procedures: structuring problems, prognosis, recommendation, monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, Dunn considers that evaluation is "a political-analytical procedure used to produce information about the value of the courses of action taken or that are planned to take (Ibid.).

Evaluation exists to improve effectiveness. Evaluating a policy needs to be done with a given direction, as it presupposes an attempt to see in action the resolution (partial or not) of the problem in question. It also assumes that the decisions or actions taken are connected in this purpose. The world of evaluation is a flow of decision and action. (Deubel, 2002). In this sense,

the strategic function of evaluation is to define the parameters and the interaction between the implementation and design of the policy; principles, flexibility, autonomy, effective action and, the results of the actions, including wanted results or unforeseen consequences.

The assessment must be done accordingly to the objectives presented, but under the fundamental base of the obtained results, both in the foreseen and in the unforeseen aspects (Restrepo, 2007).

The evaluation closes the cycle of public management by providing inputs for both the formulation and execution of the programs, and for the distribution of resources. It provides information on the progress, to compare the advancement made, against the proposed goals. Focusing on performance, it provides elements for corrective action, establishes accountability between implementers and their result, also tries to assess the causality between intervention and its effects (positive, negative, expected or not) to determine its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability (Ibid.).

Evaluation should be regular and comprehensive to fill knowledge gap. However, monitoring performance, is very susceptible of being poorly done due to time, resources and availability of the actors involved. This commonly gives inadequate discussions and the deformation of the goals. (Lahera, 2004).

In this regard, according to Demerse and Bramley when we talk about evaluation, we have to take into account different issues, such as effectiveness, fiscal impact, economic efficiency, fairness, cost effectiveness and political continuity. Ideally, a given policy option should pass all of the “tests” with flying colors, which would make the evaluation of the policy an easy

process. However, experience has shown that there are often tradeoffs between the criteria. (Demerise & Bramley, 2008).

Evaluation, as explained by Friedman needs to be shareable between levels to ensure a vertical distribute of information. (Friedman, 2017). But although all sectors of society will likely agree that the wellbeing effectiveness criterion is important in shaping wellbeing policies, various groups tend to give other criteria a nearly equal weighting: *“For politicians, political feasibility is extremely important, and fiscal impact may be crucial to a finance minister. Competitiveness concerns and integration with global policies may preoccupy multinational firms, while administrative simplicity may matter most to the owner of a small business”* (Ibid.).

All evaluations aim to assess if the policy/program/project/activity is helping with the public problem that was identified as such on the agenda (Knoepfel, Larrue, Varone, & Hill, 2007). Evaluation is a systematic advice achieved by comparing a set of implicit or explicit standards that the program traces, with the purpose of improving (Weiss, 1998). Hence, it should be explained that evaluations can be divided according to the phase in which the program is located, since they are carried out before, during or after completing its implementation. The above, because the evaluation is a tool that allows to answer in a technical and precise way questions like Are there other alternatives to achieve this goal? Could these resources be used in better way? Is the program well designed? And/or is it well implemented?

Thus, it must be said that there are three types of assessments: 1) inputs, 2) impact and 3) processes. Input evaluation is a type of evaluation that used to analyze the extent to which product goals were achieved versus resources inverted (Cruz, Acosta, Melo, & Fajardo, 2013). The impact assessment, on the other hand, studies whether changes in well-being are

effectively due to the intervention and not to other factors” (Khandker, 2010). Finally, process evaluation is the evaluation of internal dynamics of the implementing agencies, their service delivery mechanisms, their management procedures and the links that exist between all these components” (Cruz, Acosta, Melo, & Fajardo, 2013). From the above, it can be seen that evaluating does not necessarily focus on the results but also studies the processes to measure whether the progress of the program or policy is in accordance with the results of short, medium and long term (Riché, 2009).

In this regard, the evaluation makes judgments about what’s desirable for public policies and tries to determine the values that are behind their objectives. So, and according to MacRae's thinking, it can be admitted that the objective of any public policy must be the resolution of a social problem, defined as “a contrast between an observed state of affairs and a valued expectation” (Macrae, 1985).

In this way, it can be seen that the evaluation contributes to the restructuring of problems and to the formulation of new policies or reformulation of those that do not fulfill their objectives. In other words, the evaluation allows a better decision-making regarding program planning and the allocation of budget, since it has the “expectation that the programs that generate good results are extended and those that show bad results are abandoned or drastically modified” (Weiss, 1998).

An evaluation will be better formulated and developed if its duly discussed and used in the public policy cycle. Thus, if interested actors are involved in the whole process, the evaluation must respond to different expectations and allow the consideration of the interests of various agents (Cruz, Acosta, Melo, & Fajardo, 2013). Finally, it should be emphasized that the

decision to evaluate a program is made when is necessary to take measures about policy design, justification of the expenses, the effectiveness of the program, the improvement of the delivery of the services that provides the program, or the extension or replication of the program in other areas or other countries (Cruz, Acosta, Melo, & Fajardo, 2013).

However, policies and programs also affect companies, which is why Political scientists continually encounter demands from multiple stakeholder groups to question companies regarding corporate social responsibility (from now on CSR). These pressures emerge from customers, employees, suppliers, community groups, governments, and shareholders. With so many conflicting goals and objectives, the definition of CSR is not always clear. For this article specifically, we define CSR as actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the company and that which is required by law. This definition underscores that, CSR means going beyond obeying the law (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001), thus a company is not acting on CSR by applying a policy required by a regulation, but it may, if it applies a voluntary program. In other words, CSR is the voluntary integration of companies, to social concerns in their business operations and relationships (Villegas & Quintanilla, 2012).

To further on this, CSR can be characterized as a cluster concept with a variety of theoretical foundations. Theory distinguish between four paths, each in itself constituted various approaches: (a) ethical theories focusing on the right thing to do in order to achieve a good/ideal society; (b) instrumental theories focusing on the achievement of core economic objectives through social activities; (c) political theories focusing on a responsible use of status, power, and influence of business in the political arena; and (d) integrative theories focusing on the integration of social demands in business policies (Hollerer, 2012).

If a company wants to develop a more sustainable economic activity over time, it has to adopt a more socially responsible attitude. However, the adoption of CSR can increase costs in the short term. So, the questions that this arises are: can CSR be profitable from a profit maximizing perspective? also, in terms of benefits, apart from performance, what are the added values that being more socially responsible brings? These questions are relevant because although the CSR may add value to several actors, other than shareholders, the latter have to perceive an improvement in their corporate performance to adopt an organizational transformation that changes the traditional management of business (Jelic, 2016).

It has been studied that CSR, in addition to improving shareholders' profits, adds values such as general well-being, public happiness and satisfaction of the intrinsic motivations of the workers inside an organization. The company, with CSR, stimulates prosocial behaviors reducing transactional costs, being more efficient, generating reciprocity benefits, making people happier in the name of a more sustainable economic activity, this means not neglecting economic performance. Profit and CSR are not mutually exclusive options. (Ibid.).

Many companies have responded to CSR in a very positive way, by devoting additional resources to promote it. A primary reason for positive responses is the recognition of the relevance of multiple actors, thus arguing that there is a business case for good corporate behaviour. Others have a less progressive view of its relevance though, as they believe that such efforts are inconsistent with profit maximization and the interests of shareholders, in terms of sacrificing some profit in the quest for the social good. This divergence in response has stimulated an important debate regarding the relationship between CSR and financial performance (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001).

However, we can't forget that there is an essential ambiguity about the CSR culture, just as there is about the 'comply or explain' approach of codes of practice. The mechanism and processes of CSR can be adopted either as a determined attempt to shape corporate behavior for the common good, or as a form of PR window-dressing which corporations are expected to present. The CSR culture may comprise processes and systems which are deliberately initiated to protect corporations to avoid any consequent restrictive regulation or legislation. In such cases, CSR may be simply a small part of maintaining the status quo rather than its improvement (Corporate Reform Collective , 2014).

We mustn't forget that CSR is a rational argument for businesses seeking to maximize their performance by minimizing restrictions on operations. In today's globalizing world, where individuals and activist organizations feel empowered to enact change, CSR represents a means of anticipating and reflecting societal concerns to minimize operational and financial limitations on business (Hollerer, 2012).

The consequences of this rational argument – business acting proactively – lead directly to a strong economic argument for CSR: Incorporating CSR into core business operations and the value chain offers considerable opportunities for differentiation and competitive advantage. In its various roles within the economic system the attractiveness and success of a corporation is strongly linked to the strength of its image and brand, as well as to its ability to balance the conflicting interests of multiple stakeholders. Thus, CSR is an argument of economic self-interest of business. CSR adds value because it allows companies to reflect the needs and concerns of their various stakeholder groups. By doing so, a company is more likely to retain its societal legitimacy, and maximize its financial viability, over the long term. Simply put,

CSR is a way of matching corporate operations with societal values at a time when these parameters can change rapidly (Ibid.).

CSR can be assigned the status of an objective in itself and positioned at the same level as other goals in the hierarchy of organizational objectives or obligations. While the business case seems to be an increasingly attractive and legitimate framing for corporations to employ the concept of CSR, frequent references to the ethical foundations of the notion of social responsibilities of business are bound to be found (Ibid.).

In addition to ethical reasoning, strong rational/economic arguments have been increasingly used to argue for the adoption and implementation of CSR. The business case for CSR is an investment in a project that promises to yield a suitably significant return to justify the expenditure. The core idea, corporations might “do well by doing good”, they might perform better financially by attending not only to core business operations but also to various societal responsibilities. As a result, corporations signal their compliance with standards of social responsibility accepted by society in order to increase their attractiveness to potential employees, investors, suppliers, and customers, to reduce their vulnerability to potential damage “irresponsible” conduct can have on profitability, brand image, overall reputation as well as societal legitimacy (Ibid).

According to some advocates of CSR, being a good corporate citizen can also make a firm more profitable. Since firms presumably have no interest in simultaneously reducing profits and harming society. This vision, however, doesn’t work quite well in firms that often suffer from a short-term bias. In practice, short-termism often implies both an intertemporal loss of profit and an externality on stakeholders. That is, taking decisions that increase short-term

profit, but reduce shareholder value and hurt workers or other constituencies. CSR is about taking a long-term perspective to maximizing (intertemporal) profits. This suggests that socially responsible investors should position themselves as long-term investors who monitor management and exert voice to correct short-termism (Bénabou & Tirole, 2010).

Some justifications for CSR employs arguments of cost and risk reduction. Under the cost and risk reduction perspective, the primary view is that the demands of stakeholders present potential threats to the viability of the organization, and that corporate economic interests are served by mitigating those threats through a threshold level of social or environmental performance. An important means of reducing costs (and, thus, enhance long-term shareholder value) is to adequately manage risk and threats from the organizational environment. Most corporations have established risk management systems in place, and many of these systems incorporate CSR issues within their risk evaluation (Hollerer, 2012).

