

MENDEL UNIVERSITY IN BRNO

FACULTY OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Student mobility and career prospects

‘Erasmus mobility experience as a benefit for the future employment‘

Bachelor thesis

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Brno 2016

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In Brno, May 2016

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Sára Adamcová

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Abstract

ADAMCOVÁ S., Student mobility and career prospects. Bachelor thesis, Brno: Mendel University, Faculty of Regional Development and International Studies, 2016.

Supervisor of Bachelor thesis prof. PhDr. Stanislav Hubík, CSc.

The aim of this work is to analyse the decision of Czech students for going abroad on Erasmus study placement, or an internship and to analyse whether the companies operating in the Czech Republic consider the Erasmus mobility experience as beneficial.

In this bachelor thesis the focus is on two main research questions:

- 1) To investigate the opinion of Czech students on the exchange mobility programmes and their major benefits
- 2) To measure how employers in Czech Republic appreciate international mobility experience of applicants

Key Words: Mobility, Erasmus, Study Placement, Internship, Employment, Students

Abstrakt

ADAMCOVÁ S., Studijní Mobilita a šance na zaměstnání. Bakalářská práce, Brno: Mendelova univerzita, Fakulta regionálního rozvoje a mezinárodních studií, 2016.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce prof. PhDr. Stanislav Hubík, CSc.

Cílem této bakalářské práce je analyzovat rozhodnutí českých studentů pro studium nebo stáže v zahraničí v rámci programu Erasmus a zhodnotit zda firmy působící v České republice považují zahraniční mobilitu Erasmus jako výhodu u uchazečů o zaměstnání.

V této bakalářské práci je kladen důraz na dvě hlavní výzkumné otázky:

- 1) zjistit názory českých studentů na největší benefity studia v zahraničí
- 2) porovnat důležitost zkušeností z mezinárodních pobytů v rámci programu Erasmus u potenciálních uchazečů pro zaměstnavatele v České republice

Klíčová slova: Mobilita, Erasmus, Studijní pobyt, Stáž, Zaměstnání, Studenti

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2. Introduction

For almost thirty years the European Union (EU) has been systematically promoting and supporting student mobility within Europe. Through the ‘European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students’ (ERASMUS), the largest student programme in Europe, more than three million students have studied abroad and had the opportunity to learn about other European peoples and cultures.

Understanding the role of international mobility programmes as well as its influence on skills development and its effect on the future employability of the candidate is becoming more and more widely discussed topic and the Erasmus mobility program is becoming increasingly popular not just among Czech students but also on the European level.

The aim of my thesis is to analyse the effects of Erasmus student mobility (both study placement and internships) on individual skills enhancement and especially employability.

In order to answer the research questions posed, I have created both quantitative and a qualitative study. The basic design of the quantitative study were a web-based questionnaires about relation of foreign mobility and skills related to employability, given to students at Czech universities who have participated in Erasmus mobility program. In total, the sample for the study comprises of 60 individual responses.

As for the quantitative study semi-structured interviews were scheduled with managers from Human Resources and Recruitments teams in companies in the area of the Czech Republic, which were aimed to provide a better insight into the problematics of employability and to confirm or reject the quantitative findings from the students.

Responses were received from 6 companies representing more than 8000 employees in the area of the Czech Republic. Of the companies surveyed, Only 1 was a small company (with less than 100 employees), 3 were companies with the number of employees between 101 and 1000 and 2 of them were big companies or large organization with over 1000 employees located in the Czech Republic.

Most of the companies participating in the research operate in multiple countries or they are planning to expand abroad soon. The field of industry of the companies

ranges from travel industry, software and IT industry, food and beverage industry to communication industry.

3. Targets of the Thesis

As the topic of my bachelor thesis I have chosen to search for the answer, whether the students from Czech universities who decide to go abroad on an Erasmus mobility programme have a better chance to get a job in companies in the area of the Czech Republic in comparison with students who have not been to any kind of Erasmus mobility.

The reason why I decided for this topic is because Erasmus programmes are becoming more and more popular among students at Czech universities and according to the statistics of the National agency the number of outgoing students has almost doubled in the last ten years.

Many researches were created across Europe about Erasmus programme and its benefits but none of these studies were focused on university students and companies in the area of the Czech Republic.

The bachelor's thesis is divided into two parts. The first part is theoretical and it aims to describe all the necessary terms for better understanding of the topic. It includes information about history of the Bologna process, Erasmus programme, The Erasmus impact study or Czech organizations and statistics. The second part is empirical and it is where the research is introduced. The main aim of the research is to determine the measure of influence of Erasmus mobility on employability of the students and it also deals with the opinions of students on foreign exchange mobility benefits.

All the data were acquired from questionnaires and interviews and the result of this thesis will be presented, compared and concluded.

Theoretical part

4. History and Main terms

4.1 Free movement within the EU

European rights to free movement within European Union (EU) are the most popular of the European Union's achievements and they are also fundamental aspects of EU citizenship, which was introduced by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. Venables (2015) defined the basic element of the European Treaties, policies and capital legislation as the link between four main interconnected freedoms of people and goods. Additionally, the right of free movement across Europe is the prime and fundamental right of European citizenship.

For the young generation it is not difficult to travel across Europe and it is almost taken for granted to travel from one to the other side of European Union just with a valid identification card. The space of freedom has risen a lot in past 25 years and because of this fact, the movement of workforce and movement for the reason of education has become much easier and much more required.

Free movement of workers is another of the fundamental principle of European legislation. It is established and described in the article 45 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and further developed by a secondary legislation of European law and jurisprudence of the Court of Justice. (Borchardt, 2010 p.27).

EU citizens are allowed to:

- Search for job opportunities in another EU country
- work there without the need of work permit
- stay there for a purpose of work
- stay there even after the completion of the work
- have the same possibilities as local citizens in terms of, working conditions, job opportunities and all other social and tax benefits

(European Commission, 2016)

As Venables (2015, p.2): defined at the conference *“Free movement in aggregate is seen as a win-win situation for European migrants themselves, countries of origin and host countries where newcomers fill vacancies which are complementary rather*

than competing with the domestic workforce and contribute more in taxes than they receive in benefits.”

The actual implementation of freedom of movement in EU by Union law was not as simple as it might seem, because at first there was a need for gradual removal of internal borders under the Schengen Agreement. The differences in culture and language might add diversity and richness to European societies however, although it can increase the number of EU citizens who are multilingual, language is still one of the biggest barriers to mobility.

The main obstacles to mobility according to Touzenis (2012) have been identified as:

- scarcity of integrated European employment legislation and laws;
- diversity in tax systems in the member states;
- inadequacy in language proficiency;
- diversity in benefit systems in the member states;
- issues with migration;
- diversity in pension systems in the member states;
- inadequacy in recognition of professional qualifications;
- not enough information about employment opportunities in foreign countries

The number of European Union citizens who have used the possibility to live in another EU country is around 11 million. Many others travel regularly to other countries in European Union, either for business purposes, or as tourists without any checks in the Schengen area or with very quick controls at borders out the Schengen area. (European Commission, 2010)

4.2 EU education space

Traditionally the higher education system was led by only one unitary system of universities. Nowadays it is being organized with the help of a network of diverse institutions, which includes both university as well as non-university institutions.

The duration of courses might vary within the same level of education, making it difficult to compare degrees and diplomas offered by different countries in terms of

content, quality, and duration, thus reducing the chances of regional mobility of students and programmes.

On worldwide scale, we can see that there was a need for transparency and trust among those Higher Education Institutions (HEIS), in order to improve the global attractiveness and competitiveness of higher education system. The Bologna Process represents an attempt to achieve this. (Crosier David and Teodora Parveva, 2013)

As a result of increasing cooperation, mobility and search for collectivism in European Higher Education (HE) the Erasmus programme was launched in 1987. The aim of this programme was to support and promote mobility within Europe. (Teichler, 2012)

Higher education is expected to fulfil a wide range of needs for developing knowledge across societies and economies and also to educate even higher numbers of the population. At the same time another aim of HE is to create new opportunities and possibilities not just for non-traditional students, but also for research and innovations in a response to local and regional economic challenges. The last aim is to improve quality and efficiency in all different features of the higher education mission. While these trends started even before the turn of the 21st century, the speed of change is much faster in recent years.

