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Die Auswirkungen der Erasmus-Mobilität auf die berufliche Entwicklung : empirische Ergebnisse internationaler Studien über temporäre Mobilität von Studierenden und Lehrenden

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The impact of Erasmus mobility on the professional career: Empirical results of international studies on temporary student and teaching staff mobility

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Introduction

- 1 The Erasmus programme was introduced as the EUs' *flagship education and training programme* and on the occasion of its 20th anniversary in 2007, Erasmus was celebrated as an important motor for European integration for which the *Erasmus generation* is named as synonym. Erasmus certainly is seen as a European success story. The figures easily support this view: While just more than 3,000 students had the possibility to spend a study period abroad in one of eleven participating countries in the first Erasmus year in 1987/88, nowadays, the overall majority of universities in Europe participates in Erasmus forming co-operations among the universities that enable far more than 150,000 students to study abroad in one of 33 participating countries (cf. Erasmus statistics of the European Commission). This development illustrates how substantially the Erasmus programme contributed to making study abroad an exclusive experience no longer restricted to a minority, but one from which more and more students across Europe are able to profit.

- 2 The Erasmus programme was always expected to serve ambitious aims: to help students to become internationally competent and well-prepared for job requirements in a closely interrelated European economy. It is expected that this international experience has a positive impact on the personal development of the students and in particular on intercultural understanding and foreign language proficiency, but also on their academic development. Finally, the Erasmus experience is seen as beneficial for students to find their first job after graduation and for their early career. Reports² on the Erasmus experience by students often tell about an outstanding experience having a long-lasting impact on their lives and making them discover a new European identity. A Portuguese student who spent an Erasmus stay in Sweden is cited: "When I finished my Erasmus programme I felt not only Portuguese; but a bit Swedish (after spending one of my 22 years in Sweden)... a little bit Italian as well, and Spanish, German, French and so on ..." (European Commission, 2007). Since 1997, also university teachers have the possibility to teach abroad in the framework of Erasmus. The teachers, who in contrast to the students in most cases already have a vast international experience when they leave for an Erasmus stay, similarly tell about their teaching period abroad as being a valuable experience that has opened new perspectives.
- 3 The anecdotal evidence supports the success of Erasmus, but the benefits of the Erasmus programme were also analysed systematically by various evaluation studies at local and European level. The impact of Erasmus on the students' employment and early career has been the focus of three evaluation studies. The most recent is the VALERA study in which 4,600 former Erasmus students from the academic year 2000/01 were surveyed in 2005, that is about five years after their participation in the Erasmus programme (Bracht *et al.*, 2006). Selected results of this study regarding the characteristics of the study abroad period, the impact on graduates' competences and on their transition to work and early career will be presented and discussed in the article. As the VALERA survey also asked employers and university leaders on their view of Erasmus graduates, the results of the student survey will be related to the assessment of employers and university leaders.
- 4 Study abroad is no longer an elite experience as it was when the Erasmus programme was inaugurated. At the same time, international work tasks have become more and more important. For this reason, it will be interesting to compare the results of the VALERA student survey to results of previous evaluation studies: Erasmus students of the academic year 1988/89 were surveyed upon return, and also three years and five years later (Maiworm and Teichler, 1996). Jahr and Teichler surveyed graduates of 1994/95 about four years after graduation. This study allows comparison of the early careers of non-mobile graduates and mobile graduates having been mobile within the framework of Erasmus or with other measures (Jahr and Teichler, 2002). Furthermore, Maiworm and Teichler surveyed Erasmus students of 1998/99 some months after return (Maiworm and Teichler, 2002).
- 5 Since 1997, university teachers have had the possibility to go abroad for a teaching assignment within the framework of the Erasmus programme. Nearly 8,000 teachers took this opportunity in the first year. The number of outgoing teachers has been rising constantly since then to more than 28,000 Erasmus teachers in 2008/09. The primary focus of teaching staff mobility is not the promotion of the teachers' professional career, but to foster the learning conditions of mobile as well as non-mobile students at both home and host institution, even though this Erasmus experience might also have

an influence on the teachers' competences and on their individual career. The article will illustrate selected results of the VALERA study, which examines the professional impact of Erasmus teaching staff mobility in the views of mobile teachers and university leaders.

