

# European Mobility of Students in Erasmus Programme with Intercultural Focus

Diploma Thesis

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## **Abstract**

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The diploma thesis is focused on the cultural patterns and motives the Czech and Belgian students are influenced by when selecting a country for their Erasmus+ exchange study programme. Further, a development of students' soft-skills after the exchange programme as well as their attitude to further international mobility is analyzed. After a realisation of primary and secondary research, a relationship was revealed between the individualism dimension of selected countries and students' home country, confirming the hypothesis that the Czech and Belgian students choose more individualistic countries. Further, there was proven a positive correlation in terms of the development of a student's skills. Also, the students tend to be more mobile within Europe as well as worldwide. In the end, the benefits of Erasmus+ exchange study programme are discussed and suggestions aimed to the representatives of department of the foreign affairs proposed.

## **Key Words**

Country cultural dimension, Culture, Erasmus Programme, Erasmus+, Europe, Hofstede's intercultural dimensions, Mobility, Soft-skills, Students, Tertiary education

## **Abstrakt**

Trávníčková, M. *Evropská Mobilita Studentů v Erasmus Programu s Mezikulturním Zaměřením*. Diplomová práce. Brno: Mendelova Univerzita v Brně, 2015.

Tato diplomová práce je zaměřena na vliv národního kulturního pozadí pro české a belgické studenty při jejich výběru země na výměnný studijní pobyt Erasmus+. Dále je zjišťován vývoj tzv. soft-skills studentů a postoj k další zahraniční mobilitě po návratu z tohoto programu. Na základě primárního a sekundárního šetření byla statisticky zjištěna spojitost mezi stupněm individualismu v domácí a ve vyjíždějící zemi, kterou si studenti vybrali. To potvrzuje hypotézu, že si čeští a belgičtí studenti vybírají více individualisticky hodnocené země dle Hofstedeho specifikace. Také byla statisticky potvrzena pozitivní korelace vývoje tzv. soft-skills studentů po návratu ze zahraniční mobility a dle výsledků jsou po této mobilitě studenti více otevření k evropské i světové mobilitě. V závěru jsou diskutovány pozitivní stránky Erasmus+ výměnného studijního programu a představeny návrhy cílené zástupcům oddělení zahraničních styků na terciárních institucích těchto dvou zemí.

## **Klíčová slova**

Erasmus Program, Erasmus+, Evropa, Hofstedeho mezikulturní dimenze, Kultura, Mobilita, Národní kultura, Soft-skills, Studenti, Terciární vzdělávání

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# 1 Introduction

Each person is influenced by variety of factors when making a decision. Such decisions might be conscious, but the majority of the decisions are made without about knowing one was dealing with them, which can be called as unconscious decision-making. It has been proven by many researchers that around 50% of our personal traits are inherent and are given by the genes we get when we are born. The other 50% of our behaviour is influenced by the environment in which we were raised and have lived (such as family, friends, teachers, neighbours, etc.). The combination of both – inherent and learned patterns, gives everybody their personality and the attitude to life.

It is clear that people living in the same region, respectively country, behave alike and have very similar attitudes to life (for example the perception what is good, what is bad, how one should one behave in public, whom to respect and many others). These behavioural patterns are in everybody, one can hardly change them and they are reflected in one's daily life and in personal decisions.

Moreover, everyone also feels that also inhabitants among different continents - Europe, Asia, Africa, America and Australia differ in their behaviour. In terms of Europe, one could admit that there are many countries with diametrically opposed way of life; however in comparison with the rest of the world, one could still find similarities among European countries rather than in European and for example Asian countries. Out of this, an assumption could be made that it should be culturally easier for Europeans to travel and live within the borders of Europe rather than in the rest of the world.

Since the fifties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the European countries started to integrate themselves into what is today known as the European Union, there were many initiatives to support Europe as a single nation. Nevertheless, it is clear that all individual European countries will keep their national sovereignty together with their cultural heritage (tangible and intangible also) as such a transformation would take not only decades, but centuries. The mindset of the people cannot be changed in such an extent in such a short period of time. However, many programmes for support of mobility within Europe started in the early eighties. One of them, called Erasmus – an international exchange programme, was established in 1987 and its variations continue till today. Such mobility helps to exchange not only the knowledge and the know-how; its purpose is much deeper. It slowly changes the mindset of young people about other nations (not only about European countries), it changes their attitude to international mobility - travelling, living and working beyond the borders of their home country. Such awareness is crucial for the further development of a unified Europe.

One of the most important factors of successful economy is labour mobility. When there are workers demanded in one country, the unemployed labour force could come from a second country and fill the demand-supply gap in the labour market. If such a gap will not be covered, the first country might lose the market

opportunity and the labour force from the second country will stay unemployed. Both countries, respectively whole union of countries, will suffer. That is an easy example why international labour mobility is important. It is easy to describe, though more difficult to act. As was said earlier, the mindset of people – inherent and given by the environment cannot be changed easily. One could say that it is impossible to change during one's life or in other words, one generation.

Coming from the results of the deep sociological research of Danish scientist Geert Hofstede (where he described the differences and interactions among national cultures), the Czech Republic is scored as a very uncertainty avoidant nation and Belgium as extremely uncertainty avoidant. That means that Czechs and Belgians should try to minimize the occurrence of unknown and unusual circumstances and to proceed with careful changes step by step by planning and by implementing rules, laws and regulations. This is further connected with the perception of the time horizon, especially the future, where, based on Hofstede's results of another dimension – long-term vs. short-term orientation – the Czechs are scored as very long-term oriented and Belgians as extremely long-term oriented. These nations attach more importance to the future. They foster pragmatic values oriented towards rewards, including persistence, saving and capacity for adaptation.

When assuming that Czech and Belgian university students are influenced by their cultural background and both are trying to avoid uncertainty and are more oriented towards the future, it should be clear that when making a decision, these two cultural dimensions will be reflected in their selection. Thus, they should for the exchange programme choose such a country, which will be close to their values and cultural background. In order to make the diploma thesis more concrete, the main focus will be done on the other two dimensions – individualism/collectivism degree and masculinity/femininity degree – in a student home country compared to the selected countries to be able to provide reliable results and conclusions. When analyzing the Czech Republic and Belgium, both nations tend to be more masculine (competitive, assertive, ambitious and emphasize the power) and more individualistic (where they stress personal achievement and are expected to stand up for themselves). Based on the assumption, that in order to minimize uncertainty and when thinking in the future patterns, the majority of Czech and Belgian students should select a country for their Erasmus exchange study, which will tend to be more individualistic and more masculine on the Hofstede's scale.

Further, the students experiencing such an exchange study should feel more open towards other nations and towards mobility itself and could be willing to travel within the borders of Europe more likely than without such experience. In majority of cases, this might turn into international mobility outside Europe as well. The students should also feel more comfortable in the international environment including the international labour market and therefore are more likely to work in one of the multinational companies in their home country as well as abroad. Such mobility brings the students great competitive advantage and skills many companies already include into their job requirements. Among

these skills can be counted: openness and perspective in terms of international issues, good knowledge of foreign language, problem-solving ability, bearing responsibility, decision-making ability, and reading and understanding of work instructions. Other important factors the employers are seeking for are: verbal and written communication skills, presentation skills and expressing one's own opinion and stressful situations management. All these so called "soft skills" can be developed during an international exchange and are further very valued in the labour market.

The universities participating in the international mobility programmes represent an important component in the student decision-making process as well. It is not unusual that the selection and administrative process for Erasmus student exchange programme is very time demanding and lengthy. In some cases, it might discourage some of the potential participants. However, it is always on everyone to evaluate the pros and cons and decide accordingly. In order to understand the organisational and administrative part of the whole process connected to Erasmus exchange study programme, it was important to realize discussions with the representatives of both Czech and Belgian foreign study department employees who are involved in the Erasmus selection and realisation process. Not only the administration part, but mainly their experience with the outgoing students of the exchange study process was discussed. In the end of the thesis, based on the results from the research, the motives of students for their country selection are described and recommendations and suggestions for the university representatives are proposed.

## 2 Objectives of the thesis

The diploma thesis deals with the mobility of university students and their attitude to mobility. The centre of interest is European mobility; however world mobility is not excluded as the European mobility can be seen as an assumption for mobility beyond the borders of Europe. The countries selected for the purpose of deeper analysis are the Czech Republic and Belgium based on their similar cultural background in terms of proven methodology by Dutch scientist and sociologist Geert Hofstede. One of his most significant pieces of research was the analysis and description of the differences and interactions among national cultures and identifying key cultural dimensions for each participated country. Therefore, it was decided to ground the assumptions of this thesis exactly on this methodology.

Out of the available sources an interesting outcome can be observed. In the academic year 2012/2013 out of all Czech Erasmus students there is majority of those travelling to European countries which are culturally similar to their home culture. The same result has been also seen in the case of Belgium. Therefore a question could be asked: Is there any connection of home cultural background to the choice students are doing when selecting foreign university for their studies on Erasmus programme?

For the purpose of verification of such a hypothesis students were surveyed after returning back from Erasmus+ exchange study programme to their home university. These university students were at that time on the bachelor level and were present on a foreign university between September 2014 and February 2015. This target group was intentionally chosen as these students have had fresh experience and therefore their answers should be given great importance.

The first objective of the thesis aims to prove or reject the hypothesis that *Czech and Belgian students choose a foreign country for the purpose of their Erasmus exchange study programme based on the cultural similarities in the host country with their home country*. Especially, two cultural dimensions from Hofstede's methodology were selected - individualism/collectivism degree and masculinity/femininity degree. In the terms of both dimensions, Czechs and Belgians are described as more individualistic and masculine which will be presented later in the thesis. It is clear the students are usually not aware about such cultural factors and choose the country based on their personal preferences; still these preferences are driven by unconscious values and behaviour encrypted in each person by the culture, respectively nation, in which the person is living. At this stage, there must be given a remark that students' selection of the foreign country cannot be driven by the home cultural background only, however is also influenced by the financial sources of the student or his family and current offer of the foreign placements at the host universities the home university has contract with. In order to concentrate and prove the significance of the cultural dimension in this decision-making process, the students were asked several questions about financing and placements availability to better complete the bigger picture of the selection process.

The second objective of the thesis is to prove that based on students' opinion the *Erasmus programme has positive effect on ones' self perception and the soft skills*. For proving this, students were asked about the development of their skills during their stay abroad and benefits they gained from this stay. Also there were several questions trying to uncover the contrast of one's skills before and after Erasmus study programme. Here, a remark must be done. The results of the questionnaire for this part might not be seen as unbiased because there is the students perception about their own skills included and it does not have to be always objective. Nevertheless, as there has been sufficient amount of respondents and the statistical analysis was applied, the general result can be taken as significant. Further, it is difficult to measure these soft skills and the student's critical self-evaluation and self-perception might be more valuable than any measurement done by a third party.

The third objective of the thesis is connected with the mobility itself and so that *the students experiencing Erasmus exchange study programme are afterwards more open to be mobile and move abroad for further studies or work*. In this part, the students were asked about their opinion in terms of their perception to further travel, study, work or stay abroad (within the borders of Europe as well as beyond them). It is clear that the respondents tended to be mobile already as they participated on Erasmus+ exchange study programme. However, the emphasis has been placed on the current attitude to mobility (after Erasmus+ experience) including the further plans and motives which might lead to foreign mobility.

The sources for proving all three objectives were selected carefully. Majority of secondary sources are resulting from literature about mobility, Europe, Erasmus and Erasmus+ programme, and cultural dimensions. Therefore the main sources were always connected to the research and the material of European Commission and the Dutch scientist Geert Hofstede. To complete and help to statistically prove the three main statements above, there was also concluded a primary research, where students were surveyed by means of an on-line questionnaire and experts in the field of foreign affairs were interviewed at both selected universities. The expected amount of answers from the on-line questionnaire is not exactly stated as it has been more important that the questionnaire itself were answered truthfully and with care.

The outcome from the questionnaire was collected to be statistically adjusted and subjected to an analysis in order to be able to display an objective sample of answers. With the help of these answers the three hypotheses discussed above are planned to be statistically and reasonably proven or rejected. The expert interviews serve as additional information source to administrative process of Erasmus programme and help to clarify an unclear problematic and will complete the topic in general. All the results serve as a source of information for the recommendations directed to both selected Czech and Belgian universities about their portfolio of contracting foreign universities and resulting offer for domestic students. The author of the thesis hopes that this research will help the future Erasmus+ exchange study applicants as well as the university representatives to meet their demand for the mobility.



### 3 Methodology

The diploma thesis consists of two main parts – theoretical and practical. The empirical knowledge about the topic was gained from available written and electronic sources, where the majority was coming from information and data of the European Commission and the Dutch scientist Geert Hofstede's publications. For a complete picture, other adequate sources were analysed and the deductive empirical method was used. The theoretical part is followed by the practical part, where there is quantitative research (the questionnaire) and qualitative expert interviews described and the results of the whole primary research are presented. In the end, the discussion and conclusion are presented together with the recommendations for the representatives of selected university's department of foreign affairs.

The chapter *Literature overview* introduces the term Europe in terms of the common European identity versus national identity of its inhabitants. There are also European values mentioned. Following, there is a topic of culture and national dimension of the culture discussed. The basic methodology used is the theory of cross-cultural communication based on the six dimension of culture typical for each nation. The Czech as well as Belgian culture within this framework is introduced and the similarities as well as differences are presented. The next subchapter is related to increasing importance of mobility and education within the borders of Europe and the competences (skills) demanded in the labour market. Also the mobility as a tool for increasing the employability is analysed because it is closely related to the topic of this thesis. The last subchapter is dedicated to the description of the exchange study programme Erasmus (respectively Erasmus+) and the analysis of the data related to outgoing mobility of students of the two selected countries and more specifically, of the two selected universities – Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic and UC Leuven-Limburg, Belgium.

The chapter *Primary Research* consists of detailed description of the design, data completion, evaluation, validity, limitations and statistical methods used when processing the primary research. For the primary research two data sources were selected. The first channel were bachelor students of both above mentioned universities, who filled in an on-line questionnaire, which was focused on three main topics related to the three hypotheses stated – culture as a factor influencing a student decision-making about a country selection for Erasmus, positive effect of Erasmus on students' self perception and their soft skills, and increasing mobility of students who experienced Erasmus. As the second channel, there were experts in the field of international relations and Erasmus selecting process and administration interviewed in order to complete the applicability of above mentioned hypotheses.

The chapter *Results* describes the key findings of both – secondary and primary research together with the summarization of the empirical evidence presented in the theoretical part. The results of the data collected and adjusted are revealed in this part and deep analysis and discussion follows. Moreover, based

on the results, the recommendations for the representatives of selected university's department of foreign affairs are stated and substantiated.

In the final part of the thesis, the chapters *Discussion* and *Conclusion* serve as a recapitulation of the key findings and facts, and reveal the final interpretation about the correctness of the three hypotheses. The recommendations for future mobility at the selected universities are summarised as it has been the main objective of the thesis from the beginning. At the very end, there follows the list of used sources, so called *References*. In the *Appendix*, the original questionnaire, questions asked during the personal expert interviews and detailed tables and graphs with results to each question of the on-line questionnaire are all presented. Further, the detailed results of the statistical analysis of the questionnaire are revealed there as well as the statistical tables used for the correlation analysis.

## 4 Literature overview

*“Europe will not be made at once or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements.”*

- Robert Schuman, French politician and initiator of the European integration

### 4.1 Unified Europe

The second smallest continent in the world but the one with the richest history; variety of communities, countries and empires, which were created in peace and destroyed by the wars in order to be again built up during the centuries – this is Europe. There are strong cultural similarities but also great differences between the European inhabitants and their behaviour. Divided by the mutual disagreements and unified in order to protect themselves against common enemy (or let call him competitor). These days, fortunately, the European countries seem to cooperate and help each other as it is common in the family.

#### 4.1.1 European identity

*Collective identity* is a way of behaviour realized in a group or collective, which is unique and distinguishes this group from other groups. It is such an identity, where the individual is strongly influenced by its environment – a collective or a group, and takes its values and behaviour as his own, which is unconsciously shaping a part of his or her personal identity.

The analysis of *European identity* lies in the social psychological approaches and in the concept of social or collective identity. According to social psychological theories, personal social identity is part of a person's concept of self and refers to the psychological link between individual and social groups. It is closely connected with the term European consciousness; and both are caused by specific thought orientation, related lifestyle and social ethos, which lead to accepting allegiance to Europe as natural. An important aspect in perception of European identity depends on appropriate pro-European education system on the primary and secondary schools, which forms a cornerstone for European consciousness of the university graduates.

It has to be mentioned there has been a great struggle between European identity and *national identity*, since the historical development in Europe. Each country in Europe constitutes its own political unit and its national identities have developed over a long period of time and are deeply rooted in the national histories of the countries. Yet, European identity is a matter of the last few decades and is not and cannot be rooted in its citizens. One could argue that Europe has long common history and development which could create such common identity; however, as the differences among the European countries

are so great and since there were conflicts between the nations in recent history, there cannot be such a strong common identity which would be called the European identity. (Fuchs, et al., 2011)

European dimension of education was introduced to the member states of the European Union with the aim to discover Europe as a value and become aware of its benefits. Additionally, the Council of Europe called for support for fundamental values, especially regarding European cultural diversity, democracy, environmental balance, human rights, fairness and security in 1991.

The implementation of common European dimension is based on three aspects:

1. Learning about Europe (acquisition of comprehensive knowledge of European culture, history economy and politics)
2. Learning from Europe (personal experience and intercultural contacts, European values)
3. Learning for Europe (cultivation of the relation to Europe and the European Union, responsible life in a unified Europe)

One must distinguish from unacceptable distortion of the last one mentioned, which could lead into propaganda in favour of further violent unification of Europe. (Labischová, et al., 2013)

#### **4.1.2 European values**

In order to change the perception about Europe as a set of individual nations and cultures to common peaceful place for living without any barriers, there were created seven so called European values, the cornerstones of the common identity of Europeans:

1. Individual liberty (everyone has his or her own private space into which no one should intrude)
2. Human dignity (every human being has an inherent worth that he or she cannot be deprived of nor he or she can sell it or transfer)
3. Rule of law (governmental power is legitimately exercised only in accordance with publicly disclosed laws adopted and enforced in accordance with established procedure; thus, rule of law limits government arbitrariness and power abuse and also includes the principle of equality before law)
4. Solidarity (union of interests, purposes, or sympathies among members of a group; fellowship of responsibilities and interests)
5. Civil society (possibility for citizens to participate in public life without the need to be active in political parties)

6. Democracy (government based on majority rule and the consent of the governed the existence of free and fair election, the protection of minorities and respect for basic human rights)
7. Private ownership (the owner has the right to dispense with the property according to his or her preferences, to decide whether to use it or not, to exclude others from using it, or to transfer ownership)

(International project of CR, 2008)

These seven basic values should be common for everyone in Europe, even in the world. If so, it is a beginning for mutual agreement in terms of basic common merits and it can be further developed.

To complete the idea of common European values, it must be mentioned that these days only a minority of European inhabitants perceive themselves as “Europeans”. A great majority of people is still living in conviction of the nationalism; they are patriots and are persuaded that they must protect their culture against ubiquitous internationalization. However, they cannot be criticized, as some of the cultural perceptions and institutions evolve very slowly and any incentives may be insufficient, yet it needs decades, maybe centuries to be changed.