After the economic crises round the world, there was serious increasing demand for employment and prosperity also in EU. One of the methods for achieving this goal is with the help of Higher Education Institutions. Thanks to their links to research, modernization and innovation HEIs can play a critical role not only in personal development but also in economic growth in Europe by providing highly qualified people and by fulfilling the European citizen's needs. (European commission, 2011)

Crosier and Parveva (2013, p. 18) define Higher Education as *“the centre of the global transformation from an industrialized to a post-industrial knowledge society. In this emerging globally connected knowledge society, higher education is no longer on the margins of social and political reality, in the traditional realm of comfortable ivory towers. Rather, it has been brought centre stage as a key factor in national competitiveness and modernization.”*

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) statistics, enrolment in higher education increased from 68 million in 1991 to 100 million in 2000 and further to 164.5 million by 2009. (UIS, 2011)

Higher Education Institutions are often seen as major partners in creating and realizing the European Union's strategy to keep and protect the economic growth and achieve prosperity. Undoubtedly the globalisation and internationalization have progressively remodelled the face of higher education not just on European level but also internationally. (The Erasmus Impact Study, 2014)

4.3 Bologna process

4.3.1 History of the process

The Bologna process has a long and rich history, as it was already mentioned. The basic features of the Bologna Process date back to the Sorbonne Joint Declaration on Harmonization of the Architecture of the European Higher Education System, signed on 25 May 1998 by the education ministers of France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom. (Crosier, Parveva, 2013)

The Bologna Process, launched together with the Bologna Declaration in the year 1999, is one of the main voluntary processes at European level, as it is nowadays implemented in 48 states, which define the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The main reasons for creating of the Bologna process was firstly the need of making short study programmes more attractive; and secondly the fact that the Erasmus programme was viewed as a great success in European Union and also the creation of Bachelor-Master structure in study programmes. (Teichler, 2012)

The Czech Republic has been part of the Bologna process since its beginning. One of the most important ministerial conference was held in May 2001 in Prague. Thirty-three countries participated at this meeting, together with Croatia, Cyprus, and Turkey which were accepted as new members that year. Liechtenstein was also included, because of formal relations to the process between the Bologna and Prague conferences. Another important member joined during this conference- the European Commission. (Crosier, Parveva, 2013)

The Prague ministerial conference will be remembered as the moment when the ‘social dimension’ of higher education was added to the action lines of the Bologna Process. (Crosier, Parveva, 2013)

4.3.2 The aim of the process

Members of the Bologna Process were the 48 countries, together with the European Commission, and the consultative members, namely the Council of Europe, UNESCO, European University Association (EUA), European Student Association (ESU), Education International, BUSINESSEUROPE, European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

The aim of the declaration is to introduce a more comparable, compatible and coherent system for European higher education and it can be also seen as collective effort for improving quality assurance of public authorities, universities, and students, together with employers, international organizations, stakeholder, quality assurance agencies, and institutions, including the European Commission. (The European Higher Education Area, 2010)

The two major strategic objectives of the Bologna process is to create a system of academic degrees that are easily recognizable and comparable, and promotion of the student mobility and ensuring high-quality standards learning and teaching.

The main focus areas of the activities include employability, degree structure, lifelong learning, funding, quality assurance, international openness and data collection.

A primary objective during the first 10 years of the process was to establish the European higher education area, which was then launched in 2010 with the Budapest-Vienna Declaration. For the next decade, objectives will focus on the consolidation of the EHEA. The Bologna process has been an enormous success in the regional cross-border cooperation in higher education and has attracted attention from other parts of the world. (The European Higher Education Area, 2010)

4.3.3 The critics of the process

Not everyone can look at the Bologna process as positive reform. Opponents argue that Bologna has resulted in a serious decline of study conditions. For example as stated by Pechar (2012) many results of the reform are exactly the opposite of the

original goals of the Bologna process. This criticism refers mainly to the workload for students, to academic mobility of students, and to employability of graduates of the bachelor programmes.

The main issues of Bologna process according to Pechar (2012) are:

- Rather than making the work easier for the students, the Bologna process caused the growth of the workload for students and as a result, this deepens the ‘time waste’ of students.
- Instead of increasing the number of student mobility, the new study research has resulted in a decline of number of ingoing and outgoing students.
- Contrary to the improvement of the employability of graduates, the Bologna process has formed a new degree which isn’t accepted across the whole labour market.

Other antagonists of the Bologna process were Schulmeister and Metzger, who created an empirical research for the factual workload in bachelor programmes. Schulmeister and Metzger (2011), have originally intended to confirm that Bologna has decreased the workload for students, but the results of his empirical study, where he acquired very detailed diaries of students with reports of all their activities, have surprised both the researchers as well as the participating students.

The results have shown that there was big a discrepancy between the general description of the time which students spent on their studies and the detailed report of their time protocoled in their journals. The final recorded scores were much lower than the first ones. This means mainly that the students usually exaggerated time, which they actually dedicated to their studies. Schulmeister and his co-author have also criticised the organization of the study courses, but majority of the problems can hardly be associated with the Bologna philosophy.

Also as is mentioned in the study of Curaj (2012) some of the more radical students as well as trade unions have disapproved of the Bologna process, mainly due to the fact, that according to them it become mechanism, not only for pushing the ‘market’ values into universities instead of ‘public’ values, but also for helping bureaucratic modes to take over the collegial modes in Higher Education Institutions.

4.3.4 The outcomes of the process

Nowadays the Bologna Process operates as a very powerful reform that has started a chain of national-level reforms in the higher education field. Its major effects are not only in connection with European countries or the signatory countries, but there is also a tendency to move towards harmony in several countries outside of the Bologna Process.

“The harmonization measures in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries attempt to align their universities with international standards and their education systems with those of the West. They also attempt to develop an International Institute for Educational Planning comparable structure of credit transfer systems between universities located within the CIS.” (Crosier, Parveva, 2013, p.10)

In the public discussions about the Bologna process as well as about the changes which are occurring in the major areas of this reform, we can clearly find an excessive variation of descriptions of the facts. According to Schomburg and Teichler (2011) it is possible to argue that, with respects to all interesting studies and arguments, the Bologna discussion is not very evidence based. As an example of this, we can see that while some countries have established similar Bachelor-Master models, others have gone in very different directions. We are told that Bologna process has helped to increase student mobility or that the Bologna Process restrains mobility. There are many claims about the new system of degrees which either prove that it is widely accepted on the labour market or report that the university Bachelor graduates face enormous difficulties in finding actual jobs.

The result of the Bologna process cannot be measured with final results yet, but we can already see some progress. For example from the survey undertaken by the EUA, we could see that system of Bachelor-Master programmes was achieved in the year 2010 at the majority of Higher Education Institutions in the countries involved in Bologna process. (Teichler, 2012)

Another study called ‘Implementation report’ was completed in 2015 by the European Higher Education Area (European Commission/ Eacea/ Eurydice, 2015). Some of the findings from the study are, for example the fact, that 16 countries have made massive progress in implementation of national qualifications frameworks. Yet, on the other side, ten countries still have not started with implementation of the

programme and in some of the countries there was no progress since the 2012 Implementation report. The report states that *‘Majority of countries still face challenges in including non-formal qualifications within national higher education frameworks self-certified against the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA).’* (European Commission/ Eacea/ Eurydice, 2015, p.17)

It is hard to come up with an overall overview of the Bologna process, since there exist many varieties raising in the date and the speed of the implementation in individual countries, but we can see some general trends. The first noticeable trend can be considered the fact, that even though Bologna has helped to increase mobility of students from the other parts of world, there was no big increase of intra-European mobility. The second trend is that the outwards mobility taking place during the study course, was seen much more often than what was expected by many experts and thirdly, there is a gradual decline in the value of student mobility mainly due to the fact, that because more and more students are opting for an exchange abroad, so there is not the notion of ‘exclusiveness’ as there used to be. (Schomburg, Teichler, 2011)

4.4 The Erasmus programme

The Erasmus programme is the world’s most prosperous student mobility programme. Since the beginning of its existence, the Erasmus programme has provided over three million European students with the opportunity to go abroad and study at a higher education institution or to do a traineeship in a company abroad.

The Erasmus mobility programme was established in 1987 to assure support for temporary student mobility within Europe. The number of participating students on a European scale has increased from about 4 000 in the first year, and about 10 000 in the following year to about 272 497 in the year 2013/2014. (Erasmus+ Programme Annual Report, 2014)

Since the Bologna declaration titled the enrichment of student mobility as one of the main objectives of the programme there were surveys undertaken in order to monitor the development of the student mobility. One of the studies called ‘The Bologna Process in Higher Education in Europe: key indicators on the social dimension and mobility’ (Eurostat & Eurostudent, 2009) presented the data on change in trends in student mobility in Europe, based on a statistics made by UNESCO, Office of

Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and European Statistical Office (Eurostat). One of the results of this study was the fact that the percentage of foreign students at universities in the 27 countries in European Union, increased from 5.4% in year 2000 to 7.5% in 2006. (Teichler, 2012)

Erasmus programme started as an essential part of Socrates/ Erasmus, then between years 2007 to 2013 it was replaced by a Lifelong Learning Program (LLP) and followed by the Erasmus+ program from the year 2014. The new Erasmus+ started in January 2014 as the single EU programme for education, training, youth and, for the first time also sport. It covers the time period 2014-2020 and its aim is to integrate the seven previous programmes into the main three Key Actions