Another justification is that CSR activities and initiatives might be conceived strategically as conferring competitive advantage on corporations. Value creation occurs when organizations adapt to their environment in order to realize and/or optimize their competitive advantage in the respective field. CSR helps on building firm competitive advantage through strategically orienting and directing resources toward the perceived demands of stakeholders. Stakeholder demands are viewed less as constraints on the organization, and more as opportunities to be leveraged for the benefit of the firm. It focuses on how firms may use CSR practices to set themselves apart from their competitors. By meeting demands of key stakeholders, CSR activities enhance the position of corporations to the extent that stakeholder decisions are influenced in their favor, they lead to favorable stakeholder attitudes and better support behaviors (Hollerer, 2012).

From a resource-based perspective, all CSR related initiatives should generate resources for the corporations that yield a source of competitive advantage, meaning that create situations in which competitors are unable to deploy equivalent resources and duplicate their benefits. In particular, CSR can help to build and strengthen competitive advantage by strategically adapting to the environment and enhancing relationships with various stakeholders (Ibid).

This 'strategic CSR' consists in taking a socially responsible stance in order to strengthen one's market position and thereby increase long-term profits. For instance, CSR could be a means of placating regulators and public opinion to avoid strict supervision in the future, or to attempt to raise rivals' costs by encouraging environmental, labor or safety regulations that will particularly handicap competitors (Bénabou & Tirole, 2010).

Also, another justification that is also argued for employing CSR activities is to create value by enhancing corporations' reputation (and strengthening their societal legitimacy). (Hollerer). Under such an aligning perspective, failure to meet crucial stakeholder needs will have a negative impact on corporations' reputation. The social impact hypothesis states that costs of CSR activities are much lower than potential benefits, other studies suggest a positive link between corporations' social performance and their reputation for association with factors that distinguish them from competitors in the mind of key stakeholders (for brand differentiation). CSR activities can assist corporations in building a reputation of integrity, and thus enhance the ability of corporations to attract customers, employees, and investors, among others (Hollerer, 2012).

There are also approaches advocating synergistic value creation focus on exploiting opportunities that reconcile the differing demands and interests of a diverse set of stakeholders. Thus, according to Hollerer, such a win-win perspective to CSR practices provides a view in which CSR is perceived as a vehicle that allows both the firm to pursue its interest and stakeholders to satisfy their demands.

This could be view as a delegated philanthropy (the company as a channel for the expression of citizen values) Some stakeholders (investors, customers, employees) are often willing to sacrifice money (yield, purchasing power and wage, respectively) so as to further social goals. Put differently, stakeholders have some demand for corporations to engage in philanthropy on their behalf. The corresponding CSR profit sacrifice is then passed through to stakeholders at their demand (Bénabou & Tirole, 2010).

One would need to explain why people would want corporations to do good on their behalf, rather than doing it on their own, and this is about the information and transaction costs. If it involves enormous transaction costs somehow, philanthropy must be delegated. Another argument for asking this of corporations is that the desired actions are about refraining from specific behaviors, such as polluting the environment; here there is no substitute (Ibid.).

Here, CSR does not raise any specific corporate governance issue: management caters to demand and maximizes profit. As with the long-term perspective, profit maximization and CRS are consistent. Nonetheless, it may be of interest that sometimes, there is an insider-initiated corporate philanthropy. In this interpretation of CSR, corporate behavior is (at least in part) not motivated by stakeholders' demands, but rather reflects management's or board members' own

desires to engage in philanthropy. Profit is then typically not maximized (Bénabou & Tirole, 2010).

In practice, the dividing line between the different notions of CSR may be elusive. In sum, we see that, as with individual consumers and investors, corporate socially responsible behavior often carries much ambiguity as to their exact motivation. (Ibid)

Delegated philanthropy may be the fastest-growing form of CSR (at least in terms of visibility). It is a response to a widespread demand by stakeholders that organizations they interact with, are *good* corporate citizens. Thus, the temptation to free ride is substantial, but there are limits to such sacrifices. While people almost unanimously declare themselves willing to incur costs to improve the environment or promote development, attitudes change when things become more concrete.

In order to choose a company to invest in, buy from or work for, investors, consumers and workers need information as to whether it really behaves pro-socially, which raises three challenges (Bénabou & Tirole, 2010):

1. Data collection is itself a public good. It is therefore important that specialized rating agencies supply the required information to the public. Of course, these agencies may face inadequate incentives.
2. Different dimensions of good corporate citizenship need to be aggregated. Companies do well in some dimensions and poorly on others, so one of the challenges rating agencies have is to find a methodology for adding them up into a synthetic index. For example, how does one assess the closure of a plant that emits a lot of CO₂ but provides jobs to a local community?

3. Also, should corporate social performance be assessed in absolute or relative terms? For example, an oil company may pollute a lot, but make substantial efforts to reduce its pollution and be 'best in class'. Thus, many authors have suggested including relative performance within the industry as a criterion for delineating socially responsible portfolios.

Finally, we may take into account that the evolution of CSR has been characterized by the emergence of multiple initiatives to structure the conception, management and reporting of policies and actions taken by companies. Which is why is important to understand the almost 'negative' - causes and effects of the increase in CSR. This because due to the exponential growth of CSR, a process of business legitimization with CSR is being evidence (Villegas & Quintanilla, 2012).

As theory on CSR is still in the making, critically understanding the process of emergence, evolution and expansion of this topic, requires close scrutiny, as companies seek how to instrumentalize CSR. However, social responsibility practices and initiatives have evolved based on the demands of society, which shows that companies are “understanding” and interacting with their various stakeholders. This also implies that CSR must be aligned with the business strategy. Achieving coordinated work in pursuit of transparency implies the universal and cross-cutting nature of criteria that allow to measure, compare and evaluate progress on the road to sustainable development (Ibid.).

Companies should pursue corporate social responsibility and the theory believes that it is possible to align the objective of satisfaction of human and social needs. Nonetheless, the current hegemony of a “financed” vision of the company in which the short term and the

maximization of financial income prevail, is contradictory with CSR. Trends dominated by the cultural hegemony of finance have overshadowed the broader views of CSR, which is inconvenient and dangerous because it reduces the chances of a more sustainable society and creates skepticism and disbelief about it (Ibid.).

Methodology

This chapter will strive to help the reader understand the Methodology used in the Evaluation of Uniplaces activities.

First, it must be taken into account that to select the type of evaluation that best fits the desired analysis, it is important to be clear about what are the objectives of the evaluation, so what is and isn't going to be included in the study and specify the main questions to be solved (Cruz, Acosta, Melo, & Fajardo, 2013). So, I established my interest in analyzing the disparities between the design and implementation of the HousErasmus+ program in the Organization. Hence the evaluation that best fits is the evaluation of processes, because with the Process Evaluation the objective is to analyze the operation of the program, and in particular there is the option to understand how goals, purposes, components and interrelationships interrelate with activities (Mejía, 2008).

Throughout the document, the intention is to answer these by looking at the CSR initiative inside the company, by studying if it was successfully adopted, through the analysis of what was experienced in the internship. The program is assimilated as an CSR practice and it will help analyze if the organization developed a collaborative environment adding value to a wide range of actors, not only for its shareholders.

Above, I summarized some of the most prominent lines of argument for CSR. The existence of various termini further complicates matters; this complexity also partly explains why conceptual and empirical studies on the social responsibility of business have been handicapped by not being able to share a common understanding or definition (Hollerer, 2012). The construct of CSR overlaps with some, and is synonymous with other, conceptions of

business-society relations. A variety of more or less related concepts is interchangeably used with CSR, which is why, this article will also use Evaluation framework to analyze the activities of the company even if it's through the CSR viewpoint.

Thus, it must be said that process evaluation is based on program theory, which in turn connects the context in which the program/policy is developed, the resources available for its implementation, the activities carried out and the results reflected in the opinion of the people involved (Cruz, Acosta, Melo, & Fajardo, 2013). Hence, it was chosen, since working in Uniplaces I could identify the relationships that each of the processes needs to produce a good service, also because the main characteristic of this type of evaluation is to examine the procedures and tasks involved in the implementation of a program, as well as, the description and analysis of how it is planned.

Thus, this method allows us to know the degree of efficiency with which you can get to operate the program and implement it properly for the final delivery of services. The process evaluation that was chosen helped determine whether purposes and goals are aligned as they should, if services are being delivered as intended, how well delivery is organized, the effectiveness of program management, and how effectively it is being evaluated. This evaluation seeks to explain how the program is behaving in Uniplaces and thus I'll be making use of the logical framework matrix, a tool to facilitate the process of conceptualization, design, execution and project evaluation (Ibid.).

The logical framework seeks to provide structure to the planning process and communicate essential information related to the project. It was originally developed as an answer to three problems common to projects: 1) when project planning is lacking precision with multiple

objectives that are not clearly related to project activities; 2) when the projects are not executed successfully, and the scope of responsibility of those who design it is not clearly defined; and 3) when there is no clear picture of how the project would look if it succeeded, and evaluators do not have an objective basis to compare what was planned with what happens in reality (Op Cit. Méjia).

The logical framework method addresses these problems and provides a uniform terminology that facilitates communication and serves to reduce ambiguities. In this way, it reports the information necessary for the execution, project monitoring and evaluation and provides a structure to express, in an only chart, the most important information about a project.

In this sense, it should be explained that the chosen methodology gives greater importance to the vision that Uniplaces' workers have about the set of activities and processes to comply with the HousErasmus+ program, to evaluate how the company is carrying out the parameters that have been raised in the program. What is sought with this evaluation tool is to produce more timely and relevant information so that it's easier to arrive to decisions about adjustments to the programs executed, in order to increase efficiency levels and effectiveness of the policies inside the company (Ávila & Guerrero, 2008).

Therefore, it is imperative to clarify that for this document the documents I've sought to answer revolve around the program design and the practices adopted by Uniplaces to comply to the HousErasmus+ program as a CSR initiative. Hence, the following questions obtained from the Executive Evaluation of the DNP, will serve as an evaluation guide (Ávila & Guerrero, 2008):

- Is the program aimed at a specific problem / need / interest existing and attainable?
- Does the program have clearly defined and achievable objective beneficiaries?

- Does the theoretical intervention model of the Program fit the perceived reality?
- Is the vertical logic of the Program fully validated?
- Are there the necessary institutional elements and conditions for implementing the program?
- Has the program defined clear goals?
- Are there relevant bottlenecks throughout the implementation of the program?
- Does the Program collaborate and coordinate effectively among stakeholders?

The previous questions allowed me to analyze the external and internal coherence of the design and implementation in Uniplaces, as well as the following sources of information. As secondary sources the official websites of both HousEramus+ and Uniplaces provided a large amount of information on institutional design, operational structure, and management organization.