## 4.2 Cultural diversity

Culture is set of thoughts, emotions and behaviours in relation to its environment. Even though people are born into a culture, it is not innate. Culture is learnt. It influences one’s thinking, feeling and acting. In many aspects, the term culture and communication can be used interchangeably. Through the process of socialisation, individuals learn dominant values and self-identities of their particular culture. Geert Hofstede (2001) described culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”.

The term *national culture* is set of values, attitudes and beliefs shared by individuals of a specific country. It includes quite stable personality characteristics and patterns that are modal among the adult members of the society. Legal, political and economic differences even among countries of European Union are obvious. To be able to orientate in such a variety of cultures, there were developed valuable frameworks to better understand the differences between national cultures. There is an abundance of anthropologists and sociologists in this area including Geert Hofstede, Edward T. Hall, Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner to name a few.

Although there are different levels of culture, the national culture gives individuals their basic assumptions and values, and therefore contributes heavily to their way of viewing the world. As this is learnt at early age and relatively unquestioned, national culture values are more difficult to change than other levels of culture. (Brunet-Thorton, 2010)

As Geert Hofstede (2001) stated, “We assume that each person carries a certain amount of mental programming that is stable over time and leads to the same person’s showing more or less the same behaviour in similar situations.” He continued that because the person’s behaviour is to some extent predictable and not purely random, the social patterns can exist. He also proved with his extensive statistical calculations that there is high correlation between the behaviour of his respondents which has affirmed the statement that national cultures are extremely stable over time. This is obviously a matter of institutions (traditions, customs, but also perception of good and bad) which are present in the national culture. Some of them can be changed in few years (such as fashion), for some it takes hundred of thousand years to be changed (for example the position of women in society). However, if some dramatic occasion happens, these cultural institutions might be changed overnight. Such an occasion could be revolution, important technological progress or natural disaster.

Discussing the impact of cultural mindset on students in Erasmus exchange study programme, the disparity among the national cultures in Europe must be stated. One of the major sources of so called *cultural clash* is the language. Since almost every country in Europe has its unique language, problems arise not only in communication, but also in understanding of the thoughts one person wants to pass to another. Using common language for communication between persons of two nations is not such a great obstacle – at least in the case of university students, however understanding the real meaning of what one is saying is absolutely different dimension to discuss. This misunderstanding can sometimes happen even between people speaking the same language as their mother language. (Hofstede, et al., 2010)

An important problem to mention is so called *reverse culture shock*. A person who has lived a certain time in a foreign cultural environment and experienced the process of acculturation (a process of adopting the cultural traits or social patterns of another group) might after his return home struggle with reverse culture shock. This person (let it be a male) will usually unconsciously compare the home culture with what he experienced abroad and may feel the need to reintegrate again. During his stay abroad he could have changed his attitude, behaviour and way of living according to the foreign cultural environment and now, when he returns home he might feel as if his original culture is foreign. One could argue the “software of the might” cannot be changed whatsoever, however as a person experiences new situations and faces new problems, it is sure that it will affect him and will change his perception of the world. Thus, the personal culture might be changed but not globalized. As was described in the previous chapter, the national culture and national institutions are very difficult to change and were proved to be relatively stable over time.

#### **4.2.1 Six dimensions of culture**

In the 1960s and 1970s a Dutch sociologist and scientist named Geert Hofstede conducted a survey in the multinational company IBM. The survey was focused

on cultural differences among the nations and after executing large research study he was the first one who scientifically proved different national values worldwide. He created four dimensions and each country received rating based on the results from his survey. These original dimensions were: *individualism/collectivism*, *uncertainty avoidance*, *power distance* (strength of social hierarchy), and *masculinity/femininity* (task-orientation versus person-orientation). After some years an independent research led him to add fifth dimension called *long-term/short-term orientation*. In 2010, based on Dr. Minkov's study the last, sixth dimension, was added and named *indulgence versus self-restraint* (an extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses based on the way they were raised).

This impact study serves as a framework for cross-cultural communication and psychology. All the six dimensions are described below to be able to better understand the meaning of each of them, in order to comprehend the chosen methodology used for the purpose of this thesis.

### **1. Individualism vs. Collectivism**

The fundamental issue addressed by the first dimension is the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. It has to do with whether people's self-image is defined in terms of "I" or "We". In individualist societies people are supposed to look after themselves and their direct family only. In collectivist societies people belong to groups that take care of them in exchange for loyalty.

### **2. Uncertainty avoidance**

The second dimension has to do with the way that a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known: should people try to control the future or just let it happen? This ambiguity brings with it anxiety and different cultures have learnt to deal with this anxiety in different ways. The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these is reflected in the score for uncertainty avoidance.

### **3. Power distance**

The third dimension deals with the fact that all individuals in societies are not equal. It expresses the attitude of the culture towards these inequalities amongst the members of the society. Power distance is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.

#### **4. Masculinity vs. Femininity**

A high score (masculine) on this dimension indicates that the society will be driven by competition, achievement and success. The success is defined by the winner, the best in the field – a value system that starts in school and continues throughout organisational behaviour. A low score (feminine) on the dimension means that the dominant values in society are caring for others and quality of life. A feminine society is one where quality of life is the sign of success and standing out from the crowd is not admirable. The basic issue is what motivates people - desire to be the best (masculine) or enjoying what you do (feminine).

#### **5. Long-term vs. Short-term orientation**

Every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and the future. Societies prioritize these two existential goals differently. Those with a culture which scores high, take a pragmatic approach: they encourage thrift and efforts in modern education as a way to prepare for the future. Societies who score low on this dimension, for example, prefer to maintain time-honoured traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion.

#### **6. Indulgence vs. Self-restraint**

One challenge that confronts humanity, now and in the past, is the degree to which little children are socialized. Without socialization person does not become “human”. Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms. One could admit the similarity with the previous dimension (long-term/short-term orientation) and uncertainty avoidance. However, this one focuses more on the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, based on the way they were raised. Relatively weak control is called “indulgence” and relatively strong control is called “restraint”.

(Hofstede, 2015)

### **4.2.2 Czech Republic versus Belgium**

The two selected countries – the Czech Republic and Belgium – reached scores, based on the results of *The Hofstede Centre* available in the year 2015, scores which are described in following table. The results are commented based on author’s own perception of the description of the dimensions in the previous chapter and the scores the countries achieved.



	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Czech Republic score</b>	<b>Czech Republic result</b>	<b>Belgium score</b>	<b>Belgium result</b>
1	<b>Individualism vs. Collectivism</b>	58	More individualistic	75	Very individualistic
2	<b>Uncertainty avoidance</b>	74	Very uncertainty avoidant	94	Extremely uncertainty avoidant
3	<b>Power distance</b>	57	More hierarchical society	65	Very hierarchical society
4	<b>Masculinity vs. Femininity</b>	57	More masculine society	54	More masculine society
5	<b>Long-term vs. Short-term orientation</b>	70	Very long-term oriented	82	Extremely long-term oriented
6	<b>Indulgence vs. Restraint</b>	29	Very indulgent society	57	More restrained society

**Table 1** – Country scores of the Czech Republic and Belgium (Hofstede, 2015); adjusted by the author

For the purpose of the diploma thesis two dimensions were selected as they fit best into the issue of mobility and the decision-making process when selecting a country for exchange study of Czech and Belgian students. The first dimension is called *individualism/collectivism* and the second one is entitled *masculinity/femininity*. In the following subchapters the two countries' similarities and differences are discussed. It is important to mention that the country score does not show a country's absolute position worldwide; it rather describes its position relative to other countries. It is also very difficult to select one dimension and describe it separately without any broader context of other dimensions as only after understanding all together they create a complete picture of country's values and culture. Nevertheless, due to the scope of the diploma thesis only these two dimensions were chosen.

#### 4.2.2.1 Individualism vs. Collectivism

*The Czech Republic*, with a score of 58, is a more individualistic society. This means there is a high preference for a random social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families preferably. In individualistic societies offence causes guilt and a loss of self-esteem, the employer – employee relationship is a contract based on mutual advantage, hiring and promotion decisions are supposed to be based on merit only, management is the management of individuals. (Hofstede, 2015)

In terms of university students who experienced study abroad under Erasmus+ exchange study programme, it might mean great demand for formal part of the programme (variety of paper work from both sides - home and host university) as well as problems with integration into specific more collectivist cultures and accepting their group spirit.

*Belgium*, with a score of 75 is very high on the individualistic index. This means that the Belgians favour individual and private opinions, taking care of themselves and immediate family rather than belonging to a group. In the work environment, the relationship with work is contract based, the focus is on the task and autonomy is favoured. The management is the management of individuals and the recognition of one's work is expected. People can voice their opinion, but towards power holders a less direct style is preferred than amongst peers. The Belgian culture (together with France) houses a "contradiction": although highly individualistic, the Belgians need a hierarchy. This combination (high score on Power distance and high score on Individualism) creates a specific "tension" in this culture, which makes the relationship so delicate but intense and fruitful once you manage it. Therefore, the manager is advised to establish a second "level" of communication, having a personal contact with everybody in the structure, allowing to give the impression that "everybody is important" in the organization, although unequal. (Hofstede, 2015)

In the case of Belgian university students on Erasmus+ exchange study programme, the integration into more collectivistic cultures can be seen as an obstacle. For instance, group work with members from some collectivistic countries might lead to disagreements and great misunderstandings. On the other side, Belgian students should be able to split off their home community quite easily and therefore should overcome the cultural shock faster.

It has been proven by extensive research that individualistic societies are highly correlated with a country's economic development, modernisation, and technology. When a country experiences economic development and becomes more "rich", it happens to be also more individualistic. (Hofstede, 2001)

Comparing the two selected countries, both were scored as individualistic. In the case of Belgium, the dimension seems to be more relevant and significant; therefore the results out of the primary research (the questionnaire) are expected to be more straightforward rather than in the case of Czech Republic.

#### **4.2.2.2 Masculinity versus Femininity**

*The Czech Republic* scores 57 on this dimension and is thus more masculine society. In masculine countries people “live in order to work”, managers are expected to be decisive and assertive, the emphasis is on equity, competition and performance and conflicts are resolved by fighting them out. (Hofstede, 2015)

In relation to university students who study abroad under the Erasmus+ exchange study programme the masculinity dimension brings the desire for competition, achievement and success. Students will do almost everything to be the best. A conflict might arise when facing a person (or being in society) with more feminine dimension. These two people might not understand the reasons which underlie their behaviour and decision making. On the other side, there can be conflicts when interacting with people from other masculine society. A communication collision caused by pure competing without concrete objective might happen. Nevertheless, once the two persons from two masculine countries reach same direction, they might build a perfect hardworking team.

With 54 on average, *Belgium* has an intermediate score on this dimension. Balancing in the middle of these dimension contradictions can be found. A confrontational, win-lose negotiating style (typical of the US and Anglo countries) will not be very effective in Belgium. This could mean that the decision process may be slower, as each point of view is considered so that consensus can be achieved. Belgians strive towards reaching a compromise, winning a discussion is generally less important than achieving mutual agreement. (Hofstede, 2015)

When focusing on university students in Erasmus+ exchange study programme, a confrontation can happen when working out some group project and making decision about it. If more members from more feminine and collectivistic societies will be present, these people and Belgian students might not understand each other due to different perception about the importance of its result. On the other side, as the score is close to 50, it can be easier for Belgians to put themselves into the role of others and see the hidden drivers of these more feminine cultures.

### **4.3 Mobility and education in the EU**

#### **4.3.1 Significance of mobility**

The term mobility is described as the ability of a person or a thing to be, without any big barriers, mobile – to move. From this definition it is clear that the ability of a person to be mobile can be affected by the factors which restrain the person to be mobile. Therefore if the society is interested in increasing mobility, it should concentrate on eliminating its barriers. These barriers can be many, from personal barriers caused by social cohesion, health state or the level of

knowledge of foreign language, up to organization of legislative barriers. A significant barrier is the question of financing connected with the mobility.

The mobility can be categorized in many ways (such as: based on group of people or based on the length of stay), however the most suitable for this thesis is division of types of mobility based on the *real conditions of mobility*:

1. Geographical mobility (physical mobility in terms of regions of states)
2. Virtual mobility (real physical mobility if not needed; examples can be an e-conference, an e-seminar, or a video-conference)
3. Combined mobility (combination of geographical and virtual mobility) (Pittnerová, 2013)

Erasmus+ study exchange programme can be seen as pure geographical mobility, as the students really move from one country to another. They live in a new country for couple of months and experience the daily life of locals; they learn about the local or national standards, customs and traditions; and usually they learn the local language together with English (which is spoken by majority of such exchange students). It is not an exception that these students keep contacts after returning back to their home country. Sometimes they decide to continue full-time studying at a university abroad, or they find a job abroad and move there for few years and then they could stay there for the rest of their life. It is also often that these students find their life partners on such exchange programme and move to the home country of the partner. However, it is becoming more common to combine Erasmus+ geographical mobility with the virtual mobility, where the students are using virtual space for communication, study, work and other aspects of life. (Abramuszkinová Pavlíková, 2011)

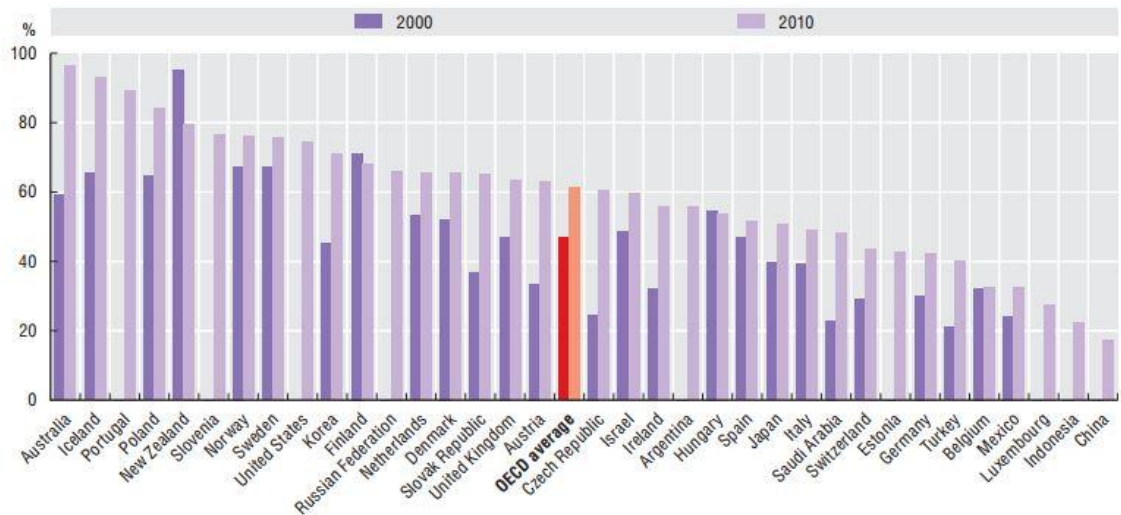
Definitely, the Erasmus+ exchange study programme serves not only for the purpose of sharing the academic knowledge, but the main purpose (and not always fully mentioned) is mobility. Students involved will start to perceive not only Europe but the world differently and will feel less afraid of travelling and moving abroad. It can be seen as a kind of precursor for labour mobility, because for such “Erasmus-experienced” graduates it is easier to find a job in an international company or in a company abroad. Regarding a recent study of the European Commission – so called Erasmus Impact Study (2014), the unemployment rate of Erasmus students five years after graduation is 23% lower comparing to graduates without such an Erasmus experience. Moreover, there are already companies having such an experience included in the requirements for the offered position.

The benefits of labour mobility were stated in the context of Lisbon strategy to make the EU “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” (a draft from Lisbon European Council 2000). The labour mobility is seen as beneficial in terms of reducing unemployment and matching labour supply to labour demand. (Boswell, et al., 2011) Its greatest benefit is seen as development of human resources and strengthening of global competitiveness of the European Union. (Pittnerová, 2013)

On the other side, there also emerge problems with EU labour mobility. One of these is called *social dumping* which refers to the practices of hiring workers or subcontracting firms from other EU country to carry out work for lower salary, social protection or working conditions than are typically afforded to domestic workers. This can be disputable as such outsourcing outflows the jobs for local workers (of country A) who then become unemployed, it influences the family of such a worker as it lowers their standard of living; and finally, it affects domestic government which has to pay out more on social benefits for these unemployed. In the country, where the outsourced job is realized (country B), it gives the labour jobs, nevertheless, these people usually earn very low salary and need to work in conditions, the workers of country A would not accept. However as there is a free market, all this is part of natural competition and it is necessary for sustaining the competitiveness of the whole EU. (Boswell, et al., 2011) The job can be only outsourced, if there is demand for such a job (including the salary and working conditions acceptable by the workers) in country B. If the salary offered for labour in this country would be unacceptable, nobody would take the job. It is all dependent on the factors influencing the situation in the domestic (country A) and outsourced (country B) market conditions.

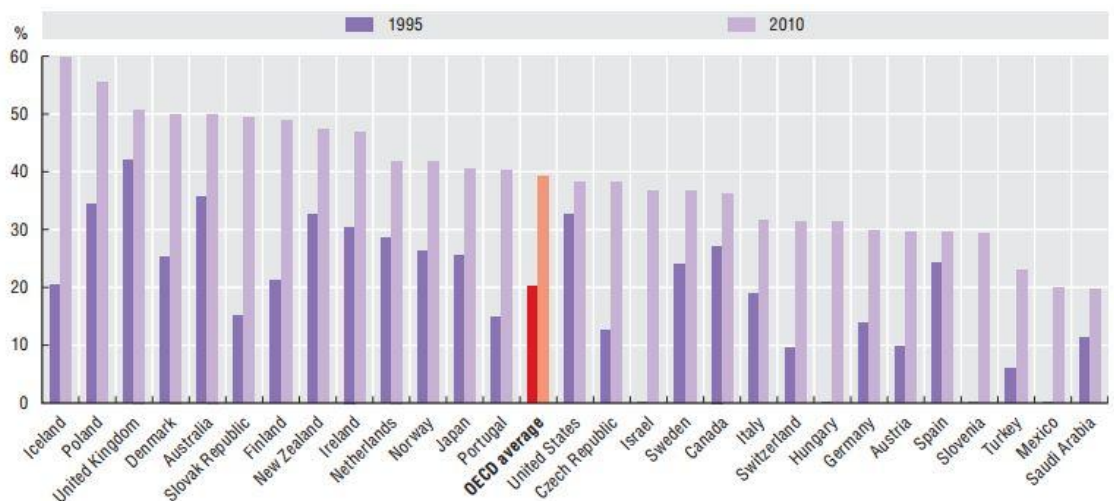
### **4.3.2 Importance of tertiary education**

In general, the significance of university education has become greater than it used to be couple of years ago. This is proven by various statistics; one of them is an OECD report from the year 2012, whose outcome can be seen in the figure below. Further, one of the EU objectives is continuous increasing of the amount of tertiary educated people. In the following figures there can be observed rapid increase of students and graduates in selected countries. The percentage of young people, who entered tertiary education increased in the Czech Republic from 28% to 61% and in Belgium from 32% to 34% between the years 2000 and 2010. (OECD, 2012)



**Figure 1** - The percentage of young people entering tertiary education in 2000 and 2010 (OECD, 2012)

The percentage of first-time graduates from tertiary institutions rapidly increased in the Czech Republic from 12% to 38% between the years 1995 and 2010 as can be observed in following figure. For Belgium there were no data in the report of OECD form 2012. Nevertheless, detailed analysis of the Czech Republic and Belgium tertiary students, graduates and institutions follows later in this chapter.