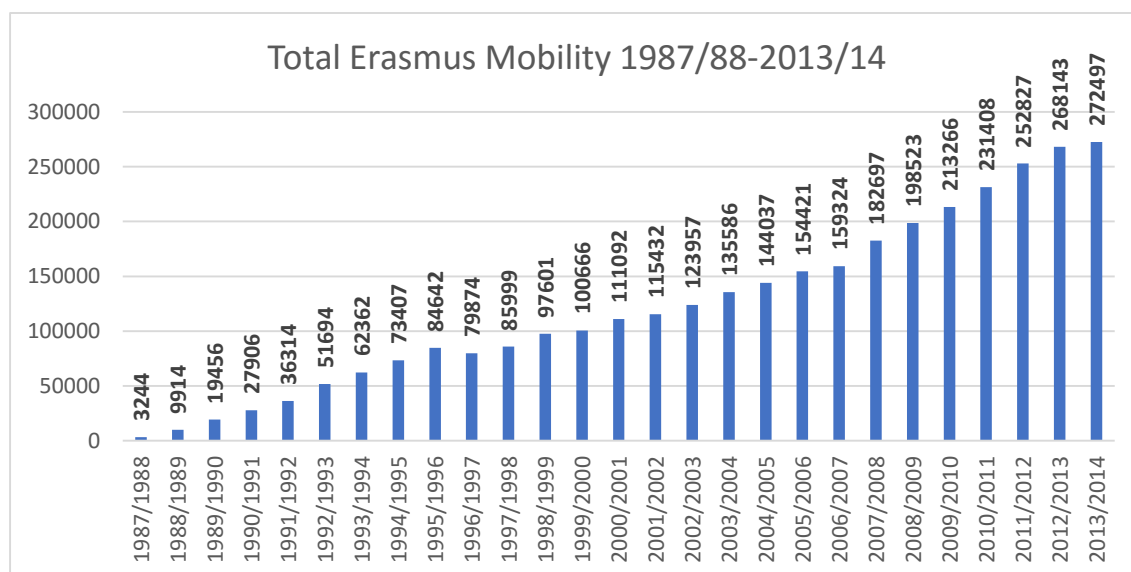
- Key Action 1 - Learning Mobility of individuals;
- Key Action 2 - Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices;
- Key Action 3 - Support for policy reform

(Erasmus+ Programme Annual Report, 2014)

The majority of students attending Erasmus mobility are the ones who go abroad for a study exchange. Study mobility enables students at higher educational institutions to spend a semester or two abroad at another university.

Erasmus also benefits students who do their traineeships in companies. By doing the internship in a company abroad students can gain a better understanding of other economies, adapt to requirements of the labour market as well as the chance to develop specific soft and hard skills. Work placements in companies abroad have been supported through Erasmus since 2007 (they had been previously managed as a part of the Leonardo da Vinci programme for vocational education and training) and are becoming increasingly popular. These grants enable students to spend a period of 3 to 12 months doing a work placement abroad. It also empowers the cooperation between higher education institutions and companies. Out of the total of 272 497 Erasmus students, 60 289 went on work placements abroad in 2013-14 which expresses 22%. This represents an annual increase of 9 %. Since its inclusion into the Erasmus programme, work placements abroad have grown rapidly, and the annual number of placements these days is more than three times higher than the number of placements in 2007/08. (European Commission, 2013-14)

Student mobility enhance the individual personal and professional skills development and helps students to strengthen those skills, which are valued by employers as well as society. Students undoubtedly improve their foreign language skills and there is also increase in development of an intercultural awareness. Moreover there is a certain progress of soft skills, such as adaptation to changes and new situations, problem- solving, team-work, communication or critical thinking. (European Commission, 2015)



Graph 1 Total Erasmus mobility 1987/88-2013/14
Source: own elaboration

4.5 The Erasmus Impact Study

The Erasmus impact study is the result of the largest single study ever created to measure the effects of Erasmus mobility on students, as well as on Higher Education Institutions, which was carried out by The Erasmus Student Network (ESN), together with CHE Consult (DE), Brussels Education Services (BE) and the Compostela Group of Universities (ES), launched by the European Commission in 2012. (The Erasmus Impact Study, 2014)

The main aim of this study is to answer two main issues-the first one is aiming to analyse the major effects of Erasmus student mobility in relation to studies and placements on the individual skills enhancement, employability and institutional development. The second question is dealing with the effects of International mobility teaching assignments/staff training on individual competences, personality traits and

attitudes, as well as the programme's impact on the internationalization of Higher Education Institutions.

In the Erasmus Impact Study (EIS) a combination of different methods and approaches was used to clearly identify all the effects of the mobility programmes on the improvement of skills, employability and personal development of the students. (The Erasmus Impact Study, 2014)

The Erasmus programme and its student mobility programmes for studies and placement have two main aims. The first aim is to offer personal experience, but in addition these experiences should also have economic and academic value. The second aim is to make international experience more visible as a method of improving skills that are ranked as important by employees and employers as well as increase of the overall internationalisation of the HEIs. For this reason, the survey was carried out throughout various target groups. In the survey there are several levels defined:

- Personal: Includes students, alumni and staff and it is defined by aspects like language proficiency, gender and academic background (only students).
- Institutional: Refers to Higher Education institutions and is also relevant to all surveys, including conditions like the country of the origin, size or profile of the institution.
- Mobility: Including all prevailing mobility
- Company: Includes each of the companies participating in mobility or profiting from international mobility. This part is relevant to employers, but also students, staff or alumni. (The Erasmus Impact Study, 2014)

The analysis started by searching for the reasons why students go abroad and also the major reasons for deciding against going on an Erasmus exchange. At the next stage the study was exploring which skills have students developed during their mobility. In addition to skills acquisition, Erasmus Impact Study also analysed the impact of mobility on working life and career.

EIS identified six major factors which are linked to employability skills. These skills might be presented as personality features, but they are also affected by the experience of the person. By surveying these factors before and also after the student's mobility experience, the study could recognize the changes which students gained

during their international experience. The factors should make it easier, to compare groups of mobile and non-mobile respondents, as well as groups of alumni or staff.

As far as the findings are concerned, the research has shown that majority of students increased their employability skills during their exchange abroad and in the interviews students have perceived Erasmus mobility as *“a defining period in their personal and professional development, leading to greater maturity and personal enrichment.”* (The Erasmus Impact Study, 2014, p.17)

The study was carried out both with qualitative and quantitative analysis and in order to produce adequate quantitative data, the research team launched five online surveys in 2013, resulting in the participation of 56,733 students (includes mobile students with and without Erasmus experience and non-mobile students), 18,618 alumni (83% mobile with and without Erasmus), 4,986 staff (academic and non-academic, mobile and non-mobile), 964 higher education institutions and 652 employers. The study covered 34 countries- European Union members and also Macedonia, Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey. In total, the sample for the study comprises of 78 891 individual responses. (The Erasmus Impact Study, 2014)

4.6 Czech organizations supporting Erasmus programme

In the Czech Republic there operate several organizations for support and promotion of student mobility. The biggest and also most the known one is the Centre for International Cooperation in Education (DZS) and The National Agency for European Educational Programmes (NAEP). As for the others we can use help of academic information agency, Aktion, American fund for Czech and Slovak leadership studies and many others. It is also possible to get help or join student’s organizations that helps Erasmus international students. The biggest one in the Czech Republic is called Erasmus Student Network Czech Republic (ESN CZ).

4.6.1 The Centre for International Cooperation in Education

The Centre for International Cooperation in Education is a semi-budgetary organization, established by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Czech Republic. Their main tasks include ensuring educational and training relations with foreign countries under the instructions of the ministry.

The centre is also responsible for a number of international programmes and carries out activities relating to the promotion of education. DZS services are focused

both on individuals, students, teachers, directors of all types of schools and other professionals, and organizations and companies involved in education and local authorities and, last but not least, also the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. (The Centre for International Cooperation in Education, 2015)

4.6.2 The National Agency for European Educational Programmes

The National Agency for European Educational Programmes was established by the Czech Ministry of Education in 2007 as a part of the Centre for International Services. The National agency is a replacement of the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci National Agencies and it is the main responsible organization for the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme (Comenius, Erasmus, Grundtvig, Leonardo da Vinci, Transversal Programmes and Jean Monnet) and other educational programmes in the Czech Republic (Erasmus Mundus, eLearning, EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanism Fund, Tempus, ASIA-LINK, etc.).

NAEP is also the connection to students who are not from European Union, but who want to study at a Czech university, both in general and under Erasmus Mundus programme.

The national agency provides several types of activities:

- Promotion for educational programmes
- Monitoring, dissemination and valorisation
- Assistance and consulting services
- Contracts and financial management for decentralized projects
- Organizations of conferences and seminars

(The National Agency for European Educational Programmes, 2015)

4.6.3 Erasmus Student Network Czech Republic

Erasmus Student Network Czech Republic is a part of one of the biggest student organizations Erasmus Student Network (ESN) which has over 430 local sections in 38 countries all over Europe and together it is represented by more than 150 000 volunteers in total. The main aim of this organization is to provide help to international students and foster student mobility in Higher Educational Institutions. ESN operates on local, national and international level.

