

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF STUDENT ERASMUS+ TRAINEESHIPS OF PRAGUE UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

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Abstract

The author aims to provide a basic analysis in the form of a comprehensive overview, map indicators, motivational factors, and benefits of traineeships of the Prague University of Economics and Business (hereafter referred to as VŠE) students who completed traineeships in 2014-2019 and were financially supported by the Erasmus+ programme. Among the student's obligations to provide this financial support is their final report from the mobility, completed in the Mobility Tool of the European Commission. As the author has access to this database and the final reports as part of her work at VŠE, it is this database of completed questionnaires that provides an overview of students' motivation for traineeships abroad and their contribution in terms of personal and professional.

Keywords: mobility, tertiary education, traineeship, Erasmus, motivation, skill

Introduction

“An employee's earning potential is a direct function of his or her skills, capabilities, and experience - and international experience is one of the most effective ways for people to increase their value.”¹

In Bologna in 1999, the education ministers of 29 countries agreed on a common vision for the European Higher Education Area. They found this vision to be politically relevant for their own countries and translated it into the operational goals listed in the Bologna Declaration.² Erasmus + supports the Bologna Process, the aim being that by 2020 at least 20% of graduates will spend a period of study or training abroad (Mazilescu et al., 2016).

The traditional benefits of studying abroad include improving language skills, learning a different style of knowledge transfer and learning, engaging a future employer, expanding contacts, learning about a new culture and worldview, building and strengthening self-confidence, and last but not least, job opportunities abroad. However, what is the specific motivation of tertiary³ students for mobility during their study?

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- 1 Deloitte Development LLC (2010). Smart moves A new approach to international assignments and global mobility [on-line]. [Accessed: 2 March 2022]. Available at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/Tax/us-tax-talent-smartmoves-062410.pdf>
 - 2 European Higher Education Area and Bologna Process. History [on-line]. [Accessed: 2 March 2022]. Available at: <http://ehea.info/pid34248/history.html>
 - 3 „Higher“ education students and „tertiary“ students have the same meaning for the purpose of this article and are used interchangeably. They refer to formal post-secondary education that leads to an academic degree.

With the relatively easy access to the foreign labour market and potential international mobility within the employers' locations of branches abroad or the possibility of international engagement (so-called expatriate), Sarkiunaite and Rocke (2015) identified success factors for foreign engagement of employees. They concluded that successful foreign engagement is most influenced by employees' personal strengths, their professional, social and adaptive abilities, international experience, and the favourable situation of their families. Subsequently, Sarkiunaite and Rocke (2015, p. 23) defined the selection criteria according to which candidates for foreign engagements should be assessed:

- interpersonal, language, and work-oriented skills,
- cultural empathy and awareness of the host country,
- the ability to adapt to the new environment, culture, and working conditions,
- personal motivation to work and live abroad,
- previous foreign experience and other personal qualities.

International mobility within higher education (also thanks to social and intercultural experience) undoubtedly leads to the acquisition and deepening of the student's knowledge, skills, and competencies, which are subsequently valued by the labour market. One of the main goals of the current direction of universities is their internationalisation, which includes international student mobility. For international mobility to be possible for students from different socio-economic backgrounds, it also means that it is financially supported.

This article focuses primarily on short-term university mobility in the form of traineeships and especially on Erasmus+ student mobility at the Prague University of Economics and Business (hereafter referred to as VŠE). The **main goal** of the article is to provide a basic analysis in the form of a comprehensive overview, map indicators, motivational factors and benefits of traineeships of VŠE students who completed traineeships in 2014-2019 and were financially supported by the Erasmus+ programme. The years 2014-2019 are chosen because students' final reports are available for this period in the Mobility Tool application. The **partial goal** is to improve the awareness of what motivational factors lead students to go abroad for a traineeship and get an idea of the students' intentions for their future careers.

