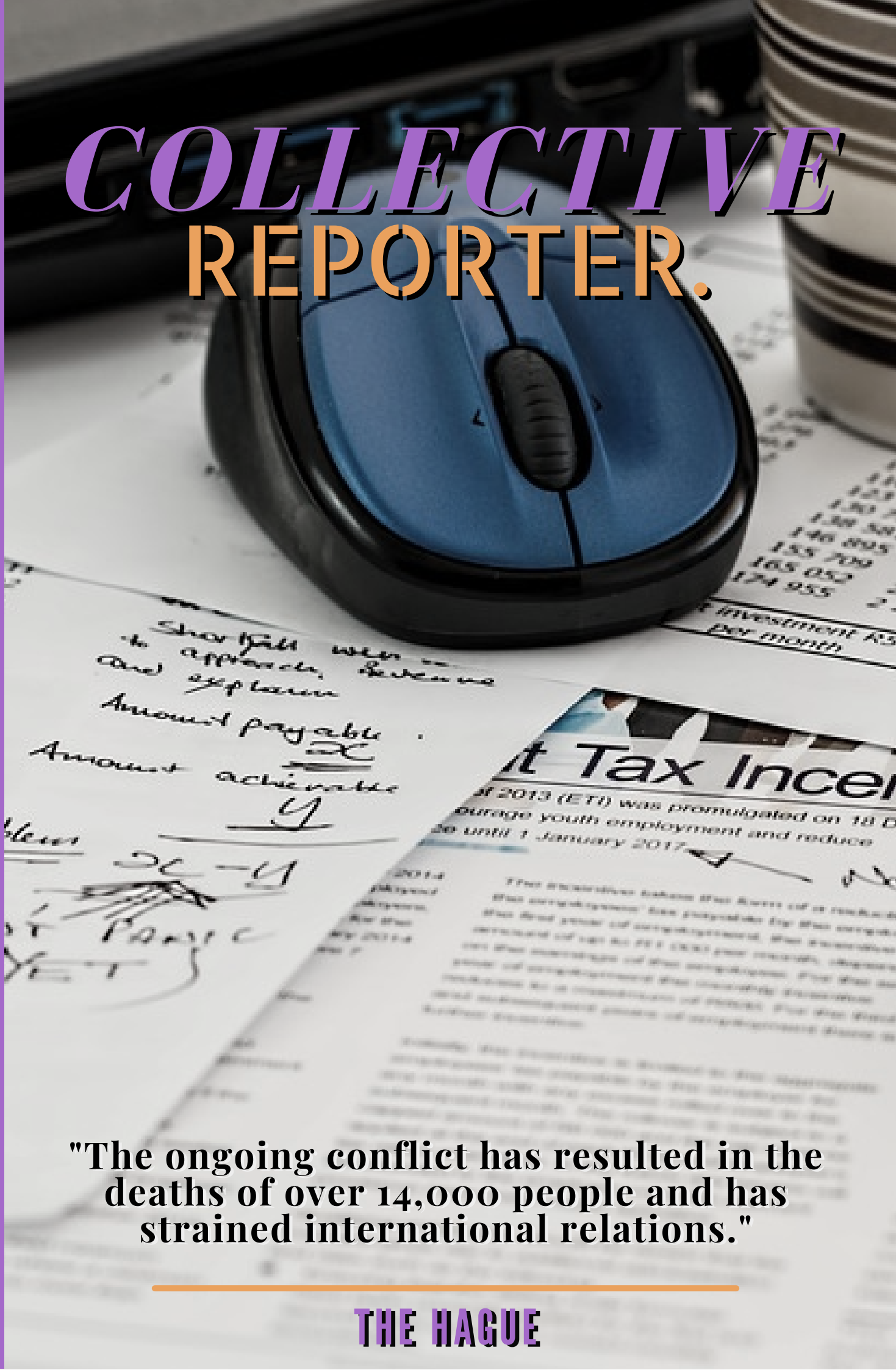


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"The ongoing conflict has resulted in the deaths of over 14,000 people and has strained international relations."