ESN CZ is a non-profit organisation which helps about 5 000 international student each year. By helping in a student's organization with international students, it is possible to develop skills like intercultural understanding, team work or communication.

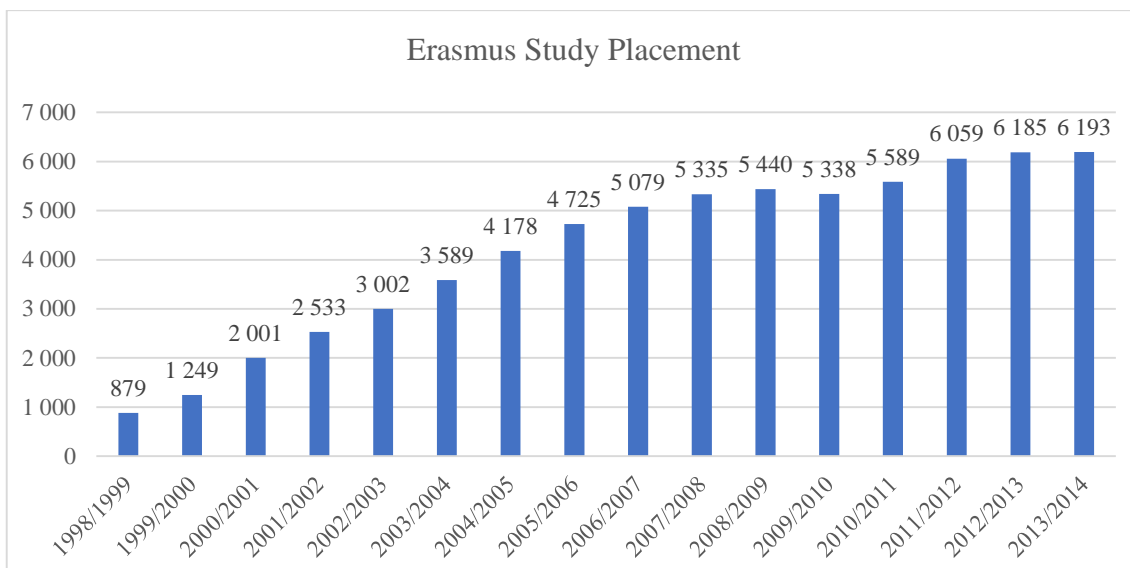
4.7 Statistics in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic the Erasmus programme has been running for 18 years already. Since 1998 the Erasmus programme has helped more than 58 thousand Czech students and nearly 21 thousand of teachers and other staff at Czech universities to go abroad to gain experience.

The program involves public, private, state universities and selected colleges or conservatories. Funding for the implementation of Erasmus activities comes from two sources. The main source of financing funds is the European Union (Erasmus budget) for schools on the basis of their applications allocated by the National Agency. Additional source is called the supplementary financing (funds from the national budget), which is available only for public universities and is distributed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. (The National Agency for European Educational Programmes, 2015)

The main types of Erasmus in which students from Czech universities can participate are study programme abroad, internships or intensive courses. There are some conditions which have to be fulfilled in order to be able to participate in Erasmus exchange mobility. The study abroad stay has to last from 3-12 months, students don't have to pay any tuition or other fees and the learning must be recognized by the home institution.

One of main conditions for participation of students in the programme is also to have completed at least the first year of university. On the NAEP website you can also find the scholarships for each state. (The National Agency for European Educational Programmes, 2015)



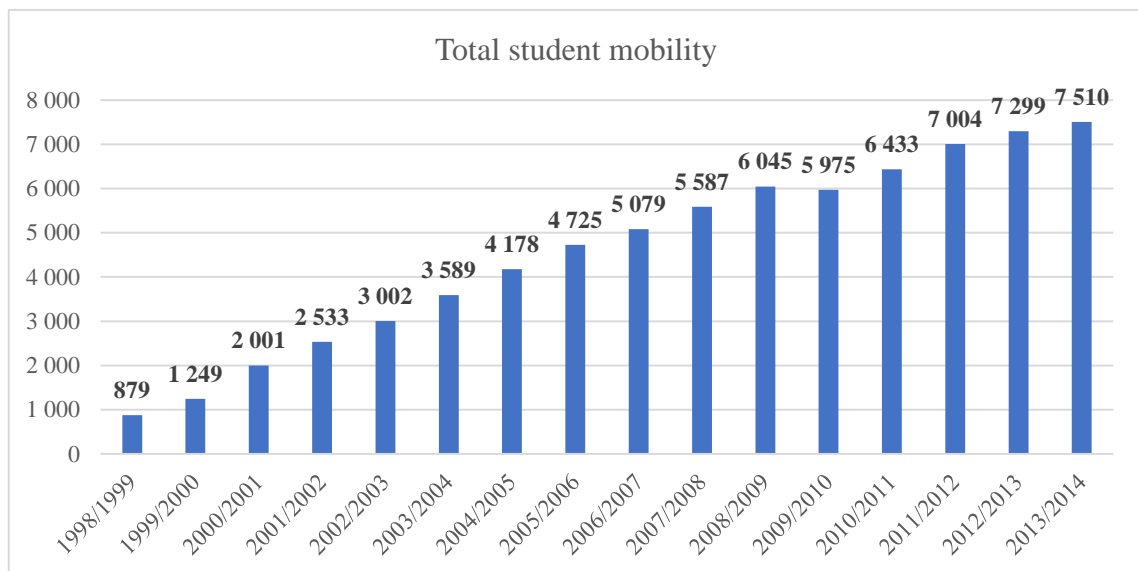
Graph 2 Number of outgoing students on Erasmus Study Placement
Source: own elaboration

Statistical data for the Czech Republic are only available from the year 1998/99 where in the first year 879 Czech students participated in Erasmus program in total. From this point more and more students are going abroad for study placement or for an internship each year.



Graph 3 Number of outgoing students on Erasmus Internship
Source: own elaboration

Compared to other EU countries the Czech Republic is doing above average. For example in the academic year 2008/09 the Czech Republic occupied the fourth place in the proportion of students who used the opportunity to spend 3-12 months at a university abroad or an internship as part of their degree program. Over six thousand Czech students, representing around 4 percent of the total have decided to do their Erasmus study placement at a university in another country.



Graph 4 Total student mobility in the Czech Republic
Source: own elaboration

From the statistics from European Commission, which were launched in 2014 we can clearly see the progress of Erasmus mobility programmes. In the years 2013/14 the number rose to 7 510 students who went for a study programme or a traineeship exchange and the number of students coming from abroad to the Czech Republic is growing at even a greater pace, increasing from 3 715 in the year 2008/2009 to 6 868 in 2013/14. (European Commission, 2014)

Most students coming to study in the Czech Republic are from Spain, Turkey, France, Poland or Slovakia and the most popular target destinations of Czech students are Spain, Germany, France, Great Britain, and Portugal.

Erasmus made a substantial contribution to the opening and modernization of the Czech higher education not just in Europe but also internationally.

Empirical Part

5. Introduction of the research

In the empirical part of my research I will present and compare all the data which I was able to collect. Due to the nature of this study two different types of approach were chosen. For the first part of the study it was the quantitative research which is suitable for higher number of respondents. For the second part qualitative research was more appropriate. This method allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the research area and it is relevant for a smaller number of subjects.

5.1 The Aim of the study

The main aim of this study was to find out the student's and employer's views on exchange student mobility programme. The major goals were first to find out which skills students usually develop during their stay abroad, as well as the main criteria for choosing the country and differences between educational institutions in the Czech Republic and in foreign countries. The second aim was to discover the qualities which candidates can apply at positions in companies in the Czech Republic and thirdly, whether the mobility overall can be beneficial in connection to future employment.

5.2 Determination of the research questions

The questions related to the aim of the research of this bachelor thesis (*Student mobility and career prospects*) are following:

- 1) What are the main skills which students have developed during their Erasmus international mobility experience?
- 2) What are the major benefits of study placement or internship abroad?
- 3) What is the biggest difference between the applicants with and without International mobility experience?
- 4) What are the most important qualities which an ideal candidate should have?
- 5) Is the Erasmus experience beneficial for the future career of students?

5.3 The research process

The technique of data collection for my bachelor thesis that was used is called web-based questionnaires in the quantitative method and semi-structured interview for the qualitative research.

As for the first part of the research the questionnaires were created on-line so they can be easily filled by the participants of the research. Even though this type of survey might slightly decrease the validity of data it is acceptable for this type of research.

During the data collecting process in the second part of the research, the respondents were before every interview informed about the fact that the whole interview would be recorded before every interview. They were assured that any interview would not be published and that all the information given would be used only for the research of the thesis. All the respondents were also guaranteed total anonymity.

5.4 Characterization of the research sample

The research sample for the quantitative study part were students and former students who have participated in Erasmus mobility during their studies. The respondents were from different universities across the Czech Republic. There was no restriction in question of age, gender or the current status of the respondents. 60 responses were collected in total.