On the other hand, interviews were conducted as primary source (Appendix 1) to Uniplaces directives and senior agents to “obtain descriptions of the world lived by the people interviewed, in order to achieve true interpretations of the phenomena described” (Kvale&Svend, 1996). Thus, it could be known firsthand the perception of the people responsible for implementing and evaluating the program.

The kind of interview that was used was semi-structured for the collection of information. It is presented as a list of topics and questions that does not condition the interviewer as it allows to assume a different trajectory if necessary, as long as it covers the entire of the questions that need an answer. The selection of such interviews was because: (i) it allows the interviewee to

express his experience with the program on its own terms and (ii) allows the interviewer to apply flexibility to the questions depending on the answers of the interviewee.

The elected Uniplaces employees were:

1. Head of Operations
2. Customer Experience Manager
3. Global Partnerships Manager
4. Key Account Team Leader
5. Bookings Team Leader
6. Content Creator
7. Customer Experience Senior Agent
8. Landlord Success Senior Agent

For the coding of the interviews, I assigned a keyword and one color to each question to allow tabulating the information. Subsequently, a scheme was developed for each interview, in which for each coded question its respective answer was arranged in a specific category (Appendix 2). It should be noted, that occasionally, for lack of knowledge of the interviewee and taking into account that the semi-structured interview was used, some interviewees stopped answering some questions.

It must be added to the above, that as a primary source, surveys were also conducted (Appendix 3) to the 32 random employees in Uniplaces. This instrument of evaluation was implemented, with the objective of reviewing the perspectives that the different tiers of employees have regarding the knowledge of the HousEramus+ Program and as well with the processes Uniplaces have of complying with the Program. The survey was sent to my co-workers via

Slack in a company channel for anyone to fill, with the exception of the people I had interviewed.

As the survey, unlike the interview, looks for short and concise answers, I used this resource to be able to evaluate in detail Uniplaces' processes. The information was tabulated in tables and graphs using Google Forms. The questions were basically divided into three groups: open questions, yes/no questions, and multiple-choice questions. Taking into account that the purpose of the survey wishes to know the perception of the employees of Uniplaces' initiatives to satisfy the program, I developed questions related to it and the awareness that the respondents have regarding student mobility issues.

Finally, once the information was collected and categorized, a phase of analysis of the answers found in interviews and surveys began. This can be seen in the following chapters, which intend to describe and evaluate components, and purposes of the Program and Uniplaces involvement in it thanks to experiences and perceptions of its employees.

HousErasmus+ Description

In this chapter, I'll be unfolding the HousErasmus+ Program specifications. All information regarding the Program was extracted from secondary sources, documents that provided information on institutional design and operational structure, unfortunately not much on organizational management from the Program. These were obtained from the Program's website alone, as no other information was made public when writing of this document.

So, the secondary sources used for this report are the existing research on international student housing gathered by the Program itself that are composed of two publications:

1. A research paper gathering all the collected information from their work as a project (Four Surveys to different stakeholders of the student housing sectors, Ten Study visits on locations with best practices, An awareness-raising campaign, Four conferences all over Europe to share the results of the research to stakeholders, One final conference in Brussels with key policy-makers, a Campaign on social media and key international events to spread best practices) (HousErasmus, 2020)
2. A recommendations booklet about how to improve Student Housing for mobile students (HousErasmus+, 2017) (Kuzmane, Jahnke, Encinas, Alfranseder, & Fellingner, 2017).

First of all, regarding the HousErasmus+ project, we need to clarify that it is a program co-funded by the Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission and coordinated by ESN. Based on the information collected, they advocate and make concrete recommendations for an improved situation for all mobile students and trainees

in Europe. Consequently, the HousErasmus+ project sole purpose is to identify the challenges and best practices around accommodation for international students and trainees. It's needed to remark that it's a policy with established guideline and not an entity the develop or execute them. In this sense, with their Final Research Report and its Recommendation Booklet they completed their aim.

Continuing with what I described above HousEramus+ consolidated its research findings into 9 most pressing issues to be addressed, I'll list the issues and the recommendation they gave to it next:

- Lack of awareness among stakeholders: There is a clear mismatch of how mobile students perceive the challenges posed by accommodation and the awareness between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), policymakers and housing providers.

The program suggests that it is necessary to raise awareness about the added value of mobility programs and obstacles to this experience. Mobility programs aim to deepen the understanding of Europe and can lead to better intercultural dialogue, language learning and promote crucial academic and non-academic skills and competences necessary for the future labor market. The mismatch of perceived obstacles and the awareness of the real obstructions/hurdles to mobility needs to be addressed.

- Need for more cooperation: All stakeholders involved (HEIs, student organizations, housing providers, policymakers etc.) expressed the need for more cooperation to get a better understanding of the challenges and to work on a more systematic approach to solving those challenges.

They recommended the need to have more synergies between all relevant stakeholders to be able to address the challenges in a more systematic and effective way. It does not mean shifting responsibility to someone else but coming together and agreeing on common goals and ways to reach them.

- Lack of quality information: Students struggle to find the necessary information on finding accommodation, leading to problems in finding accommodation. In many cases, students go abroad without having permanent accommodation arranged.

They commented that there's a need for more systemic ways to provide exchange students with useful and reliable information that helps them prepare for their mobility. Erasmus+ App has already been launched and more digital innovations are underway. Therefore, now is the time to prototype innovative solutions that help inform students so that they can add accommodation availability in their decision-making process.

- Quality assurance, discrimination & fraud: Many students report discrimination and attempted fraud. Little is being done in terms of quality assurance for accommodation and the information provided to students.

The recommendation they proposed is that European landscape of student accommodation needs to change in order to take into account new quality assurance mechanisms, such as student reviews, and create accessible and high-quality information on accommodation. Furthermore, mobile students having to arrange their accommodation online rather than during site-visits makes them particularly prone to attempted fraud. Creating awareness of the

possibility of such attempts and providing reliable information sources are necessary to avoid such issues.

- Financial burden: The additional financial burden of taking part in a mobility program is still the number one obstacle to student mobility and the costs of accommodation make up a majority of these additional costs.

They proposed a mind-shift in terms of public investment into student mobility is necessary.

- Insufficient student housing: There is a general lack of student housing in many cities. Necessary investments in the student housing market are lacking and mobile students who have to compete with the local student population are at a disadvantage.

The program contemplated financial support mechanisms targeting the provision of student accommodation is a necessary investment and helps avoid social selectivity in access to education and mobility. In many cities private investment would find new business opportunities if the housing market for mobile students were understood and cooperation between stakeholders worked more efficiently.

- Short-term accommodation: Short-term mobility often leads to issues with contractual arrangements for accommodation, as short-term renting is less attractive (or legally challenging) for housing providers.

The program is resolute that both changing legal frameworks and the organization of mobility are necessary to solve the issue.

- Language barrier and cultural differences: Differences in the way of living and lack of cultural awareness, as well as the language barrier amplify other challenges.

They believe language learning as well as intercultural communication are key to a successful mobility experience, therefore both sending and receiving institutions should offer support and guidance with these aspects. To successfully overcome housing issues, it is crucial to provide such services sufficiently in advance of the mobility period.

- Trainees are facing most challenges: The fact that students that go abroad for a traineeship do not have a receiving Higher Education Institution makes them a particularly vulnerable target group.

The program reinforces the thought that trainees do deserve special attention and more support in overcoming the challenges they are faced with in their search for accommodation. A compromise solution should be looked into at European policy level.

Regarding the evaluation of the program, only the first 8 issues will be analyzed as Uniplaces target market are students. In regards, to the recommendations, as you can see the booklet offers broad suggestions which turn to be a challenge for stakeholders as sometimes it won't be a clear guideline. Nonetheless, the program gives some good practices but those are limited to infrastructural changes at policy level that can't be achieved by partners to the project as Uniplaces.

However, there are some good practices that can be used for reference for Uniplaces behavior such as:

- Some High Education Institutions (HEIs) like the University of Aarhus cover the costs for the period when the student dormitories stay empty throughout summer months, ensuring housing providers do not lose rent due to short-term stays of mobile students.
- In Manchester, England, a common student accommodation quality label has been developed and monitored in cooperation with the municipality and HEIs.
- Erasmus fairs, where (potential) outgoing students can meet with current mobile students at their home institution, can be very efficient ways to create a space where students can exchange experiences and ask questions.
- The use of 3rd party online platforms that provide quality assurance mechanisms (such as visits to apartments) substantially lower the risk of fraud and ensure that students get a full picture of the accommodation they are booking without having to visit it themselves. However, when offered by private providers, such services usually come at a cost for the student.
- Specifically created scholarships for international/foreign students, such as the Stipendium Hungaricum in Hungary have been created to attract international talent. Many countries have created such initiatives, often also focusing on specific academic disciplines.

- In Italy, one housing provider offers language courses as part of their student accommodation offer.
- During the regional conference in Paris, a participant reported of mobile students giving language course to families and in return, the families hosting them during their stay

To conclude, it can be said that the program aims to improve the accommodation for students abroad in the long run, but for associate partners such as Uniplaces, tasks should be properly given to better manage time and make supervision and control more effective.

It's important to denote that the Erasmus+ program and its predecessors have contributed to the internationalization of European higher education and mobility programs, as they believe it's a core component for creating an innovative and high-quality higher education sector. In the research showed by the Program, the number of students who have completed exchanges abroad is supposed to continue to grow according to the benchmark in the EU's Education and Training 2020 strategy framework (ET2020) and if that is certainly a fact to celebrate per se, what should also be kept in mind is that quantity should not overshadow quality and the mobility experience should be accessible to a wide range of students and not just to those more fortunate in socioeconomic terms.

As illustrated by the Erasmus Impact Study (HousErasmus, 2020), there are still considerable barriers to mobility, one of it being housing. The perception of the importance of accommodation and the severity of the obstacles for mobile students to find accommodation varies, but student groups that have been abroad, are planning to go abroad, or are not considering going abroad mention is the financial burden. This, as accommodation can be one

of the main (additional) cost factors when moving abroad. Also, the high level of insecurity posed by the financial implications of moving abroad might stem from the fact that students are not well informed about possible funding opportunities. Similarly, separation from a partner, children, friends is a secondary but still important and very commonly mentioned obstacle to mobility.

In its publication, the program affirms that it is challenging to map all the financial resources available to students when going abroad, nonetheless this is a major problem and means that not all Europeans have equal access to an opportunity to broaden their horizons and experience Europe.

They also discovered that the private real estate companies do acknowledge the profitability in investing in student accommodation. The favorable conditions are mainly due to the growing number of students as well as the success of Higher Education Institutions in attracting degree mobile students as well as loopholes in national real estate markets to ensure mobile student accommodation opportunities create good market conditions. However, it is important to note that profitability does not necessarily mean affordability for students, potentially leading to a distorted situation when the majority of students' needs are not truly met. There seems to be a gap in the available research in bridging this gap between profitability and affordability.

