Door-opener into the labour market: Empirical results of international studies on temporary student mobility

A short report of the VALERA Project

Séminaire Relations Internationales Quelles stratégies pour une internationalisation des Universités?

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The VALERA Project

OFFICIAL TITLE: External Evaluation of the Impact of ERASMUS Mobility and Students’ Access to Employment and Career Development, and Teachers’ Career Development and on Two Areas of Study to be Specified

SHORT: ValERA (The Professional VALue of ERAsmus Mobility)


COVERAGE: 30 European countries (23 languages)

2 PROJECT PHASES: quantitative general vs. qualitative field-specific

Outcome-oriented ERASMUS evaluations

ERASMUS 1988/89 Students Three Years and Five Years Later
- 1,339 and 1,234 former ERASMUS students from 12 countries

ERASMUS 1994/95 Graduates Five Years Later as Compared to Other Mobile and Non-mobile Graduates
- 407 former ERASMUS students graduating in 1994/95 as compared to more than 1,000 other mobile students and more than 10,000 non-mobile students

ERASMUS 2000/01 Students Five Years Later
- More than 4,500 former ERASMUS students from 25 countries
- Oliver Bracht, Constanze Engel, Kerstin Janson, Harald Schomburg and Ulrich Teichler. The Professional Value of ERASMUS Mobility

ERASMUS Student Mobility

1. Do mobile graduates have higher competences upon graduation?

2. Do they have an easier transition to work?

3. Are they more successful in their career?

Competences of mobile students upon graduation (comments)
- Personality
- Maturity
- Cultural awareness
- Self-confidence
- Teamwork
- Problem-solving ability
- Getting along
- Openness

Competences at time of graduation (graduate view, in percent)

Competences upon graduation in comparison (graduate view, in percent)

Rating of competences: Students vs. Employer (in percent)

Comparison of mobile and non-mobile Graduates by Employers (in percent)
1. Do mobile graduates have higher competences upon graduation?

2. Do they have an easier transition to work?

3. Are mobile graduates more successful in their career?
ERASMUS-Related Work Task of Former ERASMUS Students (% of employed graduates)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998/99</th>
<th>1999/00</th>
<th>2000/01</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using the language of the host country orally</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the language of the host country in reading and writing</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using firsthand professional knowledge of host country</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using first hand knowledge of host country culture/society</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional travel to host country</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Year of graduation

International Dimensions of Employment and Work

- more than half each considered study abroad and foreign language proficiency as important recruitment criteria
- more than half each work in an internationally active organisation and view knowledge and understanding of other cultures, societies and languages as important for their work
- almost 20 percent worked abroad and more than 10 percent were sent abroad

⇒ far more frequently reported by former ERASMUS students than by formerly non-mobile students.
⇒ But: international dimensions of employment and work declined somewhat in recent years

Selected Problems During Study Period Abroad (%)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial matters</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative matters</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Obtaining credit/credit transfer</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different teaching/learning methods</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers meeting/helping students</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking courses in foreign language</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too high academic level</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R = Retrospective view of graduates

Recognition of ERASMUS-Supported Study (%)

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Recognition</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-prolongation</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R = Retrospective view of graduates

Differences by field of study

- Often substantial differences by field of study:
  - Prolongation: prolongation most often reported from law (55%) and humanities (44%), least often from Business (27%) and Medicine (23%); average 33%
  - Job search: longest search humanities, geotechnical sciences (5.2 months), languages (4.8 months); shortest search medicine (2.4), architecture (2.8), mathematics, education (3.1); average: 3.8
  - Type of contract: Permanent contracts in engineering and business sciences 51%, social sciences 30%, architecture 21%; average: 36%
  - Experiences abroad as recruitment criteria: business (63%), languages (62%), medicine (32%); average: 53%

Feedbacks of ERASMUS graduates from France

- Very mobile during course of study
- High international scope of work tasks

Characteristics of study abroad period:

- Duration of study abroad: ERASMUS graduates of France: 7.4 months, average 6.8 months
- Additional periods abroad: France 54%, average 40%
- Recognition of credits upon return below average: 57% France, 73% average
- But: prolongation of study because of study abroad: Clearly better than average; 22% France, 33% average
- Level of courses abroad: 25% more demanding (21% average)
# Feedbacks of ERASMUS graduates from France

## Competences upon graduation as compared to non-mobile students:
- “International competences” (e.g., intercultural understanding, foreign language proficiency): very high, 95 to 96% state “very high competences”
- Academic knowledge and skills: 46% France, 53% average
- Preparation for future employment: 44% France, 65% average

## Characteristics of employment:
- Percentage of work time with international context: 37% graduates from France, 31% average
- Percentage of graduates who worked abroad: 30% graduates from France, 18% average
- Relevance of international competences for current work: above average in most aspects
- ERASMUS related work tasks: (language of host country, knowledge about host country, travel to host country or other countries): in all aspects clearly above average

## Rating of impact of study abroad period:
- Obtaining first job: 62% France, 54% average
- Type of work tasks: 41% France, 39% average
- Income level: 18% France, 16% average
- Long term career prospects: 49% France, 53% average

## Evaluation of study abroad period:
- Enhancement of academic/professional knowledge
- Job relevance
- Income
- Career prospects
- New perspectives, new ways of thinking
- Maturity and personal development

→ In most aspects above average

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## Summarizing Results: Former ERASMUS students...
- believe to have higher academic knowledge and skills and to be better prepared for employment and work
- note often a positive effect of ERASMUS in obtaining a first job, some a positive effect on the types of work tasks and on average no positive impact on income level
- report more often about international work tasks and an international working environment
- are in a somewhat better position than non-mobile students regarding the links between education and work assignments and in general employment situation

→ Educational and socio-biographic selectivity of ERASMUS students (positive self-selection)
→ Other international experiences of ERASMUS students
SUMMARY

- Very positive subjective ratings of the professional outcomes of mobility
- More work task relevance than status relevance
- Study abroad as „door-opener“
- Work and research in an international context
- Differences by country and field of study (strong differences between Western and Eastern & Central European countries)

⇒ Comparison with former studies shows study abroad is gradually losing its uniqueness – being mobile becomes „normal“

Summary: Suggestions from the workshops (practitioners, employers, students)

- Facilitating integration into course of study (recognition...)
- Flexible but consistent institutional support (different fields of study)
- Improved co-operation between HEI (e.g. staff mobility, learning agreements)
- Transparency and necessary information before the study abroad period (guidance, counselling)
- Selection of host HEI for specialisation
- Systematisation of recognition procedures (departmental instead of individual recognition)
- Consistent application of ECTS
- Fostering contacts to local students (currently about 50% on average!)

Questions?

FOR FURTHER READING:

Thank you very much!