In accordance with the aim of the article, the research question is "*What gains and skills are reported by the students after their traineeship mobility?*".

The article is divided into four chapters. The first chapter focuses on theoretical knowledge of international mobility in tertiary education, while the second chapter is dedicated to Erasmus+ traineeships. The third chapter is analytical and deals with VŠE students' motivation for Erasmus+ traineeship mobility. The fourth chapter presents an analysis of the benefits of Erasmus+ traineeship mobility from the student's point of view.

Although there are final reports of the beneficiary of each Erasmus+ project, a detailed analysis of student mobility for traineeships has not yet been elaborated. The available empirical data will be subjected to fundamental qualitative analysis. The acquired knowledge will serve for a closer overview of Erasmus+ traineeships and thus contribute to the development of international relations at VŠE. They can also be used by academic programmes that consider implementing student mobility for traineeships.

1. International mobility in tertiary education

International student mobility (OECD, 2022) represents the number of foreign tertiary students as a proportion of the total number of tertiary students in the (host) country. International students are those who have previous education in another country and are not residents of the country where they are currently studying. In the Czech Republic, this share was 14.4% in 2019.⁴ The so-called outbound mobility ratio indicator, i.e. students/residents of the Czech Republic who go to another country for tertiary education, was 3.7% in 2019 (UNESCO UIS, 2022).

The mobility of university students has been an important phenomenon and has played a significant role in higher education in Europe and the world over the last decades. The Czech Republic joined the upward trend in international mobility in tertiary education later. For example, the Erasmus programme has been operating in the Czech Republic since the academic year 1998-1999 (DZS, 2017). The number of university students who participate in international mobility is growing every year at a slight pace. Kahanec and Kralikova (2011) identify some key determinants of international student mobility within the tertiary education strategy. Their research shows that, in particular, the quality of university institutions and the availability of English programmes are essential tools to attract international students. The increase in international student mobility is undoubtedly one of the impacts of globalisation. According to Levent (2016), one of the most important indicators of internationalisation of higher education is the mobility of students, i.e. students who travel abroad for educational purposes.

From the very beginning, the mobility or relocation of people in higher education has constantly been expanding and changing, despite the limitations of the COVID-19 era. The free movement of persons within the European Union also goes hand in hand with the right of an EU citizen to study, learn, prepare for a future profession and carry out research in the EU. In the field of tertiary education in the European Union, the mobility of university students is one of the key initiatives. “The main goal of VŠE (Strategic Plan of VŠE) is to create favourable conditions for increasing the share of graduates with foreign experience, which is increasingly becoming a requirement of employers.”⁵ And to support internationalisation, financial support for student traineeships and study abroad is offered.⁶ Erasmus+ funds are used for student traineeship mobility within the European Union. The Faculty of International Relations supports mobility outside the EU from its scholarship fund. Based on a new call from the National Agency of the Czech Republic, VŠE can use Erasmus+ finance to support unpaid traineeships outside the EU from 2022 to a certain amount allocated to the budget, which is an interesting opportunity, especially from the faculty’s point of view.

4 OECD (2022). International student mobility (indicator). [on-line]. [Accessed: 2 March 2022]. doi: 10.1787 / 4bcf6fc3-en

5 VŠE v Praze (2022). *Strategie internacionalizace*. [on-line]. [Accessed: 12 January 2022]. Available at: <https://strategie.vse.cz/rozvoj-a-strategie/dlouhodoby-strategicky-zamer/strategicky-zamer-vse-pro-roky-2021-2025/strategie-internacionalizace/>

6 Fakulta mezinárodních vztahů VŠE v Praze. [on-line]. [Accessed: 2 March 2022]. Available at: <https://fmv.vse.cz/aktuality/vetsina-stipendijnihofondu-fmv-bude-vyuzita-na-podporu-internacionalizace/>

For the purposes of this article, we will look at tertiary education mobility from the following perspectives. Let's consider the mobility of university (tertiary level) students. It can be divided into short-term or temporary mobility and long-term mobility to obtain a university degree. Within the short-term mobility of university students, study abroad, traineeships, research stays and summer schools can be set aside. From the point of view of the Erasmus+ programme, mobility is divided into Erasmus+ student mobility for studies, Erasmus+ student mobility for traineeships, and Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility (ICM).