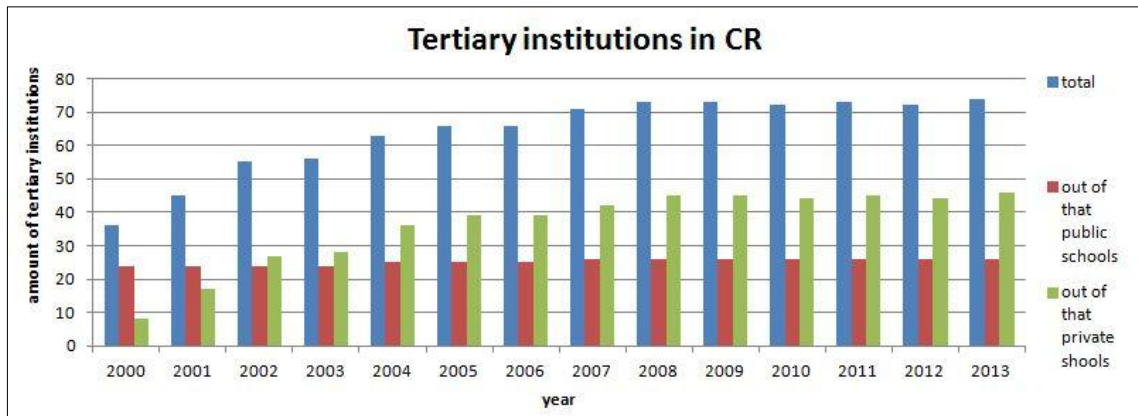


**Figure 2** - The percentage of first-time graduates from tertiary institutions in 1995 and 2010 (OECD, 2012)

The tertiary education in the Czech Republic and Belgium has developed a lot in recent years. This can be proved in the following figures, where a significant increase can be seen in terms of quantity of institutions offering bachelor,

master and post graduate studies in the Czech Republic as well as amount of students and graduates studying tertiary institutions in both countries.

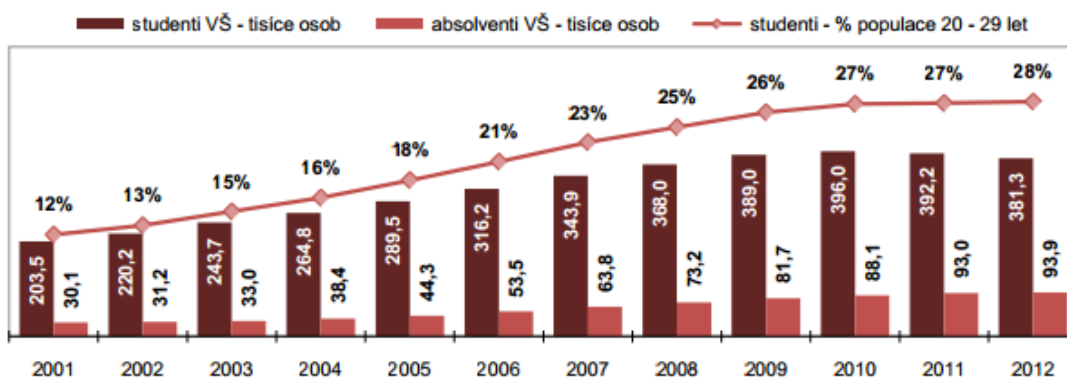
The following table shows a significant increase in the quantity of tertiary institutions in the Czech Republic over the past decade. The amount of institutions was in the year 2013 more than double when compared to the year 2000. A rapid increase can be seen in the amount of private schools up to the year 2013 (increase by more than 500% when compared to the year 2000), whereas the number of public institutions is relatively stable over time.



**Figure 3** - Tertiary institutions in CR (CZSO, 2014); adjusted by the author

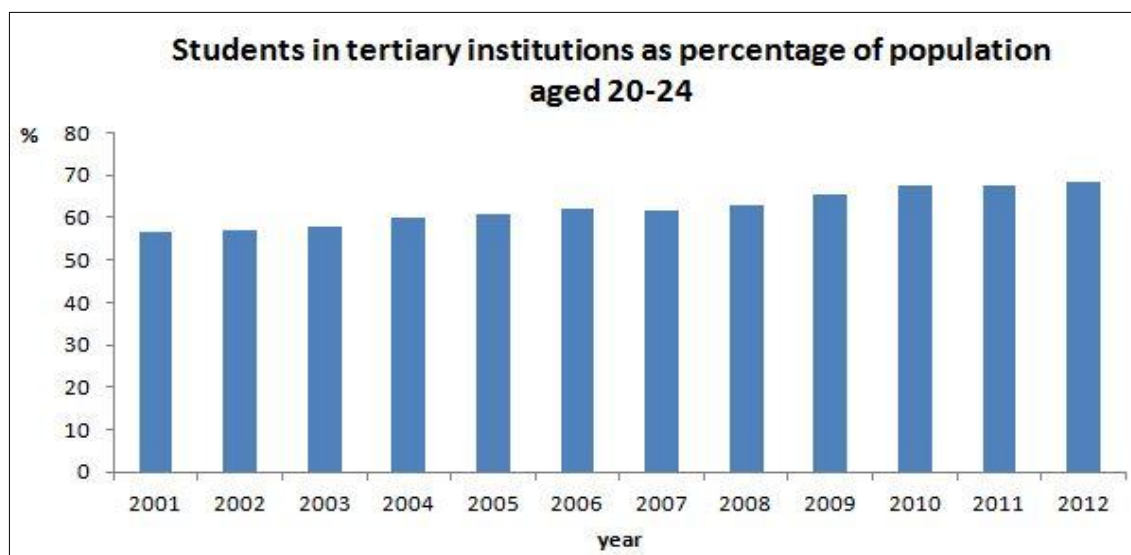
In the next figure one can observe a significant increasing trend of students (dark red – in thousands) and graduates (light red – in thousands) between the years 2001 and 2010 in the Czech Republic. Starting from the year 2010 the amount of students is decreasing, however, the amount of graduates still keeps increasing as there is usual lag of three to five years between the beginning of studies and graduation. The standard length of Bachelor studies is three years and for Master studies it is two years. Nevertheless, some tertiary institutions keep old model of Master studies (Bachelor and Master together), which takes five years. The standard length of Doctoral studies is three years. The percentages in the graph represent the respective percentage amount of the population between 20 and 29 years. It is clear this amount is increasing during the whole period.

Based on Ministry of Education in the CR, there were 368,304 students and 91,539 graduates in 2013. (MŠMT, 2014) There are unfortunately no data for the year 2014, but it is expected that the trend will be slowly decreasing.



**Figure 4** – Students and graduates of the tertiary institutions in the CR between 2001-2012 (CZSO, 2012)

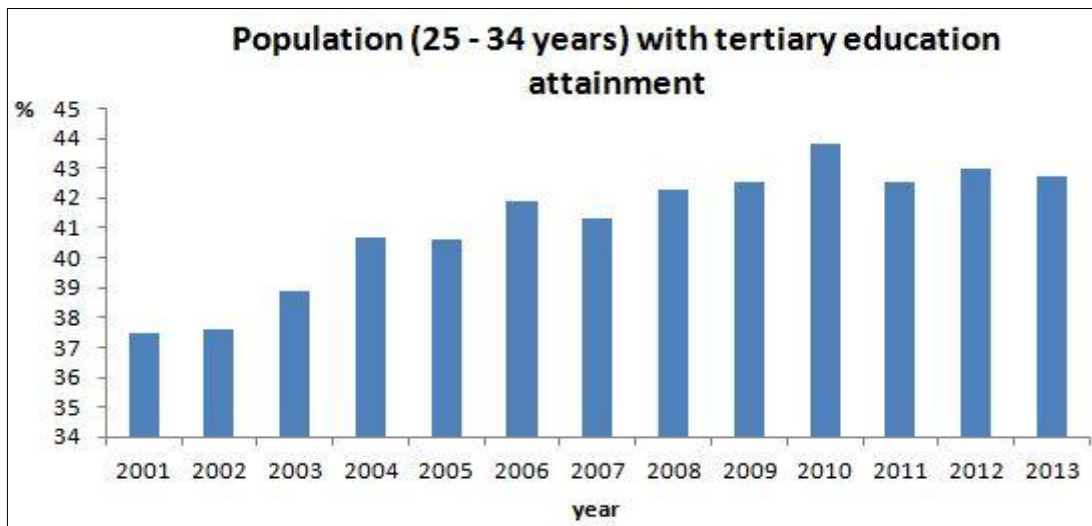
In 2014, there were 33 universities and more than 30 other higher education institutions and colleges in Belgium, which is comparable to the quantity of higher education institutions in the Czech Republic in the same year. (4ICU, 2014) Further, an increasing trend can be seen in the percentage in young population, who participated in tertiary education. Even though an increase of the trend is not as rapid as in the case of the Czech Republic in the past decade, the amount of tertiary educated Belgian people slightly increases in time. Also comparing to Czech students, who represent in average 25% of young population, the Belgian students represent in average 60% of comparable age group.



**Figure 5** – Belgian students in tertiary institutions as percentage of population aged 20-24 (Eurostat, 2014(a)); adjusted by the author



In the case of the graduates of tertiary institutions in Belgium, there are in average 42% of people in the young population (between 25 and 34 years), who reached university (or other higher education) degree. The most common type of degree studied in Belgium is the Bachelor programme and based on the statistics and recent literature it is taken as attainable in terms of education. The standard length of Bachelor studies is three years and for Master studies it is one to two years. It must be mentioned that the higher public education in the Czech Republic is free, whereas in Belgium, tuition fees are collected.



**Figure 6** - Belgian population (25 - 34 years) with tertiary education attainment (Eurostat, 2014(b)); adjusted by the author

In 2010, more than 44% of young Belgians had a diploma of higher education, which places Belgium on the seventh position within EU-27. In the same year, around 21% of the Czechs had higher education diploma. This means, there are twice more tertiary educated young people in Belgium than in the Czech Republic, despite the tuition fees collected in Belgium. This conclusion is interesting and may be caused by different cultural perception about the importance of higher level education between these two countries. Further research focused on cultural differences related to mobility and education in terms of these two countries is provided in the next chapters.

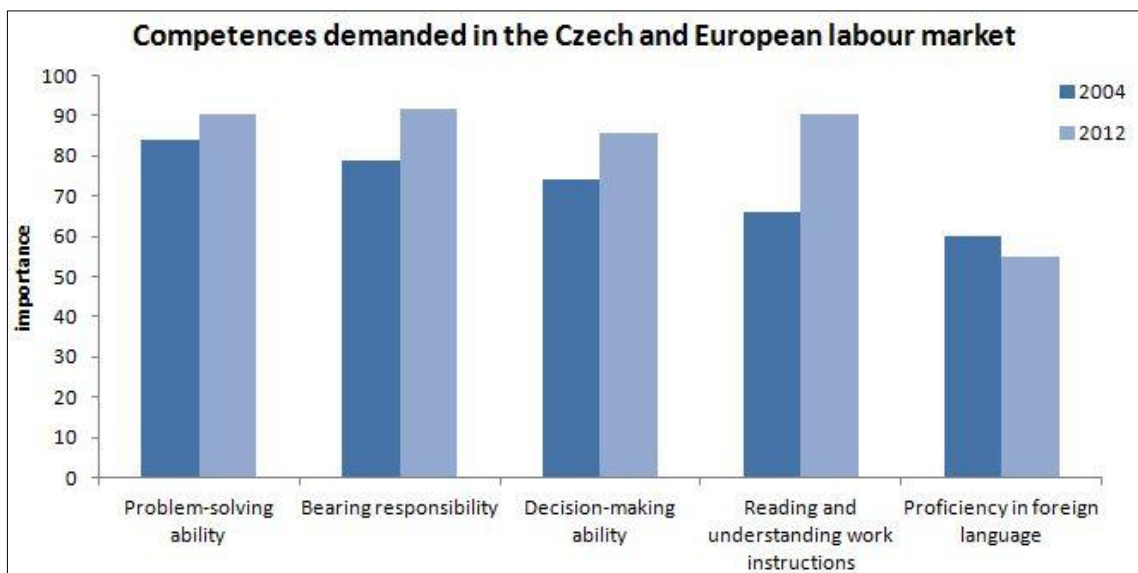
The employability of graduates depends on which field each student decides to study. Each student should realize their responsibility for future employment. What is now seen as strength to freely choose a study programme may turn out to be a weakness in terms that there might occur oversaturation in demand for certain professions. Therefore it is very important for such a graduate to be able to offer as much knowledge, skills, and experience to have some kind of a competitive advantage over the others in the labour market. (Göttlichová, 2014) One of such competitive advantage can be international experience (study or work), as it contains openness and perspective in terms of international issues

of the student and is usually connected with very good knowledge of a foreign language.

### 4.3.3 Competences demanded in the labour market

In the years 2004 and 2012, Czech National Institute of Education realized a survey about employers' requirements on candidates in the Czech and European labour market. The most important competences demanded by the employers related to the skills and abilities of the candidates are presented in the figure below. A majority of these can be influenced on the tertiary level of education or more intensively, during an international exchange mobility such as Erasmus+.

Among the four most important competences demanded over time (significant in both years) belong problem-solving ability, bearing responsibility, decision-making ability and reading and understanding work instructions. All of them represented in average 80% importance (in the year 2012) for the employers when selecting a suitable candidate for a position offered.



**Figure 7** - Competences demanded in the Czech and European labour market (Lepič, et al., 2012); adjusted by the author

In addition to this, three new significant competences were identified as important for employers in the survey realized in 2012: verbal and written communication skills (88.2%), presentation skills and expressing own opinions (78.6%), and stressful situations management (75.2%). (Lepič, et al., 2012)

All these competences are mainly influenced by the culture, in which the person is growing up and are definitely more developed during last years of his studies, usually on the tertiary level. Many of the theoretical knowledge turns into ability

without even recognizing when working on the group projects, presenting the results of personal or group work and just discussing problems in the class.

Very important factor is the phase of independence, where the person learns, how to solve daily situations by himself. (Lumley, et al., 2014) This can be perfectly experienced during an exchange stay in a foreign country (such as Erasmus+ exchange study programme), as will be analyzed in the following chapters.

#### **4.3.4 Mobility as a tool for higher employability**

As mentioned earlier, the focus of Erasmus+ programme is not only international academic knowledge sharing, but also about increasing of the mobility of the students which will later be part of the European labour market. If the objective of the European Union is to become competitive worldwide, the member states must be competitive and effective in what they have geographical and cultural predispositions for and in what they are able to effectively produce. One of the important factors is stability in the labour market of single states, but also whole EU. When one country (A) is growing slower or is affected by an external economic shock in comparison to the rest of the union, it may have an excess of labour, because there are not enough jobs to satisfy the labour supply. If there is another country (B) which could employ the labour of the country A (the reason can be fast economic growth or demand for certain professions domestic market of country B does not supply), the demand-supply in the union could be balanced if the workers would be willing to move from country A to country B. This assumption is partly substantiated by the results of the regression analysis performed by Milan Palát, where there was found significant negative correlation between the crude rate of net migration and the unemployment rate in EU15 countries in the reference period among the majority of analysed countries. (Palát, 2013)

However, people are not always willing to move abroad because of the job as they are socially dependent on their family and friends in their home country. These people usually do not know the foreign language (or at least think that they do not reach the level comparable with the native speakers) and have prejudices about anything foreign (so called xenophobia). Therefore, the labour mobility is one of the big obstacles the European Union has to deal with. A significant part of the labour market is covered by the university graduates as could be seen in the previous subchapters. The exchange programme called Erasmus has been running for several years. One of the objectives of the programme has been to prepare the students to actively participate in the labour market with European dimension.

## 4.4 Erasmus programme

The Erasmus Programme has been part of the Lifelong Learning Programme, which was planned for the years 2007 – 2013 and has been one of the most popular programmes of the European Union in terms of education with practical preparation for further employment. In terms of a tertiary education, Erasmus has been the biggest programme supporting European cooperation in the area of mobility. There are 90% of European universities from more than 30 countries included in the project. (Krňanská, et al., 2010)

The Erasmus programme has its roots in the year 1987 through a project of 11 member states (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, France, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Great Britain) and a total of 3,244 students studied abroad in the first year. In 1998, another 6 countries joined the programme – namely Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Cyprus. In the first academic year, there were 879 Czech students sent to study abroad.

In 2007, the programme was included into the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) of the European Union for the length of 7 years (2007 – 2013). The main objectives of Erasmus can be formulated as following: a support of mutual relationships and cooperation among the universities within the framework of European area, increase of the level of transparency and compatibility of qualification of tertiary education in Europe, improvement in the level of teaching of foreign languages, and awareness about the educational systems in different states. One of the objectives not explicitly mentioned, but very significant, is increasing the mobility of participants and thus enhancing greater employability within the European framework.

The budget for Erasmus was more than 40% of the budget of LLP and counted 6.97 billion EUR. Student willing to apply for Erasmus study programme had to be enrolled into a bachelor, magister or post gradual study programme of accredited tertiary education institution. Such study programme had to be in the length of 3 to 12 months and realized in one of the 27 countries of EU + the members of EEA (Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland) + the candidate countries (Croatia, Turkey).

In January 2014, the new programme called Erasmus+ came into force, which has followed the programme of Lifelong Learning Programme. Erasmus+ was approved on November 19<sup>th</sup> 2013 by European Parliament, and with the budget of 14.7 billion EUR it became a flagship programme of the European Commission for the years 2014 – 2020 with the aim of supporting international mobility and cooperation in terms of education. (Pittnerová, 2013)

In the recent report of the European Commission, called The Erasmus Impact study, it was proven by more than 78 thousands of respondents that Erasmus programme has positive impact on its participants in terms of mobility, internationalization and employability, as the students learn the important skills (such as openness and curiosity about new challenges, problem solving

and decision-making skills, confidence, tolerance towards other personal values and behaviours) demanded by the employers in the labour market. (EU, 2014)

The last statistics of student's mobility were published in June 2014 by the European Commission and are related to the academic year 2012/2013. In this academic year, a total of 212,522 students were sent to study abroad and 55,621 students for working placements, which makes total of 268,143 students sent on Erasmus mobility. That represents yearly increase of 6%. Also a key milestone was reached: the 3 millionth student was sent abroad, as can be seen in the following figure. (EC, 2014(b))



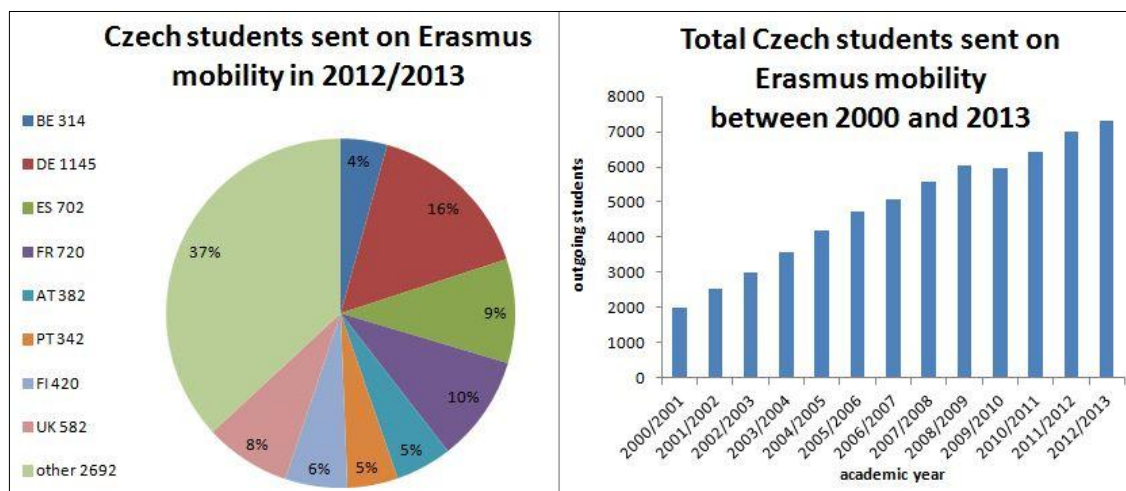
**Figure 8** – The development of Erasmus student mobility between 1987 and 2013 (EC, 2014(b))

#### 4.4.1 Erasmus in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, in total 7,299 students were sent abroad to study or train in the academic year 2012/2013. Out of that, 6,185 students were sent to partner higher education institutions to study and 1,114 students were sent for work placements (internships) abroad. As part of the mobility, 314 students were sent to Belgium, and the most popular countries were Germany (1,145 students), France (720 students), and Spain (702 students).

