

The Professional Value of ERASMUS Mobility

The Impact of International Experience
on Former Students' and on Teachers' Careers

**ACA Papers on
International Cooperation in Education**

Lemmens



Kerstin Janson, Harald Schomburg, Ulrich Teichler

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Preface

The promotion of temporary study abroad in Europe is generally viewed as the most visible “success story” among internationalisation policies of higher education, and the European Union’s ERASMUS Programme is certainly the flagship in this regard.

Many policy reports praise ERASMUS for having enabled over two million students to study in another European country. It is apparent that most of these students had an eye-opening experience of learning from contrast. Or, as Ulrich Teichler, the higher education researcher most active in evaluation studies of ERASMUS, likes to put it: students returning from an ERASMUS period in another European country “do not trust a single professor and a single paradigm anymore”. This underscores how cultural and academic learning through temporary study abroad are closely intertwined.

ERASMUS was probably more frequently in the limelight and more thoroughly scrutinized by means of evaluation studies than any other higher education policy measure and programme in Europe. The widespread opinion, shared by almost everybody, that the programme was and remains a success story, was never misused as a pre-text for simply continuing on the beaten path. Instead, it worked as a challenge to maintain the level of success amidst expansion and possible threats of routine and to enhance its quality. The analysis of the first seven years of ERASMUS was published by the European Commission in 1997 under the title *The ERASMUS Experience*. The authors, Ulrich Teichler and Friedhelm Maiworm, named areas where there remained room for improvement. For example, many students reported problems in properly planning their course of study due to relatively late decisions for ERASMUS support, and one fifth of them faced administrative problems in the host country, financial problems and problems with accommodation. Moreover, recognition of the study abroad period upon return by the home institutions was often lukewarm and led more frequently to an extension of the overall period of study than the formal recognition seemed to suggest.

Presenting the results from various surveys, the part of the overall evaluation study of the SOCRATES Programme of 2000 devoted to ERASMUS and higher education was published in 2002 in the series *ACA Papers on International Cooperation in Education*, under the title *ERASMUS in the SOCRATES Programme: Findings of an Evaluation Study*. The editor, Ulrich Teichler, noted that this study, again funded by the European Commission, confirmed that the strengths as well as the not negligible weaknesses had remained more or less unchanged. At the time, I wrote in the preface: “...the overriding tendency of the findings is one of continuity, despite the revolutionary fervour of the reforms of the mid-1990s. It almost appears as if the programme has a will of its own, which gently resists or cushions off initiatives aimed at massive change, be they inspired or misinformed”.

Since 2000, no comprehensive evaluation study of ERASMUS has been undertaken anymore. Instead, studies on a smaller scale, often also relying more strongly on qualitative methods, were commissioned by national governments or initiated by individual scholars. It might well be that the earlier repeated findings of continuity did lower the expectation that new large-scale studies would lead to new insights. However, the European Commission did decide to commission a new study on a specific aspect of the ERASMUS Programme, i.e. that of its 'professional value', which you are holding in your hands. Ulrich Teichler, until recently Director of the International Centre for Higher Education Research (previously: Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work) of the University of Kassel (Germany), again took the lead in this exercise. The study could put the emphasis on both continuity and change over time, since the earlier studies mentioned above had also addressed the careers of former mobile students and the new study also included retrospective questions on the ERASMUS study experiences.

The present study points out a paradox of continuity and change. The immediate value of the ERASMUS experience seems to be unchanged: the eye-opening value of a contrasting learning experience in another European country. But former ERASMUS students of the academic year 2000 report a less impressive career impact five years later than prior generations of ERASMUS students did: a lesser privilege in access to visibly international job tasks and a lesser advantage in the job search in general. Finally the number of graduates believing to have an advantage in income and status compared to their non-mobile counterparts is not anymore higher than those perceiving a disadvantage. The authors of the study, Kerstin Janson, Harald Schomburg and Ulrich Teichler, argue that internationalisation in general has progressed in Europe so much that the ERASMUS experience is bound to lose its exceptionality over time. They draw the conclusion that more ambitious curricular thrusts might be needed to turn a temporary study period abroad again into a clear "value added".

ACA is proud to be able to publish the present study in its series. Like the earlier publications by Ulrich Teichler, in the field of programme evaluation and elsewhere, it is the work of an independent mind of rare analytical acumen. It deserves to be read and it would be in the best interest of those in charge of the ERASMUS Programme to take its findings and recommendations very seriously. So that the success story can continue...

Bernd Wächter
Director of the Academic Cooperation Association
Brussels
May 2009

1 Introduction

1.1 Aims and Design of the Study

The ERASMUS programme inaugurated in 1987 is viewed generally as major success story. This was clearly pointed out at many occasions in 2007 when 20 years of the programme have passed and ERASMUS still can be viewed as a major mobilizing force for experiencing more than one's own country during the course of study. The success can be expressed easily in quantitative terms: more than 1.7 million students have studied a temporary period in another European country with financial support of ERASMUS and within networks between universities that are expected to facilitate study abroad through various organisational provisions and through cooperation in academic matters. But ERASMUS was always expected to provide a meaningful experience that eventually enhance the participants' competences and, therefore, will also turn out to be beneficial for their life after graduation: in their employment and work situation and in other spheres of life.

These ambitions of the ERASMUS programmes were not just left to wishful thinking. Rather, the European Commission initiated a substantial number of evaluation studies over the years in order to gather information valuable as feedback and to pinpoint areas in which improvement would be desirable. These studies by no means were confined to issues which the European Commission could address directly, such as the financial awards, the modes of application and awards of ERASMUS University Charters, etc.; rather, they addressed issues in which the individual universities, departments, teachers and supervisors could be encouraged to seek for improved academic and administrative arrangements whereas the European Commission and all supra-institutional agencies involved could only play an indirect role through setting conditions for support or through information on successful practices.

During the second phase of ERASMUS being a sub-programme of SOCRATES, i.e. during the years 2000-2006, the European Commission recommended the individual participating countries to undertake evaluation studies themselves on a broad range of issues. On the European level, a single theme was given priority: the professional value of ERASMUS.

This study "The Professional Value of ERASMUS Mobility" (VALERA) presents the results of an evaluation study undertaken from December 2004 to June 2006 on the professional impact of mobility in the framework of ERASMUS. First, as in a previous study on the second ERASMUS student cohort (1988/89), this study aimed to identify the role ERASMUS has played in recent years for transition to employment and early career of the fourteenth ERASMUS student cohort (2000/01).

Second, the VALERA study addressed for the first time, the professional value for teachers who have taught a period in another European country in

the framework of ERASMUS. Teachers had been addressed already in previous ERASMUS evaluation studies, but the focus of these studies had been the ways how teaching mobility can be valuable for the students – both those mobile and those studying all the time at home. This time, the VALERA study explored how this teaching experienced abroad affected the teachers' subsequent employment and work. Obviously, teaching mobility, in contrast to student mobility, is not promoted primarily for the benefit of the mobile persons themselves: teaching staff mobility is expected primarily to benefit the students. However, teaching in another country, though not expected to be such an exceptional phase of life as temporary study in another European country, might be valuable as well for subsequent employment and work of the teachers themselves.

For the above stated purposes, first, prior evaluation studies were screened thoroughly and a broad range of actors and experts were asked to present their views. Second, by taking available information and the experts' views into account, representative surveys were undertaken of formerly mobile ERASMUS students and formerly mobile ERASMUS teachers who had spent a period in another European country in the academic year 2000/01. In additional surveys, third, university leaders were asked about student and teacher mobility at their institution, and employers were asked to report about their experience with formerly mobile students. Fourth, seminars were held addressing four selected fields of study, i.e. chemistry, mechanical engineering, sociology and business, in order to elicit experts' and actors' views about the major strengths and weaknesses of temporary student mobility and possible ways in increase its professional value specifically under the conditions of these disciplines and related areas of employment.

The study was commissioned by the European Commission – Directorate – General Education and Culture – as “External Interim Evaluation of the Impact of ERASMUS Mobility (Action 2 of the SOCRATES Community Action Programme, 2000 – 2006) on Students' Access to Employment and Career Development, on Teachers' Career Development and on Two Areas of Study to be Specified (Contract No. 2004-3297)”. It was undertaken by members of the International Centre for Higher Education Research (INCHER-Kassel), University of Kassel, Germany. The Centre, previously named Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work, had been responsible for several previous evaluation studies on ERASMUS and thus was in the position to pay attention to effective procedures of inquiry as well as to a thorough analysis on changes of over time.

Constanze Engel, Kerstin Janson, Harald Schomburg and Ulrich Teichler (head of the project team) conducted the project. They were partly assisted by Oliver Bracht and Albert Over (Association for Empirical Studies). Cristian Ivan, Andschana Anna Maria Mendes, Pui Ling Sandy Mui, Bhina Patria,

Roman Schmidt, Torsten Schramm, Lars Söhlke and several other students at the University of Kassel assisted the project team.

Christiane Rittgerott took care of the editorial quality of the publication, while Dagmar Mann and Susanne Höckelmann from INCHER-Kassel were responsible for text processing and layout.

The authors would like to thank all those who contributed to the completion of the research project and of this publication. Special thanks go to the respondents of the questionnaires, without their readiness to take part in the survey this project could not have been successful.

1.2 Prior Evaluation Studies

As already pointed out, the study “The Professional Value of ERASMUS” aimed to draw substantially from previous evaluation studies of ERASMUS. The prior experiences, first, should help to choose sound procedures and to develop good instruments which were most likely to ensure a high readiness of participation among the possible respondents and valid responses which help not only to collect but also to understand the activities and views of the respondents. Second, the detailed analysis of prior studies were expected to establish the extent to which the activities undertaken in the framework of ERASMUS and their impact were constant over time or have changed in recent years, and, if so, the directions of change.

The VALERA team had at hand and additionally traced a broad wealth of prior studies. Among them, naturally, most importance was attached to studies which were similar in character and thus were most fruitful for examining the stability or change over time. Actually, the two major previous studies in this domain had been undertaken as well by the International Centre for Higher Education Research of the University of Kassel (Germany).

The first seven years of ERASMUS were scrutinised by Ulrich Teichler and Friedhelm Maiworm (*The ERASMUS Experience: Major Findings of the ERASMUS Evaluation Research Project*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1997). In this framework, representative surveys of the ERASMUS students of the cohorts 1988/89 and 1990 were undertaken a few months after that period. The respondents of the 1988/89 cohort were surveyed again in a longitudinal study about three years after and again five years after the study period supported by ERASMUS. Moreover, students were surveyed of the first three cohorts within the ECTS pilot scheme for establishing credits suitable to increase transfer. Mobile teachers of the academic year 1989/90 were surveyed as well, and surveys of ERASMUS programme coordinators provided information on the activities and views of mobile teachers, because the majority of coordinators from those days surveyed had taught abroad themselves in the framework of ERASMUS.

In the framework of a major evaluation of the SOCRATES programme in 1999/2000, analyses of the ERASMUS sub-programme played an important role. Again, representative surveys were undertaken of ERASMUS students and mobile teachers 1998/99 (see Ulrich Teichler, ed. *ERASMUS in the SOCRATES Programme: Findings of an Evaluation Study*. Bonn: Lemmens, 2002). Also reports were analyzed which presented the results of measures within the framework of Curriculum Development (CD) activities and the reports on the Thematic Networks (TN). For analysing the professional impact of ERASMUS, an unusual approach was chosen. A secondary analysis was undertaken of a major comparative survey conducted in 1999/2000 of the employment and work of persons having graduated in 1994/95 from institutions of higher education in 11 European countries and Japan (see Volker Jahr and Ulrich Teichler. "Graduates' International Experience and Mobility", in Ulrich Teichler, ed. *Careers of University Graduates: Views and Experiences in Comparative Perspectives*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2007, pp. 211-224); this provided the opportunity of comparing educational experiences, self-rated competences, employment and work of formerly mobile and formerly non-mobile students. In addition, those graduates responding from five European countries who had been mobile during the course of studies were sent a second questionnaire addressing issues of study, competences and career more thoroughly.

Thus, changes over time as regards the professional value of ERASMUS students' mobility could be established fairly well. In contrast, the analysis of the professional value of ERASMUS teacher mobility is a new approach within the VALERA study. Prior studies had already mapped the mobile teachers' activities and their institutional conditions, but an in-depth look at the professional value for the teachers themselves was undertaken in this new study for the first time.

A triangulation, i.e. a systematic comparison of identical phenomena in the view of various actors and observers, has already played a role in the previous ERASMUS evaluation studies. For example, it was interesting to note that the students themselves had a somewhat more positive view on the impact of ERASMUS than their teachers. In contrast, the teachers hardly saw any restriction of – and most likely overestimated – the recognition awarded upon return of the study achievements during the ERASMUS supported study period in another European country.

1.3 Stages and Modes of Inquiry

The Initial Expert Survey

As a first step of the project, a broad range of actors and experts were asked to state their perceptions of the impact of ERASMUS mobility. This expert survey, first, aimed to provide findings in its own right. Experts' views ideally are predicated on a broad information base and on an in-depth understanding of

the issue at stake. Second, the expert survey was undertaken prior to the survey of former ERASMUS students and teachers in order to help to prepare the latter surveys; issues might be newly addressed in the expert survey which had not been taken care of in previous student and teacher studies. Table 1 provides key information about the expert survey undertaken in spring 2005.

Table 1: Design and Processing of the Survey of ERASMUS Experts

| | | |
|---|---------------------|---|
| 1 | Target population | Experts and actors in the field of mobility, the ERASMUS Programme and labour market |
| 2 | Field phase | March 2005 – May 2005 |
| 3 | Selection procedure | Selection of experts based on known expertise, recommendations of National Agencies and literature and document research (156 experts selected) |
| 4 | Questionnaire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardised, ca. 90 variables • Language versions: English, French and German • Exclusively online |
| 5 | Participation | 67 experts, response rate 43% |

The questionnaire was sent to experts and actors identified, as a rule, with the help of the National SOCRATES Agencies. The *target group* were representatives from

- the national SOCRATES agencies,
- ministries of education,
- conferences of rectors/presidents/vice chancellors,
- umbrella organisations of employment agencies, and
- individual companies

On a supra-national level, in addition, the project team identified relevant European bodies with the help of direct information from experts within the European Commission, of a directory of relevant European associations provided by the European University Association (EAU) and with the help of some other experts known to have a broad knowledge of the European higher education “scene”. In addition, an internet search was undertaken notably in order to identify relevant employers’ associations.

Altogether, 67 experts of the 156 addressed actually responded to the questionnaire on the mobility of students and teachers. Thus, the response rate was 43 percent.