2. Erasmus+ traineeships

Studying and working abroad brings valuable academic and cultural benefits, increasing the employability of future graduates by investing this experience in their capital. The impact of Erasmus-type programmes is multifaceted, with some studies showing in the foreground the increase in relational potential, the increase in professional skills and the openness to interdisciplinarity (Mazilescu et al., 2016).

The first initiative to establish a European Higher Education Area was launched in 1987. The European Union's flagship education programme was the Erasmus programme (since 2014 under the name Erasmus+). The new Erasmus+ programming period began in 2021 and will last until 2027. Erasmus+ will have a record budget of over € 26.2 billion in these seven years, which is 11 billion more than in the previous budget period (DZS, 2021). The programme's priorities respond to current global challenges and focus on (European Commission, no date):

- Inclusion and diversity
- Digital transformation
- Environment and the fight against climate change
- Involvement in democratic life / Civic engagement

The general objective of the Erasmus programme is to support, through lifelong learning, the educational, professional and personal development of people in education, training, youth and sport in Europe and beyond. By contributing to sustainable growth, quality jobs and social cohesion, fostering innovation and strengthening European identity and active citizenship (European Commission, no date). Promoting mobility remains one of the main objectives of the Erasmus+ programme, which enables international trips and cooperation. It brings innovation to education and supports the general development of skills in participants (improvement in foreign languages; appreciation of foreign experience with the future employer; knowledge of local culture and customs; gaining self-confidence and determination; personal satisfaction). It provides Czech organisations with irreplaceable expertise from abroad and helps them to establish valuable international cooperation (DZS, no date). One of the tools that allow (in addition to an overview of student trips abroad) feedback on the fulfilment of the set goals of the Erasmus+ programme is the Mobility Tool application.

The Mobility Tool + is a web-based tool for collaborating, managing and reporting on mobility projects under the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) and the European Commission's

Erasmus+ programme.⁷ As soon as a student receives Erasmus+ financial support for their study or traineeship within the EU, one of the conditions is to fill in the final report of the stay in the Mobility Tool database. This is then made available to users of the database, including the author of this article, in strict compliance with the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) Act.

The users of the Mobility Tool database are:⁸

- Grant recipients (primary users of the tool responsible for entering detailed information on projects, mobility/participants, budget and creating reports), i.e. also designated staff of VŠE;
- National Agencies (users checking and monitoring project data);
- European Commission - Directorate-General for Education and Culture (system owner and central tool administrator).

Study abroad and traineeships for university students can be supported by EU financial support. One of the conditions is that the traineeship is recognised in the study, similar to a study abroad. As part of Erasmus+ financial support, the student concludes a so-called participation agreement with the home institution, based on which they receive a scholarship. Among the student's obligations to provide this financial support is their final report from the mobility, completed in the Mobility Tool of the European Commission. As the author has access to this database and the final reports as part of her work at VŠE, it is this database of completed questionnaires that provides an overview of students' motivation for traineeships abroad and their contribution in terms of personal and professional.

An overview of the international traineeship motivation and analysis of the acquired experience of tertiary students will serve as a basis for further research into labour market requirements or the analysis of competencies and skills that future employers seek. Therefore it is tertiary education where students should be equipped with such skillset. Given that we have been an EU Member State since 2004, it is understandable that international mobility (freedom of movement) is perceived somewhat automatically by the current generation of students. Experience gained outside the comfort/home zone is undoubtedly reflected in the skills acquired, which are the basis for promoting lifelong learning and adapting to the ever-changing labour market. Studying abroad engages and affects participants' worldview, personal development, and cultural interests and influences decision-making (Mohajeri, 2009).