Taking into account their research, the program has tried to formulate recommendations generally enough to be applied by as many actors as possible. At the same time, they tried to be as precise and specific as possible and make suggestions for concrete steps to be taken to improve the situation.

They hope that by dividing the recommendations according to identified problem areas, all stakeholders will find appropriate solutions for the problem areas. As is evident, the lack of general awareness of the challenges, as well as the lack of cooperation are amongst the first issues to be tackled. Stakeholders obviously need to work together to remedy a difficult situation and the recommendations given should be seen as a starting point for a discussion that needs to take place in every city that wants to welcome mobile students and trainees.

Uniplaces Description

Here, I'll describe Uniplaces as a company and its business model. I need to clarify here that there are limited resources for Uniplaces portrayal as most literature on this comes from the establishment itself so it may be a bit biased on its favor. Also, some of the details I narrate come from my own experience during the traineeship.

Uniplaces is a two-sided online platform that wants to help students, through a simple and user-friendly way, find and book a suitable accommodation while abroad. Its history started in November 2011 when the co-founders (Ben Grech, Mariano Kostelec, and Miguel Santo Amaro) understood that the student accommodation market was very informal and fragmented, and it could be a solid business opportunity (Nunes, 2017).

They developed the idea of connecting university communities with landlords in an efficient and transparent way. They initiated in Portugal, where the student accommodation market was less developed and underexplored. Uniplaces started as a classifieds site but, by tracking user's feedback, they concluded they needed to transform Uniplaces into a closed platform, where the company had control over the content published. In June 2013 they launched a website where students could book a place online.

Uniplaces has been able to finance itself because throughout the years it attracted the interest of European investors and won several prizes that brought not only money but also notoriety. Uniplaces' vision is to be the best student accommodation booking service and to be a brand that students feel identified to, when talking about student's accommodation for mid-term period (between 6 to 12 months usually what an Erasmus exchange will take). Thus, they wish

to be recognized as a database of verified student properties that will match students with their ideal university home (Ibid.).

Their aim is to make the process of finding and renting accommodation safer and simpler, which result in their strategic objective to be the strength of the relationship with both landlords and students. Moreover, they wish that with their platform students no longer feel exposed to the possibility of being victim of fraud as Uniplaces holds the payment until 24 hours after check-in before giving it to the landlord. This gives both parties time to do a walkthrough upon check-in, to make sure that everything is as expected and to ensure Uniplaces can enforce cancellation policies before the transaction is completed.

Landlords also benefit with the platform. Most of them are busy and don't have time to deal with lots of questions from possible renters, and others are still struggling with online advertisement and communication. As a result, landlords can rent their properties with minimum effort and also have them exposed to a larger pool of potential tenants.

In terms of target market, Uniplaces' focuses on Erasmus students. When the students want to book, they select the duration, and pay the first month rent and a reservation fee through the site. The fee will depend on the price of the property and the duration of the stay, as it will be calculated as a percentage of the total rent. To landlords, Uniplaces offers a listing process free of charge, only charging a commission fee per each accommodation booked. Having said this, from each booking Uniplaces receives a transaction commission which is deducted partially from the amount of money the landlord receives for the first rent.

At the moment, Uniplaces partners with Universities to help ensure the institutions could recommend a trusted place to its students. These partnerships are supported by promotional agreements: on one side Uniplaces helps the students find quality accommodation. On the other side Universities promote the platform directly to their students. Other key partners are students' organizations such as ESN (Erasmus Student Network), AISEC, CEMS, and UNITE, the UK's leading operator of purpose-built student accommodation. However, the relationships with the partners is considered vulnerable as there isn't any exclusivity attachment and cooperation could also end abruptly due to various situations (Uniplaces, 2020).

Program's Evaluation

The purpose of this chapter is to show the reader a detailed study of the information collected. Its intended to answer the questions set forth in previous chapters in order to evaluate the coherence of the program and its application by Uniplaces as a company.

I'll use the Program recommendations as guidance to evaluate it, as I have matched certain activities within Uniplaces that, from my point of view, are the core of what the company is doing to follow the Booklet. In this sense, I'll explain the reader these different processes and its association to each recommendation, as I said, these were coordinated by myself as there isn't an existing Uniplaces directive on how it is currently complying with the Project.

1. For the lack of awareness, the company offers the Uniplaces Blog for Students and the Landlord's Portal for Accommodation providers. The blog is full of students and Uniplaces ambassadors' stories from their Erasmus experience around Europe, this is focus on guiding, solving doubts and providing tips. The blog also points to different tourist attractions and neighborhoods they recommend for students.

In the Landlord's Portal, Uniplaces tries to provide tools to guarantee a great stay (rights and rules owners should follow), there is even a contract template they can download. Also, there are articles displayed to help them with their taxes.

2. For cooperation with different stakeholders, Uniplaces holds different partnerships, listed above, and brand ambassadors. This partnerships with universities and universities associations were established with the sole purpose of creating a network between landlords and Universities to guarantee the students a place to stay during their

studies. These parentships, most of the times, offered discounts in the Uniplaces service fee.

For the ambassadors' program, Uniplaces reached students at the university's fairs and through the jobs section of their website. The goal of this program is to expand the brand awareness in their market segment (students). The ambassadors' job is to help students book rooms through Uniplaces.

3. For the lack of quality information, the company has different levels of accommodation and Landlord's verification.

We can identify that Uniplaces has 4 verification tags (Uniplaces, 2019):

- Not verified: this means the landlord upload his offer to the platform but did not provide one or any of the following information: upload his identification, email and phone verification.
- Verified: this means the accommodation provider verified 2 of the following information: phone, email or upload an identification.
- Visited: the company sent a photographer to the property to provide a better renting experience. This way it is guarantee that the property students get to see in the platform, is the one they are booking.
- Exclusive: When a place is marked as exclusive, it means it's only available on Uniplaces, so it won't be possible to find it on any other platform. Exclusive places are also their top recommendation and are usually located close to universities and city centers. Whenever a tenant sends a request to book an exclusive place, it's the

agent's job to personally reply to it. Since these properties don't need to wait for the landlord's reply, these booking requests can be accepted much faster than usual.

4. For the quality assurance for fraud and discrimination, Uniplaces has the Customer Service Department and an algorithm that identifies possible scammers within the platform.

Even though actions in fraud cases are limited, the customer department goes the extra mile to provide the student the service they deserve, we have to take into account that sometimes scammers post phone numbers and emails in the pictures and tenants contact them directly. Most of these cases are scams and out of hand for Uniplaces, because no payment was done through the platform. To avoid this kind of cases the product department develop and algorithm that can detect most of these fraudulent posts.

In cases of discrimination, Uniplaces tries to know both sides of the story, if the landlord discriminated, he/she will be out of platform and banned, but since Uniplaces reach is limited, they don't have a way to properly help with anything else.

5. For the financial burden that is studying abroad, the company used to have a Uniplaces Scholarship (the last one was given in 2017)

This initiative was born to create an internet movement, this consisted in recording yourself doing a random act of kindness. They had more than 5000 applications and to the top 5 applications Uniplaces covered all the living cost during their academic studies.

6. For insufficient housing, the company used to have a Sales department for the markets they proactively work in, so: Portugal, Spain and Italy. Currently the department is on hold to focus on cleaning the platform and Account Management. Uniplaces decided to close this department and clean the platform, when everything is organized, they aim to reopen the department that aspires to be GDPR complainant.
7. Regarding the limitations of short-term accommodation, Uniplaces has the possibility of having fixed-term contracts that encircles the universities studying periods

Due to the usual semesterly rent done by the students, Uniplaces created a fixed-term contracts, this contract consisted as in named says in fixed period of time that the student and the landlord can't change, this period of time consists for an academic period, for example from September to January. This was thought to grant the security to the tenant and the landlord, but this was especially for the landlord due to most of the students left midterm, because they may arrange a better deal as group of students.

8. For the language and cultural barriers, it used to have Spanish lessons in the summer of 2018 for students going to Madrid. Uniplaces promoted Spanish lessons in Madrid for students that arrived in August, these students were allowed to access free classes during that month.

Assessment:

From this point onwards, I'll appraise the HousErasmus+ Program itself as a program that Uniplaces voluntarily partnered with. The program will be studied first as to open the path for analyzing Uniplaces' role as a partner. Parallely, I'll commence the evaluation of Uniplaces' behavior in regard to the Booklet recommendations as a CSR initiative.

○ **Problem or Necessity of the Program**

The Program is adequately directed and oriented to meet the need to provide better accommodation alternatives to mobile students and understand the importance of accommodation for a student abroad. The problem is well focused because it is supported in the need to provide a sustainable framework and opportunity for students far from home due to problematic provision of accommodation for international students and trainees. It is correctly identified since accommodation is one of the limitations for international students, thus obstructing their opportunities for cultural understanding and self-development.

The problem, however, is not well documented in my opinion, as it is not reflected as a priority for countries and only spoken of within larger projects as a related topic. The EU population is more concerned with their own well-being and that of their loved ones; even when they may have children or relatives going abroad the balance of interest comes first for their need of accommodation rather than for mobility students. Also, due to the perception that students come for a "all-round experience" the general public assumes students can withstand whatever circumstances during their time abroad.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the Program addresses the issue of accommodation issues for mobility students, but its small coverage only affects the students minimally. This is not surprising due to the growing numbers of mobile students.

- **Target beneficiaries are clearly defined and attainable in the Program**

The HousErasmus+ Program itself clearly defines its recipients as all mobile students and intends a full coverage, as it wants to improve the current situation for these students. However, there are no goals for this coverage that can be evaluated. It appears the program hides in lack of budget and structural limitations. Nonetheless it does create awareness of the issue, but I think recommendations given are quite broad and could have been more on point. Also, prioritization and targeting criteria are not evident since it seeks to help the situation itself and not a specific group of students despite their characteristics. However, it could be inferred from its publications that they indeed wish to make accommodation accessible for students with more limitations, so it appears there is an intrinsic belief for positive discrimination.

Inside Uniplaces, respondents commented on the need to reach more students, however, none commented on processes that would help achieve this objective. Also, what could be observed in Uniplaces, was an unwritten prioritization that give a better environment for undergraduate students rather than postgraduates. Younger students would have more benefits and opportunities adapting to the existing accommodations. The above happens despite the fact that the services provided by Uniplaces are offered in conditions of equality; but as students aren't able to visit the property, nor know their roommates/ housemates, this gives advantage to younger students that can usually acclimatize faster as they are also seeking for an *adventure*

during their time abroad, while maybe a postgraduates might not be too keen to this environment. This results in a lack of existent criteria that can guarantee vertical impartiality.