- 6 Through the different surveys within the framework of the VALERA study, a considerable variation of results between the different countries can be observed. The most remarkable differences, however, can consistently be found between the feedback from respondents of Western European countries and Eastern European countries³. Wherever applicable, these variations will be highlighted.

The VALERA study – Study design, and modes of inquiry

- 7 The VALERA study was realised in two phases. The first phase included five surveys: An initial expert survey, which was followed by a survey of former Erasmus students, a survey of former Erasmus teachers, a survey of university leaders and an employers' survey.
- 8 The target group of the *experts' survey* were representatives from the National Socrates Agencies, ministries of education, conference of rectors/presidents/vice chancellors, umbrella organisations of employment agencies, and individual companies. It was designed to provide in-depth views on Erasmus student mobility that could be compared to the results of the subsequent surveys. Furthermore, the results served as input for the questionnaire development of the subsequent surveys.
- 9 The survey of former *Erasmus students* was the major survey of the VALERA study. It aimed to gather information on the professional value of an Erasmus study period and to learn about study abroad conditions which might be conducive to a high professional impact. The survey was directed to Erasmus students of 2000/01, so that it could be expected that most of the participants had already graduated and gained first professional experience.
- 10 The *employer survey* was intended to provide first-hand information on recruitment criteria, competences, career prospects and work tasks of former Erasmus students. Furthermore, the results of the employer survey could be compared to the feedback of the students themselves and to the responses of the university leaders.
- 11 The *survey of former Erasmus teachers* formed the second major survey. It was directed to all Erasmus teachers of 2000/01 to ensure a similar context of the period abroad as for the surveyed students and to allow for some time in between to analyse the impact on the teachers' careers.
- 12 The *survey of university leaders*, like the expert survey and the employer survey, was meant to provide a basis for triangulation of survey results. The university leaders were asked to provide information regarding both student and staff mobility supported by Erasmus.
- 13 The second phase was based on four *study field-specific seminars* in which experts and actors discussed the survey results with regard to provisions and conditions of the Erasmus period that might be conducive to the professional impact. Participants were Erasmus students and teachers as well as representatives of academic and professional

organisations and employers representing various countries. Chemistry, Mechanical Engineering, Sociology and Business Studies were selected as study fields to include the major disciplinary areas as well as both academic and professionally oriented study fields.

- 14 During the *field phase*, the research team was confronted with difficulties to motivate the higher education institutions involved in Erasmus to support the study more than in previous studies. At the same time, response rates actually stayed lower than in subsequent Erasmus evaluations. The feedback of many contacted persons, however, suggested that these difficulties occurred first, due to a general heavy workload of persons involved in the administration of Erasmus as well as a certain evaluation overload, and second, the offered online questionnaires seemed to not yet have the same acceptance as paper questionnaires. By and large, though, the respondents can be considered to be representative for the target groups.

Table 1. Overview on the VALERA surveys.

Kind of survey	Field phase	Sampling	Number of filled questionnaires	Response rate
Expert Survey	March 2005 - May 2005	No sampling; selection of experts.	67	43%
Student Survey	September 2005 -February 2006	ERASMUS students of 2000/01; Two stage sampling: first institutions (511) and then students (N=20,500) stratified by country.	4,589	45%
Employer Survey	February 2006 -April/May 2006	- The questionnaire was sent to about 1,500 addresses provided by former ERASMUS students. - 4,500 addresses were sampled from an address database of employers in Europe. The stratified sampling took into account country, economic sector and size of the organisation.	312	6%
Teacher Survey	October 2005 - February 2006	Teachers who have been supported in the framework of ERASMUS in the academic year 2000/2001 (N=13,988).	755	24%
University Leader Survey	September 2005 - February 2006	All university leaders of institutions which had outgoing ERASMUS students in 2000/2001.	626	44%
Study-field specific seminars	Four seminars between March and May 2006	No sampling; selection of participants.	Qualitative data	