The Survey of Former ERASMUS Students

The survey of *former ERASMUS students* was aimed at providing information on the actual professional impact of an ERASMUS supported temporary study period in another country and at identifying the most conducive conditions

for a high professional value. To gather information from the formerly mobile students, this survey was directed at students who had gone abroad in the framework of ERASMUS in the academic year 2000/01. The formerly mobile students received an elaborate questionnaire on their views regarding the competences they had acquired during their ERASMUS period abroad and on the impact of the temporary study abroad on their transition to work as well as the early years of employment and work. By addressing ERASMUS students from 2000/01, it could be assumed that most respondents had graduated and had embarked on the labour market as well as had already a few years of professional experience. Table 2 provides key information on the survey.

The following sampling strategy was chosen in order to ensure that a certain number of responses could be reached also from former ERASMUS students of relatively small European countries: 1,500 students each from the five largest countries, 800 each from a second group of countries, 650 each from a third group, and all outgoing students from the fourth group of the smallest countries.

Actually, the survey was undertaken from autumn 2005 until spring 2006. Almost 4,600 former ERASMUS students provided the information on which the subsequent analysis is based. The response rate is estimated to be about 45 percent.

Table 2: Design and Processing of the Survey of Former ERASMUS Students

| | | |
|---|---------------------|---|
| 1 | Target population | Students supported in the framework of ERASMUS in the academic year 2000/2001 (N=108,505) |
| 2 | Field phase | August 2005 – February 2006 |
| 3 | Selection procedure | Two stage sampling: institutions (511) and subsequently students (20,500) stratified by groups of countries according to the size of the country |
| 4 | Questionnaire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardised, 16 pages, 110 questions, 277 variables • 23 language versions (all official EU languages) • Online and paper versions |
| 5 | Participation | 4,589 former ERASMUS students; it can be estimated that the response rate is about 45% (based on the assumption that 60% of the 16,819 used addressed were valid) |

The Employer Survey

For the first time, an *employers' survey* was undertaken in the framework of an ERASMUS evaluation study. This was done in order to include those who are the best possible source of information concerning the criteria and pro-

cedures of recruitment and the professional utilisation of knowledge. Table 3 provides key information about the employer survey.

Table 3: Design and Processing of the Employer Survey

| | | |
|---|---------------------|--|
| 1 | Target population | 1. Organisations employing former ERASMUS students 2. Employers in Europe in general, i.e. without any prior knowledge whether they employ any former ERASMUS students |
| 2 | Field phase | February 2006 – May 2006 |
| 3 | Selection procedure | 1. 1,500 addresses of employers provided by the surveyed former ERASMUS students 2. 4,500 addresses sampled from an address database of employers in Europe; stratified sampling according to country, economic sector and size of the organisation |
| 4 | Questionnaire | Highly standardised, 8 pages, 22 questions, 160 variables 22 language versions (all languages of the countries included except Icelandic: the participants from Iceland received both an English and a Danish questionnaire) Only paper versions |
| 5 | Participation | 312 employers, 6% response rate |

The employers' survey was conducted from February 2006 to May 2006. The questionnaire of eight pages addressed characteristics of the company/organisation and particularly the recruitment procedures and criteria as well as professional work and competences of higher education graduates with international experience.

Altogether, 6,000 employers received a questionnaire. 1,500 addresses have been gathered from the survey of former ERASMUS students. Additionally, a sample of 4,500 addresses stratified by country, economic sector and size of the organisation of a database of European employers was used. Altogether, 312 employers participated in the survey. Thus, the response rate was six percent.

The Survey of Former ERASMUS Teachers

The second major survey of the VALERA project was directed at *teachers* having been mobile with the ERASMUS programme in the academic year 2000/01. The same year of reference was chosen in the student and in the teacher survey to ensure a similar context. Furthermore, a time span of five years seems to be adequate to analyse the professional impact.

As no complete set of addresses was available, the ERASMUS coordinators of the institutions addressed in the student survey were asked to identify the formerly mobile teachers and to forward the questionnaire to them. Available information suggests that more than 3,000 former teachers were contacted that way and that 755 of them actually responded. Table 4 provides key information about this survey.

Table 4: Design and Processing of the Survey of Former ERASMUS Teachers

| | | |
|---|---------------------|---|
| 1 | Target population | Teachers having been supported in the framework of ERASMUS in the academic year 2000/2001 (N=13,988) |
| 2 | Field phase | October 2005 - February 2006 |
| 3 | Selection procedure | All mobile teachers 2000/2001 for whom ERASMUS coordinators identified names and forwarded a questionnaire (3,123 teachers) |
| 4 | Questionnaire | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standardised, 12 pages, 81 questions, 206 variables• Versions in English, French and German language• Only online version |
| 5 | Participation | 755 former ERASMUS teachers, response rate 24% |

The University Leader Survey

The *university leader survey* (all higher education institutions eligible for ERASMUS support are called “universities” in the respective official documents) aimed to gather views and experiences both regarding student mobility and teaching staff mobility in the framework of the ERASMUS programme. They can be expected to be informed by various sources and have developed firm views about the professional impact of ERASMUS. They might have been also involved in decisions regarding academic staff’s careers and thus are familiar with the ways how international experience is taken into consideration.

Actually, the survey aimed to address all leaders of higher education institutions which had – according to the available documents – outgoing ERASMUS students in the reference period of the student survey (2000/01). The ERASMUS coordinators of these institutions were sent a questionnaire and asked to forward them to the university leader most directly in touch with ERASMUS. Table 5 provides key information on the university leader survey.

Eventually, leaders from 626 higher education institutions (of altogether 1,437) from 27 countries responded. Thus, the response rate was 44 percent.

Table 5: Design and Processing of the University Leader Survey

| | | |
|---|---------------------|---|
| 1 | Target population | Leaders of all higher education institutions reporting outgoing ERASMUS students in the academic year 2000/2001 |
| 2 | Field phase | September 2005 - February 2006 |
| 3 | Selection procedure | Census (all leaders of higher education institutions involved in the ERASMUS programme: 1,437) |
| 4 | Questionnaire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardised, 8 pages, 48 questions, 157 variables • 23 language versions (all official EU languages) • Online and paper versions |
| 5 | Participation | 626 leaders of higher education institutions, response rate 44% |

The Field-Specific Expert Seminars

Subsequent to the various surveys, seminars were conducted addressing the professional value of ERASMUS supported temporary study in another European country with respect to four fields of study. The aim of the seminars was to identify the specific conditions of employment and related job requirements, the specific conditions under which ERASMUS students have acquired professionally relevant competences as well as possible ways of enhancing the professional value. Experts' seminars were chosen as a mode of inquiry instead of initially envisaged interviews in order to gain a more in-depth insight of the reasoning of the experts and in order to generate new ideas through their exchange of thoughts.

The fields of study chosen were expected to represent both the major disciplinary areas as well as differences in the extent to which academic and professional thrusts prevail: (a) chemistry as an academically oriented field in the area of science and engineering, (b) mechanical engineering as a professionally oriented field in this area, (c) sociology as an academically oriented field in the area of humanities and social sciences, and (d) business studies as a professionally oriented field in the latter area.

Various sources were tapped in order to identify and invite experts, among them teachers experienced in curriculum development and/or involved in international activities, former and current ERASMUS students, representatives of academic and professional associations and experts involved in relevant projects (e.g. TUNING, Thematic Networks), as well as employers or representatives of employers' or professional organisations. Altogether 19 countries were represented among the altogether 39 experts participating.

In mechanical engineering, among others, a senior human resources specialist of a company, a former director of a foreign representation of a major car

company, a former president of the European Society for Engineering Education (SEFI), a representative of a working group “Languages and Humanities in Engineering Education” of the International Society for Engineering Education (IGIP), and a representative of the ERASMUS Thematic Network: “Teaching and Research in Engineering” contributed to the deliberations.

In chemistry, several of the participating professors were involved in various activities of the European Chemistry Thematic Network Association (ECTN), also the president of the European Chemistry Exchange Network (ECEN) took part in the discussion. In addition to employers’ representatives, several former ERASMUS students contributed to the discussion.

A representative of a national employers’ association and a human resource specialist of a bank represented the experiences and views of employers at the seminar in business studies. Business departments and schools were represented through the president of a business school, a director of a department and a few professors. At this seminar, current ERASMUS students represented those experiencing temporary study abroad.

In sociology, various professors participated who hold key functions in national associations of sociology. One representative of employers, active at a poll institute, has pointed out the typical job requirements. Among the current and formerly mobile students, some were experienced in student associations.

During the seminars, the experts were initially confronted with results from the various surveys undertaken which underscore specific conditions of the individual fields. One member of the research team guided the seminar from initial fact-oriented exchange of information to an eventual exploration of strategies suitable to enhance the professional value of ERASMUS. Reports of the seminars written by members of the research team were sent to the experts in order to check the appropriateness of the summary as well as to encourage further comments.

Lessons Learned from the Field Work

In the framework of the VALERA survey, it turned out to be more difficult than in the predecessor ERASMUS evaluation studies conducted by the Centre in Kassel to encourage the ERASMUS coordinators to take the necessary step for the field work (tracing persons and their addresses, mailing on behalf of the research, providing feedback on the detailed activities actually undertaken upon request, etc.). Also, the percentage of the students and teachers addressed who actually responded was lower than in the previous studies. These problems were clearly not due to less time and care taken by the project team. The comments provided on many occasions, rather, suggest that two factors played a major role. First, a *survey fatigue* and *evaluation fatigue* has spread in recent years in response to the vastly increasing number of

evaluation schemes and surveys conducted. Second, the readiness to respond to online-questionnaires does not (yet) correspond to the readiness to answer to more individually looking mailing and paper questionnaires. Altogether, however, those responding can be considered being more or less representative for the respective target groups.

The employer survey turned out to be not satisfactory. Though employer surveys are notorious for exceptionally low response rates, the two activities undertaken in the framework of this project to elicit responses from employers turned out to be disappointing.

In contrast, the willingness to participate in expert seminars and the readiness to embark in active brainstorming about the limitations and opportunities to enhance the professional value of ERASMUS were impressive. Most experts did their best to participate even though they were contacted by email or phone on relatively short notice. The level of involvement at the seminars was high, and a substantial number of participants provided positive feedback thereafter.

2 The ERASMUS Programme

The European Economic Community initially addressed educational matters only in the areas of vocational training and the transition from education to employment. When higher education became part of the European agenda during the 1970s, one of the first activities was to promote student mobility. The Joint-Study Programmes (JSP) were established in 1976 and remained operative for about a decade. This pilot programme provided financial support for networks of departments that exchanged students for a period of up to one year and also included some funds, though on a moderate scale, for mobile students. JSP was widely viewed as successful in creating a fruitful academic and administrative environment for student exchange between cooperating departments of higher education institutions in different countries. All of them established various modes of organisational and academic support for mobile students, many were active in joint curricular development, and the most ambitious departmental networks even developed joint or double degrees. However, the limited period of institutional support (a maximum of five years) and the extra costs incurred by students during study periods abroad constituted barriers to far-reaching success.

Subsequently, in 1987 the ERASMUS programme was inaugurated. Its name not only reminded of the Dutch humanist and theologian Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus (1466-1536), but also served as an acronym for European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students. ERASMUS was not only aimed to increase the quantity of European higher education activities but also to broaden their scope. It rapidly became the most visible of the various newly emerging European educational programmes. Though the financial basis of the programme did not reach the volume needed for pursuing the ambitious aim initially set by the European Community of supporting a temporary study period in another European country of 10 percent of all students in higher education, ERASMUS became the largest student mobility programme hitherto established.

A new chapter in the history of European support for temporary student mobility and trans-border cooperation of higher education institutions was expected to begin when the SOCRATES programme – named after the Greek philosopher and educational reformer of the fifth century B.C. – was established in 1995. Implemented in the area of higher education as from the academic year 1997/98, SOCRATES brought together the various education programmes, thus aiming at increased administrative efficiency and substantive cross-fertilisation of education activities in various sectors. They were revised or supplemented to form two new large European programmes, namely SOCRATES for the different sectors of general education and LEONARDO DA VINCI for vocational education.

The most visible changes of ERASMUS envisaged under the new umbrella of SOCRATES were of a managerial nature:

- (a) Each individual institution of higher education had to submit one application encompassing all its exchange and cooperation activities, thus replacing the previous pattern of submission of applications by networks of cooperating departments. This application became the basis for an “Institutional Contract” between the European Commission and the individual institution of higher education.
- (b) Bilateral cooperation agreements between partner institutions substituted the inter-university agreements between networks of departments. The institutions of higher education applying for SOCRATES were expected to keep and provide on request written traces of the cooperation that had been established between them and other European institutions.
- (c) Each institution submitting an application for SOCRATES support was requested to include in its application a European Policy Statement (EPS). This statement was designed to provide a framework for all the actual European activities to be carried out by the applying institution and to define the role SOCRATES support would play in this framework.

While ERASMUS in the past had clearly focused on the learning opportunities of mobile students, SOCRATES aimed to also address the *non-mobile of students*, i.e. to make the majority of students benefit from the European dimension in higher education. Notably, curricular innovation and increasing teaching staff mobility was expected to contribute to European experiences on the part of the non-mobile students.

For this purpose, activities supported in addition to student mobility were given an increasing share of the resources and were expected to play a greater role. Financial support for teaching staff exchange was substantially increased. Support for Curriculum Development and Intensive Programmes was extended and newly structured. Promotion of the European Credit Transfer System became one of the priorities of the targeted measures to improve the conditions of student mobility. In addition, Thematic Network projects were introduced. They were expected to stimulate innovative concepts of educational change through joint deliberation and development activities in networks of experts and key actors focusing on individual fields of study or special cross-cutting issues.

With the decision no. 253/2000/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 24 January 2000 the second phase of SOCRATES for the years 2000 until 2006 was established. The general objectives of SOCRATES II are described in Article 2 of the Council Decision:

“In order to contribute to the development of quality education and encourage life-long learning, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States, the objectives of the programme shall be:

- (a) to strengthen the European dimension in education at all levels and to facilitate wide transnational access to educational resources in Europe while promoting equal opportunities throughout all fields of education;

- (b) to promote a quantitative and qualitative improvement of the knowledge of the languages of the European Union, in particular those languages which are less widely used and less widely taught, so as to lead to greater understanding and solidarity between the peoples of the European Union and promote the intercultural dimension of education;
- (c) to promote cooperation and mobility in the field of education, in particular by:
 - encouraging exchanges between educational institutions,
 - promoting open and distance learning,
 - encouraging improvements in the recognition of diplomas and periods of study,
 - developing the exchange of information, and to help remove the obstacles in this regard;
- (d) to encourage innovation in the development of educational practices and materials including, where appropriate, the use of new technologies, and to explore matters of common policy interest in the field of education.”