On the other side, there were in total of 6,437 students going to the Czech Republic to train or study in the academic year 2012/2013. Among the students, there were 125 Belgian students and the biggest group represented 915 Spanish students, 795 French students, and 615 Turkish students.

If comparing the year 2000 and 2013, there was an enormous increase in the quantity of the outgoing students on Erasmus mobility by more than 250%.



**Figure 9** - Development of outgoing Czech students in Erasmus mobility (EC, 2014(a)), adjusted by the author

In selected Czech higher education institution - Mendel University in Brno, there was following amount of outgoing students on the international mobility:

Academic year:	Students (study + internship):
2009/2010	245
2010/2011	259
2011/2012	423
2012/2013	325
2013/2014	378

**Table 2** - Students of Mendel University in Brno participating in international mobility between 2009 and 2013 (Mendelu, 2015)

From the table above it is obvious that the amount of outgoing students is increasing every year and with the launch of a new mobility programme, Erasmus+, much greater growth in amount of outgoing students is expected as the budget available is more than double when compared to the previous Erasmus programme.

The following table describes amount of students and a percentage of total outgoing mobility of five most favourite countries the students of Mendel University in Brno chose for their outgoing international mobility (internships, exchange study and intensive study programme) in past five years (2009 – 2014). It is obvious that the “most popular” European countries in all five academic years were: Austria, Finland, France, Germany and Spain. The

percentage shows the portion of how many of total outgoing students were sent into the specific country in a respective year.

<b>Percentage of outgoing students at Mendel University in Brno</b>										
<b>Country</b>	<b>Academic year</b>									
	2009-2010		2010-2011		2011-2012		2012-2013		2013-2014	
Austria	25	10%	23	9%	31	7%	32	10%	30	8%
Finland	31	13%	61	24%	82	19%	35	11%	36	10%
France	28	11%	19	7%	42	10%	38	12%	41	11%
Germany	25	10%	32	12%	44	10%	0	0%	25	7%
Spain	15	6%	24	9%	39	9%	19	6%	36	10%

**Table 3** – Number of outgoing students at Mendel University based on the selected country (Mendelu, 2015)

To clearly compare the students' country selection with the topic of intercultural dimension, let's look at the following table, which contrasts these most popular European countries among the students of Mendel University in Brno with the individualism/collectivism and masculinity/femininity dimensions of these countries based on the classification of The Hofstede's Research Centre.

	<b>Individualism vs. Collectivism degree</b> (0=Collectivistic; 100=Individualistic)		<b>Masculinity vs. Femininity degree</b> (0=Feminine; 100=Masculine)	
<b>Austria</b>	55	More individualistic	79	Very masculine
<b>Finland</b>	63	Very individualistic	26	Very feminine
<b>France</b>	71	Very individualistic	43	More feminine
<b>Germany</b>	67	Very individualistic	66	Very masculine
<b>Spain</b>	51	More individualistic	42	More feminine

**Table 4** – Country cultural dimension based on research of The Hofstede's Centre (Hofstede, 2015); adjusted by the author



From the table it is obvious that all these countries are scored as more or very individualistic. That only supports the theory that Czech students are selecting countries culturally similar to their home country - in this case the countries which tend to be more individualistic (people look more after themselves and their direct family rather than belonging to groups that take care of them in exchange for loyalty).

Taking into account the dimension masculinity/femininity, there cannot be stated the same conclusion, since some countries reveal to be culturally more masculine and some more feminine. Nevertheless, analysing deeper the scores, one could state that in all cases except Finland the scores tend to be resulting into the masculinity direction or just close to the borderline between the masculinity and femininity.

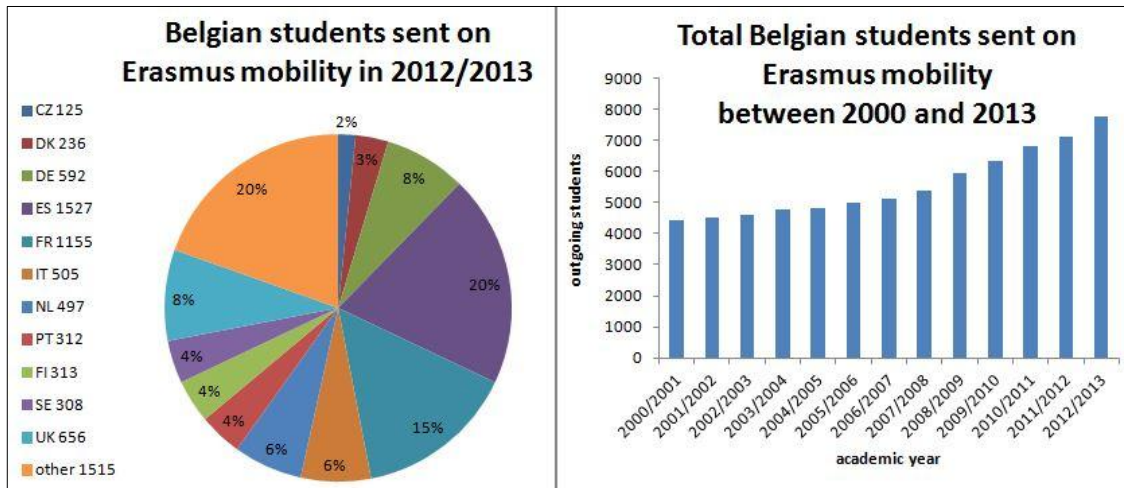
#### **4.4.2 Erasmus in Belgium**

In Belgium, in total 7,741 students were sent abroad to study or train in the academic year 2012/2013. Out of that, 6,412 students were sent to partner higher education institutions to study and 1,329 students were sent for work placements (internships) abroad. As part of the mobility, 125 students were sent to the Czech Republic, and the most popular countries were Spain (1,527 students), France (1,155 students), and the United Kingdom (656 students).

On the other side, there were a total of 6,437 students going Belgium to train or study in the academic year 2012/2013. Among the students, there were 314 Czech students and the biggest group represented 1,892 Spanish students, 1,289 French students, and 1,187 Italian students.

If comparing the year 2000 and 2013, there was increase in the quantity of the students by more than 80%.





**Figure 10** – Development of outgoing Belgian students on Erasmus mobility (EC, 2014(a)), adjusted by the author

In selected Belgian higher education institution, UC Leuven-Limburg, Belgium, there was the following amount of outgoing students on the international mobility:

Academic year:	Students (study + internship):
2009/2010	114
2010/2011	153
2011/2012	220
2012/2013	231
2013/2014	220

**Table 5** - Students of UC Leuven-Limburg, Belgium participating in international mobility between 2009 and 2014 (UCLL, 2015)

From the table above it is obvious that there is a trend of increasing amount of outgoing students every year and with the launch of new mobility programme, Erasmus+, much greater growth in amount of outgoing students is expected as the budget available is more than double comparing to Erasmus programme.

The following table describes amount of students and a percentage of total outgoing mobility of five most favourite countries the students of UC Leuven-Limburg, Belgium chose for their outgoing international mobility (internships, exchange study and intensive study programme) in past five years (2009 – 2014). It is obvious that the “most popular” European countries in all five academic years were: France, Germany, Spain, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The percentage shows the portion of how many of total outgoing students were sent into the concrete country in a respective year.

<b>Percentage of outgoing students at UC Leuven-Limburg, Belgium</b>										
<b>Country</b>	<b>Academic year</b>									
	2009-2010		2010-2011		2011-2012		2012-2013		2013-2014	
France	23	19%	28	15%	32	14%	34	13%	32	13%
Germany	2	2%	3	2%	10	4%	25	10%	17	7%
Spain	7	6%	20	10%	24	10%	21	8%	20	8%
The Netherlands	17	14%	15	8%	16	7%	13	5%	10	4%
UK	8	7%	14	7%	16	7%	20	8%	10	4%

**Table 6** - Number of outgoing students at UC Leuven-Limburg, Belgium based on the selected country (UCLL, 2015)

To clearly compare the students' country selection with the topic of intercultural dimension, let's look at the following table, which contrasts these most popular European countries among the students of UC Leuven-Limburg, Belgium with the individualism/collectivism and masculinity/femininity dimension of these countries based on the classification of The Hofstede's Research Centre.

	<b>Individualism vs. Collectivism degree</b> (0=Collectivistic; 100=Individualistic)		<b>Masculinity vs. Femininity degree</b> (0=Feminine; 100=Masculine)	
<b>France</b>	71	Very individualistic	43	More feminine
<b>Germany</b>	67	Very individualistic	66	Very masculine
<b>Spain</b>	51	More individualistic	42	More feminine
<b>The Netherlands</b>	80	Very individualistic	14	Extremely feminine
<b>UK</b>	89	Extremely individualistic	66	Very masculine

**Table 7** - Country cultural dimension based on research of The Hofstede's Centre (Hofstede, 2015); adjusted by the author

From the table it is apparent that all these countries are scored as more, very, and in the case of the United Kingdom extremely individualistic. That only supports the theory that also Belgian students are selecting countries culturally similar to their home country - in this case the countries which tend to be more individualistic (people look more after themselves and their direct family rather than belonging to groups that take care of them in exchange for loyalty).

Taking into account the dimension masculinity/femininity, the same conclusion cannot be stated, since some countries are culturally more masculine and some more feminine. Nevertheless, analysing deeper the scores, one could state that in all cases except The Netherlands the scores tend to be resulting into the masculinity direction or just close to the borderline between the masculinity and femininity.

## 5 Primary research

A deep analysis of secondary data as well as primary research was necessary. There were two main sources of secondary data research used in the diploma thesis as was mentioned in the previous chapters. These sources were retrieved from the European Commission and the methodology of national cultural dimension theory created by Dutch sociologist Geert Hofstede. Apart from that, other related sources were analysed to complete the bigger picture. A deep parsing of the literature and available data was needed as this cross-cultural and sociological topic is very complex and needs detailed understanding.

Moreover, it was necessary to collect the primary data to give the thesis its originality and significance. There were two methods of retrieving the data for the primary research:

1. An on-line questionnaire given to the university students in the selected universities in the Czech Republic and Belgium.
2. Personal interviews with the representatives of study departments in the selected universities in the same countries.

The first method, an on-line questionnaire, is quantitative research, in which the students of two universities – Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic and UC Leuven-Limburg, Belgium – were asked to participate and share their experience and perception of their exchange study in a foreign country. Therefore the respondent group was targeted to the university students of the bachelor studies who participated in Erasmus+ exchange study in one of the European countries in the winter semester 2014 (from September 2014 to February 2015). These students were expected to answer sincerely and truthfully as they had fresh experience from the exchange study programme.

The second selected method, the personal interviews, was chosen to complete the topic by qualitative research method and to reveal potential administrative and bureaucratic gaps in the selection and realisation process of Erasmus (respectively Erasmus+) programme. The next expectation from the interviews was to better understand the motives of the students when selecting the country for an exchange study. The interviews were directed to the representatives of foreign study department and to the coordinators of Erasmus+ programme at both selected universities.

### 5.1 Research design

The questionnaire was created in order to obtain the newest observations and observations from the students, who just returned from their foreign exchange study. There were three research questions addressed to this study analysed – so called hypotheses (H):

1. H1 - The Czech and Belgian university students selecting a country for Erasmus (respectively Erasmus+) exchange study programme are

influenced by their national cultural background and choose a country similar to their cultural dimension in terms of individualism/collectivism degree and masculinity/femininity in their home country, designated by Geert Hofstede's study and The Hofstede Centre research.

2. H2 – Erasmus+ exchange study programme has positive effect on examined students' self-perception and their soft skills demanded by the employers in the labour market.
3. H3 - Students experiencing Erasmus+ exchange study programme are afterwards more open to be mobile and move abroad for further studies or work.

These hypotheses were stated as the mobility of labour is becoming a more important and relevant topic for the whole European Union nowadays. Also possessing the soft skills demanded in the labour market is critical for the university graduates in order to succeed and get a job in one of the more common multinational companies in Europe. Based on a remarkable observation of the data presented by the European Commission an interesting assumption was made: Is there any reason why both Czech and Belgian university students prefer to travel for an Erasmus exchange study programme to Germany, France, Spain and the United Kingdom? Analysing deeply the Hofstede's research of national cultural dimensions and evaluating the students' responses together with the expert interviews might bring a clearer explanation.

There are four main parts of the questionnaire: Demographic, Country selection, Personal skills' development, and Mobility. The first part serves for identification of the respondent (the age group, gender, home university, field of study, selected country for Erasmus exchange study programme, and financing of education), whereas the other three parts are aimed to answer the three hypotheses stated above.

The average time to fill in the questionnaire was 10 minutes in order to attract the potential respondents to find time for it. The questionnaire was presented in an on-line layout via web-based programme called Google+ for the period of two weeks in both countries. In the introduction, there was a preface written with brief explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire and a commitment to safeguard anonymity. As students from two countries were researched, English was selected as a common foreign language and the questionnaire was aimed to be written comprehensibly in order to minimize the language-caused misunderstandings. There was an assumption that all the students have at least basic knowledge of English in order to be able to fill in the questionnaire truthfully. The original version of the on-line questionnaire can be found in the Appendix of this thesis.

There were more types of questions and more types of answers used in the questionnaire. The objective of the research was to find the students' behavioural patterns in terms of their selection and experience of the exchange study programme they recently attended. There were a total of 26 questions, out

of which 22 to 24 were displayed for the individual student based on their answers to previous answers of the questionnaire. There were these types of answers offered as they best fit the desired objective of the research:

- Yes/No reply: 7 questions were this type, to see the respondent's current opinion; in some cases selecting either *yes* or *no* meant that the respondent was able to further see only questions related to his previous preferences in the answers.
- Closed answers: 13 questions of this type to avoid individual answers and to be able to later statistically compare the respondents' preferences; a respondent could choose only one answer to be able to define his current position.
- Closed multiple-choice answer: 1 question of this type to avoid individual answers and to be able to later statistically compare the respondents' preferences; this type of an answer was chosen because a single closed answer could not be sufficient to define respondent's current position.
- Statement reaction by degree: 4 questions were this type; a matrix of statements related to one question to be able to closer determine a student's reaction to the question asked under different factors; each statement could be answered separately by assigning it a weight on a scale from either 1 to 5 or 1 to 10 (usually the scale 1 to 5 was sufficient as it was connected with the perception of one's own skills or assigning the importance to the specific factor, however in one case the scale 1 to 10 was chosen as the respondents may not have had a clear answer due to its connection to their cultural patterns which are unconsciously perceived).
- Open answer: 1 question of this type to give a respondent space to closely describe his opinion and position; it was part of the closed answer's type in order to give a respondent space to describe his/her opinion.

In the case of expert interviews, the questions were designed for the qualitative purpose and not purely for the statistical analysis. The objective of the interviews was familiarization of the real process of the Erasmus+ programme administration and detection of possible space for improvement. Another objective was to determine number of partner universities, mainly partner countries of both selected universities and possible effect the offered placements have on the Czech and Belgian students' choices when selecting a country for Erasmus+ exchange study programme.

## **5.2 Methods of data completion**

The questionnaire was created in an on-line layout via web-based programme called Google+ to ensure fast and easy access to the data source. The selection of

an on-line questionnaire helps to avoid human factor mistakes when retyping the data from a survey on paper to a computer.

The questionnaire was sent to Czech and Belgian students via a representative of the student department on students' university e-mail. The on-line questionnaire was available for the Czech respondents from April 14<sup>th</sup> to April 24<sup>th</sup> 2015 and for the Belgian respondents from April 20<sup>th</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup> 2015 on the website <http://goo.gl/forms/q7zMrc6YWb>. Afterwards, the answers were retrieved in an Excel format from the web portal for further analysis and evaluation.

As all of the respondents experienced Erasmus study program in the same period of time (from September 2014 to February 2015), there were distinguished only two major groups of answers and thus division based of the country of the home university – Czech or Belgian.

There were in total 57 respondents (34 Czech students and 23 Belgian students) to the questionnaire and the answers were made a thorough statistical analysis. Further information about the method of statistical adjustment follows later in this chapter. At the end of the on-line questionnaire, there was a possibility for the respondent to enter his/her E-mail address in order to be given a feedback - a report with aggregate answers and conclusions.

In the case of the expert interview, there were a total of 4 interviews realized. Two of them were retrieved from the representatives of the international relations of Mendel University in Brno:

- Respondent A, former Erasmus Coordinator of the Faculty of Business and Economics of Mendel University in Brno, now the Deputy Head of Department of International Relations and Internationalization of Mendel University in Brno; and
- Respondent B, Erasmus Institutional Coordinator, Department of International Relations and Internationalization of Mendel University in Brno.

The other two expert interviews were retrieved from Belgian representatives of the international relations of UC Leuven-Limburg, Belgium:

- Respondent C, Departmental Coordinator of International Office, UC Leuven-Limburg, Belgium; and
- Carina Saelen, International Relations Coordinator of UC Leuven-Limburg, Belgium.

### **5.3 Research evaluation**

After retrieving the data from the on-line platform of the questionnaire, the respondents were divided into two main groups based on their home university and analysis was done for testing the correlation among several answers.

The objective was not necessarily to conclusively answer the hypothesis, but rather to document the behavioural patterns and experience of the respondents which possibly influenced them when selecting the country for their Erasmus+ exchange study. The next objective was to evaluate the effect which such an experience has had on their further personal development and their attitude to mobility.

The questions were designed to indirectly ask for these motives, so it is supposed the answers are true and valid based on the unconscious decision-making driven by the cultural patterns when filling in the questionnaire.

As the expert interviews were more informative than scientific, only comparison of answers of the two institutions could be observed. Out of the list of the offered placements, the effect on students' choices when selecting a country can be influenced. This is discussed later in the chapter Results.

## **5.4 Validity**

There were given all assurances possible to the respondents to assure the anonymity of their replies. In the case of personal interviews, the experts were informed and agreed with the disclosure of their replies in the diploma thesis.

There is no direct evidence that some on the replies should not be valid. All the questions and answers were written in comprehensible English as there was a premise that all the respondents had at least basic knowledge of this language. Therefore, the language-caused misunderstandings should be minimized.

In the case of the validation of the personal interviews, the answers for the same university were compared and in the case of some uncertainty or even a contradiction, the reasons were identified and answers adapted.

## **5.5 Limitations**

There are limitations which should be clarified and revealed to the reader of this thesis. In the questionnaire, questions asked in the original research done by Hofstede in 1960's were avoided; however, there are some similarities in the culture-related questions.

The questions asked during the personal interviews were in general the same for all the experts. Nevertheless, some of them were adjusted based on the specialization of the expert. The purpose of the questions was rather informative than scientific to complete and better understand the answers of the students in the questionnaire.