Erasmus student mobility

Retrospective view of the study period abroad

- 15 Overall, the former Erasmus students assess their study period abroad positively. They rarely report academic problems during their study period abroad. Only five per cent of the surveyed students report that the academic level of the courses was too high, nine per cent name problems following the courses in a foreign language, 15 per cent report problems with the support of teachers. Problems with administrative or organisational matters such as accommodation (24%) or financial matters (22%) are reported much more often. The support of the home institution, however, is seen somewhat controversially. Only about 50 per cent report that they have been satisfied with the assistance provided by their home institution.
- 16 Furthermore, the integration at the host institution and contact with domestic students could still be better. Not more than half of the Erasmus students report that they had frequent contact with local students during study related activities or leisure time. Considering that a major aim of a study abroad period should be to deepen the knowledge and understanding of the host culture, efforts to foster interaction between Erasmus and local students could be improved.
- 17 The former Erasmus students surveyed in the VALERA study report that about 73 per cent of the study achievements they undertook during their stay abroad have been recognised by their home institution. 58 per cent report that the study period abroad did not prolong the duration of their whole course of studies. A comparison with earlier evaluation studies shows that the proportion of recognition and non-prolongation stayed more or less the same over the years with a slightly better situation in the late nineties (cf. Maiworm and Teichler (1997); Maiworm and Teichler (2002); Jahr and Teichler (2002); University of Kassel, VALERA survey of former Erasmus students 2005).

The impact of Erasmus mobility on students' competences

- 18 The former Erasmus students assess their competences upon graduation very positively. Not surprisingly, this is especially true regarding competences which could be attributed directly to the study abroad period such as adaptability or foreign language proficiency. But they also rate their study field related knowledge and skills in a very positive way. Asked to compare their competences upon graduation to the competences of non-mobile graduates, they rate themselves substantially better as far as international competences like knowledge of other countries, foreign language proficiency or intercultural understanding are concerned. More than 90 per cent report to have better abilities in these regards. But they also feel to be better prepared for future employment and work (63%) and to be somewhat better (53%) with regards to field specific knowledge and skills.
- 19 One could argue that the graduates' self-assessment is not the most reliable source for developing a realistic picture of their competences. Yet the employers surveyed in the VALERA study report a similar view. Again, not surprisingly, the employers see mobile graduates as substantially superior compared to non-mobile graduates in their international competences, but they also note considerable differences in the soft-skills of graduates as well as regards their field-related competences.

Table 2. Employers' rating of competences of young graduates with international experience and self-rating of competences by graduates (per cent, selected aspects).

	Employers Rating of competences	ERASMUS Students Self- rating of competences
Field-specific theoretical knowledge	62	77
Field-specific knowledge of methods	64	64
Foreign language proficiency	88	78
Analytical competences	70	73
Problem-solving ability	70	75
Initiative	79	71
Assertiveness, decisiveness, persistence	75	70
Planning, co-ordinating and organising	67	71
Loyalty, integrity	66	78
Adaptability	81	83

QUESTION B7: PLEASE, STATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH YOU HAD THE FOLLOWING COMPETENCES AT THE TIME OF GRADUATION?; UNIVERSITY OF KASSEL, VALERA SURVEY OF EMPLOYERS 2005/06, QUESTION C4: PLEASE RATE THE COMPETENCES OF THE YOUNG GRADUATES IN YOUR ORGANISATION. TO WHAT EXTENT DO THEY HAVE COMPETENCES IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS ON AVERAGE? RESPONSES 1 AND 2 ON A SCALE FROM 1= "TO A VERY HIGH EXTENT" TO 5= "NOT AT ALL".

SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF KASSEL, VALERA SURVEY OF FORMER ERASMUS STUDENTS 2005.

Transition to employment

- 20 The job search period of former Erasmus students is relatively short and the number of employers contacted to find their first job is quite small. The Erasmus students surveyed in the VALERA study reported a job search period of less than four months on average and had to contact less than 20 employers.
- 21 According to the responses of the surveyed Erasmus graduates, their international experience played an important role when entering the labour market. 60 per cent state that their foreign language proficiency and 53 per cent that their study period abroad was an important criterion in their recruitment process. This assessment is supported by the feedback of the employers, though with a different emphasis: the employers state even more often (70%) that foreign language proficiency was an important criterion. The study period abroad is stated by 30% of the employers as being important for their recruitment decisions. It is interesting to note that there seems to be a considerable difference between employers from Central and Eastern European and Western European countries for both aspects.

Table 3. Employers' rating of recruitment criteria by European region (per cent).

	European Region		Total
	Western European	Central and Eastern European	
Personality	91	89	90
Field of study	83	85	84
Main subject/specialisation	73	77	74
Foreign language proficiency	62	87	70
Computer skills	65	87	72
Practical/work experience acquired during course of study	53	65	57
Recommendations/references from third persons	45	47	46
Grades	41	41	41
Reputation of the institution of higher education	29	46	34
Work experience abroad	27	48	34
Study abroad period	25	41	30
Practical/work experience acquired prior to course of study	26	20	24

QUESTION B2: HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS IN RECRUITING YOUNG GRADUATES FOR YOUR ORGANISATION? RESPONSES 1 AND 2 ON A SCALE OF ANSWERS FROM 1= "VERY IMPORTANT" TO 5= "NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT".

SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF KASSEL, VALERA EMPLOYER SURVEY 2005/2006

- 22 This feedback is in accordance with the employers' rating of characteristics of the study abroad period. They perceive the language spoken during the study period as most important (73%) followed by the subject area (60%) and the length of the study period (50%). The mode of mobility, that is, if the study period was spent in the framework of an exchange programme or was self-organised, seems to be less important in their view (15%). Again, employers from Central and Eastern European countries clearly rate all characteristics as more important than do employers from Western Europe.

The impact of the Erasmus period on employment situation and career development

- 23 Altogether, the former Erasmus students are satisfied with their current job and employment situation. Nearly 70 per cent are satisfied or very satisfied with their current work, only 11 per cent are dissatisfied. More than 70 per cent report that their level of employment is appropriate to their level of education.
- 24 For about one third of the Erasmus graduates, the first employment was already a permanent job. At the time of the survey in 2005, the percentage with a permanent job grew to nearly 60 per cent. There are substantial differences by field of study: the percentage of graduates who have a permanent job at the time of the survey is highest for Business Studies (51% first employment, 76% current employment) and lowest for the Humanities (28% first employment, 49% current employment). Already 79 per cent of the graduates had a full time contract at their first employment. This rate increased to 87 per cent after five years. Again, the differences by field of study are evident and show the same tendencies. The rate of full time employment is highest for Business Studies (89% first employment, 96% current employment) closely followed by Engineering (89% first employment, 92% current employment) and lowest, but still at a high level, for the Humanities (66% first employment, 79% current employment).
- 25 The VALERA survey shows that Erasmus graduates often report an international focus of their work tasks and their employment situation. Many of them have considered working or actually worked abroad, are employed in an internationally oriented organisation and take over work tasks with an international dimension. The language spoken in the Erasmus host country and knowledge about the host country is reported to be used most frequently among students who spent their Erasmus period in one of the larger European countries such as Germany, France or the United Kingdom. But altogether, nearly 60 per cent report to have frequent business contacts to other countries in general.
- 26 This rating is supported by the feedback of the surveyed employers. They confirm that young employees with international experience fulfil substantially more often international work tasks than non-mobile graduates. Asked to compare international work tasks of mobile and non-mobile graduates, the employers report that the extent to which formerly mobile and non-mobile graduates fulfil international tasks differs:
- 27 Mobile versus non-mobile young graduates
- are sent abroad for work assignments (45% mobile graduates vs. 14% non-mobile),
 - do business trips to other countries (61% vs. 30%),
 - use information about other countries (64% vs. 28%),
 - work with colleagues/clients from other countries (75% vs. 36%),
 - use foreign languages in professional situations (86% vs. 42%).
- 28 Altogether, former Erasmus students note a very positive impact of their study abroad period. Nearly 90 per cent report a favourable influence on the development of their personality. But also other aspects more directly linked with their employment and career are rated favourably:
- obtaining the first job (53 %),
 - long-term career prospects (53 %),
 - taking over a job assignment closely linked to academic knowledge (41%),