It was decided to continue with the Action 2 (ERASMUS) until 2006 without major changes except for the administration of the programme: from the academic year 2000/2001 onwards, the administration of the funds for mobile teaching staff was transferred from the European Commission to the National Agencies and the *ERASMUS University Charter* (EUC) was introduced 2003/2004, which substitutes the former Institutional Contract. Now higher education institutions apply for the ERASMUS University Charter to the European Commission, and after the awarding of a EUC the institution has the right to participate in activities supported by the ERASMUS programme. Institutions of higher education that are not holders of an EUC may participate as partners in a multinational project, but they are not allowed to submit themselves a project proposal to be funded by the Community.

3 Student Mobility

3.1 Introduction

Studying in another country is viewed as beneficial for the learning process of the students and their growth of competences in various respects, notably:

- acquisition of *academic knowledge* (theories, methods and basic disciplinary knowledge) in areas of expertise which are not taught in the home country at all or only on a substantially lower level,
- gathering and experiencing *field knowledge* of the economy, society and culture of the host country of study,
- successful study in *fields which are genuinely border-crossing* (e.g. International Law),
- learning internationally *comparative approaches*,
- *broadening the mind and improving reflection* through contrasting experiences of different countries, different academic cultures, etc., and
- acquisition of *international/inter-cultural communication techniques*, e.g. foreign languages, inter-cultural communication styles, etc.

Moreover, studying abroad is expected to have a valuable impact on the personal development of the students. Naturally, ERASMUS supported temporary study in another European country is expected to have a positive *impact on the former students' life after graduation, notably on their employment and work*, but also on their activities as citizens, on their family life and on other life spheres. Although higher education as a rule is not geared closely to professional preparation, the professional value of ERASMUS was high on the agenda from its inauguration.

In this chapter about student mobility the following questions shall be discussed and the respective survey results shall be presented:

- What are the characteristics of ERASMUS students?
- How do they experience and perceive their study period abroad?
- Do former mobile students have different competences than their non-mobile colleagues?
- What are the experiences of former ERASMUS students in their job search and recruitment process?
- Do former ERASMUS students have a more favourable and/or more international career than non-mobile students?

3.2 Results of Prior Studies

This study on the impact of the ERASMUS supported study period in another European country on the subsequent career of the students can draw from the results of prior studies. For the European Commission already had supported surveys in the past addressing the transition from higher education to employment and the early careers of former ERASMUS students. As

the number of eligible countries has increased over time, it is not surprising to note that prior studies comprised smaller numbers of countries.

First, more than 1,300 former ERASMUS students of the academic year 1988/89 provided information in spring 1992, i.e. about three years later, on study upon return from the ERASMUS supported period abroad and on the transition to employment (Teichler and Maiworm 1994). Two years later, in spring 1994, more than 1,200 former ERASMUS students of the academic year 1988/89 provided information on their early career (Maiworm and Teichler 1996). These surveys were part of a longitudinal study ranging from the academic year 1989/90, i.e. shortly after the ERASMUS supported period abroad, until about five years later.

The major findings of the two studies were summarised as follows: “The study showed that the respondents perceived study abroad as a help for transition to work, but not necessarily as a boost for a high-flying career. Most considered it useful for their working life. Professional contacts with the former host country were more likely if they had spent the study period in a large EU member state. The academic value of study abroad was appreciated to a lesser extent five years later than shortly after the study period abroad, but all other impacts were seen as similar at all stages of the survey. Also, former students believed five years later that their course of study had been prolonged slightly less as a consequence of the study period abroad than they had expected during the academic year after their return. Altogether, former ERASMUS students rated the study period abroad as rather more valuable five years after returning to their home country than during the academic year immediately after returning to their home institution” (see Jahr and Teichler 2002, p. 117).

Second, this study profited from the CHEERS (Careers after Higher Education – a European Research Study) study, a comparative survey of graduates of the academic year 1994/95 about four years later. Graduates from five countries who had studied abroad temporarily were surveyed again. Thus, it was possible to compare the careers of about 400 former ERASMUS students with about 400 former European students who had been mobile during the course of study with others means (self-supporting or the with help of other support schemes) in the early 1990s and with thousands of graduates who had not been internationally mobile during the course of their study (see Jahr and Teichler 2002).

The major findings of this study were summarised as follows: “In examining the impact of temporary study in another European country on subsequent employment and work we noted that more mobile students than non-mobile students eventually:

- took over job assignments with international components,
- were employed abroad, and

- were assigned work abroad, if employed by a home country employer.
- Former mobile students also assessed their professionally relevant competence somewhat higher than the non-mobile students, and
- they also experienced a smoother transition from study to employment.

However, few formerly mobile students believed that they had a more successful career than their fellow students who had not been mobile, and few had a higher income. But the contribution of ERASMUS is impressive when it comes to European and international assignments of graduates. In most respects, the findings of a recent survey of 1994/95 graduates who had studied abroad with ERASMUS support around 1992/94 confirmed those of the longitudinal study of the 1988/89 cohort. In most respects, the change over time was marginal.

But caution is called for. First, as the recent survey shows, former ERASMUS students are not better prepared for employment and work in general or for international assignments than European graduates who studied abroad with other means of funding. Second, the number of former ERASMUS students who do not find significant European or international job assignments is fairly high and seems to grow slightly over time” (Teichler 2002, p. 220).

Altogether, all prior surveys suggest that students who were mobile during the course of study are also more likely to work abroad after graduation. They also more frequently take over professional assignments which require knowledge of other countries, foreign language proficiency and other areas of knowledge and competences which cross the national borders. Study abroad also seems to have a favourable signal effect in the period of job search.

However, there were three cautions to the “success story” of ERASMUS, as far as the professional value is concerned. First, it seems to be questionable according to these studies undertaken in the past whether ERASMUS has a clear positive impact on the status and remuneration of the beneficiaries. One might consider this as disappointing, but one might also view this as normal: ERASMUS can be viewed as a public investment to strengthen European and international competences increasingly needed on the labour market rather than as a measure to increase private return for study in another country.

Second, a considerable number of former ERASMUS students are disappointed that they cannot make more use of their European and international competences on the job. One might raise the question whether the employment system calls for fewer competences of this kind, for different competences or whether the former ERASMUS students do not find the appropriate job where their competences are required.

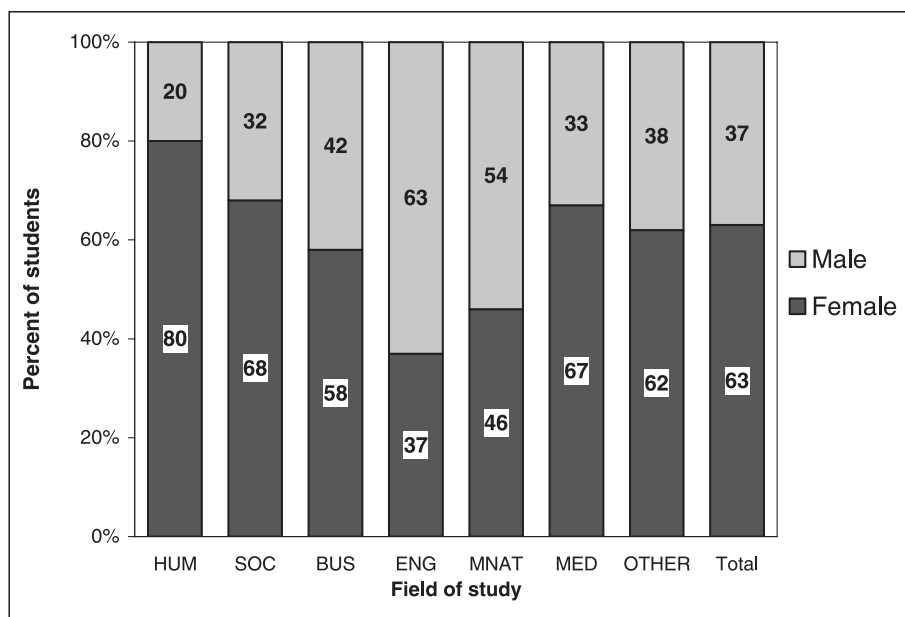
Third, ERASMUS is not superior to other modes of study abroad, as far as the professional value is concerned. One might consider this as disappoint-

ing in the face of all the activities undertaken in the framework of ERASMUS to make study in another European country successful. In contrast, one might argue that ERASMUS notably is successful in mobilizing large numbers of students to spend a study period in another country. Therefore, a professional impact of an ERASMUS supported study period abroad similar to the impact of a study abroad through other means can be viewed as a success of ERASMUS.

3.3 The Profile of Former ERASMUS Students

63 percent of former ERASMUS students responding in the most recent survey are female (see Figure 1). Only in engineering and science fields, they represent a minority.

Figure 1: Gender of Former ERASMUS Students by Field of Study (percent)



Question I1: Gender

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Former ERASMUS students have spent on average 6.8 months abroad with the help of ERASMUS. Medical students have a clearly shorter duration of the study period abroad than students from other fields of study (see Table 6).

Table 6: Duration of Study Abroad During ERASMUS Period 2000/2001 of Former ERASMUS Students by Field of Study (means of months)

| | Field of study* | | | | | | | Total |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| | HUM | SOC | BUS | ENG | MNAT | MED | Other | |
| Arithmetic mean | 6.6 | 7.3 | 6.8 | 7.2 | 6.7 | 5.4 | 6.3 | 6.8 |
| Median | 6.0 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 4.0 | 6.0 | 6.0 |
| Count | (1,245) | (749) | (789) | (610) | (455) | (261) | (444) | (4,553) |

Question A3: How many months did you spend abroad during your ERASMUS supported period in the academic year 2000/2001?

* Field of Study codes: HUM = Art and Design; Education, Teacher training; Humanities; Languages, Philological Sciences; SOC = Law; Social Sciences; Communications and Information Sciences; BUS = Business Studies, Management Sciences, Economics; ENG = Architecture, Urban and Regional Planning; Engineering, Technology; Mathematics, Informatics; Natural Sciences; NAT = Geography, Geology; MED = Medical Sciences; OTH = Other

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Nine percent of the surveyed former ERASMUS students have not yet been awarded a degree about five years after the ERASMUS supported study period and thus might be considered as *drop-outs*. The corresponding figure has been 6 percent among 1988/89 ERASMUS students five years later.

3.4 The Study Period Abroad

40 percent of the former ERASMUS students surveyed in 2005 have been enrolled (or are still enrolled) in *advanced study*. This is as frequent as among graduates of the 1988/89 ERASMUS cohort (41%). One of the most striking impacts of ERASMUS is the relatively high advancement rate to further study – about twice as high as among non-mobile students (21% among the 1994/95 graduates).

The former ERASMUS students consider about half of the courses they have taken abroad as equally demanding as the courses at their home institution. 22 percent of the courses taken abroad are rated as more demanding and 30 percent as less demanding than those abroad.

As Table 7 shows, these ratings are on average almost identical to those by previous student cohorts. In considering the ratio of “more demanding” to “less demanding” as an indicator of the quality of the courses, we note that ERASMUS students perceive:

- a relatively high quality of courses in Belgium, Sweden, Germany, Finland and the Netherlands, and
- relatively low quality in Ireland, Spain, Hungary, Portugal and Romania.

Table 7: Academic Level of Courses at the Host Institution as Compared to the Home Institution According to Former ERASMUS Students – a Comparison with Previous Surveys (average percent of courses)

| | ERASMUS students 1990/91 (S) | ERASMUS students 1998/99 (S) | ERASMUS students 2000/01 (R) |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| More demanding | 22 | 22 | 22 |
| Equally demanding | 50 | 47 | 48 |
| Less demanding | 28 | 31 | 30 |

Question A20: Approximately what percentage of the courses you took while abroad were academically more or less demanding than courses which you would have taken at the home institution during the same period?

S = View of students after return

R = Retrospective view of graduates

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Altogether, the former ERASMUS students characterise conditions and provisions for their ERASMUS supported study period in the academic year 2000/2001 quite similarly as previous cohorts of ERASMUS students have done. Altogether, the most recent ERASMUS students state slightly less frequently that they have experienced serious problems than earlier generations of ERASMUS students. The key problems named, however, remain unchanged, as Table 8 shows. Accommodation, financial matters and administrative matters are viewed as serious problems by about one fifth of the students each. Individual problems related to teaching and learning are named less frequently.

Table 8: Selected Significant Problems During the Study Period Abroad Experienced by ERASMUS Students – a Comparison with Previous Surveys (percent*)

| | ERASMUS students 1988/89 (S) | ERASMUS students 1990/91 (S) | ERASMUS students 1998/99 (S) | ERASMUS students 2000/01 (R) |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Accommodation | 22 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| Financial matters | 21 | 21 | 20 | 22 |
| Administrative matters | 21 | 18 | 23 | 19 |
| Obtaining credits/credit transfer | * | 18 | 19 | 16 |
| Different teaching/ learning methods | 17 | 13 | 13 | 15 |
| Teachers meeting/ helping students | 15 | 12 | 11 | 13 |
| Taking courses in foreign language | 10 | 10 | 11 | 9 |
| Too high academic level | 8 | 3 | 6 | 5 |

Question A12: To what extent did you have significant problems in the following areas during your study period abroad?

* Responses on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

S = View of students after return

R = Retrospective view of graduates

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

As in earlier years, the recent survey shows again substantial differences by host countries. Various serious problems again often are reported by students spending their study period abroad notably in Italy, but also in Spain and France. The recent survey provides for the first time information about the problems faced in Central and Eastern European countries. Few students spending their ERASMUS period in Central and Eastern Europe experienced financial problems or teaching and learning-related problems. Problems more often named varied substantially by individual countries, such as problems with respect to teaching and learning in Romania and regarding credits in Slovakia (see Table 9).

Table 9: Host Countries Where Former ERASMUS Students Have Faced Relatively High and Low Problems During the Study Period Abroad

| | High | Low |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Accommodation | IE, IT, IS, PT, ES | SE, SK, NO, FI, DE, AT, PL* |
| Financial matters | DK | CZ, PL, RO, HU |
| Administrative matters | IS, IT | SK, FI, SE |
| Obtaining credits/credit transfer | SK, IS | RO, CZ |
| Different teaching/learning methods | RO, FR, IT | PL, HU, IS, CZ, SK |
| Teachers meeting/helping students | ES | CZ |

Question A12: To what extent did you have significant problems in the following areas during your study period abroad?

* Country Codes: AT = Austria, BE = Belgium, BG = Bulgaria, CY = Cyprus, CZ = Czech Republic, DE = Germany, DK = Denmark, EE = Estonia, ES = Spain, FI = Finland, FR = France, GR = Greece, HU = Hungary, IE = Ireland, IS = Iceland, IT = Italy, LI = Liechtenstein, LT = Lithuania, LU = Luxembourg, LV = Latvia, MA = Malta, NL = Netherlands, NO = Norway, PL = Poland, PT = Portugal, RO = Romania, SE = Sweden, SI = Slovenia, SK = Slovakia, UK = United Kingdom and Northern Ireland

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

The former ERASMUS students of the academic year 2000/2001 report a few years later that about three quarters of their study achievements abroad have been actually recognised upon return and the credits or other units actually recognised correspond to about three quarters of the amount of study achievements expected for an identical period of study at home (see the first two lines in Table 10). These proportions are similar to those reported by ERASMUS students around 1990, but are lower than those reported by ERASMUS students in the late 1990s. We might draw the conclusion that the spread of the use of ECTS during the 1990s has been successful for some period to increase recognition, but this trend was reversed in recent years.