The Uniplaces employees interviewed in this regard expressed that there was no difference with respect to the delivery of the service. However, they made it clear that in case there's an issue during the accommodation, they can't usually do much to help as they don't have control over the parties in the transactions, as the company shields itself to be only a mediator. Also, they need to take into account the length of stay profits wise and analyze the importance of the accommodation provider for future bookings.

- **Theoretical model of intervention of the program and the perceived reality**

The intervention theory of the HousErasmus+ Program adjusts to the needs of the beneficiaries even though at the moment the scope of their recommendations may not apply to all. In other terms: even when the strategy is not being consistent with reality, the recommendation generated constitute a valid response to the needs of the beneficiaries and a solution to the problem. While some of the recommendations they provide are essential for accommodation to mobile students, there are other suggestions such as language barriers and cultural differences that are not perceived as related issues despite being designed to help the abroad experience.

Inside Uniplaces, according to the survey I conducted, only a 37.5% of the surveyed employees knew that the HousErasmus+ Program existed. Nonetheless in spite of the company not sharing with the employees the partnership with the program, the employees described Uniplaces vision as helping moving students with their accommodation and overall abroad experience.

One of the interviewed employees affirmed on this “I think it is, that it's Uniplaces sole purpose and the idea that brought the company to be founded. Now we have good partnerships with some Universities around Europe and as you can tell our highest volumes of bookings are in February and specially September. I think we provide Erasmus and all over the world students a solution of getting a place before the arrival, what's better that going to study abroad and have a safe place to stay.”

Knowledge of Uniplaces employees about the Program

Do you know what is the HousErasmus+ Program?

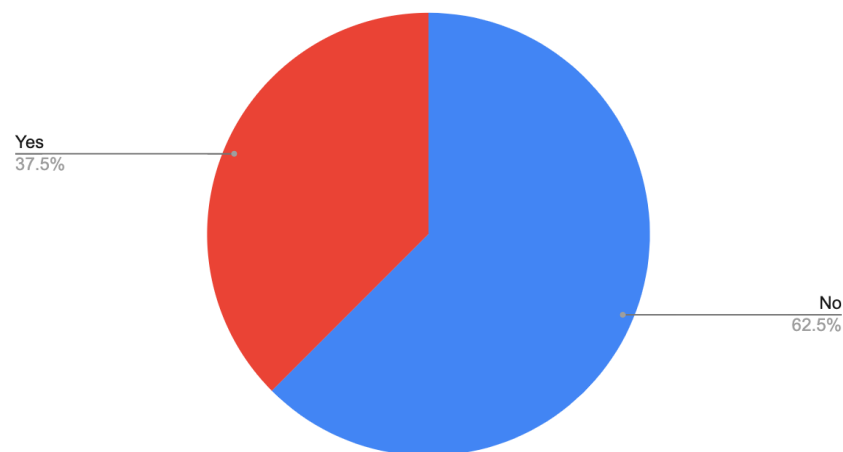


Figure 1 Do you know what is the HousErasmus + Program?

We can affirm, there's a clear inconsistency between knowing what the program is and what it should mean for the company and its employees. However, Uniplaces' common practices and internal processes assimilates as pertinent and conducive to benefit and meet the needs of the Program. For example, the respondents when defining Uniplaces named consistently two existing issues that the Program already assess: lack of quality information and insufficient accommodation; and they consider the company may be helping with this two in most of the bookings they have. The above can be shown in the responses of the employees to the question:

Do you know how Uniplaces is trying to improve the situation for Mobile Students? Where 62% of the employees replied yes.

On this, an interviewed employee stated this “I didn't know we were partners with HousErasmus+. In this case I think it is to have like a sort of certification, like an ISO one. This will legitimate our work with the students, and it will more credibility to the brand. Management is trying to build a network of students, universities and landlords and this kind of partnerships will help fortify it.”

Uniplaces Employees perception

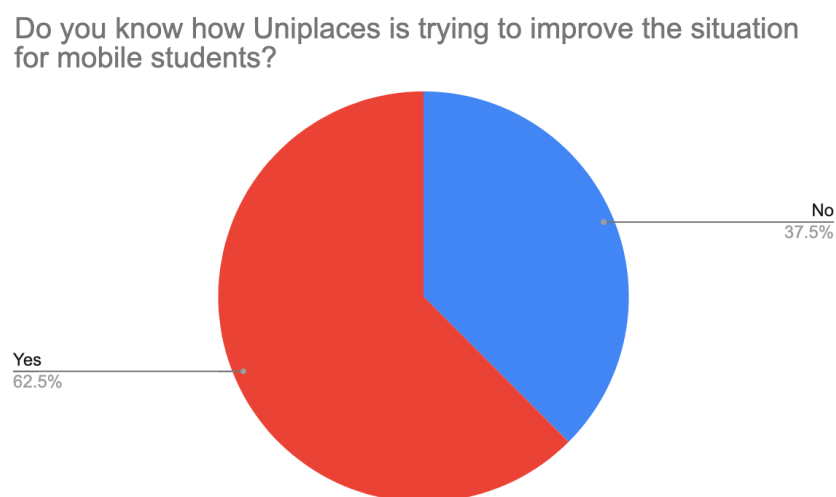


Figure 2 Do you know how Uniplaces is trying to improve the situation for mobile students?

On the other hand, the internal processes of the company to use its internal activities to comply with the program as a CSR initiative, are viable and consistent with the reality of the HousErasmus+ program. Nevertheless, the way the program portrays its suggestions is disproportionate and little accessible when dealing with the vertical logic of how to implement it. I will review this aspect in the next point.

- **Vertical Logic of the Program**

Within the Program there's a solid vertical logic, but it has some shortcomings, because their recommendations are interrupted or fractioned by promoting vague suggestions. This can be seen inside Uniplaces in which the activity portrayed by the company complies with the suggestions of the Program, but its execution is poorly implemented due to having no regulations or examples on how to properly develop said suggestion.

We can see this within Uniplaces, in terms of partnerships for example, the respondents consider that for a student to follow the process of accessing the *benefit* of the relation Uniplaces has with Universities is not simple, to access it you need to have a clear knowledge of it. Nevertheless, the universities that need to comply with the dissemination of information of this, focus on other topics and may not disclose fully or in depth their relationship with the Uniplaces. Thus, the procedure related to access a promotion or a benefit is not explained or never came to be understood from the moment the student books with Uniplaces.

The problem, according to respondents becomes more serious because of two harmful situations to the interests of the student: 1) due to the poor execution of the booking, he/she loses the promocode or 2) these situations are handled case by case by the team in charge of Customer Service and the amount to be received as a discount can be reduced or the student can also not receive anything. Hence, the partnership sometimes is more focused in securing publicity for both the High Education Institution and Uniplaces, rather than an actual benefit for the student finances.

Other point to consider within Uniplaces is the ability of paying the first month rent through the platform, it brings security to the students as the money is only transferred 24 hours after they move in. However, this also has some shortcomings, for instance the student and the accommodation provider need to coordinate the meeting time and entry to the property. This sometimes leads to conflict as students not always move-in the day they booked, so the money gets transferred to the landlord, as Uniplaces has no way to know if the student arrived or not. Another issue may be that sometimes even though the property doesn't reflect what is shown in picture, students prefer to stay in it, in fear they can't find anything else in such a short notice, it results on having a low-quality accommodation while staying abroad and a strained relationship between the student and Uniplaces.

Concerning the fraud detection algorithm, it needs to be further developed to be a tool that effectively protects students. Sometimes the company fails to consider the consequences that it entitles to a student being scammed while believing they are reaching a landlord through a trusted channel. Nevertheless, Uniplaces has tried through their Blog and Support Center to advise students on how to prevent scams within the platform, but it is indispensable to further escalate/report scammers and thus, be able to protect the students.

Regarding the properties currently offered in Uniplaces, there are cases in which the student requests a room and the landlord doesn't reply or rejects the request, this often happens as the landlord isn't engaged with the platform or the property isn't available, increasing pain and stress for the mobile student due to various infructuous attempts to find a place. It was said that such circumstances are justified when the landlord doesn't update its property, but there have been cases in which the property or landlord doesn't exist and Uniplaces do not provide the diligence expected to manage and control the veracity of the offers registered in the platform.

To close this argument, despite Uniplaces having the necessary activities to follow the Program, those activities aren't as strongly developed to properly cover for the group of students that travel abroad. For this to be a reality in the future, I consider that a design of compliance to the program by areas would be useful, because it will focus to search global benefit in a focalized manner. Also it can help the company achieve its goals as from Uniplaces' employees point of view, their work improves the accommodation for mobile students, 62% have a positive take on this, which proves that within the company they view their daily tasks as a way of progress for the current system.

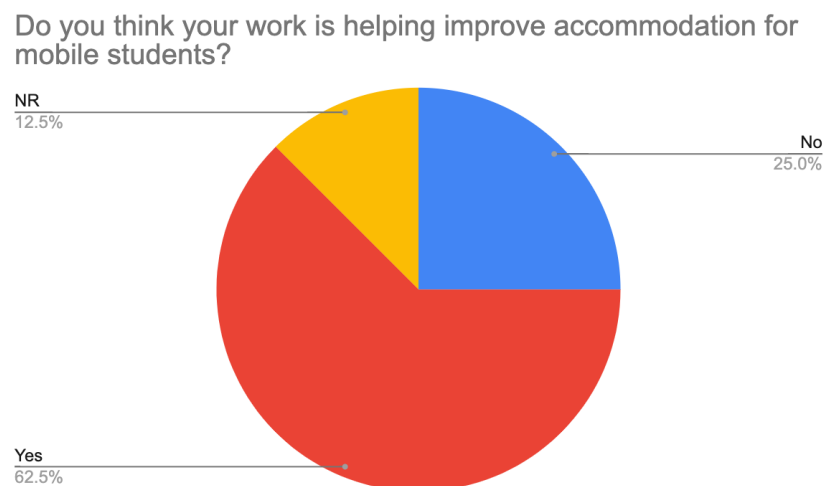


Figure 3 Do you think tour work is helping improve accommodation for mobile students?

- **Institutional elements and conditions to implement the program**

To implement the program within Uniplaces, different stakeholders hold the elements and necessary conditions to help improve the situation, however there are flaws in the interaction with the key actors at all levels, even with the students themselves.

For the lack of awareness for example, even though Uniplaces offers the Blog for Students and the Landlord's Portal for Accommodation providers, ignorance still predominates between both parties.

Students complain about prices, security and locations, every day there is a complaint from the students due to rents, security deposits, discrimination, abusive landlord's rules and even scams. So, even with the effort of documenting and creating a blog to allow access to the students and landlords about rules and rights, there is still a great number of students suffering from having a bad experience abroad related to their accommodation.