- type of work tasks (39 %).
- 29 The feedback of the graduates suggests that the impact on the income level is rather low: only 16% report a positive influence regarding this aspect. Once more, former Erasmus students from Central and Eastern European countries see the impact with regards to all named aspects more positively than former Erasmus students from Western Europe.
- 30 Comparing the impact of the study period abroad on the career of former Erasmus students with previous studies, it seems that the professional value has been declining over time. The rating of the impact to obtain the first job is highest in all studies. The assessment of the impact on the income level has always been rather low.

Table 4. Perceived positive impact of ERASMUS study period on employment and work a comparison with previous surveys (per cent).

	ERASMUS Students 1988/89 (surveyed 1993)	ERASMUS Graduates 1994/95 (surveyed 2000)	ERASMUS Students 2000/01 (surveyed 2005)
Obtaining first job	71	66	53
Type of work task involved	49	44	39
Income level	25	22	16

SOURCE: MAIWORM AND TEICHLER 1996; JAHR AND TEICHLER 2002; UNIVERSITY OF KASSEL, VALERA SURVEY OF FORMER ERASMUS STUDENTS 2005

- 31 Yet the overall assessment stayed very positive. The vast majority of the 2000/01 Erasmus students retrospectively see their Erasmus stay as being very worthwhile regarding their international competences and their personal development and report a considerable impact on further dimensions:
- personal development (89 %),
 - long-term career prospects (53 %)
 - taking over an assignment closely linked to the academic knowledge (41%).

Erasmus teaching staff mobility

Characteristics of the participating teachers

- 32 The overall majority of the surveyed Erasmus teachers were between 35 and 55 years old. Nearly 90 per cent were already full professors or in other senior academic positions at the time of the Erasmus teaching period in 2000/01. That is, the overall majority were already in advanced stages of their academic career when they decided to go on an Erasmus teaching period. Many of the surveyed Erasmus teachers have already spent previous teaching periods abroad, either within or outside the framework of Erasmus. The overall majority is internationally active in international research or other internationalisation activities of their institutions.

- 33 Many teachers decide to leave for an Erasmus stay because there are existing contacts between the home and the host institution. Other frequently named motives are a general interest in a visit to the host country and the aim to make their own knowledge available to the host institution. A high academic standard or innovative teaching strategies at the host institution are clearly more often the reason for an Erasmus stay for teachers from Central or Eastern European countries than for teachers from Western European countries.