7 Easy Erasmus+. *What is Mobility Tool? How to use Mobility Tool with Erasmus+ KA2-KA1*. [on-line]. [Accessed: 2 March 2022]. Available at: <http://www.easyerasmus.com/what-is-mobility-tool-how-to-use-mobility-tool-with-erasmus-ka2-ka1/>

8 DZS. *Dům zahraniční spolupráce. Erasmus+. Příručka pro uživatele Databáze mobility (Mobility Tool)*. (2014). [on-line]. Available at: https://www.naerasmusplus.cz/file/1062/priruckadatabazemobility_eraplus-pdf/

3. Student motivation for Erasmus+ traineeship mobility

Data from the final reports in Mobility Tool, which are subjected to elementary statistical analysis, are from 2014 to 2019 and the beginning of 2021, respectively. The research, therefore, includes completed traineeships of students in the first half of 2021, since VŠE “concerning the development in the Czech Republic and for activities in 2019/2020, it used the possibility of extending the project period by one year and use the financial resources within the activities in the following academic year 2021/2022.”⁹

With regard to the nature of the data in the analysed set, i.e. quantitative and qualitative statistical features, it is possible to perform the following basic processing of statistical data. Excel, functions, graphs and statistical analysis of data available from this programme are used for a clear overview of the results. On behalf of VŠE, 283 final reports (completed questionnaires) on traineeships are available in the Mobility Tool (or until the beginning of 2021) for 2014-2019.

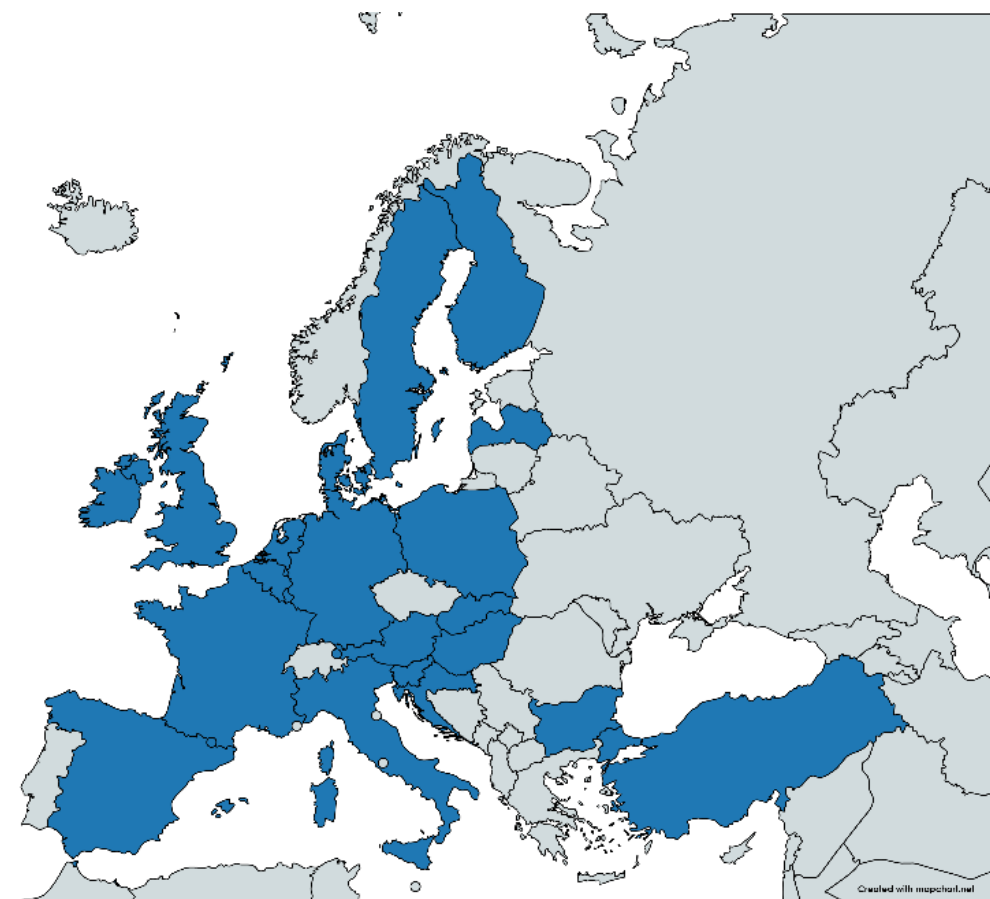
The final reports from the traineeships in the Mobility Tool application are compiled in a questionnaire with a combination of closed and open questions. The so-called Likert scale is used for some answers, which measures different degrees of attitudes and opinions. The questionnaire, or the final report in Mobility Tool, is divided into the following main parts:

1. Purpose of the Participant Report
2. Identification of the Participant and General Information
3. Overall Satisfaction
4. Quality of the Traineeship
5. Academic Recognition of the Traineeship
6. Foreign Language Skills and Linguistic Support
7. Personal Development
8. Future Prospects of Education, Training and Work
9. Practical and Organisational Arrangements
10. Accommodation and Infrastructure
11. Costs
12. Conclusions, Comments and Recommendations
13. Publication and Usage Rights of the Information and of the Email Address

The number of VŠE students on Erasmus+ mobility for a traineeship in 2014-2021 by country can be shown on the following map and graph.

9 *Fakulta mezinárodních vztahů VŠE v Praze*. [on-line]. [Accessed: 2 March 2022]. Available at: <https://fmv.vse.cz/praxe-a-staze/zakladni-informace-a-postup/>

Figure 1: Map of countries visited by VŠE students on Erasmus+ mobility for a traineeship in 2014-2021



Source: own map based on MapChart

Table 1 - The number of VŠE students on Erasmus+ mobility for a traineeship in 2014-2021 by country

Country	Number of traineeship mobility	Percentage
AN	1	0%
AT	19	7%
BE	12	4%
BG	5	2%
DE	74	26%
DK	4	1%
ES	24	8%
FI	2	1%
FR	24	8%
HR	1	0%
HU	9	3%
IE	8	3%
IT	9	3%
IF	9	3%
LU	4	1%
LV	1	0%
NL	12	4%
PL	5	2%
SE	8	3%
SI	3	1%
SK	1	0%
TR	2	1%
UK	46	16%
Total	283	100%

Source: own table based on European Commission. Mobility Tool. EU Login

Between 2014 and 2021, the most popular destinations for traineeships of university students were Germany (26%), the United Kingdom (16%), Spain (8%), France (8%) and Austria (7%).

To the question: “What was your main motivation for the traineeship abroad?”, 283 students of VŠE in the Mobility Tool answered in the form of the following multiple answers, which are sorted by frequency:

Table 2 - What were your main motivations for training abroad?

What were your main motivations for training abroad?	frequency of response
To enhance my future employability abroad	197
To do a traineeship in a foreign language	179
To build up a personal and professional network	178
To enhance my future employability in my home country	174
To develop soft skills, such as adaptability, problem solving, curiosity, etc.	155
To live abroad and to meet new people	148
To experience different learning contents / practices	143
To learn / improve a foreign language	127
To gain knowledge of another country	112

Source: own table based on European Commission. Mobility Tool. EU Login

From the above answers, it is clear that the biggest motivation to spend a traineeship abroad is their future employment in the labour market and the associated skills. The most common main motivating factor is “To enhance my future employability abroad”, followed by motivation to practice in a foreign language, build a personal and professional network, and increase employability in the home country. Students were least motivated to learn about another country and learn/improve a foreign language. Among the additional motivating factors, students often mentioned the quality of the host enterprise/organisation and the opportunity to obtain financial support.