One of the interviewed employees stated "for me the main problem are the high market prices for rooms or entire properties. Now we have landlords renting through Airbnb making 4000€ per month, renting per day, in high season. In low season, some still make good money renting per day and the few who changes to monthly, already know there is a high demand with a low offer of rooms, so the prices are too expensive, there are students in Lisbon or Madrid paying 600€ for a room in a 6 bedroom apartment. Until we find a way to regulate the rent prices this is the way is going to go and the students are the ones paying for this".

Also, the Landlord's Portal is not used as much as it should. From the landlord's point of view, they just want to rent in their own terms, and they know they have the power over the tenants

because there is a high demand on their rooms and/or properties. Few landlords visit the portal, and this is also due to the lack of effort Uniplaces makes to get the landlords read it and learn from it.

For cooperation with different stakeholders, despite Uniplaces having partnerships with Universities with the purpose to help the students with the accommodation and provide them a discount, most of the time the discount is not easy to find or it was hidden behind a lot of text and a lot of students missed it and when they realized, it was too late (not possible to use it retroactively). This entitles a bad reputation for both Uniplaces and the University, but in all the cases that the Universities heard the students didn't get a discount, they forced Uniplaces to refund them, but since sometimes the students don't make the connection between their University and the platform, they didn't complaint in their academic institutions and didn't get their money back.

For the language and cultural barriers on the other side, Uniplaces used to have Spanish lessons in the summer of 2018 for students going to Madrid. However, none of the interviewees knew about this program and no one could corroborate if this happened or not.

- **Relevant bottlenecks**

The main bottleneck for the compliance of Uniplaces to the program is the lack of clear goals, as explained in the program description there are no short or medium goals, so in the absence of an instruction of program on how to slowly approach the ultimate end there is no harmony with the work to properly do good by implementing the program as a CSR initiative.

Thus, this translates on several other bottlenecks, like dissemination of information. For example the ambassadors' program aimed to create a brand awareness among the students, and to improve cooperation between the company and the students, is not working as it should as ambassadors have a monetary incentive to get bookings, so sometimes ambassadors apply aggressive techniques, like creating deceiving posts to attract students and make them feel that there aren't other options for accommodation.

Likewise, regarding quality information, the company has different levels of accommodation and landlord's verification. This part is really an issue with the students, because the logic behind the verification is not properly displayed, when you go to the room webpage you want book, there is not header or banner to point to you the landlord verification. And you even might rent from a non-verified landlord. What is even worse is the insecurity behind the "Verified" tag, because it might mean that the landlord just verifies an email and a phone number, and those verifications are done via automatic message. This means that Uniplaces, just know that the booking will arrive to an existing email and a phone number but can't not be sure that it is the person it says to be. Making the only closest to reality tags are the "Visited" and Exclusive ones. This is a bigger problem for the company, because landlords also tend to abuse as Uniplaces business model depends on time since there aren't many offer in the markets.

Also, for complaints regarding the quality of the accommodation, the company made an algorithm that identifies possible scammers within the platform. Scammers still exist in the platform and sometimes is too late to help the students, however, the algorithm helps just in

case the pictures have contact information on it, but there are hidden scammers with good photos and even with verified or visited verification tags.

It is the same with discrimination and racism, there is nothing Uniplaces can do except giving back the rent money to the tenant and put out of platform the conflictive landlord. But in most of these cases they will also keep the security deposit they collect on the first day of arrival.

Answers related to this were a bit extreme as some will say something in the lines of “We are just intermediaries and we are in a none position of power. So, stakeholders suffer from that, specially the students, they have more to lose than the landlords or our partners. For example, sometimes we have to deal with prejudice, racism and xenophobe and there is little we can do, the best thing we can do is take the landlord out of the platform, but the student already suffered discrimination and most of the times, they have lost money.”

For the financial burden that is studying abroad, the organization used to have Scholarship (the last one was given in 2017) This is a proof that Uniplaces did an effort to improve student's mobility not only from Europe but around the world, sadly this was the first and only year that the scholarship was given. The issue with this is, sadly the company took advantage of students applying for the scholarship in following years, as these students followed all the scholarship process without knowing it no longer existed, Uniplaces by the end of the process gave them discount to rent and informed them they didn't win.

One of the interviewees said on that “when I entered, I didn't know about this scholarship and I was getting submissions for it, but they (management) told me to just to say they didn't win and send a discount code their way”. This shows that the company drifted from their original

goal to help the students to a goal of making money and try to be profitable, one thing that they failed in the two following years after they gave the scholarship.

Regarding the limitations of short-term accommodation, it has the possibility of fixed-term contracts that encircles the universities studying periods. There is still an issue with short-term accommodations, there are offers in the platform with a regular price in certain months and exponential increase due to the vacations season or high demand of short term renting, this left out students that want to stay more than 4 or 5 months in this kind of rooms or properties. As some of the interviewees said, “this was on our sales pitch, we said rent for students in low season and then increase the rent and rent with Airbnb, this was the only way to attract this kind of landlords”.

Finally, is important to bear in mind that as in every company there are some internal problems within Uniplaces itself, this certainly affect the way they can help and comply with the Booklet due to change of management or simply change of processes. We can see this also reflected as 97% of the surveyed employees have at one point make a suggestion to Uniplaces directives.

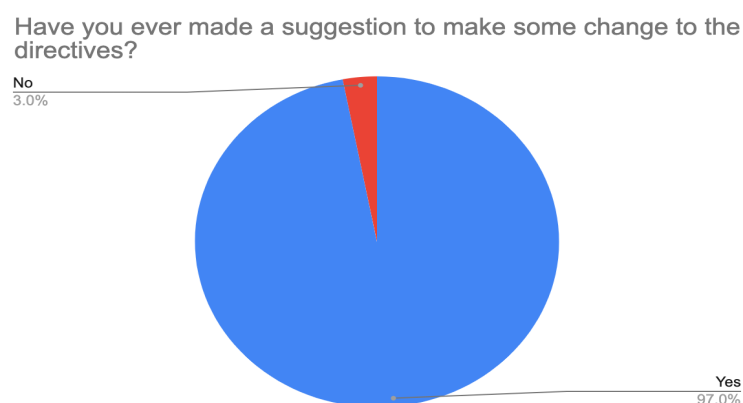


Figure 4 Have you ever made a suggestion to make some change to the directives?

- **Collaboration with other related programs**

The current Program in theory appeals for all stakeholders to work together to achieve the projects goal, however, there is no evidence of collaboration or knowledge of how these other actors comply with the program, so there are no modalities of articulation between the appliance of the recommendations, despite having as partner for example Housing Anywhere, a similar platform to Uniplaces.

Conclusions

This chapter proposes general conclusions based on the review and analysis carried out in the previous chapter, these conclusions were made considering both the strengths as well as the shortcomings found in the program itself and inside Uniplaces implementing the program as a CSR initiative.

First, we must bear in mind that the HousErasmus+ Program constitutes a major advance in the field, mainly due to their focus on giving access to quality places at reasonable price to students abroad. Additionally, the Program has clear beneficiaries, this allows for it to respond to the reality presented by students. Likewise, the approach to the problem is well addressed by the Program. This is a great advantage because if there's absence of clarity on what is sought to be solved, it would not be possible to design effective strategies to bring a state of satisfaction.

Within Uniplaces, this can be seen in the conducted interviews, as when the employees were asked about the significance of working in the company they exalted the possibility to help the student before, during and after he or she books a property. Also, the interviewees noted the platform can provide security to the students, assure a certain degree of quality for the offers, and a brand awareness that can reach a great number of students. One of the employees explained the following in this topic, "The students have a company behind them and since we have some properties verified, they know exactly how good or bad the property is, and in the case, they have a problem with the landlord they can always reach us to help them mediate".

Starting with the strengths discovered in the Program, one of them is the self-sufficiency that the partners, such as Uniplaces, have. It is important to bring this forward because that autonomy can positively encourage gratification and progress within the Organizations, due to be able to help with a sense of independence. Nonetheless, the degree of self-determination can be something to improve for the future, as the creation of tasks and the establishment of goals can incentive a directive to comply with the Booklet.

Among other strengths, it can be seen that the HousErasmus+ knows where it wants to go, as it has a clear goal, related to a need, to be satisfied. The above constitutes a great point in favor, since having a defined objective to reach, provides direction and also meaning to the Program, giving it the opportunity to learn and advance. Within Uniplaces, we can see that having a clear objective provides various benefits to the students, such as having Landlord's verification and trusted Landlords. Also, having the renting process done entirely online and having the first payment on hold to ensure the property is as presented. Also, it was possible to observe the commitment of the majority of the employees to try and help change the current system for students abroad. A strong conviction and acceptance of the Booklet's objectives and values is evident, and to that extent they provide every disposition to exert an effort to aid to a greater objective.

To continue with some of the inadequacies found, I would like to point the lack of short- and medium-term objectives. Indeed, both the Program and Uniplaces have a single general long-term objective, but it does not have tactical or operational objectives that allow us to trace the path to its last destination. Seen this way, it constitutes a weakness, since it is well known that

achieving a goal requires a process, so one should think about how to gradually achieve the objective.

Besides, it could also be seen a lack of prioritization criteria throughout the processes in Uniplaces, as even though the company is attempting to change the way the system of being abroad works, not having intermediate goals doesn't help focusing attention on the near future, in order to ensure greater impact and better use of resources. For example, for the issues listed by the interviewees, such as limited and expensive accommodations available, having a classified platform (meaning anyone can rent it doesn't matter if you are a student or not), and fake or no longer available properties still being offered in the platform. On this, one of the interviewed explained, "Yes, the acceptance rate was too low, as you know that means tons of requests have no answer from our landlords. So, know we need to clean our database from junk properties and scam ads. This way we can guarantee that the student at least gets an answer from the landlord, we can't guarantee a yes, but having a reply is better than waiting for 48 hours".

Another limitation found is the relationship between Uniplaces and the students. It is clear that Uniplaces has its own ways of naming and interpreting the problems that affect their prospective customers, as they also have lucrative purposes, which is why the interviewees emphasize their mistrust in some aspects of Uniplaces business model, for example, the time-consuming issue of waiting to be accepted by the landlord. Within Uniplaces this could be improved changing some current company conditions, as when employees were asked about it, mixed answers were obtained. Some said that Uniplaces is working hard to provide students the best experience possible, some said the company has drifted from its former vision, and some said the awareness of Uniplaces core values is dropping due to lack of understanding of

company decisions. In other words, the students value the quality of the interaction and communication during their booking process, and inside the organization some guidance is needed for effectively comply with this need. On this, one of the staff stated that they believe it happens as they “are a business, a startup, so making money and grow is all we care right now”.