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CONTENTS

Page 3

Editors' Notes

Page 4

Article

Is The Exchange The Best Period Of
Your Life?

by Ju Laclau Massaglia

Page 7

Article

The Domino Effect of Putin's Power

By Amina Kosovac

Page 9

Our Team

Editors Note

Overload. It's a word I have been using a lot lately. Not in the dramatic sense of the word, unfortunately. More and more areas of life seem to be hitting an overload. Too much information, too many deadlines, too many obligations, too much stress, and too little reward. The world we live in is no different. Every day, newspapers and channels all over the world report the latest news to us at a speed that was unthinkable a few decades back. Our brains take in more impulses and process more information than they can actually handle to not experience this 'overload'.

What makes many news items less enjoyable to read is that they are often so neutral or biased that there's little genuine feeling behind the words. That is where the Collective Reporter tries to make a difference. The stories we tell are written from a journalistic standpoint however, they almost always contain topics close to the writer's heart or those around them. This edition is no different.

The last edition of this academic year covers the experience and impact of going on exchange abroad and provides an insightful update on the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. A short but strong read is what we offer you in this final edition.

Wishing you an insightful read.

Nandi van Vliet

It's been quite a year so far. Amidst moments of calm and struggle, hellos and goodbyes, truth and uncertainty, we try to maintain momentum to reach some fateful finish line: the next school year, the plans after graduation, the rest of our lives, etc. And yet, between the hustle and bustle of living, some of us find time to observe, research, and report. The reporter—caught in the whirlwind of world events that impact our individual lives—cannot help but bear witness to the news that have shaped us this year.

This issue, Collective Reporter tackles a few of these world events, bearing witness to their impact on us, individually and societally. From the individual struggles of students here at THUAS, to the struggles faced by many abroad, we hope this issue sheds light on a few of the smaller and bigger challenges impacting us all. With accuracy and sincerity, Collective Reporter continues to aim for an honest and heartfelt take on the truth.

As we look ahead to the next issue (the next school year, the next plans, etc.), let's take some time to similarly observe and bear witness to these events. Let's look for the ways they impact us abroad, and at home. And let's take their significance with us, as we face the future struggles.

It's been quite a year so far. Let's continue to stay observant for the rest of it.

Gary Izquier

Is The Exchange The Best Period Of Your Life?

by Ju Laclau Massaglia

During the course of a graduate or postgraduate program, many universities offer the opportunity for their students to do one or more abroad. Regardless of what the home university and the receiving country are, there are some strong expectations when it comes to going on exchange. Many students hope to find love, as shown by the Erasmus Impact study, carried out between 2014 and 2018 by the European Commission on 88,000 participants, that found that 27% of young people leave their exchange in a new long-term romantic relationship.



Others are looking to broaden their employability, since young people are often expected to take on every opportunity to make their CV pop out from the pile of other applicants in the recruiter's inbox. Androulla Vassiliou, former European commissioner for education, culture, multilingualism and youth, has said it herself: "If you study or train abroad, you are more likely to increase your job prospects." Additionally, the Erasmus Impact study has shown that 10% of Erasmus students find their first job in the country where they conducted their

exchange, instead of their home country or the country where their home university is located. Additionally, 67% of the students that have gone on exchange have felt more confident and interested in relocating to a new country in the future after their exchange experience, according to the Social Inclusion & Engagement in Mobility study, conducted by the Erasmus Student Network in 2021.

With all of these strongly positive message and high expectations, it is not surprising that the Erasmus+ Program, the newer version of the European Union's Erasmus Program started in 2014, had almost 649,000 participants in 2021. Counting with almost double the budget of its predecessor -around €26.2 billion between 2021 and 2027-, and offering students help with mobilities linked to "higher education, vocational education and training, school education (including early childhood education and care), adult education, youth and sport", the program is said to place a "strong focus on social inclusion, the green and digital transitions, and promoting young people's participation in democratic life". However, how inclusive is really the exchange arena in present-day Europe?

Their main method of achieving this goal is to implement measures - such as a Framework on Inclusion and an Inclusion and Diversity Strategy - that set up strategies to deal with potential barriers that can hinder student's participation in the program. These can range from "physical, mental, intellectual and sensory impairments" and health problems to cultural, social and economic challenges. To help solve these issues, the program includes different mechanisms such as the Erasmus+ Study grant, which is meant to help them afford travel and subsistence costs in their receiving country.

However, it is only available for people that will follow an exchange program in a country included in the Erasmus+ Program. These are only the European Economic Area, Turkey and the Republic of Macedonia. Students going to other countries appear to be left to their own devices or to any form of financial aid or scholarship program offered by their home country or home university.