Table 3 - What were your additional motivational factors for training abroad?

What were your additional motivational factors for training abroad?	frequency of response
The quality of the receiving enterprise / organisation	183
The possibility to receive an Erasmus+ grant	182
A good alignment of the traineeship abroad with the curriculum at the sending institution	127
The length of the traineeship period was appropriate	123
Available support in finding accommodation	14
Other	10

Source: own table based on European Commission. Mobility Tool. EU Login

With regard to additional motivational factors, it is an interesting fact that the financial support for the traineeship placed second. When asked whether students would think about a traineeship abroad without financial support (Would you have gone on the Erasmus+ stay abroad if you had not received an Erasmus+ grant?), only 30% answered positively. 39% of students responded that if they did not receive an Erasmus+ grant, they would not choose a traineeship abroad. And 31% of students said they would “maybe” carry out a traineeship without financial support).

Most students then had to self-finance the traineeship; as can be seen from the overview, what percentage of the expenses associated with working abroad were covered by the provided Erasmus+ financial support.

Table 4 - To what extent did the Erasmus+ grant (EU funds only) cover your overall expenses related to your mobility period?

To what extent did the Erasmus+ grant (EU funds only) cover your overall expenses related to your mobility period?	number of answers	percentages
0- 25%	30	11%
26- 50%	106	37%
51- 75%	117	41%
76- 100%	30	11%
Total students	283	100%

Source: own table based on European Commission. Mobility Tool. EU Login

4. The benefits of Erasmus+ traineeship mobility from the student's point of view

Regarding the benefits of traineeship mobility from the student's point of view, an overview is obtained with the help of Part 4 of the final Mobility Tool reports, “Quality of the Traineeship”. Students assessed the prescribed questions as important to the relevant selection criteria (What were the criteria for you to choose your receiving enterprise/organisation?). Subsequently, the students answered what they had learned during their work stay abroad (“I learned to...”). A five-point scale was prescribed for the identified criteria.

The traineeship offer was a very important criterion for choosing an Erasmus+ traineeship, followed by the reputation of the enterprise/organisation, which was an important criterion and the language option of the traineeship. Feedback from previous participants in the traineeship and cooperation between the home university and the enterprise/organisation was not decisive for about one-fifth of the participants (23% and 19% of responses). Feedback from previous participants was generally rated as less important. The same was true for social life.

Table 5 - What were the criteria for you to choose your receiving enterprise/organisation?

Criteria	Total answers	Very Important (%)	Most important (%)	Important (%)	Less important (%)	Not important (%)	No opinion (%)	Total (%)
Collaboration between my university and enterprises / organisations	102	16%	3%	35%	11%	19%	17%	100%
Traineeship offer	283	15%	40%	36%	2%	1%	5%	100%
Reputation	283	11%	29%	43%	6%	1%	10%	100%
Facilities	283	4%	5%	34%	28%	5%	25%	100%
Feedback from the Erasmus+ alumni	283	2%	5%	20%	19%	23%	30%	100%
Language	283	12%	31%	41%	6%	3%	7%	100%
Country	283	13%	29%	39%	10%	3%	5%	100%
City and culture	283	11%	23%	35%	14%	5%	11%	100%
Social life	283	6%	9%	39%	22%	10%	15%	100%
Other	135	5%	4%	11%	4%	20%	56%	100%

Source: own table based on European Commission. Mobility Tool. EU Login

Part 7 of the Mobility Tool concerns personal development, and students commented on what they had learned better from (improved after) their Erasmus+ stay abroad. The questions and scale answers are presented in the following table.

Table 6 - Through my stay abroad with Erasmus+, I learned better how to...