Earlier studies have shown that a prolongation of the overall study period due to the period of study abroad is more frequent and longer than responses as regards recognition upon return would suggest. Moreover, the longitudinal study of the 1988/89 cohort had suggested that former graduates slightly less often reported a prolongation of study as the consequence of the study abroad period than they had expected shortly after the return from the ERASMUS supported period abroad.

The most recent survey of former ERASMUS students shows that the percentage of them not experiencing a prolongation of study due to the study period abroad remained unchanged at 59 percent (see the second and the fifth column of Table 10).

Table 10: Recognition of ERASMUS Supported Study According to Former ERASMUS Students – a Comparison with Previous Surveys (percent)

| | ERASMUS students 1988/89 (S) | ERASMUS students 1988/89 (R) | ERASMUS students 1990/91 (S) | ERASMUS students 1998/99 (S) | ERASMUS students 2000/01 (R) |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Degree of recognition | 77 | * | 74 | 81 | 73 |
| Degree of correspondence | 73 | * | 72 | 80 | 74 |
| Non-prolongation | 53 | 59 | 54 | 45 | 59 |

Question A16: Overall, to what extent were the academic studies you actually undertook successfully at the host institution recognised (granted credit or otherwise considered equivalent) upon return by the home institution? Question A17: To what extent did the workload of your studies at the host institution actually correspond to the amount of the typical workload expected at your home institution during a corresponding period? Question A18: Did the study period abroad prolong the total duration of your studies?

S = View of students after return

R = Retrospective view of graduates

* Not asked

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

The experts surveyed in the VALERA study also point out that recognition has remained a problem. While many experts like the students themselves believe that the study period abroad was highly valuable academically in various respects, some gaps remain both as far as the acquisition of knowledge and the readiness of teachers to recognise study achievements abroad are concerned. Most of the experts, however, seem to believe that this is more than compensated by valuable experiences during the period in another European country.

Altogether, former ERASMUS students show that academic learning differs strikingly between the various host countries. Table 11 documents this in various dimensions for four major European countries:

- Learning and understanding of theories, according to the former students' perception, are more strongly emphasised at German and British higher education institutions than in France and Spain.
- Independent learning as well as process learning or problem-based learning play a stronger role in Germany and the United Kingdom as well, while teacher-centered learning is more customary in France and Spain.
- In the United Kingdom, out-of-class communication between teachers and students is more frequent, and students note a stronger overall emphasis on attitudes and socio-communicative skills.
- In Germany, students have more choice between courses than in the other three countries.

Thus, the experience reported by former ERASMUS students provides a more lively picture of varied academic cultures across Europe than official reports tend to convey.

Table 11: Emphasis Placed on Selected Modes of Teaching and Learning by the Host Institution According to Former ERASMUS Students by Selected Host Countries (percent*)

| | FR | ES | DE | UK |
|--|----|----|----|----|
| Facts and instrumental knowledge | 56 | 56 | 58 | 52 |
| Theories | 49 | 47 | 55 | 54 |
| Attitudes, socio-communicative skills | 40 | 36 | 46 | 55 |
| Independent learning | 48 | 47 | 69 | 69 |
| Teacher-centred | 58 | 50 | 40 | 44 |
| Choice | 50 | 57 | 70 | 59 |
| Process/problem-based learning | 38 | 35 | 47 | 50 |
| Out-of-class student-staff communication | 26 | 31 | 37 | 42 |

Question A13: To what extent were the following modes of teaching and learning emphasised by your host institution of higher education and its teachers.

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

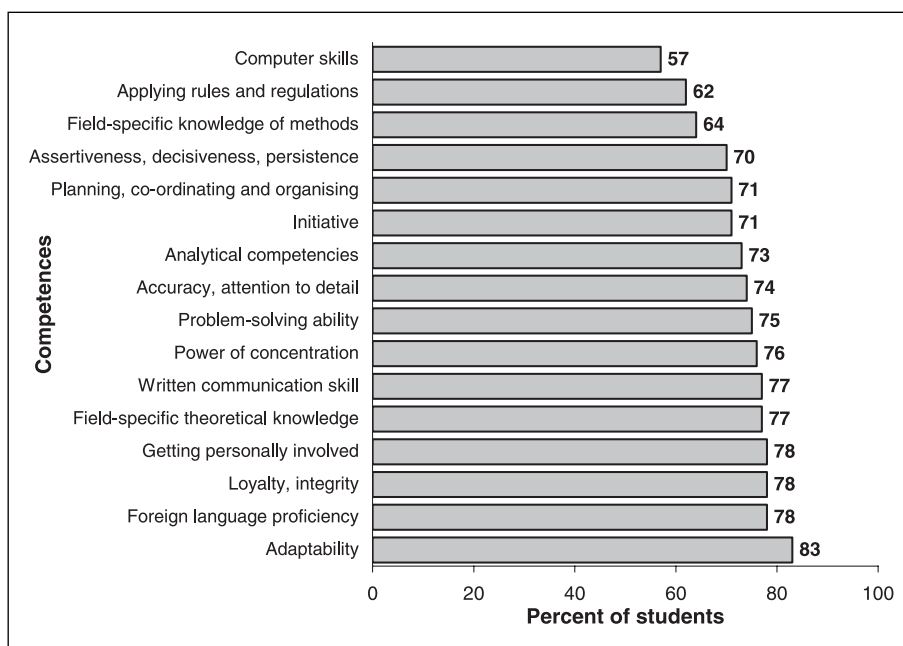
3.5 Competences Upon Graduation

Former ERASMUS students have been asked to rate retrospectively their competences at the time of graduation. These competences certainly are only in part determined by their study abroad experience, but they are certainly a useful measure for analyzing differences in the transition process to work and in the early career process between mobile and non-mobile students.

Overall, former ERASMUS students rate their competences at the time of graduation quite positively. More than three quarters report high competences with regard to theoretical knowledge, foreign language proficiency as well as regarding various work attitudes and styles (see Figure 2).

Differences by home country (with the exception of positive ratings by students from Bulgaria, Malta and Romania), host country and even by field of study turn out to be small.

**Figure 2: Competences at Time of Graduation –
Self-assessed by Former ERASMUS Students (percent*)**



Question B7: Please, state the extent to which you had the following competences at the time of graduation.

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

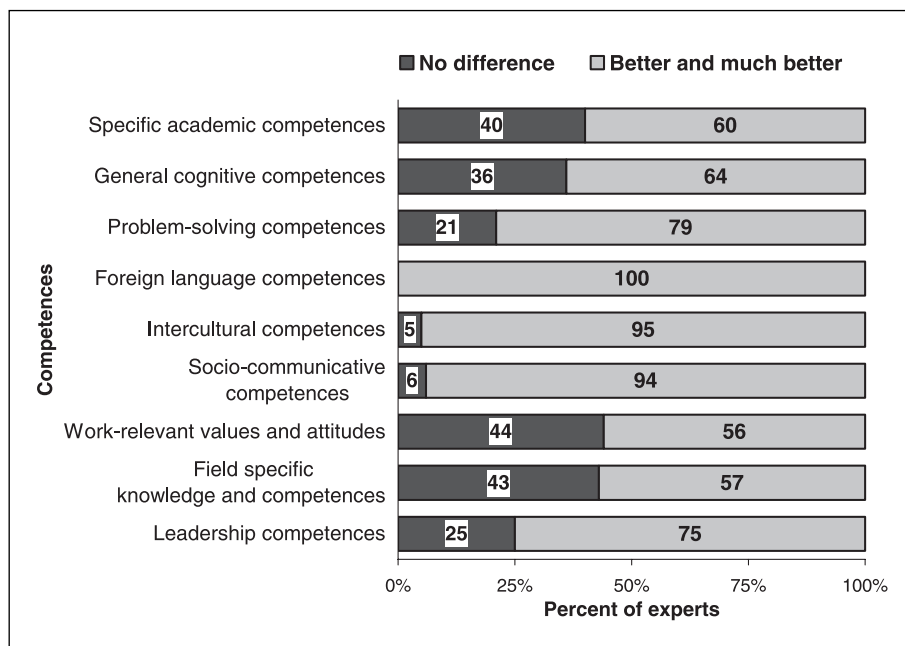
Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Asked to compare their competences with those of non-mobile students, more than 90 percent each feel superior with respect to knowledge of other countries, foreign language and intercultural understanding. It might be more impressive to note that former ERASMUS students consider themselves superior regarding other competences as well:

- 65 percent as regards preparation for future employment and work, and
- 53 percent as regards academic knowledge and skills in general.

According to the expert survey undertaken concurrently, former ERASMUS students are not only superior consistently with respect to foreign language proficiency and intercultural competences. But, as Figure 3 shows, almost all experts as well consider the formerly mobile students superior to non-mobile students with respect to socio-communicative competences. And the majority of them each consider them superior regarding all the competences addressed in the survey.

Figure 3: Competences of Former ERASMUS Students Upon Graduation as Compared to Those of Non-Mobile Students in the View of ERASMUS Experts (percent*)



Question B1: How do you rate the competences of former ERASMUS students at the time of graduation as compared to non-mobile students? (n=63)

* Responses on a 5 point scale from 1 = "much worse" through 3 = "no difference" to 5 = "much better"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Experts 2005

Experts from Northern European countries rate the formerly mobile students' competences upon graduation somewhat more cautiously than experts from other European regions, as Table 12 shows. Previous evaluation studies suggest that the impact of study abroad is viewed as less positive, if the academic quality of the host university is rated lower than that of the home university. As the Northern universities are viewed on average as academically more demanding than the European average, both by Northern students and teachers as well as by students and teachers from other regions, this seemingly regional difference might reflect primarily quality differences between home and host universities.

Table 12: Competences of Former ERASMUS Students Upon Graduation as Compared to Those of Non-Mobile Students in the View of ERASMUS Experts by Country of Expert (arithmetic mean*)

| | Country Group | | | | | | Total |
|--|---------------|--------|-------|------|-------|-----------|-------|
| | North | Middle | South | East | Other | No answer | |
| (1) Specific academic competences | 3.4 | 3.5 | 3.8 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 4.0 | 3.6 |
| (2) General cognitive competences | 3.4 | 3.5 | 3.9 | 3.7 | 3.8 | 4.0 | 3.7 |
| (3) Problem-solving competences | 3.4 | 3.9 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 4.0 | 4.1 |
| (4) Foreign language proficiency | 4.7 | 4.4 | 4.5 | 4.8 | 4.5 | 5.0 | 4.6 |
| (5) Intercultural competences | 4.2 | 4.4 | 4.9 | 4.5 | 4.3 | 5.0 | 4.5 |
| (6) Socio-communicative competences | 4.1 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.0 | 4.3 |
| (7) Work-relevant values and attitudes | 3.3 | 3.6 | 3.9 | 4.0 | 3.5 | 4.0 | 3.8 |
| (8) Field specific knowledge and competences | 3.4 | 3.2 | 3.7 | 4.0 | 3.3 | 3.0 | 3.6 |
| (9) Leadership competences | 3.7 | 3.9 | 4.2 | 3.9 | 4.3 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| Count (n) | (9) | (14) | (16) | (19) | (4) | (1) | (63) |

Question B1: How do you rate the competences of former ERASMUS students at the time of graduation as compared to non-mobile students?

* Arithmetic mean of a 5 point scale from 1 = "much worse" over 3 = "no difference" to 5 = "much better"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Experts 2005

The university leaders surveyed note higher competences of the formerly mobile students compared to non-mobile students as well. Altogether their ratings, as Table 13 shows, are similar to those of the former ERASMUS students.

Table 13: Competences Reinforced by ERASMUS Study Period Abroad in the View of University Leaders by Number of Students Enrolled (percent*)

| | Number of students enrolled | | | | | | Total |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------|
| | Up to 500 | 501 – 2,000 | 2,001 – 5,000 | 5,001 – 10,000 | 10,001 – 20,000 | More than 20,000 | |
| Foreign language competences | 94 | 88 | 96 | 93 | 93 | 100 | 93 |
| International urbanity | 85 | 87 | 88 | 89 | 84 | 88 | 87 |
| In depth knowledge of the respective host country | 84 | 81 | 83 | 84 | 90 | 81 | 84 |
| Personality and social behaviour | 78 | 79 | 81 | 78 | 71 | 86 | 79 |
| Working independently | 83 | 79 | 73 | 82 | 79 | 69 | 78 |
| Planning, co-ordinating and organizing | 67 | 55 | 67 | 67 | 62 | 62 | 63 |
| Broad general knowledge | 56 | 61 | 55 | 61 | 49 | 57 | 57 |
| Understanding of complex social, organisational and/or technical systems | 47 | 54 | 59 | 56 | 51 | 50 | 53 |
| Cross-disciplinary thinking | 57 | 52 | 48 | 56 | 49 | 45 | 52 |
| Field specific knowledge of methods | 60 | 51 | 52 | 36 | 49 | 54 | 51 |
| Time management | 48 | 50 | 51 | 55 | 52 | 52 | 51 |
| Field-specific theoretical knowledge | 59 | 44 | 45 | 43 | 53 | 45 | 48 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (94) | (145) | (99) | (70) | (72) | (42) | (522) |

Question C7: Up to what degree students will gather the following competences especially during their ERASMUS supported study period?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "up to a very high degree" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA University Leaders' Survey 2005

Employers have been asked to rate separately the competences of young graduates with international experiences and those without international experiences. Again, they name the international experienced young graduates as stronger with respect to typical international competences than those not internationally experienced. In various other respects as well positive ratings of internationally experienced graduates are made, as Table 14 shows: notably regarding adaptability (81% versus 57%), planning abilities (67% versus 50%) and assertiveness, decisiveness and persistence (79% versus 62%).