The amount of money provided is also very limited and it might not allow people from less privileged backgrounds or that cannot rely on their parents' financial support to afford the exchange. Additionally, people from a country with lower salaries might have a hard time affording the most expensive options within the selected group of countries. "There is a huge gap between Member States that threatens to divide the EU and the rest and we have to reduce this gap," stated Tibor Navracsics, former Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport.

Still, the Social Inclusion & Engagement in Mobility study found that 43% of students coming from low income backgrounds are worried about their finances and might decline the exchange out of fear of losing the job with which they support themselves. Especially since the aforementioned grant covers at best 75% of the student's basic needs during the exchange, which don't include the additional costs linked to the

Erasmus experience, such as the payment of trips or social events organised by the host university or the ESN.

"With all of these strongly positive messages and high expectations, it is not surprising that the Erasmus+ Program, the newer version of the European Union's Erasmus Program started in 2014, had almost 649,000 participants in 2021."

Upon interviewing over 13,600 exchange students, it was estimated by the study that in 64% of the cases the Erasmus+ Study grant covers around 30% of the overall costs of the exchange. All the remaining expenses are left to be covered by the student or their family, which for 75% of the students from low income backgrounds was a major barrier for them going on exchange. This financial challenge is made worse by the fact that only a part of the money will be given to the student before their exchange and the remaining portion will only be made available to them after the exchange is completed. This means that during the exchange, the student will have to initially count with the funds by themselves and then be reimbursed by the Erasmus+ Study grant.

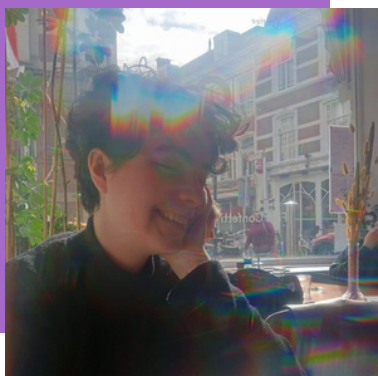
Aside from the financial challenges, 24% of the students reported experiencing discrimination based on their nationality, race, ethnicity or gender. Students from low-income households and belonging to ethnic minority groups, have a higher rate of being the target of such behaviours, either in the hands of other students, citizens or even their host university. Additionally, differentiation based on nationality can also be found early on in the Erasmus+ experience, since many students that don't have EU citizenship are faced with additional paperwork and requirements that might discourage students from participating in the Erasmus experience altogether.



On top of that and the paperwork related to the academic aspect of the exchange, students are also faced with requirements related to visas and mobility among countries. After interviewing a student that went through this situation but prefers to remain anonymous, it was clear that her struggle was more linked to the lack of information or the false data given to her by her home university and government, than with the paperwork itself. Not only did she get wrong information that endangered her possibility to keep her visa, but also she had to face extremely high and unnecessary travel costs that could have been prevented, had she received the information early on when she requested it. Other articles have

"No one understands the struggles young people face during their exchange better than themselves."

been published on this topic previously, however the situation has not changed. One of them, published in the magazine of the University of Karlovy, depicts students' testimony of their own problems. "As I am just a student and only have a limited amount of money, it was really difficult for me to pay such a high amount of money for transportation again. I still cannot figure out why it is so hard to get a visa for a student." said Nilüfer Deniz Baş back in 2012. Similarly, during the interview, the student told me she had to buy a plane ticket for the two days later,



Ju is a second-year Communication student with a big passion for books and writing. She is a work in progress that is continuously trying to be a verb instead of a noun.

"It is time for the Erasmus+ program to listen to the students' struggles and formulate a plan together with the partner universities and governments to prevent these things from happening to future students."

which meant extremely high costs that can be added to the cost of the Erasmus experience on top of all the aforementioned ones.

Considering all of this, should students still choose to participate in exchange experiences? The Social Inclusion & Engagement in Mobility study found that 67% of the respondents had a higher interest in continuing to study or working abroad in the future and 45% stated that their academic performance improved after their exchange as a result of their mobility. This study, as others created by international organisations, have given several points of advice to improve the program and allow more students to reap the benefits of a study period abroad. One of them that keeps being mentioned by research papers and students is to work together with the students. No one understands the struggles young people face during their exchange better than themselves. It is time for the Erasmus+ program to listen to the students' struggles and formulate a plan together with the partner universities and governments to prevent these things from happening to future students. Clearly there is still room for improvement in order for all students to have equal access to the benefits and information related to going on exchange.