Impact of the Erasmus teaching period

- 34 The retrospective evaluation of the Erasmus teaching period abroad is overall positive. The most often reported beneficial effects are an enhanced intercultural understanding (92%), an intensified use of scientific foreign language publications for teaching (71%), new co-operations with partner programmes at the host institution (66%), improved research contacts (64%) and a broadened own specialist knowledge. Again, the responses of the mobile teachers differ substantially by home region. In almost all aspects, the teaching period is evaluated more favorably by teachers from Central or Eastern European countries: Huge differences are for example perceived in the evaluation of career perspectives. 32 per cent of the teachers from Western Europe note a conducive impact here (versus 67% from Central and Eastern Europe), a broadened specialist knowledge (57% versus 78%) and developing new teaching methods (34% versus 67%).
- 35 Asked more in detail about the effects of teaching abroad, different concepts of study courses in the host country, and especially an enhanced knowledge about the structure of higher education, are reported by all participating teachers. Again, specific effects such as getting acquainted with new ways of teaching and learning or different quality assurance procedures for teaching and learning are noted more frequently by teachers from Central and Eastern Europe.
- 36 Even though the overall majority of participating teachers were already internationally well experienced and in advanced stages of their academic career at the time of their Erasmus stay, many teachers report a considerable impact on their professional career. Regarding the professional impact, there are notable differences between the asked aspects as well as between regions and countries. Once more, teachers from Central and Eastern European countries observe a higher influence than those from Western Europe. Overall, an enlargement of work tasks (38%), enhancement of scientific co-operation (49%) and an increase of international research co-operation (38%) is reported most often as influenced positively by the Erasmus teaching assignment. Asked to summarise the impact of the teaching period in general, 52 per cent among Western European teachers, but 82 per cent Central and Eastern European teachers report a positive or even very positive impact of the Erasmus teaching assignment.

Impact of teaching mobility at the home institution

- 37 Overall, mobile teachers as well as university leaders perceive the impact of teaching mobility at the home institution positively. Once more, both the surveyed Erasmus teachers and the university leaders from Central and Eastern Europe tend to assess the impact on the home institution a little more positively.

- 38 The mobile teachers rate the possibility to improve guidance and advice to new students most positively (70%) followed by fostering the knowledge of other countries (58%). The impact on other aspects more directly hinting at teaching and learning, such as addressing issues comparatively (41%) or developing new teaching methods (32%), is seen more cautiously.
- 39 Among the university leaders, more than three quarters expect a favourable impact on their institutions' international reputation and more than half of them report that Erasmus teaching mobility supports international research co-operations with partner institutions. Around 40 per cent perceive teaching mobility to be beneficial for teaching methods and contents of study programmes or for international co-operations in study programmes. Altogether, it is interesting to note that the impact on teaching and learning tends to be seen as slightly less auspicious than the impact on the institutions' international reputation and research co-operations.

The view of teaching staff mobility at the home institution

- 40 Whereas the overall assessment and the influence on the professional career is seen favourably by the surveyed Erasmus teachers, the attitude and support of the home institution to leave for Erasmus teaching assignments is perceived somewhat controversially. The overall majority of surveyed teachers report that teaching mobility is valued to a certain extent or perceived as an individual activity.

Table 5. Assessment of teaching mobility at the home institution – the teachers' view (per cent).

...Teaching mobility at the home institution	administrative level	departmental level	colleagues
... is highly valued	22	22	19
... is valued to a certain extent	38	38	33
... is perceived as an individual activity	33	32	39
... is largely perceived as a burden	2	3	4
... is not much appreciated	5	5	5

QUESTION C4: IN GENERAL, HOW IS TEACHING MOBILITY ASSESSED AT YOUR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION TODAY AT THE FOLLOWING THREE LEVELS?
SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF KASSEL, VALERA TEACHER SURVEY 2005

- 41 This assessment is in accordance with the feedback of the teachers that only a minority are released from their work tasks to go for a teaching period abroad. Rather, teaching abroad is handled as part of the normal professional tasks or as additional work which has to be integrated into the ordinary work tasks. Most of the mobile teachers (64% in Western European countries, 54% in Eastern European countries) point out that teaching abroad means extra work without any compensation.
- 42 However, 70 per cent among the university leaders surveyed in the framework of the VALERA study stated that it is important to increase the number of incoming as well as outgoing teaching staff. Furthermore, as table 3 shows, the university leaders

predominantly point out that teaching mobility is highly valued or valued to a certain extent at the administrative level at their institution. A comparison with the perception of the mobile teachers suggests that this appreciation might not be communicated in an appropriate way and should be made explicit and tangible to support and increase teaching mobility.