Table 14: Competences of Young Graduates With and Without International Experience According to Employers (percent*)

| | Young graduates | |
|--|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | with international experience | without international experience |
| <i>International competences</i> | | |
| Foreign language proficiency | 88 | 48 |
| Knowledge/understanding of international differences in culture and society, modes of behaviour, life styles, etc. | 76 | 28 |
| Ability to work with people from different cultural backgrounds | 76 | 40 |
| Professional knowledge of other countries (e.g. economical, sociological, legal knowledge) | 59 | 16 |
| <i>Knowledge and methods</i> | | |
| Computer skills | 69 | 66 |
| Field-specific knowledge of methods | 64 | 54 |
| Field-specific theoretical knowledge | 62 | 58 |
| <i>General competences</i> | | |
| Adaptability | 81 | 57 |
| Initiative | 79 | 62 |
| Getting personally involved | 79 | 67 |
| Assertiveness, decisiveness, persistence | 75 | 57 |
| Analytical competences | 70 | 59 |
| Problem-solving ability | 70 | 58 |
| Written communication skills | 70 | 58 |
| Planning, co-ordinating and organising | 67 | 50 |
| Loyalty, integrity | 66 | 62 |
| Power of concentration | 63 | 59 |
| Accuracy, attention to detail | 59 | 57 |
| Applying rules and regulations | 58 | 52 |
| Count (n) | (187) | (250) |

Question C4a: Please rate the competences of the young graduates in your organisation. To what extent do they have competences in the following areas on average? Please answer this question both for the group of young graduates with international experience and for the group of young graduates without international experience.

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Employer Survey 2005/2006

Additionally, employers have been asked whether former ERASMUS students are superior or inferior with regard to their international competences than other former internationally experienced students. Actually, 15 percent of the employers responding consider the ERASMUS students superior and not a single respondent considers them inferior to other internationally mobile persons.

Table 15 indicates that employers' views of the internationally experienced young graduates vary substantially by the size of the organisation (in terms of staff numbers). Employers in small organisations are more positively impressed by the competences of internationally experienced graduates.

Table 15: Selected Competences of Young Graduates with International Experience According to Employers by Size of Organization (percent*)

| | Size of the organisation | | | Total |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| | Small | Medium | Large | |
| Adaptability | 94 | 77 | 75 | 81 |
| Getting personally involved | 85 | 83 | 67 | 79 |
| Computer skills | 80 | 75 | 50 | 69 |
| Field-specific theoretical knowledge | 49 | 68 | 63 | 62 |
| Analytical competences | 80 | 73 | 56 | 70 |
| Written communication skills | 76 | 71 | 62 | 70 |
| Problem-solving ability | 76 | 71 | 62 | 70 |
| Loyalty, integrity | 86 | 63 | 50 | 66 |
| Power of concentration | 73 | 69 | 44 | 63 |
| Accuracy, attention to detail | 65 | 63 | 46 | 59 |
| Count (n) | (51) | (84) | (52) | (187) |

Question C4a: Please rate the competences of the young graduates in your organisation. To what extent do they have competences in the following areas on average? Please answer this question both for the group of young graduates with international experience and for the group of young graduates without international experience.

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Employer Survey 2005/2006

As the employers have been asked similarly as the graduates themselves, we can compare the ratings. As Table 16 shows, employers rate the competences more cautious in various respects, notably regarding theoretical knowledge and accuracy. This does not call into question, though, the findings presented above.

Table 16: Competences of Young Graduates with International Experience Rated by Employers and Self-rated by Graduates (percent*)

| | Employers' rating of competences | ERASMUS Students' self-rating of competences |
|--|--|---|
| Field-specific theoretical knowledge | 62 | 77 |
| Field-specific knowledge of methods | 64 | 64 |
| Foreign language proficiency | 88 | 78 |
| Computer skills | 69 | 57 |
| Analytical competences | 70 | 73 |
| Problem-solving ability | 70 | 75 |
| Initiative | 79 | 71 |
| Assertiveness, decisiveness, persistence | 75 | 70 |
| Power of concentration | 63 | 76 |
| Accuracy, attention to detail | 59 | 74 |
| Planning, co-ordinating and organising | 67 | 71 |
| Applying rules and regulations | 58 | 62 |
| Loyalty, integrity | 66 | 78 |
| Getting personally involved | 79 | 78 |
| Written communication skills | 70 | 77 |
| Adaptability | 81 | 83 |
| Count (n) | (187) | (4,342) |

Student Questionnaire: Question B7: Please, state the extent to which you had the following competences at the time of graduation?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Employer Questionnaire: Question C4: Please rate the competences of the young graduates in your organisation. To what extent do they have competences in the following areas on average?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Employers 2005/06

Altogether, all four groups of respondents agree in considering not only those competences of former ERASMUS students to be superior to non-mobile students which might be called visible international competences: foreign language proficiency, knowledge of foreign cultures, knowledge and understanding of different cultures as well as ability to work with people from different cultures. They also consider former ERASMUS students to be more

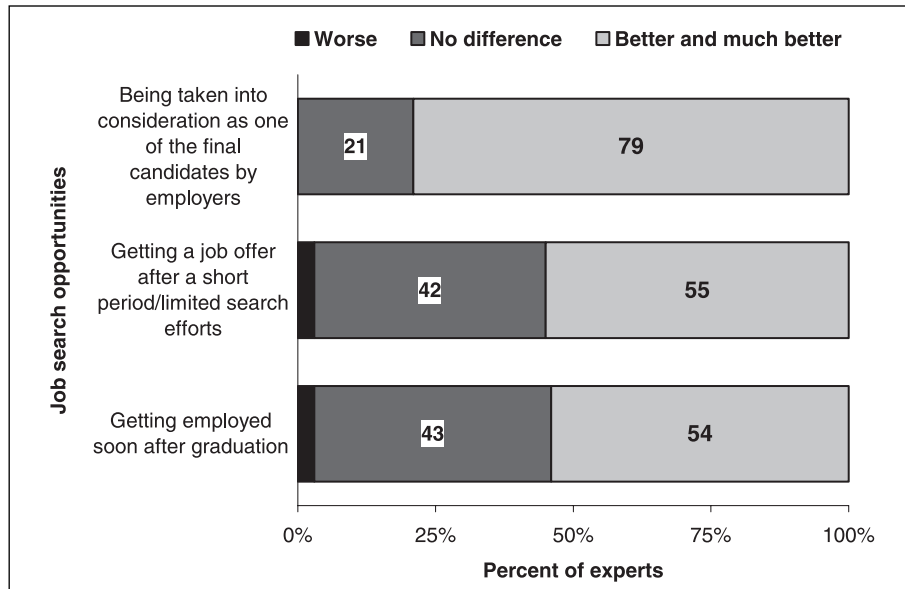
competent than formerly non-mobile students in many other respects. As regards the individual dimensions of the latter competences, though, the views of the four groups of respondents are not consistently convergent.

3.6 Job Search and Recruitment

As already pointed out, many former ERASMUS students are convinced that they have been in an advantageous position to formerly non-mobile students in the process of transition from higher education. This view is also confirmed by many employers, university leaders and experts on issues of student mobility.

In previous studies, former students had underscored that study in another European country helps raising attention in the search and recruitment process and thus is helpful for being invited by the employer. Figure 4 suggests that this positive impact is not confined to the first step of selection. On contrary, the majority of experts surveyed are convinced that former ERASMUS students have an advantage in the final stage of selection (see the first line of Figure 4).

Figure 4: Job Search Opportunities of Former ERASMUS Students as Compared to Non-Mobile Students in the View of ERASMUS Experts (percent*)



Question C1: In your opinion, how do you rate the opportunities of former ERASMUS students regarding the following areas of transition to work as compared to their non-mobile fellow students? (n=63)

* Responses on a 5 point scale from 1 = "much worse" through 3 = "no difference" to 5 = "much better"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Experts 2005

Written comments provided in the questionnaires as well as the results of the experts' seminars help explain the findings presented in Figure 4. First, of course, former students are more likely to be hired, if visibly international competences play a major role. Second, former ERASMUS students are often viewed as superior regarding the dimensions of personality which are appreciated by employers.

Some of the respondents, however, raise doubts whether former ERASMUS students are academically superior. According to them, many employers do not know enough about the ERASMUS programme. Some respondents point out that ERASMUS is a mass programme not selecting the academically most talented ones; some believe that the value of the ERASMUS experience for the enhancement of competences depends on the quality of the individual host university. Finally, some experts point out that the value of ERASMUS for the transition to employment varies substantially by field of study:

- business studies,
- social sciences,
- humanities and languages as well as
- information and communication sciences

are most often named as fields where the ERASMUS experience might be helpful in the process of transition.

Also the majority of university leaders are convinced that the job opportunities of former ERASMUS students are superior. More than half each stated that former ERASMUS students on average get employed in a shorter time span and end up in better jobs. Table 17 shows that leaders of small institutions of higher education are slightly less optimistic in those respects.

Table 17: Impact of ERASMUS on Job Opportunities According to University Leaders by Number of Students Enrolled (percent*)

| | Number of students enrolled | | | | | | Total |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|-------|
| | Up to 500 | 501 – 2,000 | 2,001 – 5,000 | 5,001 – 10,000 | 10,001 – 20,000 | More than 20,000 | |
| On average, ERASMUS students get better jobs | 49 | 49 | 74 | 67 | 54 | 64 | 58 |
| get a job in a shorter time span | 40 | 50 | 68 | 57 | 57 | 65 | 54 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (51) | (78) | (47) | (41) | (38) | (25) | (280) |

Question C10: According to your experience or the data gathered: Have ERASMUS students better opportunities to get an appropriate job and to get a job faster than non-mobile students?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "absolutely right" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA University Leaders' Survey 2005

One finding deserves more attention: About three quarters of university leaders from Central and Eastern European countries note a positive impact of ERASMUS in those respects, while only about half of the university leaders from Western European countries respond affirmatively.

Asked for a change over time, 80 percent of university leaders are convinced that a temporary study period abroad has become a more important recruitment criterion over the last decade. Only one percent stated that study periods abroad are less important for the entry to the labour market nowadays than about ten years ago (see Table 18).

Table 18: Changed Significance of Study Periods Abroad in the View of University Leaders by Number of Students Enrolled (percent)

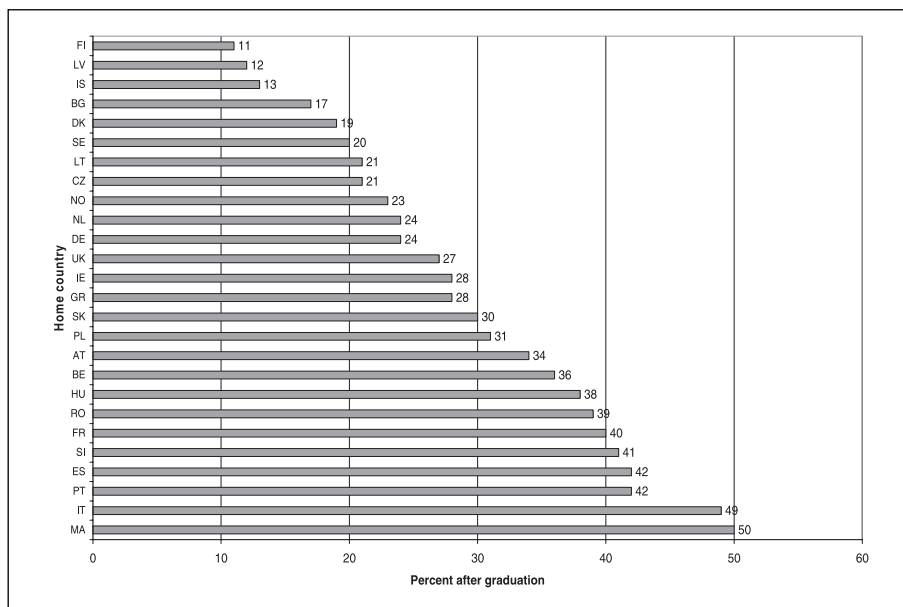
| | Number of students enrolled | | | | | | Total |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------|
| | Up to 500 | 501 – 2,000 | 2,001 – 5,000 | 5,001 – 10,000 | 10,001 – 20,000 | More than 20,000 | |
| Considerable higher value as compared to the past | 16 | 18 | 18 | 14 | 15 | 26 | 17 |
| Higher value compared to the past | 62 | 56 | 63 | 73 | 69 | 58 | 63 |
| Stayed the same | 22 | 25 | 18 | 12 | 15 | 16 | 19 |
| Lower value than ten years ago | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (86) | (133) | (96) | (66) | (72) | (38) | (491) |

Question C8: Did the value of temporary study periods abroad change during the last decade as a criteria for employment?

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA University Leaders' Survey 2005

Many of the former ERASMUS students surveyed have *started their job search* relatively late: 32 percent of the job seekers have started only some time after graduation. The proportion of those having started the job search relatively late is highest in Italy and Malta (50%); it was also frequently late, as Figure 5 shows, in Spain, Portugal, France, and Slovenia (about 40% each).

Figure 5: Start of Job Search of Former ERASMUS Students' by Home Country* (percent)



Question C1: When did you start looking for a job? (Exclude search for casual and vacation jobs)

* Country codes see Table 9

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Despite the on average late beginning, the former ERASMUS students surveyed have spend a short *time span to seek* for their first regular job: only 3.8 months on average. This period is quite short in comparison to the 5 months average job search period of mobile students and 7 months of non-mobile students among the 1994/95 graduates.

The average job search period for 2000/01 students has been clearly the shortest in medicine (2.4 months) and the longest in humanities (4.5 months). It varies from less than 2 months in some Central and Eastern European countries to about 6 months in Spain and Italy.

Relatively long periods of average are reported by former ERASMUS students from

- Spain (6.1 months) and
- Italy (5.5 months on average).

During the job search period, former ERASMUS students have contacted on average 19 employers. This figure is lower than that reported by 1994/95 graduates: 25 on average. Among the former ERASMUS students of 2000/2001, those from medical fields have contacted fewer employers (7 on average)

than those from other groups of field of study (ranging from 16 to 23). Starting employment after contacting only a very small number of employers is most pronounced in some Central and Eastern European countries: Latvia, Bulgaria, Lithuania and the Czech Republic (less than 5 each on average).

Former surveys have underscored that, in the view of the graduates, employers regard both academic achievement and personality highly in recruiting graduates from institutions of higher education. While only a few formerly non-mobile students report that foreign languages and international experiences have been crucial for their employers to hire them, the majority of formerly mobile students believe that foreign languages and experience abroad were among the key criteria of their employers (see Table 19).

This has been confirmed by the recent survey of former ERASMUS students. They name as most frequent criteria of their employers in hiring them

- personality (83%),
- field of study (74%),
- foreign language proficiency (60%),
- main subject/area of specialisation (59%),
- experiences abroad (53%), and
- practical experience during the course of study (51%).

Computer skills, grades, reputation of the higher education institutions, and recommendations are named less frequently.

Table 19: Most Important Recruitment Criteria of Employers in the View of Former Students – a Comparison with Previous Surveys (percent of employed graduates*)

| | ERASMUS students 1988/89 | ERASMUS graduates 1994/95 | Non-Mobile graduates 1994/95 | ERASMUS students 2000/01 |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Field of study | + | 73 | 70 | 74 |
| Main subject/specialisation | 60 | 55 | 59 | 59 |
| Grades | 49 | 35 | 32 | 35 |
| Practical/work experience | + | 45 | 43 | 51 |
| Reputation of HEI | 27 | 24 | 20 | 33 |
| Foreign language proficiency | 64 | 60 | 17 | 60 |
| Experience abroad | 53 | 56 | 5 | 53 |
| Personality | 81 | 81 | 73 | 83 |

Question in the current study: Question D6: How important, according to your perception, were the following aspects for your employer in recruiting you for your initial employment after graduation, if applicable?