The Domino Effect of Putin's Power

By Amina Kosovac

Over a year ago Russian forces invaded Ukraine that left 13 million either as refugees abroad or displaced in their own country. Vladimir Putin described the invasion as a "special military operation" with an aim to "demilitarize and denazify" Ukraine. Putin has for years denied Ukraine's statehood and proclaimed Russians and Ukrainians as one people. During the start of the war and now, Russia has attacked Ukraine repeatedly with no end in sight.

Last year, former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev predicted that Europeans would be "freezing in their homes" because of their support of Ukraine. At the start of winter, there were fears of energy shortages caused by the disruptions to Russian pipeline supplies. Putin made efforts to make Europe "freeze" by cutting its gas supply. Many were afraid of the consequences that could arise from Putin's plans to blackmail Europe over gas.

"Last year, former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev predicted that Europeans would be "freezing in their homes" because of their support of Ukraine"

Different European countries were on high alert during the summer and preparing themselves for a thought winter without Russian gas supplies. A Brussels-based energy expert said

that she was worried at some point that European governments would respond to this crisis by prioritizing their own energy supplies and stop sharing with their neighbors. This could have had negative consequences both politically and economically.



Luckily, the winter proved to be milder than anticipated. Europe managed to protect its market and survive without Russian gas supplies. Putin's blackmail efforts backfired and the demand for gas in the European Union was 12% lower than in 2019 – 2021.

However, despite the relatively mild winter, the threat of Russian aggression against Ukraine and Europe remains. The ongoing conflict has resulted in the deaths of over 14,000 people and has strained international relations. The annexation of Crimea by Russia remains a point of contention, and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine continues to escalate.



"The ongoing conflict has resulted in the deaths of over 14,000 people and has strained international relations."

Moreover, the European Union is working towards reducing its dependence on Russian gas, as such dependence has been a source of vulnerability and political pressure. The EU is exploring alternative energy sources, such as renewable energy and liquefied natural gas imports from the United States and other countries. The bloc is also investing in energy efficiency measures and developing regional energy markets to improve energy security.

In conclusion, while Europe managed to weather the gas supply crisis, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine remains a volatile and ongoing issue. The EU is taking steps towards reducing its dependence on Russian gas and improving energy security, but the geopolitical situation in the region remains complex and fraught with tensions.



Amina is from Norway. She's an ICM student, and loves to read. She has studied Political Sciences before, which sparked her interest in writing about politics for the Collective Reporter.

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RUMBIDZAI MUDZONGO

WHO, WHAT, WHERE

Finding The Student Service You Are Searching For

Talk to....

MENTOR OR SLB'ER

Questions about your program or the curriculum?
Or are you struggling in planning?

Talk to....

FACULTY OFFICE

Questions about your schedule, signing up for an exam, grades, or Osiris

FACULTY

Talk to....

SOMEONE YOU TRUST

Are you dealing with inappropriate behaviour at THUAS?

Talk to....

OMBUDSMAN

Do you need assistance in going into objections and appeals?

Talk to....

STUDY & CAREER CENTRE

Are you having doubts about your study choice?

STUDENT SERVICE

Go to the...

LEGAL PROTECTION FACILITIES

Do you have a complaint?
Do you disagree with a decision made by THUAS?

Talk to....

DEAN

Do you have:

- A study delay? or concerns about money?
- Need special facilities due to your circumstances?
- Questions about college regulations, financial or legal?
- Want to get in touch with a student psychologist?

Talk to....

STUDENT NET TRAINING

Are you looking for a training in the area of personal effectivity?

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Amount payable 5

Amount achievable 4

20-4

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Investment R5414
per month

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of 2013 (ETI) was promulgated on 18 December
during youth employment and reduce
to until 1 January 2017

NOTE

The incentive takes the form of a reduction in the corporation tax payable by the employer for the first year of employment, the incentive is set at a maximum of 10% of the monthly contribution to the pension of the employer. For the second year of employment the incentive is reduced to a maximum of 5%. For the third and subsequent years of employment there is no incentive.

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