In the qualitative part of the research there were some major criteria for the research sample. It didn't matter about the field of business and as for the size of the company, the only restriction was a minimum of 40 employees with no upper limit. The main requirement was that the company uses or is planning to use English language and that it operates in the area of the Czech Republic and other countries or is planning to expand to foreign markets soon. In total 6 interviews with HR managers or other employees from the Human Resources and Recruitment teams were set up and recorded.

5.5 Methodology

It is very important to choose the right type of method for each survey, depending on the number of respondents, the time allocated for the study and the nature of the study. For this reason mixed method research was chosen, which is as Creswell (2011) explains a combination of the collection of quantitative data and qualitative data, in this case web-based questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The final study is a combination of both types of data due to the fact that this should maximize the positives and minimize the negatives of each type of data.

5.5.1 Questionnaire

As I have mentioned above, for the first part of the study indirect, web-based questionnaire administered to former Erasmus students were created. Those were students from universities across the Czech Republic who have participated in an Erasmus mobility at some stage of their study. The collection of the data was done through online forms.

For the quantitative method of the research it is typical to collect limited information on numerically large scale of subjects. The major advantage of quantitative research as described by Hendl (2001) is relatively quick data collection and analysis of these data and also the fact, that the results are not dependent on the researcher. The drawbacks of this methods are mainly that categories of applied research may not correspond with specific features or the possibility of receiving highly general data. In this case the mathematical analysis was used to process the collected material.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts and the respondents were asked to answer 38 questions in total. The survey was carried out indirectly through an online platform. The first part included questions about general information of the participants like age, university, gender or occupation. The second and third part were focused on the type of mobility in which the student has participated. The questionnaire contained closed questions and ranking questions, set by the means of a scale.

5.5.2 Interview

In order to get some more detailed information about the companies, a technique of semi-structured interview was selected as an appropriate method for the data collection in the second part of the study. The semi-structured interviews allows the author to guide and adjust the conversation towards the relevant data and topics. Another positive feature of this research method is the ability to control the flow of the meeting. These interviews were realized together with the employers from Human Resources (HR) department in companies and were focused on the ideal candidate profile and advantages of applicants with previous foreign mobility experience.

The qualitative type of research enables us to get more comprehensive data about a lower number of surveyed subjects. The advantages of qualitative methods according to Hendl (2001) are mainly the consideration of specific local or sub-cultural concerns and also the fact, that the subject of the research is studied in its natural environment.

On the other hand the disadvantages are the time-consuming length of the research and the possibility of influencing the final results by the researcher.

To analyse the data collected during the survey the Grounded theory was used. As Strauss and Corbin explained (1990) this method allows the researcher to sort the data according to chosen code, in this case open coding technique. During this process similarities and differences were found in answers of employers. Data were then processed by finding the codes and interpreted in the empirical part of the thesis.

With all of the 6 respondents a face-to-face interviews were carried out. The questions were carefully selected and consulted in cooperation with the supervisor of the thesis. During each interview these selected questions were strictly followed.

The interview questions were divided into three main parts and contained 15 questions and two ranking tables. The research questions were connected to the thematic areas. The first part was about general information of the company-size, number of countries in which the company operates and the percentage of the Czech and Slovak, and foreign employees. In the second part there were questions about requirements and preferences in regards to potential applicants of the company. The third part contained two ranking scales about the skills which ideal applicants should have.

Each interview took about 20 minutes and it was recorded both on tape as well as in written form.

6. Analysis of the acquired data

In this all the data collected during the research will be presented and compared. This study might offer some interesting information and one of the main intention is to search for the answer, if and to what extent has an Erasmus mobility an impact on the professional career. This will be done by analysing the opinions of the student who took part in a mobility programme and of companies operating in the area of Czech Republic.

6.1 The general characterization of respondents

In the following tables (Tab. 1, 2, 3 and 4) we can find the overall characterization of the respondents from the first part of research. Those were students aged 21 to 35. The majority of them (75%) still have a status of student, while 25% of them is employed or self-employed and none from the surveyed subjects is unemployed. There is also a visible higher percentage of females (73%) over the males (27%). In question of citizenship the majority of the subjects have Czech nationality (87%) and the rest of them are from Slovakia. (13%)

Tab. 1 Characterization of students according to gender (N=60)

Sex	Absolute numbers	Relative number
Male	16	27%
Female	44	73%
Total	60	100%

Source: own elaboration

Tab. 2 Characterization of students according to nationality (N=60)

Nationality	Absolute number	Relative number
Czech	52	87%
Slovak	8	13%
Total	60	100%

Source: own elaboration

Tab. 3 Characterization of students according to occupation (N=60)

Occupation	Absolute number	Relative number
Student	45	75%
Employee	14	23%
Self-employed	1	2%
Unemployed	0	0%
Total	60	100%

Source: own elaboration

Tab. 4 Characterization of students according to age (N=60)

Age	Absolute number	Relative number
21	1	2%
22	15	25%
23	10	17%
24	13	21%
25	9	15%
26	2	3%
27	3	5%
28	5	9%
29	1	2%
35	1	2%
Total	60	100%

Source: own elaboration

There is a set of informative table (Tab. 5, 6, 7) portrayed bellow with general characterization of the subjects from the qualitative part of study. As was mentioned before data from 6 companies were collected. One of these companies was in the small company category (with less than 100 employees), 3 were medium size companies (101-1000 employees) and 2 of them were large companies with the number of employees exceeding 1000 in the Czech Republic alone.

For the reason of anonymity of the companies it was decided to not include the country of origin or the number of countries in which the firms are operating in the table.

Tab. 5 Characterization of employers according to number of employees (N=6)

Company		1	2	3	4	5	6
Number of employees:	Czech Republic	<100	101-1000	101-1000	101-1000	>1000	>1000
	Worldwide	-	>100000	<100000	-	>250000	>250000

Source: own elaboration

Tab. 6 Characterization of employers according to field and internship offer (N=6)

Company	1	2	3	4	5	6
Field of the company:	Software	Software	Software	Travel	Food and Beverage	Software & Hardware
Does the company offer paid internships:	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO

Source: own elaboration

Tab. 7 Characterization of employers according to percentage of employees (N=6)

Company		1	2	3	4	5	6
Percentage of Employees	Czech & Slovak	100%	95%	85%	55%	90%	60%
	Other	0%	5%	15%	45%	10%	40%

Source: own elaboration

6.2 Questionnaire findings

6.2.1 General information

The most important finding of the quantitative survey was, that the students do believe that the Erasmus mobility experience is beneficial for their future career.

Only 33% of all respondents had previously done an internship in the Czech Republic and about 58% of them thought that foreign internship experience was more valuable than internship in the area of Czech market.

From the 33% who have this experience 58% said that they thought that foreign internship experience was more valuable than a work internship in the Czech Republic. In the table below (Tab. 8) the ratings of skills and capabilities which students have gained during their mobility can be found.

Tab. 8 Skills and capabilities gained during mobility (N=60, Ranking scale 1-Not at all; 5-Absolutely)

	1	2	3	4	5	Standard deviation	Weighted average	Median
Communication skills	2%	2%	9%	32%	55%	12.39	4.37 / 5	5
Team-working skills	7%	12%	23%	33%	25%	5.76	3.58 / 5	4
Integrity	0%	10%	20%	42%	28%	8.65	3.88 / 5	4
Confidence	2%	0%	28%	37%	33%	9.53	4 / 5	4
Personality	0%	3%	29%	29%	39%	9.11	4.03 / 5	4
Intellectual Ability	0%	8%	28%	47%	17%	9.78	3.72 / 5	4
Planning & Organizational skills	7%	5%	25%	35%	28%	7.21	3.73 / 5	4
Decision-making skills	2%	7%	20%	43%	28%	9.01	3.9 / 5	4
Leadership skills	5%	17%	44%	22%	12%	7.83	3.19 / 5	3

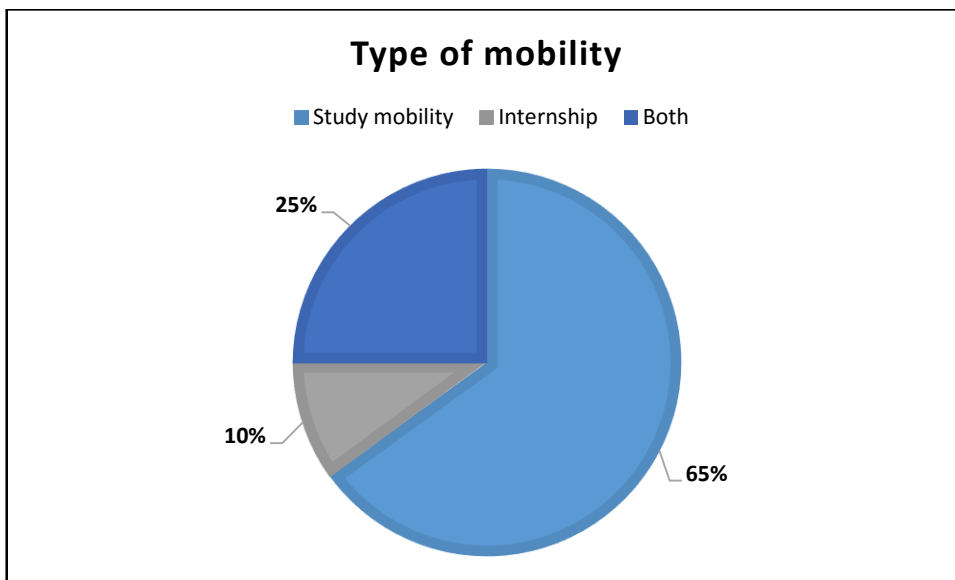
Source: own elaboration

From all the respondents 73% have answered positively to the questions whether they are planning to move abroad for better work placement in next 3-5 years and

another interesting point is also the fact that 27% from all the surveyed subjects stated that they do already work abroad. In the question of employment of the respondents, 59% answered positively on question of current employment, including part time jobs and 70% from those believe that the Erasmus experience has helped them to get the job.