Another limitation can be seen in the choice of the benchmark – original Hofstede's and The Hofstede's Centre research. The purpose of the thesis was not to confirm or reject his hypothesis about the cultural setting in the two



countries, but rather to identify the motives the students might have for selecting a country for their mobility and further personal development.

The data retrieved from the primary research are cross-sectional, which means they represent an observation in a single point of time. Explanatory cross-sectional data have an inherent problem: the objective of the research was to describe certain behaviour pattern in terms of student mobility. However, the factors influencing these are developing over time and might change. Therefore it is beneficial to revise on the earlier (secondary) data.

Finally, the approach of the thesis is entirely focused on culture – its similarities and/or differences in the two selected countries may it itself be a limitation. As the culture cannot be measured, it is impossible to quantify it into clear results. The only method in this case is analysis of the answers of the two countries and retrieving the motives influencing the students' decision-making in terms of the European mobility.

## 5.6 Statistical methods

Information about a population can be considered scientifically valid only when it meets the following four criteria:

1. It is descriptive and not evaluative (judgmental).
2. It is verifiable from more than one independent source.
3. It applies, if not to all members of the population, at least to a statistical majority.
4. It discriminates: that is, it indicates those characteristics for which this population differs from others.

(Hofstede, 2001)

In the case of this diploma thesis, special attention was given to meeting these four criteria. Instead of analysing the whole population, a certain group of people was analysed within two nations. The group has been described as students from bachelor's programmes at certain university with Erasmus exchange study experience. There were two such groups analysed –students from Belgium and the Czech Republic, and the relative national characteristics evaluated. For better orientation in the thesis, there is used term “students” for description of the “population” mentioned above.

For a statistical analysis of some of the questions from the student survey, simple statistical methods were used – calculations of a mean value, median and standard deviation of the data sample.

An *arithmetic mean* or an average refers to a central value of a discrete set of numbers - specifically, the sum of the values divided by the number of values.

A *median* is the number separating the higher half of a data sample, a population, or a probability distribution from the lower half.

A *standard deviation* is a measure that is used to quantify the amount of variation or dispersion of a set of data values. A standard deviation close to zero indicates that the data points tend to be very close to the mean of the data sample, while a high standard deviation indicates that the data points are spread out over a wider range of values.

(StatSoft, 2015)

Specific answers were selected for further statistical elaboration – a correlation analysis. A correlation ( $r_{xy}$ ) is a single number that describes the degree of linear relationship between two variables (X and Y). Zero value of the correlation coefficient means linear independence. The extremes indicate deterministic linear positive or negative relationship. Sign of the coefficients indicates direction of the linear relationship (+ means positive relationship, - means negative relationship). The correlation can be calculated as the ratio of covariance ( $s_{xy}$ ) and the square root of the multiplication of the two respective variances ( $s_x^2$  and  $s_y^2$ ), where n represents number of observations. (William, 2006)

The correlation between two variables (X and Y) can be calculated as follows:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{s_{xy}}{\sqrt{s_x^2 s_y^2}}$$

Where the covariance is calculated as follows:

$$s_{xy} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (X - \bar{X})(Y - \bar{Y})}{n - 1}$$

And the variance of each variable (X and Y) accordingly:

$$s_x^2 = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (X - \bar{X})^2}{n - 1} \qquad s_y^2 = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (Y - \bar{Y})^2}{n - 1}$$

Further, it is tested, whether the correlation coefficient ( $r_{xy}$ ) is statistically significant (different from zero).

The null hypothesis  $H_0$  against the alternative hypothesis  $H_1$  tested:

$$H_0: \rho_{xy} = 0$$

$$H_1: \rho_{xy} \neq 0$$

T-statistics for verifying the statistical hypothesis is calculated as follows:

$$t = \frac{r_{xy} \sqrt{n-2}}{\sqrt{1-r_{xy}^2}}$$

A determination of the number of degrees of freedom of the sample (k):

$$k = n - 2$$

Next, a significance level is chosen. In statistics, the significance level 5% is usually used. Therefore, for the purpose of the thesis, the significance level  $\alpha$  (0.05) has been chosen. The calculated t-statistics is compared with the critical table values.

$$t_{(1-\frac{\alpha}{2});k} = t_{(1-\frac{0,05}{2});k} = t_{(0,975);k}$$

The statistical table of quantile t-distribution is commonly available and are enclosed in the Appendix.

If the calculated t-statistics is greater than the critical table values

$$|t| > t_{(0,975);k}$$

, the null hypothesis  $H_0$  is rejected. That means that the correlation coefficient  $r_{xy}$  is statistically significant (different from zero).

If the calculated t-statistics is smaller than the critical table values

$$|t| < t_{(0,975);k}$$

, the null hypothesis  $H_0$  cannot be rejected. That means that the correlation coefficient  $r_{xy}$  is not statistically significant (equals to zero).

The correlation analysis was performed in more cases, where there was especially searched for a positive correlation between two factors (answers).

First of all, it was crucial to find positive correlation in the case of the answers called "Statement reaction by degree", where the respondents were assigning the weight based on their perception of their own skills before and after the Erasmus+ exchange study experience. As the questions were connected to their

skills' development, finding a positive correlation would mean the students are improving their skills, or at least, they are more confident with those skills, which complies with the second hypothesis that *Erasmus programme has positive effect on one's self perception and soft skills.*

Further, it was important to find connection between the student's perceptions of future, respectively his/her perception of future career development. The students were asked for assigning a weight, how important the factor of future career development was important while making a decision about the country. In another question later in the questionnaire, the students were asked whether they think that after their recent mobility they got such a competitive career advantage for future. In this case, finding a positive correlation between these two answers could be crucial for the understanding of motives driving the student's selection of a country and his/her self-development and future mobility attitude.

## 6 Results

After a long preparation time for the research and thorough discussion with all the individuals involved (representatives of universities from both participating countries, former and current students who experienced Erasmus mobility and native speakers), the answers themselves were collected very quickly. The preparatory time was crucial for successful collection of the answers in order to display statistically relevant data which will help to answer the three hypotheses stated in the beginning. Due to the nature of the thesis – an international sociological topic, the questions for the online survey had to be formulated in comprehensible English language and very carefully defined so that the respondents would not be pushed into predetermined results.

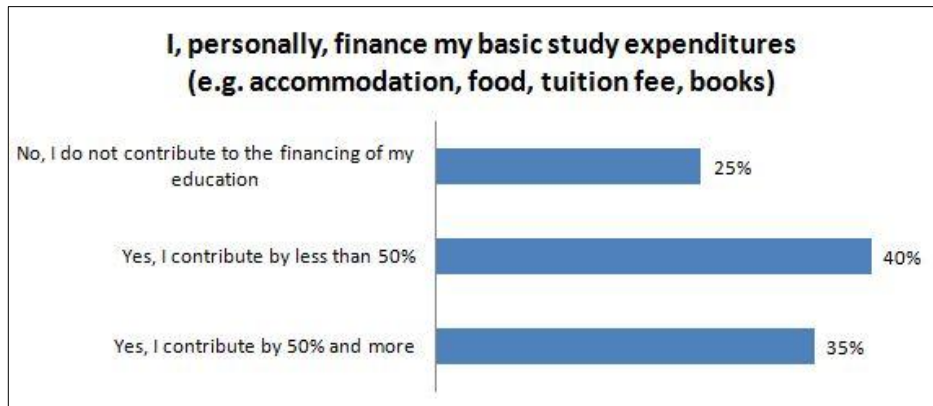
As the topic of the thesis is more culturally oriented, it is very complicated to reveal quantitatively and confirm statistically certain behaviour pattern in terms of student international mobility, their skills development and further mobility effect. Also, the factors influencing these are developing over time and might change.

### 6.1 Quantitative data presentation

Out of 85 Czech bachelor students, to whom the questionnaire was offered, only 34 complete answers were received. In the case of Belgium students, the questionnaire was sent to 80 students and out of that 27 complete answers were received. It makes total of 57 respondents (which is 36% of all addressed students). All the students from both universities were asked for their participation through an official e-mail from a study department representative. The questionnaire was written in comprehensible English and available to each student for 12 days. The students were briefly informed about the purpose of the survey and their anonymity was guaranteed. All the answers were filled in completely which helped to gain a bigger picture about each respondent's behavioural pattern. The students were also offered the possibility of feedback with aggregate results and conclusions. More than half of the students (exactly 31 out of 57) offered their e-mail address showing their further interest for feedback.

A majority of the respondents were aged 20 – 25 as expected. There was only one person older than 25 years. Surprisingly, a great majority were females, who represent 75% of all the respondents. There were two higher education institutions involved – Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic (with 60% share of the answers) and UC Leuven-Limburg, Belgium (constituting the remaining 40% of answers). More than 50% of all the respondents study the field Business, management and administration; the other two most represented fields of studies were Agriculture, food, forestry and fishery and Law. All the respondents answered they are full-time students. As it is obvious from the following figure, 75% of all the respondents contribute to their basic study expenditures (40% contribute by less than 50% to their basic study

expenditures, and 35% contribute by 50% and more to their education). That is evidence of an active participation in one's own education and an important step toward self-development and independence.



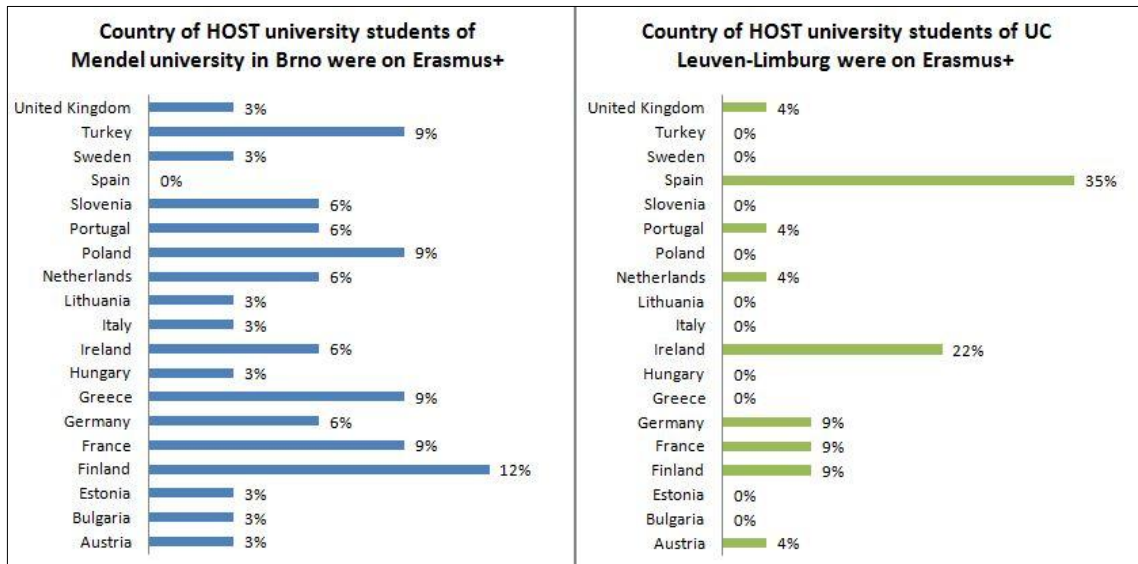
**Figure 11** – Financing of study expenditures; results from the questionnaire; own research

### 6.1.1 Country selection

In order to be able to answer the first hypothesis – whether the home country cultural patterns have an influence on students' country selections for Erasmus+, the respondents were asked to name the country where they recently were on their Erasmus+ exchange study programme. In the next question, they were asked again for a selection of a country. This second selection was presented to the students as their choice if there were no limitations (such as finance or placements available). In the following figures and tables, the results are presented.

In the next figure, a percentage of total respondents of each university (Czech and Belgian) can be seen divided into the countries where they were on their Erasmus+ exchange study programme.

In the case of the Czech students, the portfolio of countries differs a lot (respondents selected 18 countries) comparing to the Belgian students, where the respondents selected only 9 countries. This might be caused by a limited offer of the placements in these countries. The most commonly chosen countries in the case of Czech students were Finland (12%), France, Greece, Poland and Turkey (each 9%). In the case of Belgian students, the most commonly chosen were Spain (35%), Ireland (22%), Finland, France and Germany (each 9%).



**Figure 12** – The location of the host university where the respondents stayed during their Erasmus+ exchange study programme; results from the questionnaire; own research

For the same question, a simple statistical analysis was performed. In the table below, the arithmetic mean value, median and standard deviation of the country scores can be seen for individualism/collectivism and masculinity/femininity dimension of all the countries the respondents selected. To each country selected by each respondent, there was assigned a value (a country score of both above mentioned dimensions based on The Hofstede's Research Centre scores for each country). Out of these values, this simple statistical analysis was calculated.

	Total INDIV / COLL	Total MASC / FEMIN	Mendel INDIV / COLL	Mendel MASC / FEMIN	UC LL INDIV / COLL	UC LL MASC / FEMIN
<b>MEAN</b>	58.509	46.667	56.588	44.824	61.348	49.391
<b>MEDIAN</b>	63.000	43.000	61.500	44.000	63.000	42.000
<b>ST.DEVIATION</b>	16.686	19.865	18.637	21.443	13.176	17.372

**Figure 13** – Cultural dimension of students' country selection of their Erasmus+ exchange study programme; results from the questionnaire; own research

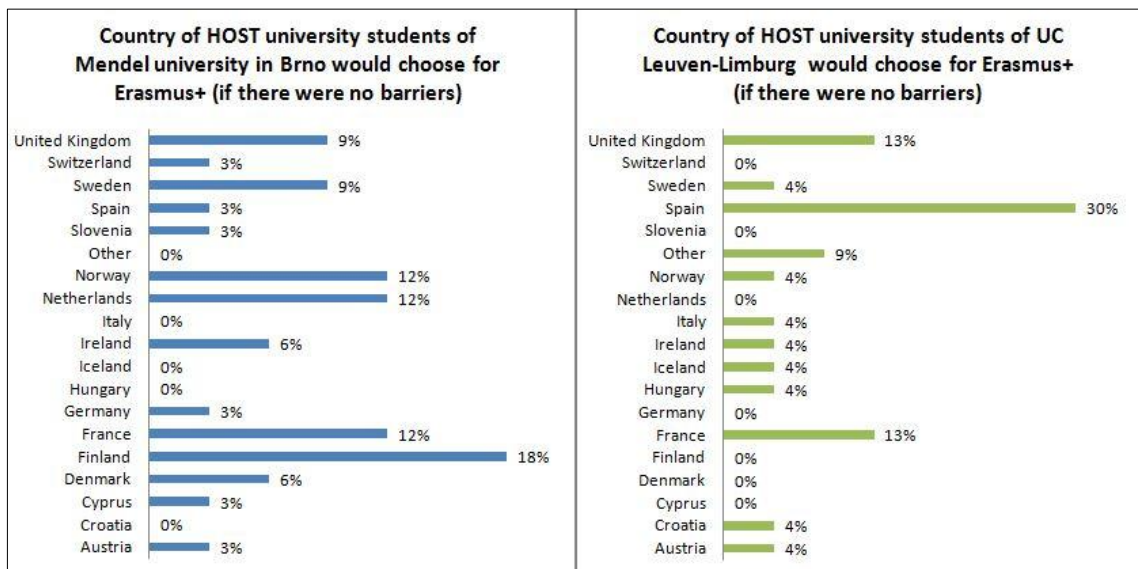
From the table above, a very important conclusion can be made. The respondents experienced their Erasmus+ exchange study programme in the countries which tend to be more individualistic. On the other side, these countries tend to be more feminine.

Within the individualism/collectivism dimension and in all three cases – Total (total sample), Mendel (sample of students of Mendel University in Brno) and UC LL (sample of students of UC Leuven-Limburg), the mean determines the value from 56.558 to 61.348, the median determines the value from 61.0 to 63.0, and the standard deviation is in the range from 13.176 to 18.637. That confirms the hypothesis that these countries tend to be more individualistic.

Within the masculinity/femininity dimension and in all three cases – Total, Mendel and UC LL, the mean determines the value from 44.824 to 49.391, the median determines the value from 42.0 to 44.0, and the standard deviation is in the range from 17.372 to 21.443. That supports the hypothesis that these countries tend to be slightly more feminine, however since it is close to the value 50, it means these countries selected are on the border with the masculinity dimension as well.

Comparing the results of Mendel University in Brno and UC Leuven-Limburg, it can be observed that in the case of Belgian students, their selection was more deterministic (closer to the expected value) than in the case of Czech students. Belgium, a country being rated as extremely uncertainty avoidant (score 94 on Hofstede's scale), is expected to have inhabitants who will make decisions very carefully, which has been just proven.

In the next figure, a percentage of total respondents of each university (Czech and Belgian) can be seen divided into the countries which the students would choose for their Erasmus+ exchange study programme if there were no barriers or limitations (such as finance or placements available).



**Figure 14** – The location of a host university the respondents would choose for their Erasmus+ exchange study programme in there were no barriers or limitations; results from the questionnaire; own research



The most preferred countries in the case of Czech students were Finland (18%), France, The Netherlands and Norway (each 12%). It is worthy to repeat that Finland and France were also very often chosen in the previous question by the Czech students. In the case of Belgian students, the most preferred countries were Spain (35%), France and the United Kingdom (each 13%). Here, it is worthy to mention that Spain was also very often chosen in the previous question by the Belgian students and that 85.7% of Belgian students who experienced their Erasmus+ exchange study programme in that country would have chosen Spain again.

For the same question a simple statistical analysis was performed. In the table below, the arithmetic mean value, median and standard deviation of the country scores can be observed for the individualism/collectivism and masculinity/femininity dimensions of all the countries the respondents selected. To each country selected by each respondent, a value was assigned (a country score of both above mentioned dimensions based on The Hofstede's Research Centre scores for each country). Out of these values, there was this simple statistical analysis calculated.

	Total INDIV / COLL	Total MASC / FEMIN	Mendel INDIV / COLL	Mendel MASC / FEMIN	UC LL INDIV / COLL	UC LL MASC / FEMIN
<b>MEAN</b>	66.579	38.807	68.941	33.029	63.087	47.348
<b>MEDIAN</b>	69.000	42.000	70.000	26.000	60.000	43.000
<b>ST.DEVIATION</b>	13.526	23.476	11.845	23.629	15.294	20.997

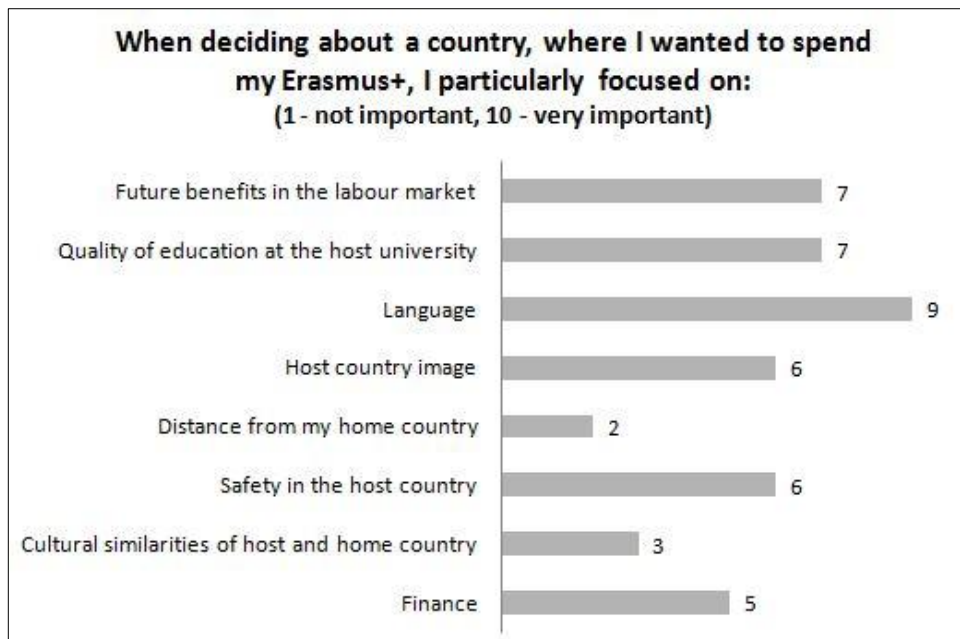
**Figure 15** - Cultural dimension of students' country selections of their Erasmus+ exchange study programme if there were no limitations; results from the questionnaire; own research

From the table above, a very important conclusion can be made. If there were no barriers to choice, the respondents would select the countries for their Erasmus+ exchange study programme which tend to be more individualistic. On the other side, these countries tend to be more feminine.