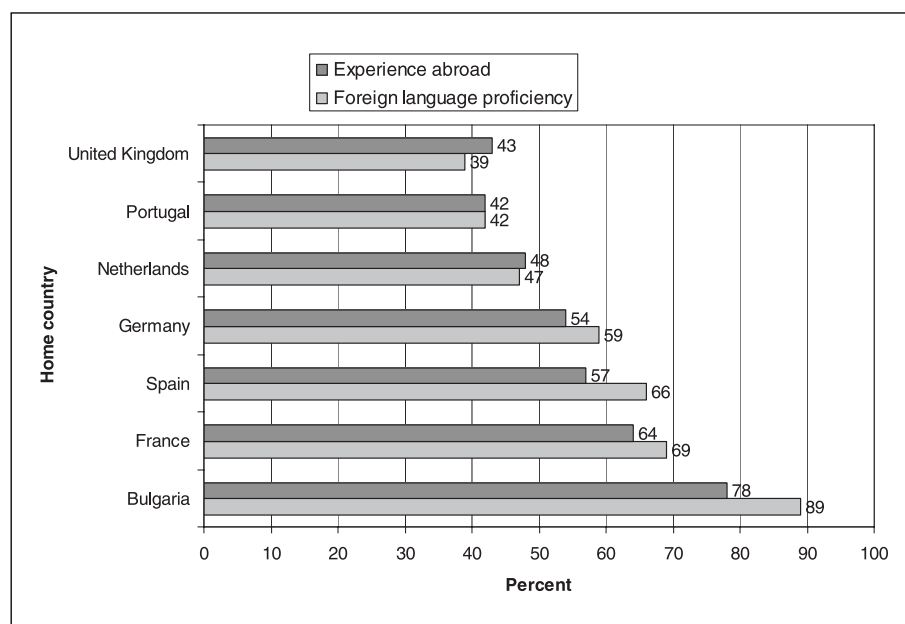
* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very important" to 5 = "not at all important"

+ Different formulation or question not asked

Source: Maiworm and Teichler 1996; Jahr and Teichler 2002; University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

The two criteria closely related to the ERASMUS study abroad period, i.e. foreign language proficiency and experiences abroad, are most important for graduates from foreign languages, followed by business studies and engineering. They are least important for graduates from medicine. They are highly important for graduates in some Central and Eastern European countries and in France, but least important for graduates in Poland and the United Kingdom. Figure 6 provides information for a selected number of countries.

Figure 6: Importance of Foreign Language Proficiency and Experience Abroad as Recruitment Criteria of Employers in the View of Former ERASMUS Students by Select Number of Home Countries (percent of employed graduates*)



Question D6: How important, according to your perception, were the following aspects for your employer in recruiting you for your initial employment after graduation, if applicable?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very important" to 5 = "not at all important"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Employers appreciating internationally experienced and competent graduates obviously will take those dimensions into account in the process of recruiting new staff. Therefore they have been asked to state the role played by international experience among the various recruitment criteria. In addition, they have been asked whether they prefer graduates having opted for certain modes of mobility.

Table 20: Importance of Different Recruitment Criteria in the View of Employers by European Region (percent*)

| | European Region | | Total |
|---|-----------------|----------------------------|-------|
| | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe | |
| Personality | 91 | 89 | 90 |
| Field of study | 83 | 85 | 84 |
| Main subject/specialisation | 73 | 77 | 74 |
| Foreign language proficiency | 62 | 87 | 70 |
| Computer skills | 65 | 87 | 72 |
| Practical/work experience acquired during course of study | 53 | 65 | 57 |
| Recommendations/references from third persons | 45 | 47 | 46 |
| Grades | 41 | 41 | 41 |
| Reputation of the institution of higher education | 29 | 46 | 34 |
| Work experience abroad | 27 | 48 | 34 |
| Study abroad period | 25 | 41 | 30 |
| Practical/work experience acquired prior to course of study | 26 | 20 | 24 |
| Count (n) | (199) | (92) | (291) |

Question B2: How important are the following aspects in recruiting young graduates for your organisation?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very important" to 5 = "not at all important"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Employer Survey 2005/2006

Actually, Table 20 shows that employers underscore foreign language proficiency even more often as important for their recruitment decisions (70%) than the former ERASMUS students have perceived the employers' decisions (60%). As regards experience abroad, the question addressed to employers has made a distinction between work experience abroad and study period abroad. As Table 20 shows, employers slightly more often underscore the relevance of work experience abroad (34%) than that of study abroad (30%). Altogether, Table 20 shows that employers in Central and Eastern European countries put a stronger emphasis on visible international competences in their recruitment process than employers in Western European countries.

Employers appreciating study periods abroad in their selection among candidates have been asked to rate the importance of different characteristics of the study period abroad. Actually, they emphasise more strongly:

- the language spoken during the study period abroad (73%),
- the subject area studied abroad (60%), and
- the length of study period abroad (50%).

In addition, they take into consideration the specific host country of the study period abroad (43%), the reputation of the host higher education institution (38%), while the mode of mobility (15%) and other activities during the period abroad (14%) seldom seemed to be important. In all respects, employers from Central and Eastern Europe consider study abroad more important than employers from Western Europe (see Table 21).

Table 21: Importance of Characteristics of the Study Period Abroad by European Region According to the Employers (percent*)

| | European Region | | Total |
|---|-----------------|----------------------------|-------|
| | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe | |
| Language spoken during the study period abroad | 68 | 83 | 73 |
| The subject area during the study period abroad | 57 | 67 | 60 |
| Length of study period abroad | 46 | 58 | 50 |
| The specific host country of the study period abroad | 37 | 55 | 43 |
| Reputation of the host higher education institution | 33 | 49 | 38 |
| Mode of mobility (organisation of the period abroad: exchange programme, self-organisation) | 9 | 28 | 15 |
| Other activities during the period abroad | 11 | 23 | 14 |
| Count (n) | (96) | (46) | (142) |

Question B3: If study periods abroad play a role in the recruiting process: how important are the following characteristics of the study period abroad?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale of answers from 1 = "very important" to 5 = "not at all important"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Employer Survey 2005/2006

The relevance of the modes of mobility has been further elaborated by a specific question, which explicitly asked the employers actually taking into account international experience in their selection among applicants to state the arrangements for mobility they prefer in recruiting formerly mobile graduates. Actually, 57 percent of these employers state preferences. The majority of them prefer students going abroad in the framework of ERASMUS, other organised exchange programmes and other scholarship programmes (see Table 22).

Table 22: Employers' Preference of Modes of Mobility by European Region (percent; multiple responses)

| | European Region | | Total |
|--|-----------------|----------------------------|-------|
| | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe | |
| Self-organisation of the study period abroad | 16 | 18 | 16 |
| Study period abroad as part of an organised exchange programme | 20 | 51 | 30 |
| Study period abroad as part of the ERASMUS programme | 32 | 59 | 41 |
| Study period abroad as part of a scholarship programme | 29 | 45 | 34 |
| Study period abroad as part of other programmes | 3 | 8 | 5 |
| No preference of such kind | 50 | 27 | 43 |
| Other: | 3 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 153 | 208 | 171 |
| Count (n) | (103) | (49) | (152) |

Question B4: The modes of mobility can widely vary. Please state the modes you prefer when recruiting formerly mobile graduates

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Employer Survey 2005/2006

Employers also have been asked in this context to state their degree of knowledge about the SOCRATES/ERASMUS mobility programme. According to their responses,

- only 17 percent know the programme and its details very well,
- 39 percent have some general knowledge about the programme,
- 34 percent know the name but do not know any details at all, and
- 10 percent never had heard about it before they received the questionnaire.

Knowledge about the SOCRATES/ERASMUS programme seems to be more widespread among the employers from Central and Eastern Europe than among employers from Western Europe. 69 percent of the former state at least some general knowledge about the programme as compared to 50 percent of the latter.

3.7 Early Career of Former ERASMUS Students

Former ERASMUS students have been asked to provide basic information about their situation five years after the study period in another European country. They also have been requested to rate the links between study and subsequent employment and work.

Actually, 72 percent of the former ERASMUS students are professionally active at the time the survey is conducted. On average, they already have been employed for about two years. As Table 23 shows, 6 percent are unemployed.

Table 23: Current Major Activity of Former ERASMUS Students by Field of Study (percent of employed graduates)

| | Field of study | | | | | | | Total |
|-----------------------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| | HUM | SOC | BUS | ENG | MNAT | MED | Other | |
| Employment | 59 | 59 | 79 | 74 | 61 | 66 | 63 | 66 |
| Self-employment | 7 | 6 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 9 | 7 | 6 |
| Unemployment* | 8 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 6 |
| Further study | 11 | 12 | 6 | 8 | 19 | 8 | 10 | 11 |
| Professional training | 3 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 3 |
| Family care | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Other | 10 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 8 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (1,197) | (720) | (777) | (590) | (437) | (252) | (339) | (4,312) |

Question E1: What is your current major activity?

* Not employed and seeking employment

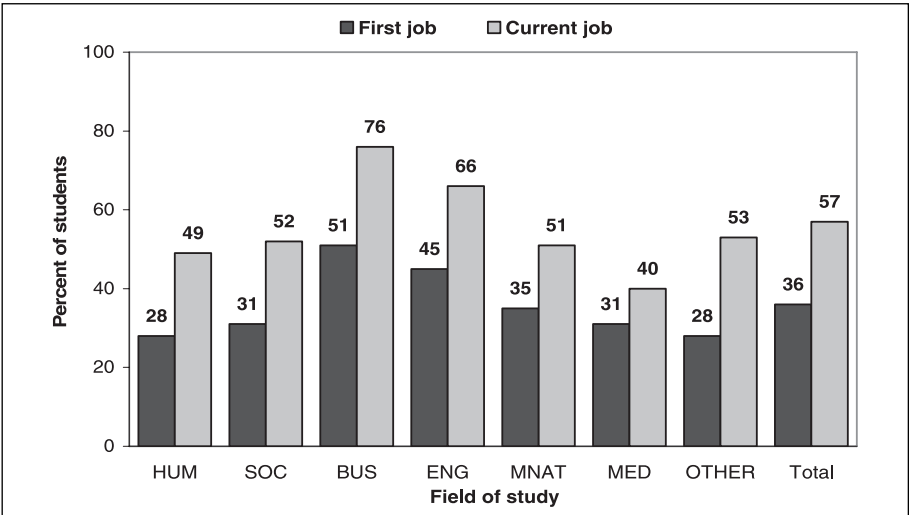
Field of Study codes see p. 29, Table 6

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

14 percent are active in further study and training. As already pointed out before, former ERASMUS students opt more frequently than formerly non-mobile students for advanced study.

On the first job after graduation, 36 percent of the former ERASMUS students have been employed on *permanent contracts* (see Figure 7). This ratio is 57 percent at the time of the survey. *Full-time employment* has been already dominant on the first job after graduation (79 percent). It is 87 percent at the time of the survey (see Figure 8).

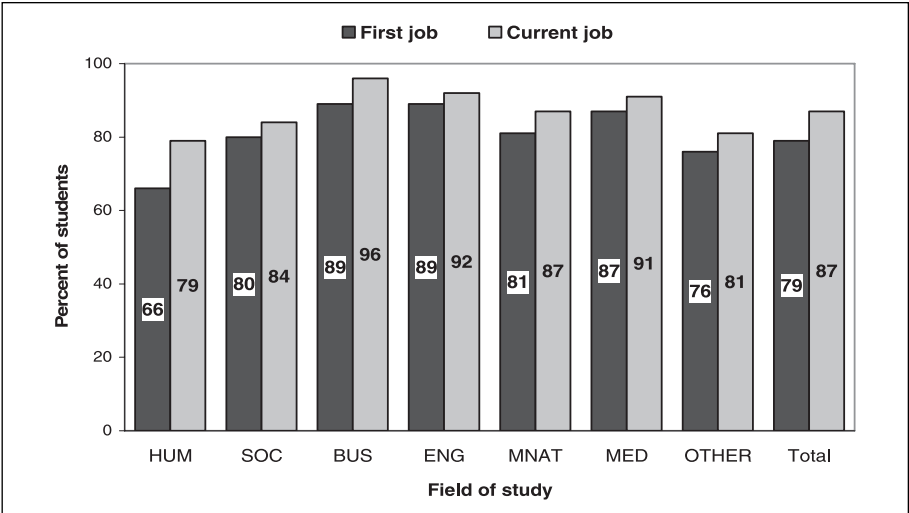
Figure 7: Permanent Contract at the First Job and Current Job by Field of Study (percent of employed graduates)



Question D2: What was the type of your contract? Question E5: What is the type of your current contract?
Field of Study codes see p. 29, Table 6

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Figure 8: Full-Time Employment at First Job and Current Job by Field of Study (percent of employed graduates)



Question D3: Did you work full-time or part-time? Question E6: Do you work full-time or part-time?
Field of Study codes see p. 29, Table 6

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

A comparison with previous studies confirms that the percentage of former ERASMUS students of the year 2000/01 working on a temporary contract has slightly increased. This generation of ERASMUS students also seems to be more involved in further study and training than previous ones. This difference might have been caused by labour market conditions and, thus, might not be a changing effect of the ERASMUS study period (see Table 24).

Table 24: Former ERASMUS Students' Employment Situation Five Years Later – a Comparison with Previous Surveys (percent of employed graduates)

| | ERASMUS students 1988/89 (surveyed 1993) | ERASMUS graduates 1994/95 (surveyed 2000) | Non-Mobile graduates 1994/95 (surveyed 2000) | ERASMUS students 2000/01 (surveyed 2005) |
|-------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| Employed, self employed | 84 | 81 | 82 | 71 |
| Study/training | 7 | 12 | 7 | 14 |
| Unemployed | 4 | 3 | 5 | 6 |
| Job mobility | * | 67 | 58 | 53 |
| Temporary contract | 27 | 27 | 27 | 35 |
| Part-time employment | 10 | 7 | 10 | 10 |
| Public sector | * | 29 | 39 | 36 |
| Research and Higher Education | 13 | * | * | 16 |

Summarising tables about questions E1, E5, E6, E9 and E10; Question E1: What is your current major activity?

Question E5: What is the type of your current contract?

Question E6: Do you work full-time or part-time?

Question E9: Do you work in the public or private sector?

Question E10: In which economic sector are you currently working?