6.2.2 Type, destination and reason for mobility

In this survey, 65% of respondents have participated in an Erasmus study mobility programme, 10% in Erasmus internship and 15% in both types. It is in congruence with the European statistics, where the internships are around 22% of overall Erasmus mobility. Also 27% of all subjects have participated in other type of mobility besides the Erasmus study exchange and internship mobility, for example in the Youth in Action mobility or Erasmus training courses.



Graph 5 Type of student mobility from quantitative study (N=60)
Source: own elaboration

Another finding was that most frequently visited country was ranked Spain and Finland. From the European statistics we can see that Spain is the most visited country overall in Erasmus exchange mobility. The last finding for this part of the research was the reason for deciding on a particular country. In question on study type of mobility, the most respondents (42%) answered that the main factor for selecting a destination was previous knowledge and awareness of the country, followed by the availability of the course/program (24%), language spoken (20%) and personal recommendation (15%).

6.2.3 Study mobility information

The majority of the respondents has selected English (80%) as the most frequent language used in the foreign institutions.

In the table number nine (Tab. 9) we can see the evaluation of the schooling system in the Czech Republic. The majority of students have agreed on the fact, that the education in the Czech Republic is unnecessarily theory-based (55% of respondents agree) and is not very focused on practical learning (53% agree).

Tab. 9 Evaluation of education in the Czech Republic (N=39)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Standard deviation	Weighted average	Median
Practical	24%	29%	21%	23%	3%	3.44	2.53 / 5	2
Difficult	3%	18%	39%	32%	8%	5.28	3.24 / 5	3
Beneficial for future career	3%	16%	27%	43%	11%	5.2	3.43 / 5	4
Unnecessarily theoretical	3%	13%	29%	32%	23%	4.08	3.61 / 5	4

Source: own elaboration

Despite this fact, more than half of the respondents believe that the education is beneficial for their future career. As for the difficulty level 40% marked the education as difficult and 39% expressed neutral opinion on this topic.

Tab. 10 Evaluation of education in foreign universities (N=39)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Standard deviation	Weighted average	Median
Practical	0%	24%	16%	26%	34%	4.41	3.71 / 5	4
Difficult	11%	26%	24%	29%	11%	3.01	3.03 / 5	3
Beneficial for future career	0%	3%	21%	47%	29%	6.65	4.03 / 5	4
Unnecessarily theoretical	8%	42%	29%	18%	3%	5.43	2.66 / 5	3

Source: own elaboration

As for the universities abroad the situation is the following (Tab. 10).

When comparing both tables quiet interesting facts can be observed. For example 60% of students answered positively on the question if education at foreign universities is practical, which is by 34% more, than when asked the same question about universities in the Czech Republic. Another finding of the survey is the fact, that unlikely the Czech education, only 21% of respondents described education in foreign countries as much too theoretical, which is by 34% less.

Of those surveyed, 97% said that they would appreciate education in the Czech Republic to be more real-life focused and practical and 92% of these also said, that they would welcome to have a semester of compulsory, practical internship in companies in the Czech Republic, and also abroad, therefore following the example of Germany or Finland, where this system works.

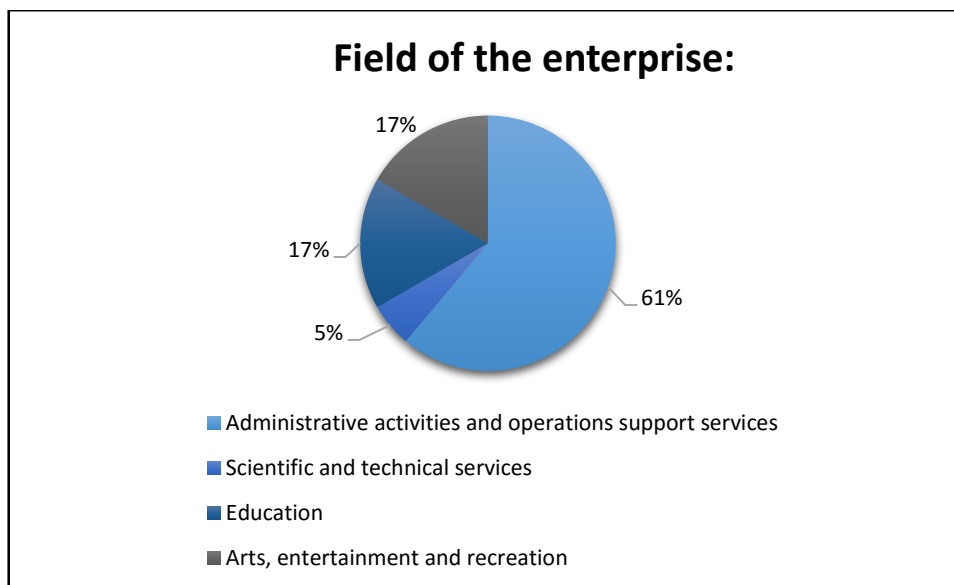
6.2.4 Internship information

This series of questions was directed only to participants who went abroad for an Erasmus internship. The first question was focused on interning and living in a new country and culture and the ability to adjust to the unfamiliar norms and customs of the foreign country. Almost all of respondents answered positively (96%).

The majority have stated (83%) that during interning abroad there were times when the respondents did not understand how to do something, or when the process varied from what they were used to.

English was stated as the main language used in the organizations by most of the students. The size of the enterprise differs from a company with 1-50 employees (57% of all answers), followed by 50-500 employees (33%) and 500 and more employees which was the answer in case of 10% of all the respondents.

The last question included various sectors of the internship, where 61% reported their work placement in the administrative field, 17% in education and in art and entertainment, 5% in scientific and technical services and none from the respondents have done their internship in IT services.



Graph 6 Field of enterprise (N=21)
Source: own elaboration

All the respondents agree that the international experience has expanded their network and improved their professional knowledge. The majority of them (95%) has the feeling that it boosted their self-confidence.

On the other side only 38% would start their own business after the internship and also there was only 29% of positive answers to the question whether the students have had any kind of help with preparation for the internships from their home universities.

6.3 Interview findings

6.3.1 General information

In the first part of the qualitative research the first part of the interview was focused on questions about general requirements, which the company has on applicants.

The survey shows that the minority of the respondents have participated in an Erasmus mobility themselves. The majority of companies do not require a university degree, however they do find a bachelor or master diploma beneficial when considering more applicants. Moreover, some of the companies offer special after-graduation programmes where a completed Master degree is one of the main conditions for participation. The leading language requirements are either only high level of English or active knowledge of English as well as the Czech language.

All of the respondents agreed that the language requirements notably depend on position in question. For example there is no such a high demand for languages in

technical or finance positions, while on the other hand when one wants to apply for positions in support or human resources it is crucial to have a certain language knowledge and besides English and Czech, it is very valuable to know some other foreign language as well.

Most employers see language proficiency as more important than having a University degree. Nevertheless there are exceptions in technical positions, where the diploma was stated as more important, due to a certain level of knowledge which is required.

None of the respondents have preferences in question of gender. Some companies indicated that tend to accept more men, but mainly due to fact, that they have many technical positions and there are not enough women in this industry. Another finding was that no employers would select female applicants based on the fact, whether they have children. On the contrary, majority of these companies are family-friendly and try to support working mothers in many ways, however sometimes the job might not be ideal for women with children because of night time work shifts due to different time zones.

One part of the interviews was a question whether there exist any benefits at Slovak students, for example better adaptability or lower age of graduation. Most of the responses were negative. Only a minority stated that there is no big difference, the few differences might be that actually the 'better students' come to Czech universities and they already have the drive to study abroad, or that Slovak students are more flexible in question of offered positions.