At the same time, it was observed that within Uniplaces interaction with third parties was not optimal either. The interaction with Universities for example should be a two-way process that considers the joint and active participation of both sides. Currently though the company has the incorrect idea that just offering a discount to students of partner Universities will bring a relationship with the institution. Moreover, Uniplaces employees affirm that verification doesn’t translate into security, as it is not possible to identify the landlords with only their document, phone and email. So, regarding the interactions with Universities, there isn’t a state of mutual influence that allows establishing bonds of trust and true results, which is something the company needs to work on. According to the employees interviewed, Uniplaces goal of partnering with HousErasmus+ is to have a seal of approval from a recognized institution that shares the same core values as the company and spread awareness of the difficulties of the student mobility, however some answers pointed to it being only a marketing strategy.

I similarly noticed that despite the fact that Uniplaces existing processes are oriented towards the provision of its service, these are a bit complex and constitute a source of various failings. Therefore, the first step to follow should be to raise awareness of the current situation to correct the errors that threaten compliance with the Booklet. A diagram could be created in which all the existing processes that work in accordance with the Booklet can be seen in order, the resources that are used are established, and the restrictions that could be present. If this is done,

an efficient and effective information system could be developed to support the processes and provide adequate and essential information to the company and to the Program.

Additionally, there is not a full alignment of priorities between students and Uniplaces, since to promote the growth of the company it is necessary that Landlord interest are sometimes overvalued, so sometimes the interests aren't aligned with what students or the Program need. However, this proves to be a difficult task, which calls for a strategy to initiate reconciliation between Uniplaces and the Program, maybe this can be done initiating a plan of opening communication channels with the Program. To fulfil the booklet goals, Uniplaces needs a structure to comply with it, make an effort to spread awareness of the current limitations to find accommodation, have more rooms and/or entire properties available for rent and post new accommodations with clear and secure information

From another point of view, it was observed that the dissemination mechanisms towards the potential students were neither timely nor effective. It turned out another disadvantage for the Program due to the misinformation of the services, making the path to access easy accommodation a mystery. This additionally embodies in the student not receiving the quality they signed up for.

Finally, there weren't any established mechanisms to evaluate the efficiency and efficacy of the internal processes used to comply with Booklet. However, the company used internal and external metrics such as: NPS, CSAT, Trustpilot, SiteJabber, Portal da Queixa and Reviews in

Offers. With this metrics, the interviewees pointed some issues, as metrics can easily be biased and manipulated so they are often not valid nor representative, this translates in acting reactively to feedback, as changes done to the way Uniplaces worked were as a result of bad reviews and social media problematics, two examples to this are:

1. The creation of the “Landlord Success” team to clean the platform and only keep the best accommodations.
2. Adding GDPR to the way the company works, so no more cold calling to Landlords and also having a new interface of the website to make it more user friendly to avoid misinformation.

On this, an employee stated: “even though we receive useful information we are only reacting to the problems and to the market situation, but we are not acting preventively, we don't have any contingency plans for the risks there are. We have tons of information from our metrics and the public metrics and we just sit and watch them and we do something, sometimes is too late.”

To conclude, there are indeed various pros and cons on how Uniplaces is adopting the Program. Though, the company doesn't have a clear guidance on how to adopt the program, they are doing a solid start on trying to change the system as it is. Regarding, CSR, the activities performed by Uniplaces present profitability from a profit maximization perspective. In relation to the economic costs of the CSR, it can be stated that it can be reduced when governments start imparting social restrictions or externalities to control the accommodation for students. So, the company could be encouraged to improve its behavior as this could translate in benefits or rewards at a later stage being pioneers as partners of the program. Hence,

I'd like to give some recommendations for the future in the next and final chapter, so that maybe in the future we can see some advance in this field.

Recommendations

This final chapter aims to contribute with specific recommendations from the analysis performed, these were made in accordance with the questions that were sought to answer in the Evaluation. Consequently, it is intended that this text helps Uniplaces and the Program with organizational learning that builds feedback for the staff that implements the Booklet. Hopefully, by providing this information, knowledge is generated to achieve a better situation related to accommodation for mobility students.

Firstly, although Uniplaces is aware of the problem defined by the Program and directs efforts to act on it, I consider that the company should have specific purposes planned. So, having practices appropriate to Uniplaces, their budget and their employees, therefore having the company understanding and developing fully their role as a partner. Likewise, it is critical that Uniplaces creates short and medium-term objectives to achieve the ultimate goal for Booklet compliance. Despite the company's efforts to comply with the Booklet, employees can only help with the tools they have, but there isn't a formula or method that facilitates fulfilling the purposes outlined in the Program.

To support this proposal, I would also like to present the employees replies to the question: Do you consider Uniplaces should change the way it works? Astonishingly, it shows that 87% of the respondents replied yes to the query.

Do you consider Uniplaces should change the way it works?

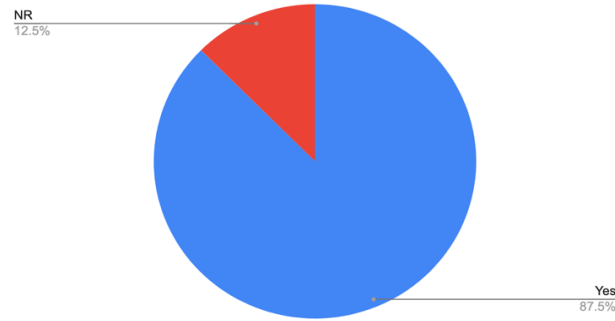


Figure 5 Do you consider Uniplaces should change the way it works?

It is clear that the majority of respondents do not find satisfaction in what could be called the *correct way of achieving the company's objectives*. Hence, since the vision of Uniplaces and its staff does not coincide, there is an urgent need to restructure current objectives, and create functional compliance guidelines in line with the Program and the company's business model.

Regarding the knowledge and dissemination of information, we know Uniplaces has tools such as the Blog or the Landlord's Portal. However, I believe it can be valid to also try to involve the student's family or the person who will pay for the booking process. This, to broadcast further the important information, because it can happen that the student doesn't understand everything at once. Perhaps if his/her family was also involved in the process it might somehow fill the void. Therefore, it would be useful if the existing Uniplaces' processes are more structured and if those can be confirmed with someone other than the student. The transmission of information to the student is essential and every attempt to streamline processes must be a priority to improve the provision of the service.

Additionally, Uniplaces should give some *power* to itself and its employees, so that when there's a lack of compliance with the Booklet, a public attention call is made to either the Landlord or the employee within the company. However, if the company doesn't wish to use public shaming, a congratulatory action and/or an incentive should be given to those who help with the fulfillment of the Program. However, for this to work, the company should explain to its staff the Booklet and its importance.

Although the Program's target population is adequate, effective help could be sought for the most vulnerable students. Uniplaces can help with the creation of mechanisms that provide support and satisfactory coverage for these students. It is valid to segment students to guarantee diversification. If such a proposal were to be adopted, joint work with the company's partners would be required.

Finally, I consider important and feasible that Uniplaces coordinates with the other HousErasmus+ Partners to learn from the experiences offered by others. However, by recognizing that coordination is not easy, a link could be established between organizations, such as having an advisory or discussion body with the sole purpose of enhancing benefit for students abroad.

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Appendix 1

Semi-structured interview model for Uniplaces Directives

1. Is Uniplaces work important for students looking for accommodation and for accommodation providers? Why?
2. What do you think are the current problems of accommodation for mobility students?
3. What are the different benefits both students and providers receive from Uniplaces?
4. What are the goals that management has in regard to being partners with HousErasmus+? (if they don't know what it is, I'll explain them as it isn't widely known within the Organization)
5. What are your functions within the company?
6. Do you consider the existing processes to follow the booklet recommendations serve to deliver the program goals?
7. Do you think there are the necessary institutional conditions for implementation of the program?
8. Do you think that the interaction of Uniplaces with the stakeholders (students, accommodation providers and partners) is adequate?
9. What are the tools used to review the operation of the HousErasmus+ program?
10. Do you consider that with the evaluation instruments used, you are creating relevant information to improve?
11. Have you ever made changes to the way you are operating using information received in the evaluations?

Appendix 2

Questions	Code	Types of answers	Categories
1. Is Uniplaces work important for students looking for accommodation and for accommodation providers? Why?	Importance	Accompany the student to find and book accommodation and during the whole stay.	Security
		Provide quality accommodation for the students	Quality
		Reach the most quantity of students possibly and generate brand Awareness	Visibility
2. What do you think are the current problems of accommodation for mobility students?	Necessity	There aren't in off quality accommodations available	Poor quality
		The accommodation prices are too high for students	Price
		We can't guarantee a good experience in all cases	Experience
		Providers often supply also to other target markets besides students	Segmentation
		Students and providers have higher expectations that sometimes can't be managed	Expectations
		Hgh quantity of unavailable accommodations	Unavailability
3. What are the different benefits both students and providers receive from Uniplaces?	Benefits	Sense of financial security for students and providers	Accountability
		Quick and remote service for students and providers	Online service
		Identity verification for providers (having students in their accommodations)	Identification
		Trusted Accomodation providers (levels of verification)	Verification
4. What are the goals that management has in regards to being partners with HousErasmus+? (if they don't know what it is, I'll explain them as it isn't widely known within the Organization)	Goals	having a seal of approval from a recognized institution	Legitimacy
		Marketing (brand exposure)	Publicity
		They share our core values to improve the existing issues for accomodation of mobility students	Values
5. What are your functions within the company?	-	Doesn't apply as it clashes with the interviews anonymity	-
6. Do you consider the existing processes to follow the booklet recommendations serve to deliver the program goals?	Structure	Awareness of the current limitations to acquire accomodation	Awareness
		Helping with insufficient housing	Availability
		Providing quality information	Information
7. Do you think there are the necessary institutional conditions for implementation of the program?	Company Conditions	No, because our CEO vision is to focusing on all segments a not only in students	Targets
		Yes, we are working hard to provide the best renting experience to the students	Effort
		Yes and no, there is room for improvement in our current process, we need to improve our communication and reach more awareness of the needs of the students	Communication
		We used to, at the beginnng of the company there was a clear vision that the student was the center of our bussiness, but the company drifted to alternate directions	Profitability
8. Do you think that the interaction of Uniplaces with the stakeholders (students, accommodation providers and partners) is adequate?	Interactions	(Students) Verification doesn't translate in security	Assumptions
		(Accomodations Providers) Is not possible to manage the providers expectations. Preexisting Prejudices and low demand	Prejudices
		(Patners) It is not vere clear what it means a partner also there isn't a lot difussion and communication to the student about the partnerships	Ambiguity
9. What are the tools used to review the operation of the HousErasmus+ program?	Evaluation	There aren't any established mechanisms to evaluate the efficenc and efficacy of the internal processes used to comply with booklet, however we have internal and	-
10. Do you consider that with the evaluation instruments used, you are creating relevant information to improve?	Information	Yes, we have really good overall response and metrics show us that. Those are honest opnions of our users	Sufficient information
		No, because the metrics are sometimes biased and easy to manipulate. Also becasue the tools listed aren't made to evaluate program	Insufficient information
		Theoretically, because even though we receive useful information we are only reacting to it and not acting preventively	Average information
11. Have you ever made changes to the way you are operating using information received in the evaluations?	Changes	We made some changes to improve the acceptance rate.	Availability
		Creation of a new team (Landlord success) that clean our offers	Structure
		We stop doing cold calling due to GDPR	GDPR
		We changed the interface of the page to be more user firendly and display more information	Access

Appendix 3

Electronic anonymous Survey to 32 Uniplaces employees shared via Slack (having asked beforehand to the people interviewed to not answer it)

Uniplaces

Form description

What is the Uniplaces vision for you? *

Long answer text

Do you know what is the HousErasmus+ Program? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ NR

Do you know how Uniplaces is trying to improve the situation for mobile students? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ NR

If yes, list a few

Long answer text

What is your opinion/take on the Uniplaces blog? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Poor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Very good

What is your opinion/take on the Uniplaces Landlord's Portal?