Within the individualism/collectivism dimension and in all three cases – Total (total sample), Mendel (sample of students of Mendel University in Brno) and UC LL (sample of students of UC Leuven-Limburg), the mean determines the value from 63.087 to 68.941, the median determines the value from 60.0 to 70.0, and the standard deviation is in the range from 11.845 to 15.294. That confirms the hypothesis that these countries tend to be more individualistic. In the case of Czech respondents, the results are even more determining and so that Czech students choose more individualistic countries.

In terms of the masculinity/femininity dimension and in all three cases – Total, Mendel and UC LL, the mean determines the value from 33.029 to 47.348, the median determines the value from 26.0 to 43.0, and the standard deviation is in the range from 20.997 to 23.629. That supports the hypothesis that these countries tend to be more feminine, however since it is close to the value 50, it means these countries selected are on the border with the masculinity dimension as well. In the case of Czech respondents, the results are even more determining and so that Czech students choose more feminine countries.

Further, the students were asked for their experience before the Erasmus+ mobility – particularly what influence the predetermined factors had on their decision-making about the host country. They assigned a weight to the factor on the scale from 1 to 10 (1 = not important; 10 = very important). From the figure below it is clear that the most importance the students assigned to the “Language” (9 out of 10), followed by the “Future benefits in the labour market” (7 out of 10) and “Quality of education at the host university” (7 out of 10). Two other important factors were “Host country image” and “Safety in the host country”. The factor “Finance” is neutral for the students; and two last factors – “Distance from my home country” and “Cultural similarities of host and home country” are more or less unimportant for the respondents. That does not mean they really have such a conscious effect on them, as unconscious motives driving the student for choosing a country they selected might be hidden.



**Figure 16** – Median of the factors influencing the students’ country selection; results from the questionnaire; own research

A simple statistical analysis was realized, as well. The table below describes the mean, median and standard deviation of the answers.

<b>FACTOR</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>ST. DEVIATION</b>
Finance	5.5	5	2.952
Cultural similarities of host and home country	3.6	3	2.282
Safety in the host country	6.0	6	2.800
Distance from my home country	3.5	2	2.680
Host country image	5.5	6	2.612
Language	7.7	9	2.655
Quality of education at the host university	6.6	7	2.595
Future benefits in the labour market	6.8	7	2.619

**Table 8** – Median, mean and standard deviation of the factors influencing the students' country selection; results from the questionnaire; own research

The results of the analysis above just confirm the statement that following factors are important for a student when making a decision about a host country: "Language", "Quality of education at the host university", and "Future benefits in the labour market". On the other side, it is confirmed that the following factors are unimportant (at least consciously) for a student: "Distance from my home country" and "Cultural similarities of host and home country". The results of the other factors deviate a lot and verge to neutrality, therefore clear statistical conclusion cannot be given as more samples would be required to confirm the importance of them.

Later in the questionnaire, the students were asked whether they think the recent Erasmus+ experience gave them a competitive advantage which will help them in their future career. Observing the answers (Yes/No were substituted by the comparable values 10/1) against the weight (importance on the scale from 1 to 10), which each respondent gave to the factor "Future benefits in the labour market" in the previous question was very beneficial, as there was proven a positive correlation in the answers. That means the greater the weight they gave to the factor, the more likely they answered positively and believe they gained a competitive advantage after the recent Erasmus+ experience.

### **6.1.2 Student skills development**

The next significant part of the questionnaire was defined to detecting the development of 12 predefined soft skills of a student in order to be able to answer the second hypothesis – whether Erasmus+ exchange study programme

has positive influence on a student's soft skills. These soft skills were carefully chosen and are very close to those demanded by the employers in the labour market, which was presented earlier in the chapter Theoretical background. There were two questions asking the same – self-assessment of own skills. Once before, and once after a student's recent Erasmus+ experience. The respondents were asked to assign a weight on the scale from 1 to 5 (1 = very weak; 3 = average; 5 = very good). Afterwards, a simple statistical analysis including a correlation analysis was performed and interesting outcome was detected: there was statistically proven a positive correlation between the students' skills before and after Erasmus+ exchange study mobility in 11 out of 12 predefined areas.

From the following table it is easy to read that the mean value, how the students evaluated their skills in the respective areas before they experienced Erasmus+ exchange study programme, is in the range from 2.8 to 3.5. Also the median gives the value from 3 to 4. As the standard deviation is in the range 0.714 and 1.005, the results can be taken as quite accurate.

<b>BEFORE I experienced this Erasmus+ exchange study, I feel that my skills in the following areas were: (1 - very weak, 3 - average, 5 - very good)</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>ST. DEVIATION</b>
Presentation skills	3.0	3	0.886
Self-confidence	2.8	3	0.875
Stressful situation management	3.0	3	0.886
Foreign cultures understanding	3.0	3	0.973
Awareness of my strengths and weaknesses	2.9	3	0.718
Correct decision-making	3.1	3	0.714
Responsibility	3.5	4	0.984
Individual problem solving	3.4	3	0.858
Team work	3.5	4	0.825
Reading and understanding of text in the foreign language	3.1	3	0.934
Writing an essay in the foreign language	2.8	3	0.982
Speaking about an academic topic in the foreign language	2.8	3	1.005

**Table 9** - Median, mean and standard deviation of the soft skills of the students before their Erasmus+ experience; results from the questionnaire; own research

Compared to the results of answers how the students evaluate their own skills after their Erasmus+ exchange study programme experience, a clear conclusion could be made. In all areas, the mean value and median of the analysed sample increased when compared to their self-assessment before the programme. That

means the pre-defined soft skills, which are greatly desired in the labour market, are improved after the Erasmus+ mobility. Even though the self-assessment is rather subjective, it is important that a student perceives the improvement which increases his self-confidence and later motivates him for further personal development.

The mean results from the following table prove that the students evaluated their present skills (after they experienced Erasmus+ exchange study programme) in the range from 3.5 to 4.1. Also the median gives the value 4 in all the areas. As the standard deviation is in the range 0.662 and 0.855, the results can be taken as quite accurate.

<b>And NOW I feel that my actual skills are: (1 - very weak, 3 - average, 5 - very good)</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>ST. DEVIATION</b>
Presentation skills	3.7	4	0.745
Self-confidence	3.8	4	0.732
Stressful situation management	3.5	4	0.782
Foreign cultures understanding	4.1	4	0.817
Awareness of my strengths and weaknesses	3.7	4	0.827
Correct decision-making	3.6	4	0.855
Responsibility	4.0	4	0.803
Individual problem solving	3.9	4	0.803
Team work	3.9	4	0.673
Reading and understanding of text in the foreign language	4.1	4	0.662
Writing an essay in the foreign language	3.9	4	0.748
Speaking about an academic topic in the foreign language	3.9	4	0.789

**Table 10** - Median, mean and standard deviation of the soft skills of the students after their Erasmus+ experience; results from the questionnaire; own research

Further, it was crucial to realize a correlation analysis. The main objective was to seek a positive correlation between the values the students answered in the previous two questions about the personal soft skills development. As it is apparent from the table below, a positive correlation was found between the two values in all 12 areas. After calculating the t-statistics and comparing it with the t-critical value, it was decided whether the correlation is statistically significant. In all 11 areas (exception was only “Speaking about an academic topic in the foreign language”), there was statistically proven an occurrence of positive

correlation between “before” and “after” Erasmus+ mobility status of a student personal skills.

Having these two results – evidence of an increase in mean value and median and statistically proven correlation between the two values, it can be concluded that the Erasmus+ exchange study programme has positive influence on a student’s soft skills and helps him/her to increase these competences, which are so desired in the labour market. Herewith, it complies with the expectations and perception of the students regarding the importance of Erasmus+ exchange study programme in their future career.

	Correlation analysis	T-statistic	T-critical	Significant
Presentation skills	0.62223	5.89474	2.00404	Yes
Self-confidence	0.40381	3.27350	2.00404	Yes
Stressful situation management	0.41137	3.34710	2.00404	Yes
Foreign cultures understanding	0.37969	3.04383	2.00404	Yes
Awareness of my strengths and weaknesses	0.46519	3.89728	2.00404	Yes
Correct decision-making	0.49899	4.27017	2.00404	Yes
Responsibility	0.41339	3.36692	2.00404	Yes
Individual problem solving	0.58469	5.34502	2.00404	Yes
Team work	0.47377	3.98973	2.00404	Yes
Reading and understanding of text in the foreign language	0.44153	3.64949	2.00404	Yes
Writing an essay in the foreign language	0.47684	4.02316	2.00404	Yes
Speaking about an academic topic in the foreign language	0.23119	1.76229	2.00404	No

**Table 11** – Correlation analysis of the students’ soft skills before and after the Erasmus+ experience; results from the questionnaire; own research

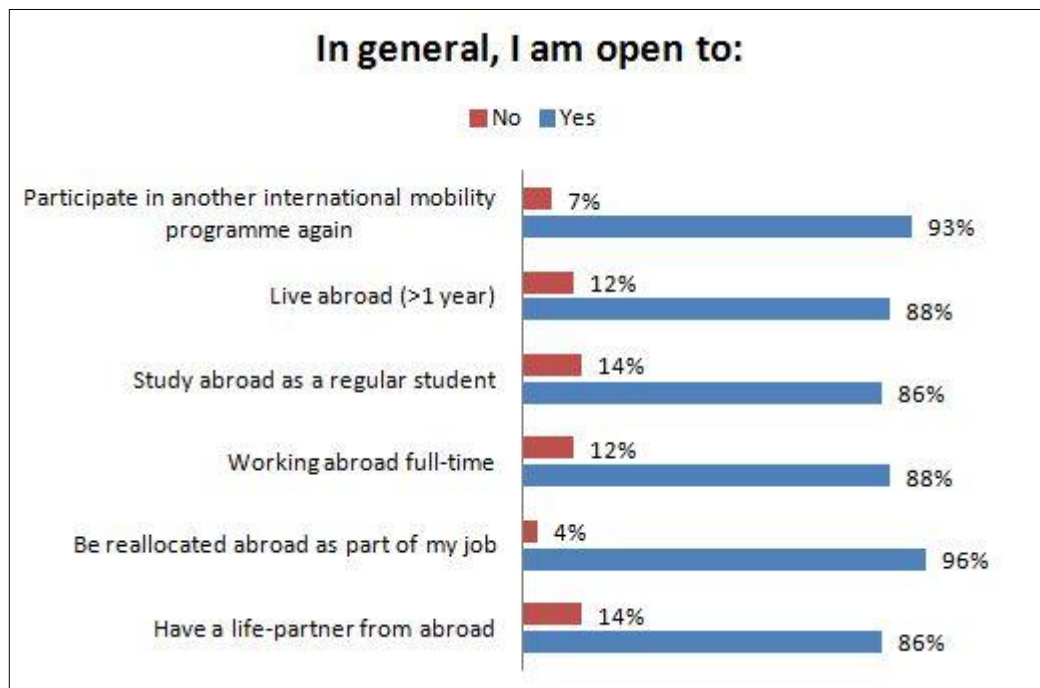
### 6.1.3 Mobility attitude of the students

In the last part of the questionnaire, there were a variety of questions focused on the complex behavioural patterns in terms of mobility of the students, which were designed in order to help to answer the third hypothesis – whether the students tend to be more mobile after their recent Erasmus+ experience. Out of the outcomes of the questionnaire, great results can be observed.

The students were asked whether they had any other experience with an international mobility programme. In total 63% of the respondents had not experienced another mobility programme before and thus this recent Erasmus+ exchange study programme mobility was their first one. Another 37% of the students experienced a mobility programme before, whereas the most common length of the programme was up to three months.

The students were asked whether their interest into the international affairs at their home university had changed after their return from Erasmus+. In total 49% of the respondents replied they started to be more interested than before their recent mobility. The others stated their interest was the same as before.

In order to understand whether the students tend to be more mobile after their recent Erasmus+ exchange study experience, several questions focusing on different types of mobility had to be asked. In the questionnaire, questions were included which related to further participation in another international programme, or personal opinion about living more than 1 year abroad. Further, the students were asked about their attitudes to studying as a regular student abroad, to work full-time in a foreign country or to be relocated abroad. Last, there was a question related to openness of having a life-partner from abroad. Surprisingly, the respondents answered to all the questions very positively and in all cases there are always more than 86% of respondents who are open to further mobility, which can be seen in the figure below.

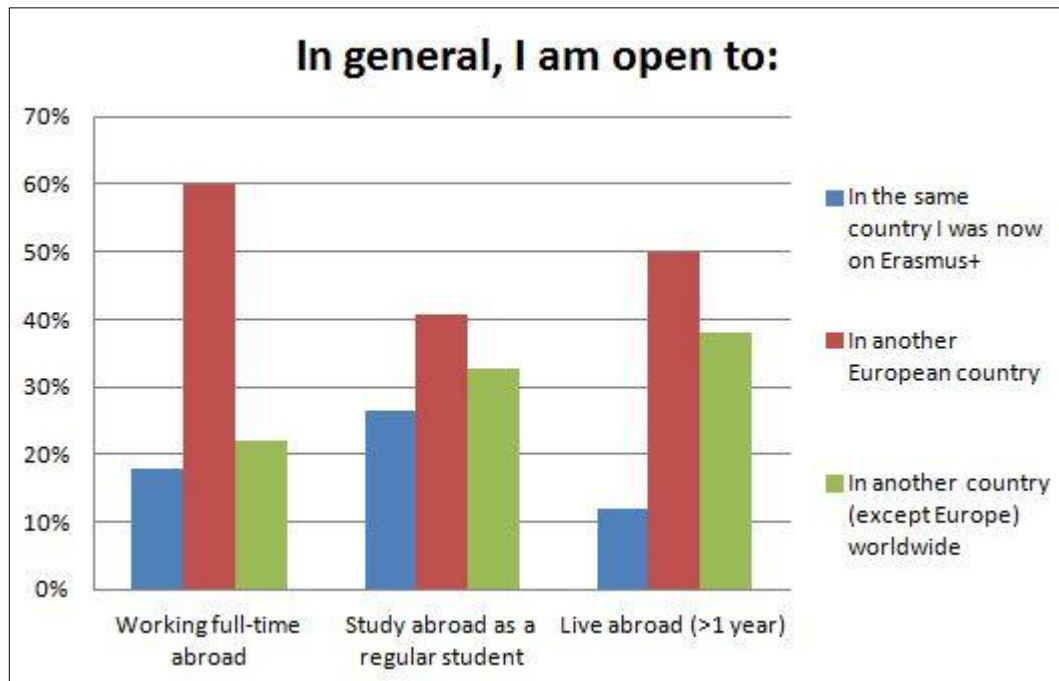


**Figure 17** - Students' attitudes to future mobility; results from the questionnaire; own research

Analysing the questions more deeply, additional valuable information can be observed. Out of the respondents who answered that they would like to participate in another international mobility programme again, the most popular mobility would be: repeated study abroad for 1 to 2 semesters (selected by 47% of the respondents), and an internship programme (selected by 39% of the respondents). Only four respondents answered negatively to the question of

further participation in the international mobility. As a reason, the most commonly answered was: no further interest in international mobility and graduation.

Further, it was interesting to reveal the results of the students' territorial attitude to mobility (see the figure below). There were three different areas distinguished: the same country a respondent was now on Erasmus+, another European country, and another country (except Europe) worldwide. In all three cases (working, studying or living abroad), the majority of respondents was willing to be mobile within the borders of Europe. It could be observed most clearly in the case of working abroad full-time, where 60% of the respondents willing to work abroad answered they would prefer one of the European countries. An unexpected finding has been revealed as well: in the case of studying, and even more in the case of living abroad, the respondents were very likely to prefer a country beyond the borders of Europe. That points to an unforeseen hypothesis that the European mobility experience might lead to the world mobility very quickly.



**Figure 18** - Students' territorial attitude to future mobility; results from the questionnaire; own research

In the case of the respondents who answered they are not willing to live more than 1 year abroad (only 12% of total respondents), they were asked for possible reasons for such a statement. There were predefined answers to which a respondent assigned a weight (1 = not important; 5 = very important), as it is described in the table below. It was confirmed that social interdependence caused a barrier to mobility because the answer "Partner, family and friends",



had the mean value 4.14 and median 5 with the standard deviation 1.46. In the case of other answers, the significance cannot be confirmed as the respondents perceive the other factors as more or less unimportant.

If no: For me, the following reasons are (1 - not important, 5 - very important)	MEAN	MEDIAN	ST. DEVIATION
Partner, family, friends	4.14	5.00	1.46
Possession of some immovable property in home country (such as flat or house)	1.43	1.00	0.53
Job I have in my home country	1.71	1.00	1.11
Patriotism to my home country	1.86	1.00	1.46
I do not feel safe in foreign environment	1.71	1.00	0.95

**Table 12** - Students' territorial attitude to future mobility; results from the questionnaire; own research

## 6.2 Expert interviews

After completion of the results from the students' questionnaire, in total four interviews were conducted. Two of them were implemented through personal meetings at Mendel University in Brno; the other two were realized through Skype conversation with the representatives of UC Leuven-Limburg.

The representatives of Mendel University in Brno were selected as they have had long-term experience with the outgoing student mobility on the faculty and the institutional level. On the faculty level, the expert is former Erasmus Coordinator of the Faculty of Business and Economics, and present Deputy Head of Department of International Relations and Internationalization. On the institutional level, the expert has been Erasmus Institutional Coordinator at the Department of International Relations and Internationalization.

The representatives of UC Leuven-Limburg were selected based on the recommendation as they have had also long-term experience with the outgoing student mobility on both, the departmental and the institutional level.

The interview was chosen as a method to complete the topic of European student mobility in this thesis. The results are revealed in the two following subchapters and are rather a summary of the conversation with the experts than a direct transcription of the interviews. It must be mentioned that from each country only two independent interviews were conducted and thus the conclusions should be taken as tentative.

The main objective of the expert interviews was to reveal the personal experience of the representatives with the students going abroad. Each interview took from 30 to 60 minutes and varieties of topics were discussed in order to better understand the bigger picture and to be able to answer the three hypotheses stated in the beginning of the thesis.