6.3.2 Requirements on the skills and capabilities of applicants

In general the employers see the foreign mobility experience beneficial. The respondents agree that those candidates are more employable mainly because of higher cultural awareness and adaptation and therefore ability to work and deal with colleagues and customers from foreign countries. Another advantage of the applicants who have been on Erasmus stay is the high level of languages proficiency and independence. Also one finding was that it is important to not just speak the foreign language but also to know the culture of the country. Therefore a person who has been on Erasmus for example in Germany, is not just able to speak German language, but is also aware of the cultural differences which has higher added value, than a person who can only

communicate in the language. On the contrary, the skills which candidates without the experience abroad are missing are mainly the self- drive, courage to think ‘out of the box’ and the openness. Minority from the surveyed companies stated, that they do not see any or see only a small difference between applicants with and without foreign experience.

In the next step respondents were asked to rank the skills and capabilities which they consider as important when recruiting new employees. The study confirms that the most employers view social skills and personality as more important and valuable than most of the hard skills e.g. Literacy, Numeracy or good degree qualification.

Tab. 11 Ranking table of 'Soft skills' by each company (N=6, Ranking scale: 1-Not Important; 5-Most important)

Skills:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Communication	3	5	3	5	5	4
Team-working	5	5	4	5	5	3
Integrity	4	5	4	4	5	5
Honesty	4	4	4	4	5	1
Intellectual ability	4	4	3	5	5	3
Confidence	3	4	2	4	4	2
Personality	4	4	2	3	4	4
Planning & organizational	3	3	2	4	5	1
Leadership	4	3	1	3	3	3
Cultural fit	3	4	5	5	5	5
Problem-solving	3	3	3	5	4	4
Positive attitude to work	5	5	5	5	5	4
Self-management	3	3	4	4	5	3
Business awareness	3	2	3	3	4	4

Source: own elaboration

In the table above (tab. 11) we can see the evaluation of ‘soft skills’. Employers rate the positive attitude to work and the ability to work in a team as the most important

skills. In contrast the leadership skills or the business awareness were ranked with much lower scores.

Also the intellectual ability which stands for critical thinking or deep subject knowledge and the ability to fit in culturally were ranked as highly demanded by the employers. This is mainly due to the fact, that the majority of the surveyed companies have foreign employees and therefore it is very important to be able to work in a team, and also to work with people from different cultures.

Tab. 12 Ranking table of 'Hard skills' by each company (N=6, Ranking scale: 1-Not Important; 5-Most important)

Skills	1	2	3	4	5	6
Professional experience	3	3	5	2	3	2
Language proficiency	3	4	3	5	3	3
Literacy	1	2	2	5	3	1
Numeracy	2	3	2	3	4	2
IT skills	3	2	5	3	3	4
Relevant course study	2	2	3	2	2	1
Punctuality	2	4	3	4	4	3
Good degree classification	2	3	1	1	2	1

Source: own elaboration

In the next table (Tab. 12) there can be found the evaluation of 'Hard skills'. As we can see the most significant skills for the employers are language proficiency and punctuality, and a good degree classification.

On the other hand companies usually do not require a high level of literacy or numeracy skills. Not a single employer rated a good degree classification as important. In technical positions it is important to have a knowledge, which is not always in connection with good classification. However, all the respondents said, that those demanded skills again are highly dependent on the position for which the candidate applies for.

As the last step of this part of the interview the employers were asked to name five most important skills or capabilities which ideal candidate should have. Not

surprisingly, the most frequently named skills were again team-working, positive attitude to work, flexibility and openness, learning ability, self-drive and cultural ‘fit with the company’. These were followed by communication skills, responsibility and problem-solving.

Only a minority of the surveyed employers answered that the most demanded skills would be the planning and organizational skills or IT skills.

Along with the ranking scale of skills, the employers were asked to decide between five sets of imaginary applicants based on the capabilities, which are more relevant to them. The first one was an applicant who had previous work experience, but in the Czech Republic and an applicant, who had study experience from abroad. In this case more employers have decided for the first option.

The second question was focused on applicants with a high level of IT skills such as knowledge of special programmes versus applicant with high language proficiency. In this case there was the same proportion of both answers. Again, this is probably due to the fact, that IT& Software companies would rather accept candidates with better IT skills.

In the third question the decision was laying between a relevant course study or good communication and team-working skills. Not surprisingly all of the companies would prefer the second option.

For the fourth question respondents were asked to choose from either a candidate with great presentation skills or good IT skills where the majority preferred the first applicant.

In the last question it was possible to choose from either the ability to work with people from different cultures or punctuality, in the sense of keeping the deadlines and finishing the work. In this case the majority of employers agreed that they would rather accept the first candidate.

6.3.3 Recruitment and other findings

The research shows that online recruitment is undoubtedly the most used method for finding and hiring candidates. All of the respondents have stated that they use social

media as main tool for recruitment. These include Facebook, Twitter and Linked-in. Majority of companies also use web portals for advertising their job offers.

According to many employers it is also very important to cooperate with universities. Most of the technical focused companies indicated, that they try to offer internships to students and then continue to work with them after graduation. Events and open days of companies were rated as an effective way of branding and recruitment

In question to the recruitment process, most of the companies are doing the interviews in Czech language, but half of the respondents stated that because there are more rounds of the interview process, there is a high probability that the candidate will speak English in some of them.

The last question was focused on the biggest problems of fresh graduates and also on the over-qualification of applicants. The most frequently stated problems were, that graduates are not skilled enough and have only theoretical knowledge as well as a problem with communication and the fact that applicants cannot sell themselves during the interview. Besides that, some of the employers stated that fresh graduates are not independent enough and are lacking courage or alternatively that they are over estimating themselves and have very high expectations.

Some of the respondents indicated that they had a few over-qualified applicants in the past, which they could not accept for the offered job position, for the reason that they would not be able to meet the required conditions.

7. Discussion

The survey is focused on the employers' attitudes regarding Erasmus mobility experience of the graduates and on the view of students on the benefits of these exchange mobility programmes. The findings from the research do not undermine the importance of the subject knowledge, they rather highlight the additional value employers look for in terms of equipping graduates with a skill set that makes them more employable.

In the quantitative research an analysis of collected data from the students and former students who went abroad for Erasmus mobility programme can be found. The survey includes a ranking of both Czech and foreign universities, the benefits of education and then more detailed questions in relation to study mobility and internships.

The majority of the questionnaire respondents stated that education at foreign institutions is more practical and real life focused and thus more beneficial for their future career. Moreover, 97% of students specifically stated that they would prefer to have a more practical approach to higher education in the Czech Republic and almost all of the answers were positive, when asked whether a compulsory internship during studies would be appreciated by the students.

All of the 60 respondents agreed that Erasmus experience is beneficial for their future career and that it has enhanced the skills necessary for them to function well in a multicultural society.

As can be seen from the findings of the qualitative survey, the companies attach greater importance to students' 'soft skills' especially communication and team working skills which are exactly the skills and capabilities which students have developed during their stay abroad. The only exception are the IT and Software companies which generally prefer 'hard skills' such as IT knowledge of special programmes or numeracy.

Foreign language proficiency has become much more required in recent years as well as international experience gained a stable place among the recruitment criteria. The majority of companies do find this experience beneficial mainly due to the skills and capabilities which students gain during the time abroad.

The survey also revealed that it is considered to be more important for employers when graduates exhibit a positive attitude to work and especially in international teams, great significance is placed on the candidate's "fitting in" with the team.

The international experience seems to notably reinforce adaptability of the candidate to work in intercultural environment and enhances the foreign language proficiency. The majority of students believe that Erasmus experience offers better opportunities later in life.

What could be viewed as a disadvantage of the survey was a relatively small sample size in the qualitative research part, which included 6 employers from various companies across the Czech Republic. These companies differ in industry field, country of origin, number of countries where they operate and number of workers employed either in the Czech Republic and also internationally, therefore it cannot be claimed that the sample was representative of the general situation. However, these companies do represent around eight thousand employees on the Czech market.

8. Personal recommendations

8.1 For Students

As can be deduced from the results of research, when applying for a job it is important to possess certain specific skills and capabilities as well as language proficiency. Therefore students should make use of their studies for this purpose and try to gain the required skills either through Erasmus foreign mobility programme or by joining a relevant students' organization.

Through these possibilities the students don't just gain experience, but also they enhance their contact network and in case of an international students' club they can improve their knowledge of several foreign languages.

The employers agreed that the most important skills are communication, positive attitude to work and the ability of working in multicultural teams. For that reason we can say, that when students search for a job after graduation, the chance of finding a good quality position grows when they possess the skills needed for communicating and working in a multicultural team apart from just English proficiency.

8.2 For Universities

It would be advisable to promote student mobility and to make the language skills a priority at higher education. From what can be seen from the collected data, the majority of the students would appreciate to have more practical education experience. This might be done by taking some courses simultaneously. For example the statistics course could be taught in the same semester together with Bachelor thesis writing course – this would enable the students to use theoretical knowledge on data analysis in practice for the empirical part of their thesis.