*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Poor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Very Good

What is your opinion/take on the Uniplaces Partnerships?

*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Poor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Very Good

What is your opinion/take on the Uniplaces Ambassadors?

*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Poor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Very Good

What is your opinion/take on CET performance?

*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Poor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Very Good

What is your opinion/take on Key Account and Landlord Success performance?

*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Poor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Very Good

What is your opinion/take on Exclusive properties utility?

*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Poor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Very Good

Do you think your work is helping improve accommodation for mobile students?

*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ NR

If you replied no, what do you think should change?

Long answer text

Do you consider Uniplaces should change the way it works?

*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ NR

...

If yes, can you give an example

Short answer text

Have you ever made a suggestion to make some change to the directives?

*

☐ Yes

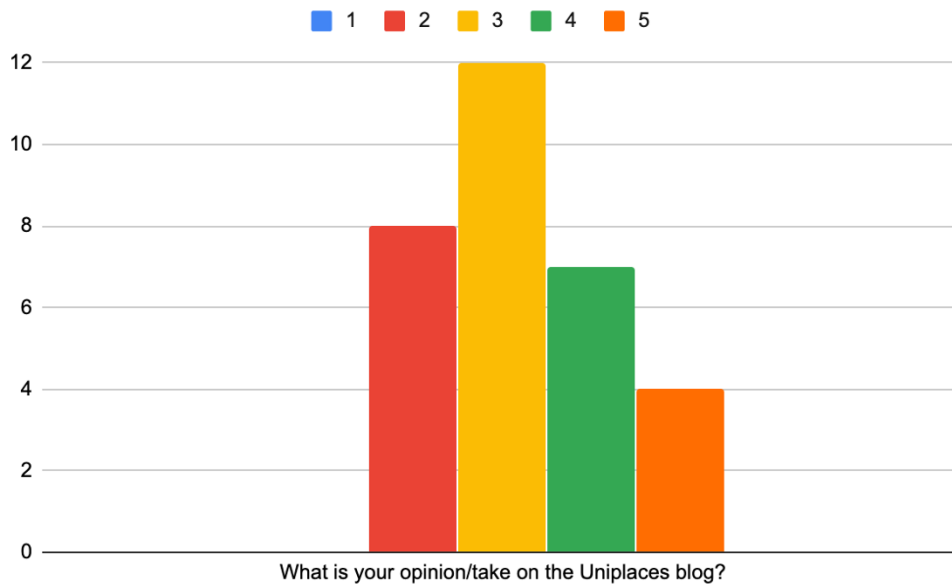
☐ No

☐ NR

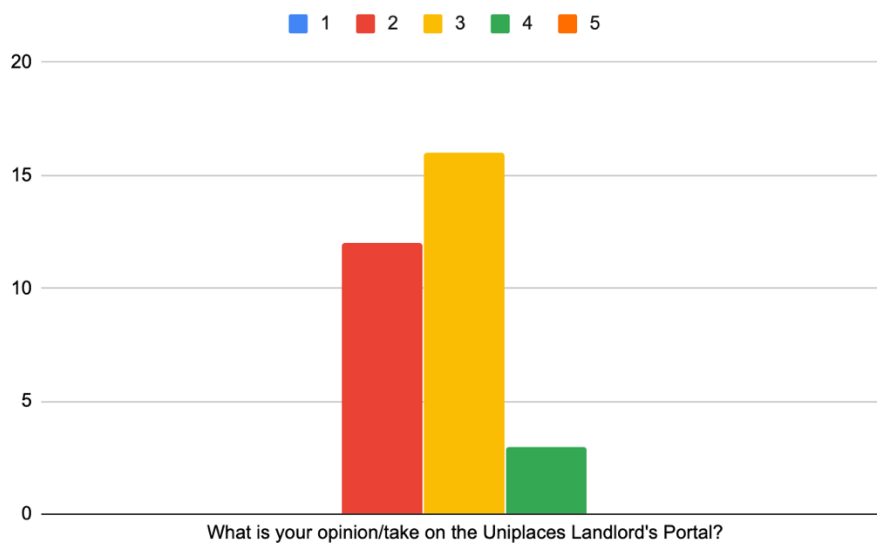
Appendix 4

The following graphs shows the Uniplaces employees' opinion on the different Uniplaces processes that respond to the HousEramus+ recommendations:

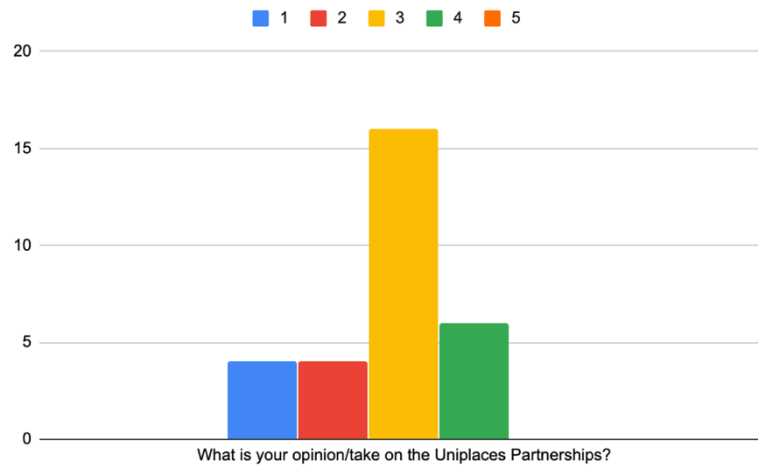
Uniplaces Blog:



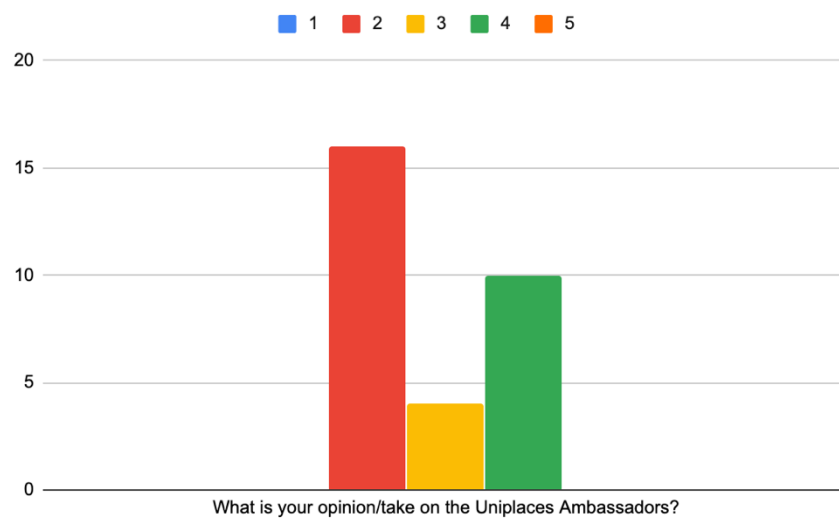
Landlord's Portal



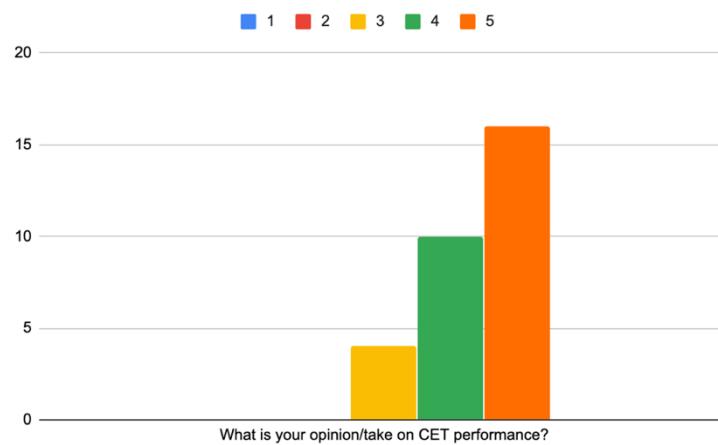
Partnerships



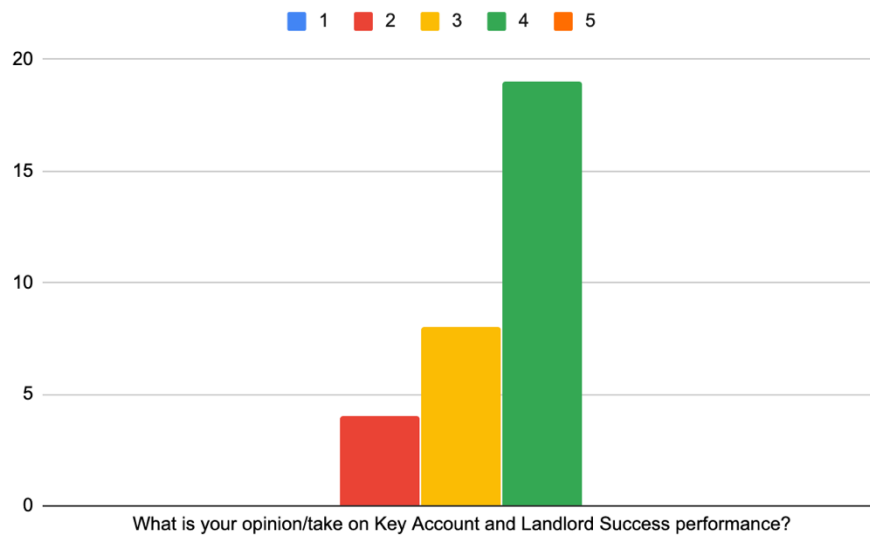
Ambassadors



CET (Customer Success Experience)



Key account and Landlord Success



Exclusive Properties