Included among the topics discussed were:

- foreign placement offer and its number at the foreign universities (institutions),
- popularity (respectively unpopularity) of certain countries by the students of both universities and the possible reasons for that,
- success rate of the candidates to get a placement they had initially chosen,
- contracting process with the partner institutions, its length, the conditions of its extension,
- types of contact channels and the process of the initiation of the international cooperation with a foreign university,
- options a student has when preferring a certain country (or university) which is not in the offer of the domestic university, the conditions and the experienced success rate of accepting of such a requirement,
- experience with the repeated student international mobility, and the types of the repeated international mobility the students select the most,
- critical evaluation of the current placement/country offer the university has (for the international student mobility) and a proposal of eligible enlargement (or reduction) in the number of placements in certain countries in order to match the demand-supply of the actual situation in mobility.

### **6.2.1 Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic**

After an analysis of the answers of the Czech students in the questionnaire and revealing its results, an interview was done with a former Erasmus Coordinator of the Faculty of Business and Economics at Mendel University in Brno, and present Deputy Head of Department of International Relations and Internationalization at Mendel University in Brno. Because more than 40% of the Czech respondents belong to the Faculty of Business and Economics, it was critical to discuss some of the results and outcomes of the questionnaire with an appropriate representative of this faculty.

The actual offer of the placements of the Faculty of Business and Economics for the year 2015 can be seen in the table below. There are a total of 257 placements available for both bachelor and master study programmes.

COUNTRY	PLACEMENTS	COUNTRY	PLACEMENTS
Austria	10	Italy	14
Belgium	8	Latvia	8
Bulgaria	3	Lithuania	16
Croatia	6	Netherlands	4
Cyprus	3	Norway	2
Denmark	2	Poland	16
Estonia	8	Portugal	8
Finland	17	Romania	4
France	37	Slovakia	6
Germany	24	Slovenia	3
Greece	8	Spain	18
Hungary	3	Turkey	26
Ireland	3		

**Table 13** – The placement offer of the Faculty of Business and Economics at Mendel University in Brno, for the year 2014/2015 (PEF, 2015); adjusted by the author

Among the most popular countries the Faculty of Business and Economics has in its offer to the students, western and northern countries such as Finland or France dominate; however also some of the eastern countries are becoming very popular now. Among these countries belong for instance Turkey, Austria, Estonia and Spain. The number of the placements offered as well as the portfolio of the countries are stable over time and the actual quantity of the placements varies only very little. The less popular destinations usually comprise of eastern countries such as Slovakia, Poland, and Lithuania.

The success rate of getting a placement the student applied for varies every semester. One semester there can be 70% of successful candidates, next semester it can be only 30%. The reason for that is not the amount of the placements available; it purely depends on the actual numbers of applicants for the certain university or country.

In general, there are long-term contracts with the partner universities until the year 2020 and the contract renewal depends on the actual bilateral mobility between the two institutions (in certain cases a sufficient unilateral mobility is satisfactory as well). If there are continuously no students participating in the programme, the placement offer might be reduced or the contract can be even terminated.

The new partner universities can be contracted based on the personal contact between the representatives of the two institutions or the university can be contacted randomly based on the similar study programmes. There are other channels for an establishment of cooperation such as EAIE conferences or international university trade fairs. The other, often uncommon, channel is a student initiative. If a student prefers a certain country, respectively university similar to his study programme, he can address his study department of foreign

affairs at his home university and apply for closing a contract with the chosen university. Such a case is an exception at the Faculty of Business and Economics and happens on average twice a year. If the cooperation is established, the contract is often closed for the length of one year, and depending on the effective utilization of the mobility the contract can be prolonged for longer period.

The repeated student mobility is becoming more common at the faculty and is conditioned by maximum 12 months of mobility abroad for one study degree (bachelor, master or doctoral). The exchange study, an internship and other mobility programmes (such as so called strategic partnership, joint degree or Erasmus Mundus) within Erasmus+ framework can be combined. There is always minimum length of the stay on the mobility: 3 months for the exchange study, 2 months for the internship, for the other programmes it depends on the specific contract. All combinations of repeated student mobility are quite often at the faculty, for instance: a student experiences an exchange study programme in one country for few months and after that apply for another exchange study programme or internship in the same or another country.

Based on the personal experience of the expert with the placement availability and the students' demand for them, more universities or more placements at the universities in France could be contracted. The basic problem is seen as insufficient amount of study programmes in English as the majority of offered placements are only in French. Also in the case of Ireland, there is lack of placements. Further, there would be very beneficial to establish a partnership with the universities or institutions in the United Kingdom, as there is a great demand for the placements from the side of Czech students expected. The problem with such a partnership can be that the mobility would be unilateral (only from the side of the Czech Republic) because the English students might not wish to travel as it prolongs their studies, which is very costly for them. (Respondent\_A, 2015)

To conclude the outgoing student mobility within Erasmus+ exchange study programme at the whole university, the next representative of Mendel University in Brno was the Erasmus Institutional Coordinator, Department of International Relations and Internationalization of Mendel University in Brno. After a short discussion, similar conclusions as in the case of interview with Respondent A were found.

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>PLACEMENTS</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>PLACEMENTS</b>
Austria	18	Latvia	8
Belgium	20	Lithuania	40
Bulgaria	5	Netherlands	38
Croatia	21	Norway	14
Cyprus	3	Poland	64
Estonia	17	Portugal	23
Finland	78	Romania	3
France	66	Slovakia	32
Germany	43	Slovenia	19

Greece	32	Spain	112
Hungary	20	Sweden	3
Ireland	3	Turkey	71
Italy	47	UK	2

**Table 14** - – The placement offer of the Mendel University in Brno, for the year 2014/2015 (Respondent\_B, 2015); adjusted by the author

As it can be seen in the table above, there are in total 802 placements for the exchange study programme Erasmus+ offered at Mendel University in Brno. The countries which dominate in the offer are Spain (112), Finland (78), Turkey (71), France (66) and Poland (64).

Year	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
<b>Students</b>	176	187	183	195	249

**Table 15** – Outgoing exchange study mobility at Mendel University in Brno between 2010 – 2015 (Respondent\_B, 2015); adjusted by the author

Further, the amount of outgoing students for exchange study programme Erasmus+ has increased in past five years, which is obvious from the previous table. The amount of outgoing students increased by more than 40% in 2015 compared to the academic year 2010/2011. (Respondent\_B, 2015) The reasons for that are following: greater offer of the placements at the university, increased popularity of the programme, and greater budget from the EU.

### 6.2.2 UC Leuven-Limburg, Belgium

In order to better understand the answers of the students of UC Leuven-Limburg, two expert interviews were conducted with the representatives of the department of the foreign affairs, who have been in daily contact with the outgoing Erasmus+ students.

Firstly, a Skype interview with the Departmental Coordinator of the International Office was conducted. After the conversation, many interesting facts were uncovered and certain obscurities were clarified. This Belgian tertiary institution is more practically than theoretically oriented and offers only bachelor level of studies; it is entitled as a university of applied sciences and the students graduate as so called professional bachelors. The countries included in the partnership are: Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Among the factors influencing a student's choice of country for exchange study programme, the language and the perceived level of education should be mentioned. Also, students have a negative prejudice about the level of education

in certain southern and eastern countries; however the expectations not always match the real situation in the country. Therefore a lower demand has been observed for these southern and eastern countries. On the other side, there is a great demand for western countries such as France and Spain, Portugal and the United Kingdom. Based on the university long-term statistics, there are around 14.5% of all the students who are willing to go abroad for the purpose of studies or internship, which is evaluated as quite a big number. Based on the discussion, it was detected that the countries which should be included into the offer or where the amount of placements should be increased are Bulgaria, Greece, Estonia, Ukraine, Romania and Cyprus. (Respondent\_C, 2015)

Further, a Skype interview with the International Relations Coordinator, Mrs Carina Saelen, was conducted. The discussion revealed very important facts about the outgoing student mobility at the institution. This Belgian university is very close to the capital, Brussels, and two languages are spoken in the country –Dutch and French. Therefore the students tend to travel to France very often. Among the factors which might have an effect on students' country choice Mrs Saelen highlighted the cultural elements, host city entertainment, art, architecture and its attractiveness, and definitely the economic elements such as financing, distance from the home city and the future professional possibilities (even though the students do not say it out loud). In general, the most popular destinations are western countries such as France and Spain as well as the United Kingdom and Ireland. The reasons for such a choice can be the language, climate and relaxed way of living the students want to enjoy. On the other side, the eastern countries are not very popular among the students – to name a few Romania, Bulgaria and Russia – as those are seen as too far away and different in the way of living to the students. Further, it was interesting to hear that Germany is not very popular among the students as well. Apart from limited places at German universities offered, there is not great demand for the placements from the side of the students. The other aspect is the bilateral mobility because not many German students are willing to travel to Belgium. Further, there are not many students applying to study in the Netherlands. The reason they have is a perception that the country is too close and too similar to Belgium. Nevertheless, after they return back from the exchange programme in this country, they often realise the differences and as their perception about the country has changed, they spread this information at the university and therefore the amount of students having an interest to travel to the Netherlands is growing every year.

Usually, each student who applies for a placement gets the placement abroad. The students are not pushed, but they are left to decide about the alternative countries if there is great demand for their country of first choice. In the past, there were always more placements than the students, which now tends to be the other way around. Therefore, it is needed to make new contracts with other tertiary institutions, even though it is not always easy due to the limits some universities have, which is connected to their limited financial resources.

The contracts UC Leuven-Limburg has with the partner universities are mostly long-term and last from 4 to 6 years. Only in 20% of cases, the contract was

made only for 1 or 2 years, and the prolonging of the contract depends on the bilateral mobility. The most common channel of contracting a new university are the EAIE conferences, where about 4,000 participants present their institutions. Personal contacts are another channel.

There are one or two students coming every year with the request to study at an institution the university has no contract with. Apart from Mendel University in Brno, these applications are mostly denied as there has not been good experience with the long-term bilateral mobility between the two institutions. The students are instead offered a place in the same country, but in a different city. The other reason for such a decision is the fact that it is very time demanding to organise new contract (and it happened very often that the host country refused to close a contract) and that the university wants to control the quality of education it offers to its students.

In the following table can be seen total amount of the placements offered at UC Leuven-Limburg in the academic year 2013/2014. In total, 116 placements were offered in the respective year for the purpose of exchange study. The countries which dominate in the offer are France (25), Finland (13) and Spain (13).

COUNTRY	PLACEMENTS	COUNTRY	PLACEMENTS
Austria	7	Ireland	6
Cyprus	3	Italy	4
Czech Republic	2	Netherlands	4
Denmark	6	Norway	7
Finland	13	Portugal	4
France	25	Spain	13
Germany	10	Sweden	2
Hungary	3	UK	7

**Table 16** – The placement offer of the UC Leuven-Limburg, for the year 2014/2015 (Michaux, 2015); adjusted by the author

In the terms of repeated mobility, the students mostly use the opportunity to study abroad again. Based on the feedback, the international office gets from the students, there are around 99% of students who would recommend the exchange study or would participate again. (Saelen, 2015)

## 7 Discussion

The future development of student mobility depends on optimum setting of demand-supply to the mobility programmes and on future results from the mobility. Since Europe is quite heterogeneous in terms of different languages, cultures and institutions, there is still a long way to reach the optimum integration in order to be competitive worldwide and to reach better living conditions of its inhabitants.

This thesis was focused on the sociological and cultural aspects of university students' international mobility. The main objective of the thesis was stated in the early beginning and thus secondary and primary research was done in order to answer the three hypotheses.

The first hypothesis proposed that Czech and Belgian students choose a foreign country for the purpose of their Erasmus+ exchange study programme based on the cultural similarities in the host country with their home country. Since both countries were determined as very uncertainty avoidant, there was an assumption the students will try to avoid any unpredictable situations and therefore will select culturally similar countries comparing to their home country. In the case of the Czech Republic and Belgium, both countries are determined as more individualistic and more masculine. After collecting and analysing the answers of the students, important results appeared. In the case of the Czech Republic, the students experienced their Erasmus+ exchange study programme in twice as many different countries than their colleagues from Belgian. After the discussion with the experts of the department of foreign affairs at both universities, it was discovered that there is a different portfolio of placements at the two universities. It was realized that Mendel University in Brno has almost twice the number of countries and placements included in their portfolio of partner universities when compared with UC Leuven-Limburg.

Moreover, after realising a simple statistical analysis, it was detected that the countries, which the students visited for their Erasmus+ experience as well as the countries they would select, if there were no limitations, are determined on The Hofstede Centre's scale as more individualistic and more feminine. In the case of individualism/collectivism, the results can be taken as deterministic. In the case of masculinity/femininity, the results pointed to the score 50, meaning on the border with masculinity, therefore the result in the case of masculinity/femininity dimension cannot be taken as purely deterministic. Also in the case of Belgian students, the results were fitting into the cultural dimension of Belgium more that in the case of the Czech students and Czech Republic. This might be caused by the fact that Belgium is scored as extremely uncertainty avoidant on The Hofstede Centre's scale.

Next, the students determined the importance of certain factors which influenced their choice of country before their Erasmus+ mobility. Based on the results, the most important thing for them was the language. Further, other very important aspects were the future benefits in the labour market the mobility could bring them and the quality of education at the host university. Other



important factors the students selected were host country image and the safety in the host country. On the other side, the least important factors were the distance of the host country from the home country and cultural similarities of the host country with the home country. It was interesting to observe that the factor Finance was much more important for Czech than for Belgian students.

Since the students determined that the future benefits in the labour market the mobility could bring them were very important in their decision-making process before the mobility, it was crucial to prove the attitude to the same statement after they returned from their stay abroad. A positive correlation was proven between these two answers, meaning the higher importance the students gave to the factor as affecting their country selection, the more likely the students answered that the mobility brought them a competitive advantage for their future career. That is a very important finding about the effects the mobility has on its participants. One could admit there is no proof the students will really get a job due to experience of this particular mobility programme. Nevertheless, since the students answered as they answered, they have to feel more confident in their future career development and may be open to participate in the programmes and projects they would not even think about before experiencing this particular Erasmus+ mobility. And these single steps can help them to succeed in the future labour market.

The second objective of the thesis was to prove that based on students' opinion the Erasmus programme has positive effect on one's self perception and soft skills. After gathering the students' answers and after a deep statistical analysis of the retrieved data, a positive correlation was detected between students' self-assessment of their own skills before and after their Erasmus+ exchange study experience. Such a result confirms that students think their soft skills improved after they returned back from their stay abroad. Among these soft skills, where there was with a significant level 0.05 statistically proven positive correlation, are included: presentation skills, self-confidence, stressful situation management, foreign culture understanding, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, correct decision-making, responsibility, individual problem solving, team work, reading and understanding of text in the foreign language, and writing an essay in a foreign language. It proves that the students rated their skills with a bigger score after their Erasmus+ exchange study experience. The only skill, where there was not with the same significant level statistically proven positive correlation, was speaking about an academic topic in a foreign language. Nevertheless, comparing the answers before and after mobility, an increase was observed in the mean value and median for all the skills. That means the students are thinking these soft skills improved after their recent mobility experience and feel more confident in those areas, which are so important for the employers in the labour market.

The third objective of the thesis was connected with mobility itself and so that the students experiencing Erasmus+ exchange study programme are afterwards more open to be mobile and move abroad for further studies or work. The majority of students have not experienced any other mobility programme before their recent Erasmus+ exchange study. The most common length of a

programme for those, who experienced another mobility programme, was up to 3 months. Thus, it is expected that the students' answers were mainly driven by the outcomes of the recent Erasmus+ mobility. In all the questioned areas, a very open attitude was observed in the students' answers towards any future international mobility. These areas included: participation in another international mobility programme, living abroad more than 1 year, studying abroad as a regular student, working abroad full-time, being reallocated abroad as part of a job, and having life-partner from abroad. In all the areas, the students (in all cases more than 86% of all the respondents) answered to each single type of mobility very positively meaning they are open to participate in another international mobility programme, live, study, work, or to have a life-partner from abroad. In the case of participation in another international mobility programme, the students would prefer an exchange study for 1 – 2 semesters abroad or an internship. Also there was found that Belgian students are more open to participate in another international mobility programme or study abroad as a regular student compared to the Czech respondents.

Further, interesting results were observed in terms of the countries the students are willing to travel into. The majority of students are open to be mobile within the borders of Europe, which was most evident in the case of working abroad. That might be caused by an easy access to other European countries for the students (lower or no requirements for visa or work permits). Also, a significant percentage of the students are open to be mobile worldwide. This result was unexpected as it means the European mobility experience might lead to the openness to the world mobility very quickly and the institution – an attitude to mobility – can be changed within one generation. For the students who answered negatively in terms of their future international mobility, the main reason was the social cohesion (a partner, family or friends) they have in their home country.

The research could be further extended to the students who have not participated in any mobility in order to find their motives and possible barriers. Further, the questionnaire could be extended to questions related to the highest level of education of student's parents as there might be connection between the student mobility and the family background. Both can be a subject of further intercultural study in terms of European mobility.

## 8 Conclusion

The main objective of the thesis was to bring recommendations for future mobility of students in general (for next Erasmus+) but also specifically for two selected countries with the respect to intercultural dimensions. These recommendations are deeply discussed in this chapter.

In order to reach the objective it was crucial to answer the three hypothesis stated in the beginning – the cultural relationship to student's country selection of Erasmus+ exchange study programme, student's soft skills development after the programme, and student's attitude to further international mobility. In all three cases the hypotheses were confirmed, even though in the case of cultural dependence only partly.

It was proven that the students are selecting culturally similar countries in terms of individualism/collectivism dimension of Hofstede's definition. The countries they selected tend to be more individualistic (people of these countries are supposed to look after themselves and their direct family). In terms of masculinity/femininity dimension of Hofstede's definition, there was proven that the students tend to choose more feminine countries (where the dominant values include caring for others and quality of life in society).

It was further statistically proven that after the Erasmus+ exchange study experience, the students evaluated their soft skills with higher scores when compared to before the programme. These soft skills are currently very important for the employers in the labour market and in some cases are necessary for successful recruitment.

Regarding the students' attitudes to future mobility after their recent experience with Erasmus+, it was again confirmed that the majority of the respondents are very open to future mobility programmes, living, studying, working or even having a life-partner from abroad. The geographical area of the mobility was in the majority of cases Europe, however, a significant percentage of the students are open to further mobility beyond the borders of Europe.

Therefore, a clear conclusion based on the research realized can be made. The Erasmus+ exchange study programme is very beneficial to its participants as it has positive influence on their soft skills and on their attitude to future international (not only European) mobility. The representatives of the departments of the foreign affairs in both universities should bear in mind the country cultural patterns and should focus on enlargement of the placements in those countries which tend to be more similar in terms of individualism/collectivism degree by Hofstede's definition. In the case of the Czech Republic, the most similar countries in terms of the individualism dimension are: Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland. For Belgium, the most similar countries in terms of the individualism dimension are: Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. It does not mean the other countries should be neglected and

not offered to the students. The other countries should be thus more promoted and presented to the students in such a way they will feel an interest to choose it for his / her exchange study (or further mobility). Due to the fact that the students coming from these two countries want to minimize the risk from choosing country not fitting to their expectations, with more information about the “risky” (from their point of view) countries, their uncertainty could turn into an interest.

However, some limitations should be mentioned. The sample was taken from two pre-selected countries and two universities within the whole Europe. Also, the number of respondents was only 57 in total, representing only a minor group of all potential respondents. Further, only four interviews with the representatives of the department of the foreign affairs were conducted. That means there could be much more students involved and more interviews done in order to give more relevant results of the whole European population. Therefore, the conclusions of this thesis should be taken as tentative and should be understood as one of the evidence of the presence of the national cultural patterns in one’s decision making process in relation to the European mobility.