* Question not asked

Source: Maiworm and Teichler 1996; Jahr and Teichler 2002; University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

During the first years after graduation, more than half of the 2000/01 ERASMUS graduates have *changed employers* – more than a quarter even more than once (see Table 25). Change of employers is less frequent in professionalised fields of study. Available data suggest that former ERASMUS students seem to change employers somewhat more frequently their early years of employment than formerly non-mobile students.

Table 25: Number of Employers Since Graduation of Former ERASMUS Students by Field of Study (percent of employed graduates)

| | Field of study | | | | | | | Total |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| | HUM | SOC | BUS | ENG | MNAT | MED | Other | |
| One employer | 37 | 38 | 44 | 49 | 44 | 45 | 34 | 41 |
| Two employers | 27 | 31 | 30 | 28 | 26 | 25 | 32 | 28 |
| Three employers | 16 | 15 | 15 | 14 | 13 | 16 | 19 | 15 |
| Four employers | 8 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 6 |
| Five and more employers | 8 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 |
| Other | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (1,135) | (681) | (768) | (572) | (419) | (243) | (319) | (4,137) |

Question E2: How many employers have you had altogether since graduation? – Including yourself if you have been self-employed – including current employer

Field of Study codes see p. 29, Table 6

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Altogether, the majority of 2000/01 ERASMUS students *perceive* a close *link between study and subsequent employment and work*, whereby differences are stronger by field of study than by country:

- 61 percent state that they use highly on the job the knowledge and skills acquired in the course of study (see Table 26).
- 41 percent view their field of study as the only one possible or by far the best field for their area of work. Less than a quarter sees their field of study as largely irrelevant for their work (see Table 27).
- 72 percent view their level of employment and work as closely linked to their level of education (see Table 28).
- 67 percent are satisfied with their current work (see Table 29).

In comparing these responses with the findings of previous surveys, we do not see consistencies according to all the dimensions addressed. By and large, however, Table 30 suggests that the links between study and subsequent work have not changed substantially during the overall period under consideration.

Table 26: Former ERASMUS Students' Usage of their Knowledge and Skills Acquired in the Course of Study by Field of Study (percent and arithmetic mean of employed graduates*)

| | Field of study | | | | | | | Total |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| | HUM | SOC | BUS | ENG | MNAT | MED | Other | |
| 1 To a very high extent | 29 | 27 | 14 | 23 | 35 | 44 | 25 | 26 |
| 2 | 32 | 34 | 42 | 36 | 31 | 30 | 36 | 35 |
| 3 | 23 | 24 | 29 | 28 | 18 | 20 | 22 | 24 |
| 4 | 11 | 11 | 13 | 11 | 12 | 4 | 12 | 11 |
| 5 Not at all | 5 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count | (1,081) | (641) | (726) | (545) | (392) | (237) | (304) | (3,926) |
| Arithmetic mean | 2.3 | 2.3 | 2.5 | 2.3 | 2.2 | 1.9 | 2.4 | 2.3 |

Question G2: If you take into consideration your current work tasks altogether: To what extent do you use the knowledge and skills acquired in the course of study?

* Responses on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Field of Study codes see p. 29, Table 6

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Table 27: Links Between Field of Study and Area of Work in the View of Former ERASMUS Students by Field of Study (percent of employed graduates; multiple responses)

| | Field of study | | | | | | | Total |
|--|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| | HUM | SOC | BUS | ENG | MNAT | MED | Other | |
| My field of study is the only possible/by far the best field | 39 | 43 | 28 | 42 | 40 | 78 | 41 | 41 |
| Some other fields could prepare for the area of work as well | 35 | 38 | 50 | 45 | 44 | 18 | 40 | 40 |
| Another field would have been more useful | 10 | 7 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 2 | 10 | 8 |
| The field of study does not matter very much | 11 | 10 | 12 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 12 | 10 |
| Higher education studies are not at all related to my area of work | 10 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 6 |
| Other | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Total | 109 | 105 | 108 | 109 | 109 | 105 | 113 | 108 |
| Count (n) | (1,050) | (628) | (717) | (551) | (383) | (238) | (293) | (3,860) |

Question G3: How would you characterise the relationship between your field of study and your area of work?

Field of Study codes see p. 29, Table 6

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Table 28: Appropriateness of Employment and Work to Level of Education in the View of Former ERASMUS Students by Field of Study (percent and arithmetic mean of employed graduates*)

| | Field of study | | | | | | | Total |
|--------------------------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| | HUM | SOC | BUS | ENG | MNAT | MED | Other | |
| 1 Completely appropriate | 37 | 46 | 33 | 41 | 51 | 63 | 39 | 42 |
| 2 | 28 | 27 | 39 | 33 | 28 | 24 | 31 | 31 |
| 3 | 16 | 14 | 18 | 18 | 11 | 9 | 17 | 16 |
| 4 | 11 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 10 | 8 |
| 5 Not at all appropriate | 7 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 5 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count | (1,027) | (621) | (707) | (541) | (379) | (234) | (291) | (3,800) |
| Arithmetic mean | 2.2 | 2.0 | 2.1 | 2.0 | 1.8 | 1.5 | 2.1 | 2.0 |

Question G4: To what extent is your employment and work appropriate to your level of education?

* Responses on a scale from 1 = "completely appropriate" to 5 = "not at all appropriate"

Field of Study codes see p. 29, Table 6

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Table 29: Former ERASMUS Students' Satisfaction with Current Work by Field of Study (percent and arithmetic mean of employed graduates*)

| | Field of study | | | | | | | Total |
|---------------------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| | HUM | SOC | BUS | ENG | MNAT | MED | Other | |
| 1 Very satisfied | 27 | 23 | 25 | 24 | 22 | 31 | 22 | 25 |
| 2 | 38 | 40 | 44 | 45 | 47 | 39 | 40 | 42 |
| 3 | 23 | 25 | 20 | 22 | 18 | 24 | 26 | 22 |
| 4 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 11 | 6 | 9 | 8 |
| 5 Very dissatisfied | 4 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count | (1,021) | (615) | (706) | (542) | (377) | (234) | (292) | (3,787) |
| Arithmetic mean | 2.2 | 2.3 | 2.2 | 2.2 | 2.2 | 2.1 | 2.3 | 2.2 |

Question G5: Altogether, to what extent are you satisfied with your current work?

* Responses on a scale from 1 = "very satisfied" to 5 = "very dissatisfied"

Field of Study codes see p. 29, Table 6

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Table 30: Links Between Study and Subsequent Employment and Work Perceived by Former ERASMUS Students – a Comparison with Previous Surveys (percent of employed graduates)

| | ERASMUS students 1988/89 | ERASMUS graduates 1994/95 | Non-Mobile graduates 1994/95 | ERASMUS students 2000/01 |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| High use of knowledge | 67 | 44 | 47 | 61 |
| Field of study the only possible/ the best for area of work | + | 31 | 39 | 41 |
| Appropriate level | 72 | 76 | 67 | 72 |
| High satisfaction with current work | 52 | 74 | 63 | 67 |

Table summarises three questions of the current evaluation study; Question G2: If you take into consideration your current work tasks altogether: To what extent do you use knowledge and skills acquired in the course of study? Question G3: How would you characterise the relationship between your field of study and your area of work? Question G5: Altogether, to what extent are you satisfied with your current work?

+ Different formulation or question not asked

Source: Maiworm and Teichler 1996; Jahr and Teichler 2002; University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

3.8 International Dimensions of Employment and Work

The survey of 2000/2001 ERASMUS students conducted about five years later confirms that those having studied a temporary period in another European country often consider to work abroad or actually work abroad after graduation. Only one quarter of the employed former ERASMUS students report that they never have considered working abroad and never were professionally active abroad:

- 48 percent have considered employment abroad,
- 22 percent have sought employment abroad,
- 18 percent have been regularly employed abroad at least for some period after graduation, and
- 12 percent have been sent by their home employers to some work assignment abroad at least for some period.

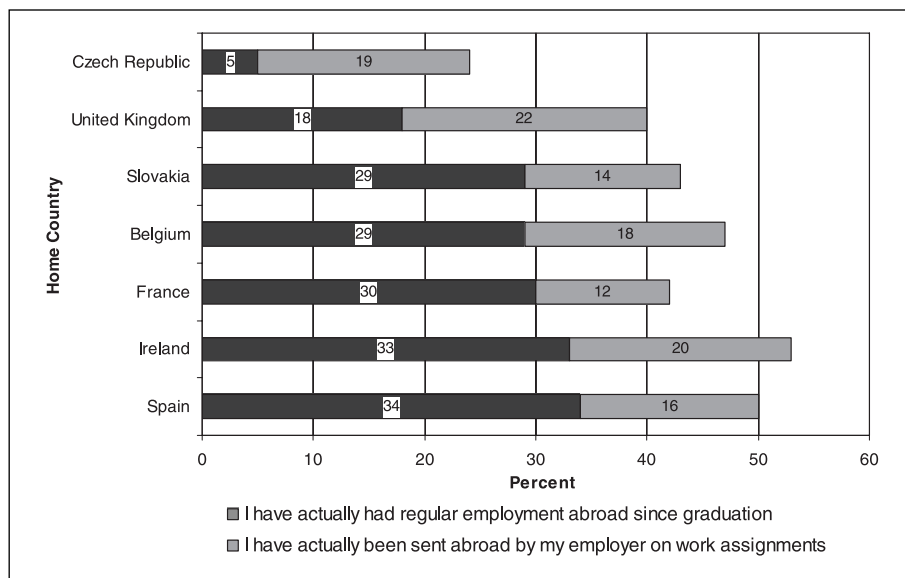
Employment abroad is by no means confined to former ERASMUS students from a few fields of study. The respective rate varies by field of study between 14 percent in medical fields and 20 percent in business studies. Work assignments abroad vary somewhat more between 8 percent each in humanities and medical fields to 18 percent in natural sciences.

The frequency of employment and work assignments differs substantially by the country of the home institution of higher education of the former ERASMUS students. As Figure 9 shows,

- about one third of former ERASMUS students from Ireland, Spain and France have worked abroad and almost as many from Belgium and Slovakia;
- about one fifth or even more have been sent abroad by their employer among the former ERASMUS students from the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia.

It is interesting to note that fewer former ERASMUS students from Central and Eastern Europe than from Western European countries have been employed abroad after graduation. As international professional mobility of graduates from Central and Eastern European countries tends to be interpreted as “brain drain”, the available data suggest that ERASMUS is not a means of increasing “brain drain”.

Figure 9: Former ERASMUS Students’ Employment Abroad and Work Assignment Abroad by Home Country (percent of employed graduates)



Question F2: Did you have international mobility experience since graduation? Please consider the country immediately prior to the ERASMUS supported period as the home country in your responses?

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Professional mobility of former ERASMUS students has not changed over time. Also 18 percent of the ERASMUS students 1988/1989 employed after graduation had been employed abroad at least for some period. Similarly, 20 percent of the 1994/1995 graduates who had been mobile in the framework during their course of study had reported about four years after graduation that they had been regularly employed at least for some period.

Asked “What is the *scope of operations of your organisation?*”, half of the employed former 2000/01 ERASMUS students answer “international”, about one third “national” and less than one quarter each “regional” or “local” (see Table 31). As one might expect, this varies substantially by field of study: notably few former ERASMUS students from medical fields work in organisations with an international scope. An international scope is reported by about three quarters of former students from Ireland and Slovakia, but by less than one third from Greece.

Table 31: Scope of Operations of Organisations of Former ERASMUS Students by Field of Study (percent of employed graduates; multiple responses)

| | Field of study | | | | | | | Total |
|---------------|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| | HUM | SOC | BUS | ENG | MNAT | MED | Other | |
| Local | 33 | 22 | 10 | 17 | 20 | 43 | 30 | 23 |
| Regional | 24 | 19 | 12 | 18 | 20 | 42 | 17 | 20 |
| National | 28 | 38 | 28 | 32 | 36 | 24 | 33 | 31 |
| International | 41 | 46 | 70 | 60 | 55 | 11 | 49 | 50 |
| Total | 126 | 126 | 120 | 128 | 131 | 120 | 129 | 125 |
| Count (n) | (892) | (549) | (680) | (527) | (348) | (224) | (265) | (3,485) |

Question E13: What is the scope of operations of your organisation?

Field of Study codes see p. 29, Table 6

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

59 percent report that their company/organisation frequently undertakes business or has contact to other countries, and 33 percent that these activities are frequent with the host country of their study period abroad (see Table 32). Responses to this question vary by field of study similarly as responses to the preceding question.

As one might expect, knowledge of the host country language and the host country in general plays quite a different role for subsequent employment and work according to the specific country chosen for ERASMUS study:

- The host country language, of course, is most often used by respondents who have studied for some period in English-speaking countries, i.e. the United Kingdom and Ireland. But also German, French and Dutch turn out to be professionally useful for a substantial proportion for those spending their ERASMUS supported period in a respective country.
- Knowledge on the host country and its culture and society is professionally most useful for persons who have studied for some period in relatively large Western European countries.

Table 32: Business Contacts with Other Countries of Organisations of Former ERASMUS Students by Field of Study (percent of employed graduates*)

| | Field of study | | | | | | | Total |
|---|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| | HUM | SOC | BUS | ENG | MNAT | MED | Other | |
| With other countries in general | 51 | 55 | 74 | 67 | 65 | 32 | 59 | 59 |
| With the host country of your ERASMUS study period abroad | 36 | 30 | 39 | 36 | 31 | 15 | 31 | 33 |
| With the host country of other study period abroad (if any) | 28 | 27 | 39 | 31 | 34 | 17 | 29 | 30 |
| Count (n) | (903) | (565) | (681) | (520) | (355) | (221) | (260) | (3,505) |

Question F5: To what extent does the organisation, institution or company with which you are associated do business or have contact with other countries?

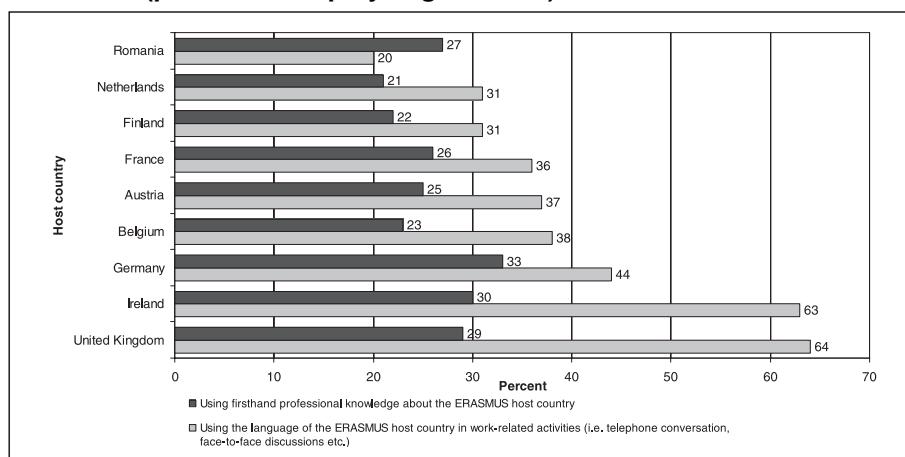
* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Field of Study codes see p. 29, Table 6

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

There are exceptions, though, from this general pattern, as Figure 10 shows. For example, the few ERASMUS students who have gone to Romania report relatively often that they use the language and the knowledge of the country subsequently.