Student	Total	Strongly agree (%)	Rather agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Rather disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Total
think logically and draw conclusions (analytical skills)	280	40%	45%	11%	4%	1%	100%
find solutions in difficult or challenging contexts (problem-solving skills)	282	53%	39%	4%	4%	0%	100%
plan and carry out my learning independently	280	42%	40%	12%	5%	1%	100%
use the internet, social media and PCs, eg for my studies, work and personal activities	273	30%	31%	26%	9%	4%	100%
use digital skills such as designing, developing, programming and / or managing IT systems, software, apps and websites	92	20%	31%	20%	20%	10%	100%
develop an idea and put it into practice	180	36%	41%	15%	7%	1%	100%
see the value of different cultures	283	46%	38%	12%	4%	0%	100%
cooperate in teams	280	47%	39%	9%	5%	1%	100%
plan and organise tasks and activities	283	52%	37%	7%	4%	0%	100%
express myself creatively	277	35%	39%	15%	8%	2%	100%

Source: own table based on European Commission. Mobility Tool. EU Login

Less than a third of participants tend to disagree and strongly disagree that they would improve their use of digital skills (29%). However, what more than half of the participants who answered “strongly agree” agreed is that they learned to find solutions in difficult or challenging contexts (problem-solving skills (53%), and they learned to plan and organise tasks and activities (52%). Almost 90% of students said that they strongly agreed and rather agreed with their benefits through participation in the traineeship.

As part of their personal development, the students further evaluated what the traineeship had brought them in their opinion. An overview of the answers and the percentage of trainees is given in the table below. Here, the questions concerned an area that the Erasmus+ programme sets as some of its goals. They were namely contributing to social cohesion, promoting innovation, strengthening European identity, and active citizenship.

Table 7 - After having taken part in this mobility activity...

	Total	Strongly agree (%)	Rather agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Rather disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Total
I am more confident and convinced of my abilities	283	50%	41%	7%	2%	0%	100%
I know better my strengths and weaknesses	283	48%	40%	9%	2%	0%	100%
I am more able to adapt to and act in new situations	283	53%	41%	6%	0%	0%	100%
I am more able to think and analyze information critically	283	40%	43%	15%	2%	0%	100%
I am more tolerant towards other persons' values and behavior	283	41%	38%	18%	4%	0%	100%
I am more open-minded and curious about new challenges	283	49%	36%	13%	2%	0%	100%
I intend to participate more actively in the social and political life of my community	283	24%	29%	33%	12%	2%	100%
I am more inter-ested in knowing what happens in the world daily	283	28%	38%	24%	8%	1%	100%
I am more able to reach decisions	283	31%	41%	22%	6%	1%	100%
I am more able to cooperate with people from other back-grounds and cultures	283	45%	37%	14%	2%	1%	100%
I am more interested in European topics	283	30%	36%	24%	8%	2%	100%
I feel more European	283	30%	28%	31%	7%	3%	100%
I am more aware of social and political concepts like democracy, justice, equality, citizenship, civil rights	283	22%	35%	29%	10%	3%	100%
I have increased my sector- or field-specific skills	283	46%	42%	10%	2%	0%	100%

Source: own table based on European Commission. Mobility Tool. EU Login

As can be seen, the traineeship helped students conclude that they were able to adapt and act in new situations. At the same time, the traineeship boosted the self-confidence of 90% of the respondents and convinced them of their own abilities. According to a study (Mazilescu et al., 2016), the contribution of Erasmus mobility in self-confidence (its increase) was acknowledged by 69.6% of respondents. This share is even higher for VŠE students. Therefore, this aspect shows that a traineeship abroad makes a significant contribution to self-esteem. Experience has significantly contributed to the development of awareness of personal value. Furthermore, students agreed (approximately 80%) that they are more aware of their strengths and weaknesses, have increased their knowledge in the field, and are more open and ready for new challenges. Only about half of the interns (53%) intend to be more actively involved in their community's social and political life.

Part 8 of the Mobility Tool deals with how students perceive their future labour market prospects after the traineeship.