In spite of these limitations, a further research in the field of intercultural relations would be more than beneficial in order to understand the personal motives and behavioural patterns connected to the mobility and the internationalization of Europe.

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# Appendix

Appendix A: T-distribution critical values table

Appendix B: Students' questionnaire layout

Appendix C: Results from the "Students' questionnaire"



## Appendix A: T-distribution critical values table

<b>Tabulka kvantilů t - rozdělení</b>					
	<b>0,9000</b>	<b>0,9500</b>	<b>0,9750</b>	<b>0,9900</b>	<b>0,9950</b>
<b>1</b>	3,077685	6,313749	12,70615	31,82096	63,6559
<b>2</b>	1,885619	2,919987	4,302656	6,964547	9,924988
<b>3</b>	1,637745	2,353363	3,182449	4,540707	5,840848
<b>4</b>	1,533206	2,131846	2,776451	3,746936	4,60408
<b>5</b>	1,475885	2,015049	2,570578	3,36493	4,032117
<b>6</b>	1,439755	1,943181	2,446914	3,142668	3,707428
<b>7</b>	1,414924	1,894578	2,364623	2,997949	3,499481
<b>8</b>	1,396816	1,859548	2,306006	2,896468	3,355381
<b>9</b>	1,383029	1,833114	2,262159	2,821434	3,249843
<b>10</b>	1,372184	1,812462	2,228139	2,763772	3,169262
<b>11</b>	1,36343	1,795884	2,200986	2,718079	3,105815
<b>12</b>	1,356218	1,782287	2,178813	2,68099	3,054538
<b>13</b>	1,350172	1,770932	2,160368	2,650304	3,012283
<b>14</b>	1,345031	1,761309	2,144789	2,624492	2,976849
<b>15</b>	1,340605	1,753051	2,131451	2,602483	2,946726
<b>16</b>	1,336757	1,745884	2,119905	2,583492	2,920788
<b>17</b>	1,333379	1,739606	2,109819	2,56694	2,898232
<b>18</b>	1,330391	1,734063	2,100924	2,552379	2,878442
<b>19</b>	1,327728	1,729131	2,093025	2,539482	2,860943
<b>20</b>	1,325341	1,724718	2,085962	2,527977	2,845336
<b>21</b>	1,323187	1,720744	2,079614	2,517645	2,831366
<b>22</b>	1,321237	1,717144	2,073875	2,508323	2,818761
<b>23</b>	1,319461	1,71387	2,068655	2,499874	2,807337
<b>24</b>	1,317835	1,710882	2,063898	2,492161	2,796951
<b>25</b>	1,316346	1,70814	2,059537	2,485103	2,787438
<b>26</b>	1,314972	1,705616	2,055531	2,478628	2,778725
<b>27</b>	1,313704	1,703288	2,051829	2,472661	2,770685
<b>28</b>	1,312526	1,70113	2,048409	2,467141	2,763263
<b>29</b>	1,311435	1,699127	2,045231	2,46202	2,756387
<b>30</b>	1,310416	1,69726	2,04227	2,457264	2,749985
<b>31</b>	1,309463	1,695519	2,039515	2,452825	2,744036
<b>32</b>	1,308573	1,693888	2,036932	2,448678	2,738489
<b>33</b>	1,307737	1,69236	2,034517	2,444795	2,733286
<b>34</b>	1,306951	1,690923	2,032243	2,441147	2,728393
<b>35</b>	1,306212	1,689573	2,03011	2,437719	2,723809
<b>36</b>	1,305514	1,688297	2,028091	2,434499	2,71948
<b>37</b>	1,304854	1,687094	2,02619	2,431443	2,715406

38	1,30423	1,685953	2,024394	2,428569	2,711568
39	1,303638	1,684875	2,022689	2,425841	2,707911
40	1,303076	1,683852	2,021075	2,423258	2,704455
41	1,302544	1,682879	2,019542	2,420802	2,701181
42	1,302035	1,681951	2,018082	2,418474	2,698071
43	1,301552	1,681071	2,016691	2,416255	2,695106
44	1,30109	1,68023	2,015367	2,414135	2,692286
45	1,30065	1,679427	2,014103	2,412116	2,689594
46	1,300227	1,678659	2,012894	2,410188	2,687011
47	1,299825	1,677927	2,011739	2,408342	2,684556
48	1,299438	1,677224	2,010634	2,406578	2,682209
49	1,299069	1,676551	2,009574	2,404886	2,679953
50	1,298713	1,675905	2,00856	2,403267	2,677789
51	1,298372	1,675285	2,007582	2,401721	2,675733
52	1,298044	1,674689	2,006645	2,400229	2,673733
53	1,297731	1,674116	2,005745	2,398792	2,671823
54	1,297426	1,673566	2,004881	2,39741	2,669985
55	1,297135	1,673034	2,004044	2,396082	2,668221
56	1,296853	1,672522	2,003239	2,3948	2,666511
57	1,29658	1,672029	2,002466	2,393572	2,664874
58	1,296319	1,671553	2,001716	2,39238	2,663292
59	1,296066	1,671092	2,000997	2,391225	2,661764
60	1,295821	1,670649	2,000297	2,390116	2,660272
61	1,295584	1,670219	1,999624	2,389042	2,658853
62	1,295356	1,669805	1,998969	2,388006	2,657471
63	1,295134	1,669403	1,998342	2,387005	2,656143
64	1,29492	1,669014	1,997728	2,386041	2,654851
65	1,294711	1,668636	1,997137	2,385095	2,653615
66	1,294511	1,66827	1,996564	2,384186	2,652396
67	1,294316	1,667916	1,996009	2,383304	2,651213
68	1,294126	1,667572	1,995468	2,382449	2,650086
69	1,293942	1,667238	1,994945	2,381612	2,648976
70	1,293763	1,666915	1,994435	2,380802	2,647903
71	1,293589	1,666599	1,993944	2,38002	2,646866
72	1,29342	1,666294	1,993462	2,379256	2,645847
73	1,293256	1,665996	1,992998	2,37852	2,644865
74	1,293097	1,665708	1,992544	2,377801	2,643919
75	1,292942	1,665426	1,992103	2,377101	2,642992
76	1,29279	1,665151	1,991675	2,376419	2,642082
77	1,292643	1,664885	1,991257	2,375755	2,641191
78	1,292499	1,664625	1,990848	2,375109	2,640336
79	1,29236	1,664371	1,990452	2,374481	2,639499

<b>80</b>	1,292224	1,664125	1,990065	2,373872	2,638699
<b>81</b>	1,292091	1,663884	1,989688	2,373272	2,637898
<b>82</b>	1,291961	1,663648	1,98932	2,37269	2,637134
<b>83</b>	1,291835	1,66342	1,98896	2,372117	2,63637
<b>84</b>	1,291712	1,663198	1,98861	2,371562	2,635643
<b>85</b>	1,291592	1,662979	1,988269	2,371016	2,634915
<b>86</b>	1,291473	1,662765	1,987933	2,370489	2,634206
<b>87</b>	1,291357	1,662556	1,98761	2,369979	2,633533
<b>88</b>	1,291246	1,662354	1,987291	2,36947	2,63286
<b>89</b>	1,291137	1,662156	1,986978	2,368979	2,632205
<b>90</b>	1,291029	1,661961	1,986673	2,368497	2,631568
<b>91</b>	1,290923	1,661772	1,986377	2,368024	2,63095
<b>92</b>	1,290821	1,661585	1,986086	2,36756	2,630331
<b>93</b>	1,290721	1,661404	1,9858	2,367115	2,629731
<b>94</b>	1,290623	1,661226	1,985522	2,366669	2,629149
<b>95</b>	1,290526	1,661051	1,98525	2,366241	2,628585
<b>96</b>	1,290432	1,660883	1,984986	2,365823	2,628021
<b>97</b>	1,290341	1,660715	1,984722	2,365405	2,627457
<b>98</b>	1,29025	1,660551	1,984467	2,365005	2,62693
<b>99</b>	1,290161	1,660392	1,984217	2,364604	2,626402
<b>100</b>	1,290075	1,660235	1,983972	2,364213	2,625893

## Appendix B: Students' questionnaire layout

### Erasmus+ Mobility Survey

By filling in this questionnaire you contribute to my master thesis entitled "European Mobility of Students in Erasmus Programme with Intercultural Focus".

It takes maximum 10 minutes of your time and I guarantee that your answers will be treated anonymously since only aggregate results will be presented in the diploma thesis.

Thank you very much for your truthful and sincere answers.

Bc. Michaela Travnickova



#### Age \*

- Younger than 20
- 20 - 22
- 23 - 25
- Older than 25

#### Gender \*

- Female
- Male

#### HOME university \*

- Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic
- UC Leuven-Limburg, Belgium

#### Field of study \*

(choose one of the options)

#### I study \*

- Full-time
- Part-time



**BEFORE I experienced this Erasmus+ exchange study, I feel that my skills in the following areas were: \***

(1 means very weak and 5 very strong skills)

	1 (very weak)	2	3 (average)	4	5 (very strong)
Presentation skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self-confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stressful situation management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Foreign cultures understanding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Awareness of my strengths and weaknesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Correct decision-making	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Individual problem solving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Team work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading and understanding of text in the foreign language	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Writing an essay in the foreign language	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speaking about an academic topic in the foreign language	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**And NOW I feel that my actual skills are: \***

(1 means very weak and 5 very strong skills)

	1 (very weak)	2	3 (average)	4	5 (very strong)
Presentation skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self-confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stressful situation management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Foreign cultures understanding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Awareness of my strengths and weaknesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Correct decision-making	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Individual problem solving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Team work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading and understanding of text in the foreign language	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Writing an essay in the foreign language	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speaking about an academic topic in the foreign language	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Erasmus+ experience gave me a competitive advantage which will help me in my future career \***

- Yes  
 No

**Since I returned from Erasmus+ I am more interested in the international affairs at my university or country \***

- Yes  
 My interest is the same as before Erasmus+  
 No

**I would participate in Erasmus+ (or another international mobility programme) again \***

- Yes  
 No

**I would prefer \***

(select 1 – 3 answers)

- Study abroad (1 or 2 semesters)  
 Intensive programme (1 to 3 weeks)  
 Internship programme

**I wouldn't participate in Erasmus+ (or another international mobility programme) because of \***

- Financial aspects
- My expectations from this Erasmus+ were not fulfilled
- I have no further interest in international mobility
- Jiné:

Following questions are connected with your general attitude to the international mobility - so please do not feel limited only by Erasmus+ exchange study you now experienced.

**Before this Erasmus+ exchange study, my experience from another international mobility programme is \***

- More than 12 months
- 6 - 12 months
- 3 - 5 months
- Less than 3 months
- I have no other experience

**In general, I am open to live more than 1 year abroad \***

- Yes
- No

**If yes: In which country? \***

- In the same country I was now on Erasmus+
- In another European country
- In another country (except Europe) worldwide

**If no: For me, the following reasons are \***

(1 means not important and 5 very important)

	1 (not important)	2	3	4	5 (very important)
Partner, family, friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Possession of some immovable property in home country (such as flat or house)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job I have in my home country	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Patriotism to my home country	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not feel safe in foreign environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**In general, I am open to study abroad as a regular student \***

- Yes
- No



**If yes: In which country? \***

- In the same country I was now on Erasmus+
- In another European country
- In another country (except Europe) worldwide

**In general, I am open to working abroad full-time \***

- Yes
- No

**If yes: In which country? \***

- In the same country I was now on Erasmus+
- In another European country
- In another country (except Europe) worldwide

**In general, I am open to be reallocated abroad for a certain period of time as part of my job \***

- Yes
- No

**I am open to have a life-partner from abroad \***

- Yes
- No

Thank you for filling in the questionnaire!

If you are interested in the results of the research, please enter your e-mail address and as soon as the results will be available, I will send a report to you.

Once again thank you!

Michaela

**Your E-mail address:**

## Appendix C: Results from the “Students’ questionnaire”

Age	Total	% of total
Younger than 20	0	0%
20 - 22	30	53%
23 - 25	26	46%
Older than 25	1	2%

Gender	Total	% of total
Male	14	25%
Female	43	75%

Home University	Total	% of total
Mendel University in Brno, CR	34	60%
UC Leuven-Limburg, Belgium	23	40%

Field of study	Total	% of total
Agriculture, food, forestry and fishery	9	16%
Architecture and building	1	2%
Arts	2	4%
Business, management and administration	29	51%
Engineering and engineering trades	1	2%
Foreign languages	1	2%
Informatics and computer technologies	1	2%
Law	4	7%
Social work and behavioural science	1	2%
Not specified	8	14%

I study	Total	% of total
Full-time	57	100%
Part-time	0	0%

Country of HOST university I was now on Erasmus+						
	Total	% of total	Mendel University total	Mendel University % of total	UC Leuven-Limburg total	UC Leuven-Limburg % of total
Austria	2	4%	1	3%	1	4%
Bulgaria	1	2%	1	3%	0	0%
Estonia	1	2%	1	3%	0	0%
Finland	6	11%	4	12%	2	9%
France	5	9%	3	9%	2	9%
Germany	4	7%	2	6%	2	9%
Greece	3	5%	3	9%	0	0%
Hungary	1	2%	1	3%	0	0%

Ireland	7	12%	2	6%	5	22%
Italy	1	2%	1	3%	0	0%
Lithuania	1	2%	1	3%	0	0%
Netherlands	3	5%	2	6%	1	4%
Poland	3	5%	3	9%	0	0%
Portugal	3	5%	2	6%	1	4%
Slovenia	2	4%	2	6%	0	0%
Spain	8	14%	0	0%	8	35%
Sweden	1	2%	1	3%	0	0%
Turkey	3	5%	3	9%	0	0%
United Kingdom	2	4%	1	3%	1	4%

<b>If I could without any limitations (finance, placements available) choose again a country for my Erasmus+, I would choose</b>						
	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total</b>	<b>Mendel University total</b>	<b>Mendel University % of total</b>	<b>UC Leuven-Limburg total</b>	<b>UC Leuven-Limburg % of total</b>
Austria	2	4%	1	3%	1	4%
Croatia	1	2%	0	0%	1	4%
Cyprus	1	2%	1	3%	0	0%
Denmark	2	4%	2	6%	0	0%
Finland	6	11%	6	18%	0	0%
France	7	12%	4	12%	3	13%
Germany	1	2%	1	3%	0	0%
Hungary	1	2%	0	0%	1	4%
Iceland	1	2%	0	0%	1	4%
Ireland	3	5%	2	6%	1	4%
Italy	1	2%	0	0%	1	4%
Netherlands	4	7%	4	12%	0	0%
Norway	5	9%	4	12%	1	4%
Other	2	4%	0	0%	2	9%
Slovenia	1	2%	1	3%	0	0%
Spain	8	14%	1	3%	7	30%
Sweden	4	7%	3	9%	1	4%
Switzerland	1	2%	1	3%	0	0%
United Kingdom	6	11%	3	9%	3	13%

<b>I, personally, finance my basic study expenditures (e.g. accommodation, food, tuition fee, books)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Yes, I contribute by 50% and more	20	35%
Yes, I contribute by less than 50%	23	40%
No, I do not contribute to the financing of my education	14	25%

<b>When deciding about a country, where I wanted to spend my Erasmus+, I particularly focused on: (1 - not important, 10 - very important)</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>ST. DEVIATION</b>
Finance	5,5	5	2,952
Cultural similarities of host and home country	3,6	3	2,282
Safety in the host country	6,0	6	2,800
Distance from my home country	3,5	2	2,680
Host country image	5,5	6	2,612
Language	7,7	9	2,655
Quality of education at the host university	6,6	7	2,595
Future benefits in the labour market	6,8	7	2,619

<b>BEFORE I experienced this Erasmus+ exchange study, I feel that my skills in the following areas were:</b>			
	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>ST. DEVIATION</b>
Presentation skills	3,0	3	0,886
Self-confidence	2,8	3	0,875
Stressful situation management	3,0	3	0,886
Foreign cultures understanding	3,0	3	0,973
Awareness of my strengths and weaknesses	2,9	3	0,718
Correct decision-making	3,1	3	0,714
Responsibility	3,5	4	0,984
Individual problem solving	3,4	3	0,858
Team work	3,5	4	0,825
Reading and understanding of text in the foreign language	3,1	3	0,934
Writing an essay in the foreign language	2,8	3	0,982
Speaking about an academic topic in the foreign language	2,8	3	1,005

<b>And NOW I feel that my actual skills are: (1 - very weak, 3 - average, 5 - very good)</b>			
	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>ST. DEVIATION</b>
Presentation skills	3,7	4	0,745
Self-confidence	3,8	4	0,732
Stressful situation management	3,5	4	0,782
Foreign cultures understanding	4,1	4	0,817
Awareness of my strengths and weaknesses	3,7	4	0,827
Correct decision-making	3,6	4	0,855
Responsibility	4,0	4	0,803
Individual problem solving	3,9	4	0,803
Team work	3,9	4	0,673
Reading and understanding of text in the foreign language	4,1	4	0,662
Writing an essay in the foreign language	3,9	4	0,748

Speaking about an academic topic in the foreign language	3,9	4	0,789
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<b>Erasmus+ experience gave me a competitive advantage which will help me in my future career</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Yes	52	91%
No	5	9%

<b>Since I returned from Erasmus+ I am more interested in the international affairs at my university or country (Yes=1, Same=0, No=0)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Yes	28	49%
My interest is the same as before Erasmus+	27	47%
No	2	4%

<b>I would participate in Erasmus+ (or another international mobility programme) again</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Yes	53	93%
No	4	7%

<b>I would prefer</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Study abroad (1 or 2 semesters)	36	47%
Intensive programme (1 to 3 weeks)	10	13%
Internship programme	30	39%

<b>I wouldn't participate in Erasmus+ (or another international mobility programme) because of</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Financial aspects	0	0%
My expectations from this Erasmus+ were not fulfilled	0	0%
I have no further interest in international mobility	3	5%
Other: I am finishing my studies	1	2%

<b>Before this Erasmus+ exchange study, my experience from another international mobility programme is</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
More than 12 months	1	2%
6 - 12 months	4	7%
3 - 5 months	4	7%
Less than 3 months	12	21%
I have no other experience	36	63%

<b>In general, I am open to live more than 1 year abroad</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Yes	50	88%
No	7	12%

<b>If yes: In which country?</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
In the same country I was now on Erasmus+	6	12%
In another European country	25	50%
In another country (except Europe) worldwide	19	38%

<b>If no: For me, the following reasons are (1 - not important, 5 - very important)</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>ST. DEVIATION</b>
Partner, family, friends	4,14	5,00	1,46
Possession of some immovable property in home country (such as flat or house)	1,43	1,00	0,53
Job I have in my home country	1,71	1,00	1,11
Patriotism to my home country	1,86	1,00	1,46
I do not feel safe in foreign environment	1,71	1,00	0,95

<b>In general, I am open to study abroad as a regular student</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Yes	49	86%
No	8	14%

<b>If yes: In which country?</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
In the same country I was now on Erasmus+	13	27%
In another European country	20	41%
In another country (except Europe) worldwide	16	33%

<b>In general, I am open to working abroad full-time</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Yes	50	88%
No	7	12%

<b>If yes: In which country?</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
In the same country I was now on Erasmus+	9	18%
In another European country	30	60%
In another country (except Europe) worldwide	11	22%

<b>In general, I am open to be reallocated abroad for a certain period of time as part of my job</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Yes	55	96%
No	2	4%

<b>I am open to have a life-partner from abroad</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Yes	49	86%
No	8	14%