Table 6. Appreciation of ERASMUS teaching mobility at administrative level – the university leaders' view (per cent).

Teaching mobility...	Home region		Total
	Western	Central and Eastern	
...is highly valued	35	46	38
...is valued to a certain extent	39	39	39
...is perceived as an activity of the individual teacher	29	23	28
...is largely perceived as a burden	3	2	3
...is not much appreciated	1	2	1

QUESTION D1: IN GENERAL, HOW DOES THE ADMINISTRATION OF YOUR INSTITUTION PERCEIVE OR TREAT TEACHING MOBILITY – INCLUDING NON-ERASMUS MOBILITY?

SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF KASSEL, VALERA UNIVERSITY LEADERS SURVEY 2005.

Concluding remarks

- 43 The assessment of study provisions and conditions abroad by the former Erasmus students stayed quite stable over time. The same holds true for the recognition of study achievements by the home institution upon return, which remains at around 75 per cent. Prolongation of the overall study duration due to the study period abroad is still an important issue for many of the Erasmus students. It seems that neither did the vast expansion of the programme lead to a decline of the quality, nor did the growing experience of involved institutions result in substantial improvements of study provisions and conditions for Erasmus students.
- 44 Overall, the Erasmus supported study period is assessed positively by both former Erasmus students and employers and certainly has a positive impact on the competences of the mobile students as well as on their career development after graduation. The former Erasmus students rate their competences upon return and upon graduation very positively and in all aspects superior to the competences of non-mobile students. This positive assessment does not only apply for competences which one might call international or intercultural abilities, but also for study field related knowledge and skills. The self assessment of former Erasmus students is supported by the feedback of the surveyed employers, who similarly rate the competences of mobile graduates as being superior as compared to those of non-mobile graduates in all asked aspects. Furthermore, both graduates and employers confirm a positive effect of study

abroad in the recruitment process as well as on international dimensions of the young employees' work tasks. The effect on the income level, however, is perceived rather low. It has to be taken into account that there are substantial differences by country and by subject area.

- 45 One fact among these differences, however, seems to be quite distinct: The overall rating of the Erasmus impact is clearly higher among former Erasmus students, employers and university leaders from Central and Eastern European countries than from Western European countries. They all agree that students from Central and Eastern European countries profit more strongly from an Erasmus stay with regards to their career prospects than students from Western Europe. A participant in the field specific seminars suggested that two factors that are closely interrelated play a major role: First, Erasmus students from Central and Eastern European countries are a somewhat more select group than their fellow students from Western European countries, as Erasmus participation is highly desired and there are less places available than students aiming to participate. Second, these students benefit more, as most Central and Eastern European countries are relatively new to the programme so that the Erasmus experience more often will be considered as a unique feature in the graduates' CVs.
- 46 Finally, it seems that the overall impact of a study abroad period has been declining over time. Previous surveys of Erasmus students suggest the conclusion that the impact of a study abroad period for the individual mobile student has been decreasing while the overall number of mobile students increased. This, however, should not lead to the conclusion that it is less important for young graduates to have gained international experience in the framework of an Erasmus study period. Rather, as it was pointed out by a practitioner during one of the field specific seminars discussing the results of the VALERA surveys, the study abroad experience has become from an outstanding experience to a prerequisite for young graduates. It is a door-opener into the labour market, but by no means a "career-boost".
- 47 The circumstances of an Erasmus teaching assignment could not be more different as compared to an Erasmus study period abroad: Erasmus teachers, most of them spending less than two weeks teaching abroad, are already in advanced stages of their career. The majority of participating teachers has a vast international experience and is well integrated in international networks. Most of them do have a permanent job holding a senior academic position or are already full professors. One might not expect a high impact of this relatively short period in the professional life of an experienced teacher and researcher, but exactly the opposite seems to be true: The teachers report a considerably positive influence on their career prospects, especially regarding international research contacts. Slightly less auspicious, but still positively, do the mobile teachers see the influence on their teaching activities. The impact on teaching itself seems to be less in the view of the teachers than on their research activities. Overall, the impact tends to be perceived more conducive among teachers from Eastern and Central Europe than among teachers from Western European countries. We observe the same tendency here for the feedback of the teachers as for the former Erasmus students, but the difference is even more striking for teachers than for students.
- 48 It is interesting to note that the mobile teachers themselves perceive the conditions at their home institution to go abroad for teaching assignments less supportive than the