Table 8 – Perception of students' future labour market prospects after the traineeship

	Total	Strongly agree (%)	Rather agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Rather disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Total
I believe that my chances to get a new or better job have increased	283	64%	32%	4%	0%	0%	100%
I have a clearer idea about my professional career aspirations and goals	283	45%	39%	13%	3%	0%	100%
I have better opportunities for traineeships or student jobs in my home country	283	48%	37%	13%	1%	0%	100%
I am better able of taking over work tasks with high responsibility after my stay abroad	283	48%	37%	13%	1%	0%	100%
I can easily imagine working abroad at some point in the future	283	66%	25%	6%	2%	0%	100%
I can easily imagine working in the country where I did my Erasmus+ period in the future	283	55%	28%	12%	4%	2%	100%
I would like to work in an international context	283	73%	20%	6%	1%	0%	100%

Source: own table based on European Commission. Mobility Tool. EU Login

73% of students surveyed strongly agree that they would like to work in an international context, and at the same time, 66% of trainees strongly agree that they can imagine working abroad in the future. This fact is also promising for graduates who have done a traineeship abroad as a signal to future employers. Companies that send their employees abroad cite foreign experience as one of the factors to be a successful “expat”. 96% of students believe that their stay abroad has increased their chances of getting a new or better job. The vast majority of students have clarified their future career prospects.

Conclusion

It is important to mention that the main goal of this article was intended to clarify the results of the final reports of traineeships in the Mobility Tool from students’ perspectives, especially the personal benefits and perceptions of their future employability. The article did not aim to provide in-depth analysis and relation with the requirements of enterprises/organisations set on their prospective employees. In this aspect, there remains room for further research.

International university traineeships contribute to the student’s socio-economic skills, increasing their competitiveness in the labour market and prospects for any other international mobility, and, through the development of communication and other acquired skills, to the cognitive benefits of international mobility. Any direct knowledge of a different cultural environment and situations allows students to broaden their outlook on their future employment. Students will test their knowledge and specify their motivation for subsequent entry into the labour market or their career focus. Motivation also leads the student, a potential future intern abroad, to search for new stimuli and challenges and expand their horizons and knowledge.

An evaluation study (Deloitte Development LLC, 2010) confirmed the finding of previous surveys that former Erasmus students view the study period abroad as leading to international mobility, international competencies and visibly international work tasks while hardly promising career enhancement as compared to formerly non-mobile students. However, other actors and observers surveyed more often believe that Erasmus contributes to general career enhancement.

With regards to the research question of the article (*“What gains and skills are reported by the students after their traineeship mobility?”*), the final reports in the Mobility Tool of VŠE students on traineeships in 2014-2021 show that 90% of students strongly agree and rather agree to gain resilience, initiative, and independence through participation in traineeships. It is also clear from the answers in the Mobility Tool application that students who took part in international labour mobility in 2014-2021 are particularly aware of its contribution to employability in the labour market. Therefore, they are aware that a potential future employer values a graduate with foreign work experience and that such expertise facilitates graduates’ access to the labour market outside their home country.

Successful international student mobility depends on the appropriate project management of the sending institution, i.e., information, preparation, mobility support, and evaluation, which can be used to make changes that reflect the constantly evolving work environment and its connection to tertiary institutions. For successful entry into the labour market, the goal should be to promote resilience, initiative, and independence as key skills of the graduate. With regards to VŠE, close and continuous cooperation with the employers is recommended

to ensure that the traineeship mobility remains a necessary skill-builder and reflects the requirements of the labour market.

In an ever-evolving world that is unpredictable (remember the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted but did not discontinue international student mobility for traineeships), it is optimistic that students have strengthened their adaptability and coping capacity through their stay abroad. Adaptability to new challenges is a valued skill that employers prefer for job candidates. It can be said that a traineeship abroad contributes significantly to the acquisition of this skill. The experience is an investment in the student's personal and human capital.

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