Another recommendation based on the results from the survey would be to start with mandatory internships in Czech or foreign companies during the studies. This practice is common in Finland and Germany, where the principle works, and it is highly beneficial not only for students, but also for the companies, as they get a chance to train and shape their future employees. These internships allow students to decide whether they are a fit for a particular industry, and allows them to start collecting work experience in their field before having finished the university, which is extremely beneficial.

8.3 For Companies

The last part is focused on the companies and their role in student-shaping process. A broader cooperation with universities in the form of offering more internships for students across different sectors would be the ideal solution to the issue of the graduates' lack of work experience. Internships are beneficial for both sides. For the company it is an efficient way of selecting and recruiting potential future employees. For the interns it is a chance to find out which position or company fits them.

Another way to improve the cooperation between the universities and companies would be to offer more possibilities of writing the thesis on different topics at a company. This might be done during a part-time job, where students could use their theoretical knowledge from their education and the practical knowledge from the internships in writing their thesis, which could simultaneously help to improve the situation in the company. Typically when students finish their studies, the employers offer them full time contracts.

The last recommendation would be to organize events for students where companies give valuable advice to the students. For example how to sell themselves in job interviews, how to write a good CV or which skills should the students improve.

9. Conclusion

This bachelor thesis aimed to investigate the effects of Erasmus mobility on the potential employability and its overall benefits on the students involved.

In the theoretical part the basic historical facts and events as well as important studies and organizations supporting mobility and Erasmus programmes are described and explained.

The major goal of the empirical part was to find out the opinions of employers and students on work and study experience abroad. For this purpose a quantitative and a qualitative research were conducted. As a method of research web-based questionnaires and mathematical analysis were used. In the second part of the research semi-structured interviews were chosen as the best method to use because of the detailed information acquired about the respondents. The analysis of data collected during the research was based on the Grounded theory method. As for the technique, open coding was used, because it enables the researcher to look for similarities and differences in the collected answers. These data were processed by finding codes and the consequent interpretation of final results.

According to the result of the survey Erasmus experience has a mobilizing and reinforcing effect on the students and it is valued by the majority of the employers. However, more than the fact of mobility experience, the companies give more importance to the enhancement of real-life skills useful for the functioning in an international team which students gain during this experience.

Generally speaking, the process of globalization and the increase of international activities available for the students and people in general seem to increase the international competitiveness and therefore it is becoming more important than ever for graduates to have some of the stated competences even when applying for a job in national companies. I would be very pleased if this thesis encouraged more students to study or work abroad in order to gain some of these highly valued experience and skills.

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12.List of abbreviations

BE	Belgium
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DE	Germany
DZS	Centre for International Cooperation in Education
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EIS	Erasmus Impact Study
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ERASMUS	European Action for the Mobility of University Students
ES	Spain
ESU	European Student Union
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
EUROSTAT	European Statistical Office
FQ-EHEA	Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
LLP	Lifelong Learning Program
NAEP	National Agency for European Educational Programmes
OECD	Office of Economic Cooperation and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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14. Appendix

14.1 Appendix number 1: Questionnaires

Student mobility and career prospects Survey for my bachelor thesis. Please provide as detailed info as possible. If the question is not relevant, please leave the answer box empty.

1) Please enter your full name:

2) Address:

3) University:

4) Nationality:

5) Gender:

- Female
- Male

6) Occupation:

- Student
- Employee
- Self-employed
- Unemployed

7) Age:

8) Do you have any children?

- YES NO

9) In which type of Erasmus/ Erasmus+ have you participated?

- Study placement
- Internship
- Both

10) Please provide country:

- Study placement:
- Internship:

11) Have you participated in any different kind of mobility apart from the Erasmus mobility?

- YES NO

12) If yes, which one was it?

13) STUDY PLACEMENT: (Reasons for choosing the country)

- Language
- Knowledge and awareness of the host country
- Personal recommendations
- Availability of course/programme

14) INTERNSHIP: (Reasons for choosing the country)

- Language
- Company preference
- Sector of internship
- Standard of living
- Salary (Paid internship)

15) Do you believe that international mobility is beneficial for your future career?

- YES NO

16) Please indicate from 1 (NOT AT ALL) to 5 (ABSOLUTELY) the skills and capabilities which you think you have gained during your mobility

- Communication skills
- Team-working skills
- Integrity
- Confidence
- Personality
- Intellectual Ability
- Planning/Organizational skills
- Decision-making skills
- Leadership skills

17) Have you done any internship in company in the Czech Republic?

- YES
- NO

18) If YES, would you say that the foreign experience was more valuable than the experience within the Czech Republic?

- YES
- NO

19) Are you planning to move abroad for a better work placement in the next 3-5 years?

- YES
- NO

20) Do you already work abroad?

- YES
- NO

21) Are you employed?

- YES
- NO

22) If YES, do you believe that your Erasmus experience helped you to get the job?

- YES
- NO

23) Please provide more detailed information about your foreign experience.

(Note; If you have participated in both, please choose only Internship). I have participated in:

- STUDY PLACEMENT
- INTERNSHIP

Study placement

24) In what language did you study at university abroad?

25) Would you say that the education at your University in ČR is:

(Strongly Disagree; Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)

- Practical
- Difficult
- Beneficial for your future career
- Unnecessarily theoretical

26) Would you say that education at the host University (abroad) was:

(Strongly Disagree; Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)

- Practical

- Difficult
- Beneficial for your future career
- Unnecessarily theoretical

27) Would you appreciate education in ČR to be more practical?

- YES
- NO

28) Would you appreciate having a compulsory internship during your studies?

(Following the example of Germany, Finland, etc.)

- YES
- NO

Internship

29) While interning and living in a new country and culture, were you able to be flexible and adjust to unfamiliar norms and customs of the foreign country?

- YES
- NO

30) Were there times when you did not understand how to do something, or was there a process that varied from what you were used to in your country?

- YES
- NO

31) Which language did you use in the company?

32) Field of the enterprise:

- Administrative activities and operations support services
- IT services
- Scientific and technical services
- Education
- Arts, entertainment and recreation

33) Size of the enterprise:

- 1-50 employees
- 50-500 employees
- 500+ employees

34) Would you say that this experience expanded your network?

- YES
- NO

35) Would you say that this experience improved your professional knowledge?

- YES
- NO

36) Would you say that this experience boosted your self-confidence?

- YES
- NO

37) Would you say that this experience encouraged you to start your own business?

- YES
- NO

38) Did you have any kind of help from your University in ČR with preparation for your internship?

- YES
- NO

14.2 Appendix number 2: Semi-structured interviews

Basic Information:

- 1) Name of the company:**

- 2) Field:**

- 3) Number of employees in Czech Republic/ Worldwide:**

- 4) What is the country of origin/the headquarters?**

- 5) In how many countries is the company operating?**

- 6) Does the company offer paid internships?**

- 7) Percentage of Czech/ Slovak/ Foreign Employees?**

Requirements

- 1) Have you participated in any kind of Erasmus program? (Study placement/ Internship)**

- 2) Do you require University degree? Bachelor or Master?**

- 3) Which language skills do you require?**
 - Only Czech
 - Only English
 - English +one foreign language
 - English, Czech + 1 foreign language

- 4) Is it more important to have a degree, or knowledge of languages?**

- 5) Is it important to have a foreign professional or study experience?**
 - Must-have
 - Beneficial
 - Not-important

- 6) **Do you have any preferences of candidate in question of country of origin?**
- EU
 - USA
 - ASIA
 - Other:
 - NONE

7) **What is the main difference between applicants with and without foreign experience?**

8) **Do you prefer applicants with better ‘Soft skills’ (Communication, Team-working skills, Integrity) or applicants with better ‘Hard skills’ (Literacy, Numeracy, IT skills)?**

9) **Do you prefer female/ male applicants?**

10) **Do you prefer applicants without/ with children?**

11) **Which type of recruitment do you use?**

- Online recruitment
- Advisory service
- Agencies
- Other

12) **Do you think that there exist any benefit with Slovak students? (Lower age of graduation, Integrity in foreign country?)**

13) **Please rank those skills from 1(NOT IMPORTANT) to 5 (MOST IMPORTANT) and also please choose five skills which ideal candidate/applicant should have:**

SOFT SKILLS:

- Communication skills
- Team-working skills
- Integrity
- Honesty
- Intellectual Ability

- Confidence
- Personality
- Planning&Organizational skills
- Leadership skills
- Cultural fit with the company
- Problem solving skills
- Positive attitude to work
- Self-management
- Business awareness

OTHER:

- Previous professional experience
- Good knowledge of language
- Literacy (Good writing skills)
- Numeracy (Good number skills)
- IT skills
- Relevant course study
- Punctuality
- Good degree classification

14) Five Most Important skills:

15) Would you prefer the applicants to have?

Previous work experience in Czech Republic	Foreign study experience
High level of IT skills (e.g. Knowledge of special programs)	High level of language skills
Relevant course of study	Good communication and Team-working skills
Presentation skills	IT skills
Ability to work with people from different cultures	Punctuality