surveyed university leaders. Most of the teachers report that they feel their teaching mobility to be an individual activity meaning extra work without any compensation. Still, the feedback of teachers and university leaders suggests that teaching mobility is especially valuable to foster provisions and conditions for student mobility at the involved institutions. This view is supported by the feedback of experts and practitioners, who have been discussing the first results of the empirical surveys in workshops. They emphasize that an intensification of teaching mobility would lead to a better embedding of the Erasmus study period in the whole course of studies of mobile students. This, as a consequence, would lead to an improved recognition of study achievements, reduce the prolongation of studies and eventually, with the integration of improved learning strategies, reinforce the overall professional value of the Erasmus study period abroad

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NOTES

1. The present article discusses selected outcomes of the VALERA study, in which the author of the article was a member of the research team: The professional value of Erasmus mobility by Bracht, Engel, Janson, Over, Schomburg and Teichler (2006). The whole project report may be found via http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/doc922_en.htm. Further articles presenting different foci may be found from Janson, Schomburg and Teichler (2009); Engel, Janson, Schomburg and Teichler (2009) or Janson and Teichler (2007) (see references).

2. On the homepage of the Erasmus student network ESN www.esn.org or in the Erasmus success stories published by the European Commission, to name a few.

3. Throughout the VALERA study, the following differentiation by European Region has been used: Western European countries (WE): Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom. Central and Eastern European countries (CEE): Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

ABSTRACTS

The impact of an Erasmus study period abroad for mobile students and teaching assignments of Erasmus teachers on professional development is the focus of the article. Temporary study abroad is expected to have a positive impact on personal and academic development, but also to be conducive to transition to employment and career development. Though the impact has been declining, study abroad remains an important experience for the professional career. Erasmus teaching assignments often do not last longer than a few days. Nevertheless, mobile teachers report a positive impact on their career.

The article is based on the VALERA Study¹ "The professional value of Erasmus mobility", a European-wide evaluation study by the International Centre for Higher Education Research Kassel.

Im Zentrum des Artikels steht der Einfluss temporärer internationaler Studien- und Lehraufenthalte auf den Berufsweg ehemaliger Erasmus Studierender und Lehrender. Es wird erwartet, dass ein Auslandsaufenthalt während des Studiums nicht nur auf die persönliche und akademische Entwicklung der mobilen Studierenden einen positiven Einfluss hat, sondern auch auf den Übergang in den Beruf und die erste Karriere. Ein Auslandsaufenthalt im Studium hat einen sehr wichtigen Einfluss auf die berufliche Entwicklung ehemals mobiler Studierender, auch

wenn der individuelle Ertrag im Laufe der Zeit gesunken ist. Lehraufenthalte im Rahmen des Erasmus Programmes dauern häufig nicht länger als wenige Tage. Dennoch berichten auch die Erasmus Lehrenden von einem positiven Einfluss des Lehraufenthaltes im Ausland auf ihre berufliche Entwicklung.

Dieser Artikel basiert auf Ergebnissen der VALERA-Studie “Der berufliche Ertrag der Erasmus-Mobilität“, einer europaweiten Evaluierungstudie des Erasmus Programms durchgeführt vom Internationalen Zentrum für Hochschulforschung Kassel.

INDEX

Keywords: Erasmus programme, student mobility, teaching staff mobility, professional impact

Schlüsselwörter: Erasmus Programm, Mobilität von Studierenden, Mobilität von Lehrenden, beruflicher Ertrag

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