Figure 10: International and European Work Assignments of Former ERASMUS Students by Host Country (percent of employed graduates)



Question F6: To what extent do the responsibilities of your work involve the following?

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Responses regarding the importance of international competences vary from those regarding international mobility and work assignment as well as the use of knowledge of the host country language and culture, as far as the field of study of former ERASMUS students is concerned. As regards the latter dimensions we had observed least mobility, host country links, etc. on the part of former ERASMUS students in medical fields and also under-proportionally among those in humanities. As regards the professional relevance of international competences, however, former students from humanities and social science fields consistently note a higher importance than those from science and engineering fields. Obviously, the “cultural dimension” of learning during the ERASMUS supported study turns out to be professionally valuable for many of those former science and engineering students who work abroad or take over visible international tasks, but is not seen as highly important by non-mobile science and engineering graduates. In contrast, also former ERASMUS students in humanities and social sciences whose job roles are hardly international consider their ability of working with other people, understanding other countries’ cultures and communicating in a foreign language as professionally important.

About half of the former ERASMUS students employed abroad actually work in the host country of the ERASMUS supported study. Substantially higher proportions of graduates, however, have had frequent work tasks related to the ERASMUS host country:

- 38 percent use the language of the ERASMUS host country in work-related activities,
- 38 percent as well use the host country language in writing and reading,
- 25 percent use firsthand professional knowledge about the ERASMUS host country,
- 24 percent use firsthand knowledge of the culture and society of the ERASMUS host country,
- 14 percent travel to the ERASMUS host country.

Knowledge of the ERASMUS host country plays a different role according to field of study. The use of knowledge related to the host country reported in 2005 is lower than that reported by former generations of ERASMUS students. Obviously, fewer ERASMUS students can be certain that their knowledge and links regarding the ERASMUS host country will be professionally relevant (see Table 33).

Table 33: ERASMUS Related Work Tasks of Former ERASMUS Students – a Comparison with Previous Surveys (percent of employed graduates*)

| | ERASMUS students 1988/89 (surveyed 1993) | ERASMUS graduates 1994/95 (surveyed 2000) | ERASMUS students 2000/01 (surveyed 2005) |
|---|--|---|--|
| Using the language of the host country orally | 47 | 42 | 38 |
| Using the language of the host country in reading and writing | 47 | 40 | 38 |
| Using firsthand professional knowledge of host country | 30 | 25 | 25 |
| Using first hand knowledge of host country culture/society | 30 | 32 | 24 |
| Professional travel to host country | 17 | 18 | 14 |

Survey 2005 Question F6: To what extent do the responsibilities of your work involve the following?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: Maiworm and Teichler 1996; Jahr and Teichler 2002; University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Altogether, the majority of employed former ERASMUS students consider their *international competences as important for doing their current work* (see Table 34):

- 45 percent consider professional knowledge of other countries as important,
- 57 percent knowledge and understanding of international differences in culture and society,
- 66 percent working with people from different cultural backgrounds, and
- 69 percent communicating in foreign languages.

Table 34: Professional Importance of Former ERASMUS Students' International Competences by Field of Study (percent of employed graduates*)

| | Field of study | | | | | | | Total |
|--|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| | HUM | SOC | BUS | ENG | MNAT | MED | Other | |
| Professional knowledge of other countries (e.g. economic, sociological, legal knowledge) | 52 | 46 | 52 | 37 | 31 | 32 | 47 | 45 |
| Knowledge/understanding of international differences in culture and society, modes of behaviour, life styles, etc. | 68 | 56 | 60 | 48 | 40 | 50 | 58 | 57 |
| Working with people from different cultural backgrounds | 69 | 61 | 71 | 65 | 60 | 67 | 69 | 66 |
| Communicating in foreign languages | 72 | 63 | 74 | 71 | 66 | 61 | 72 | 69 |
| Count (n) | (930) | (570) | (684) | (530) | (357) | (226) | (273) | (3,570) |

Question F4: How important do you consider the following competences for doing your current work?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very important" to 5 = "not at all important"

Field of Study codes see p. 29, Table 6

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

These proportions are 4-10 percent higher than among former ERASMUS students graduating in 1994/95, thus suggesting a growing relevance of international competences over time for the former ERASMUS students. The survey of 1994/95 graduates had shown as well, as one might expect, that these international competences had been substantially more important for graduates having been mobile during the course of their study than for graduates not having been internationally mobile during the course of study.

In sum, of the former ERASMUS students

- more than half each consider study abroad and foreign language proficiency as important recruitment criteria,
- more than half each work in an internationally active organisation and view knowledge and understanding of other cultures, societies and languages as important for their work, and
- almost 20 percent have worked abroad and more than 22 percent had been sent abroad.

This is far more frequently reported by former ERASMUS students than by formerly non-mobile students. But the number of ERASMUS students reporting international dimensions of employment and work has declined somewhat in recent years (see Table 35).

Table 35: International Dimensions of Employment and Work of Former ERASMUS Students – a Comparison with Previous Surveys (percent of employed graduates)

| | ERASMUS students 1988/89 | ERASMUS graduates 1994/95 | Non-Mobile graduates 1994/95 | ERASMUS students 2000/01 |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| International scope of employing organisation | + | + | + | 51 |
| Frequent contacts of employing organisation with other countries | 71 | + | + | 59 |
| Employed abroad since graduation | 18 | 20 | 5 | 18 |
| Sent abroad by employer | + | 22 | 10 | 12 |
| Professional knowledge of other countries important | + | 40 | 20 | 45 |
| Understanding of different cultures and society important | + | 52 | 32 | 57 |
| Working with people from different culture important | + | 62 | 43 | 67 |
| Communicating in foreign language important | + | 60 | 30 | 70 |

Summarising tables of several questions (here quoted based on the current study); Question F2: Did you have international mobility experience since graduation? Please consider the country immediately prior to the ERASMUS supported period as the home country in your responses (multiple responses possible); Question F4: How important do you consider the following competences for doing your current work?

+ Different formulation or question not asked

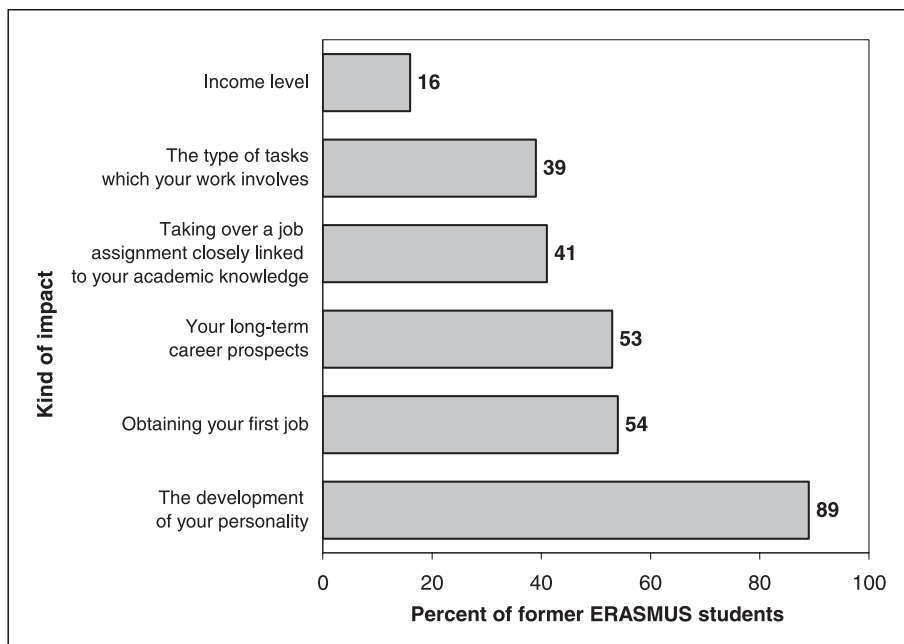
Source: Maiworm and Teichler 1996; Jahr and Teichler 2002; University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

3.9 Perceived Impact and Overall Assessment of ERASMUS Supported Period Abroad

The students eventually have been asked to assess the impact of their study period abroad on their subsequent employment and work. As Figure 11 shows,

- 54 percent state that it was helpful for obtaining a first job,
- 39 percent note a positive impact as regards their work tasks,
- but only 16 percent view their study abroad experience as having led to a higher income level – not more than those perceiving a lower income level as the consequence.

Figure 11: Positive Impact of Study Abroad Perceived by Former ERASMUS Students (percent*)



Question H1: What impact do you feel that your study abroad experience has had with regard to your employment?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very positive impact" to 5 = "very negative impact"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

These ratings of impact are less positive than those stated by former ERASMUS students who had graduated in 1995 (66%, 44% and 22%) and even less positively than those by 1988/89 ERASMUS students (71%, 49% and 25%). According to these criteria, the impact of ERASMUS seems to decline over the years (see Table 36).

Table 36: Positive Impact of ERASMUS Study Period on Employment and Work Perceived by Former ERASMUS Students – a Comparison with Previous Surveys (percent)

| | ERASMUS students 1988/89 (surveyed 1993) | ERASMUS graduates 1994/95 (surveyed 2000) | ERASMUS students 2000/01 (surveyed 2005) |
|----------------------------|--|---|--|
| Obtaining first job | 71 | 66 | 54 |
| Type of work task involved | 49 | 44 | 39 |
| Income level | 25 | 22 | 16 |

Question H1: What impact do you feel that your study abroad experience has had with regard to your employment?
Source: Maiworm and Teichler 1996; Jahr and Teichler 2002; University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

On the other hand, a high proportion of the 2000/01 students note a substantial positive impact on other dimensions not addressed in the same way in the previous surveys:

- personality development (89%),
- long-term career prospects (53%),
- taking over an assignment closely linked to one's academic knowledge (41%).

Table 37: Positive Impact of Study Abroad Perceived by Former ERASMUS Students by Field of Study (percent*)

| | Field of study | | | | | | | Total |
|--|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| | HUM | SOC | BUS | ENG | MNAT | MED | Other | |
| The development of your personality | 90 | 89 | 89 | 90 | 88 | 89 | 90 | 89 |
| Obtaining your first job | 53 | 50 | 62 | 59 | 55 | 40 | 50 | 54 |
| Your long-term career prospects | 47 | 55 | 62 | 55 | 53 | 46 | 48 | 53 |
| Taking over a job assignment closely linked to your academic knowledge | 42 | 37 | 40 | 46 | 39 | 32 | 40 | 41 |
| The type of tasks which your work involves | 45 | 34 | 37 | 38 | 35 | 35 | 42 | 39 |
| Income level | 14 | 16 | 22 | 19 | 13 | 10 | 15 | 16 |
| Count (n) | (1,102) | (655) | (731) | (560) | (402) | (241) | (306) | (3,997) |

Question H1: What impact do you feel that your study abroad experience has had with regard to your employment?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very positive impact" to 5 = "very negative impact"

Field of Study codes see p. 29, Table 6

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Table 37 shows that former ERASMUS students from medical fields rate the impact of study abroad as somewhat lower than those from other fields. Altogether, the differences of responses by field are smaller than one might have expected.

The perceived impact of study abroad varies substantially by home country, as Table 38 shows. A strong impact is notably reported by former ERASMUS students from Central and Eastern European countries. In addition, above-average positive influence is reported by former ERASMUS students from Iceland and Malta as well as in the majority dimensions by those from Greece, Ireland, France, and the United Kingdom.

Finally, the ERASMUS students of the academic year 2000/2001 have been asked about five years later whether they consider their option to study abroad to have been worthwhile. Thereby, a larger range of themes has been addressed than in the previous question. Figure 12 shows that not only almost all former ERASMUS students consider study abroad worthwhile with respect to international competences, but also regarding personality and general ways of thinking and reflection. In addition, between half and three quarters of the respondents conceive this experience as valuable for their academic and professional knowledge, for their work tasks in general and

Table 38: Positive Impact of Study Abroad Perceived by Former ERASMUS Students by Home Country (percent*)

| | Home country** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total | | | |
|--|----------------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| | AT | BE | BG | CZ | DK | FI | FR | DE | GR | HU | IS | IE | IT | LV | LT | MA | NL | NO | PL | PT | RO | SK | SI | ES | SE | UK | | |
| Obtaining your first job | 44 | 51 | 70 | 57 | 44 | 39 | 62 | 49 | 58 | 63 | 75 | 54 | 40 | 73 | 75 | 77 | 52 | 46 | 73 | 56 | 64 | 58 | 65 | 63 | 47 | 59 | 54 | |
| The type of tasks which your work involves | 30 | 28 | 70 | 45 | 29 | 38 | 41 | 34 | 45 | 40 | 69 | 33 | 30 | 73 | 60 | 38 | 28 | 37 | 46 | 43 | 54 | 32 | 45 | 53 | 30 | 42 | 39 | |
| Income level | 11 | 7 | 30 | 26 | 6 | 8 | 18 | 9 | 13 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 10 | 18 | 19 | 31 | 16 | 9 | 26 | 18 | 30 | 18 | 11 | 23 | 14 | 22 | 16 | |
| Your long-term career prospects | 51 | 33 | 65 | 62 | 56 | 46 | 49 | 55 | 60 | 45 | 58 | 67 | 42 | 73 | 51 | 46 | 46 | 44 | 58 | 52 | 63 | 43 | 65 | 45 | 69 | 62 | 53 | |
| Taking over a job assignment closely linked to your academic knowledge | 31 | 23 | 67 | 44 | 39 | 35 | 37 | 29 | 60 | 49 | 75 | 46 | 32 | 68 | 62 | 38 | 27 | 23 | 55 | 59 | 63 | 39 | 60 | 44 | 31 | 43 | 41 | |
| The development of your personality | 94 | 89 | 100 | 93 | 89 | 82 | 92 | 93 | 88 | 78 | 92 | 93 | 90 | 91 | 98 | 92 | 88 | 81 | 87 | 87 | 95 | 76 | 95 | 85 | 93 | 92 | 89 | |
| Count (n) | (185) | (88) | (21) | (214) | (157) | (186) | (369) | (391) | (129) | (137) | (13) | (85) | (426) | (22) | (61) | (13) | (94) | (126) | (187) | (205) | (149) | (38) | (20) | (281) | (231) | (163) | (399) | (1) |

Question H1: What impact do you feel that your study abroad experience has had with regard to your employment?

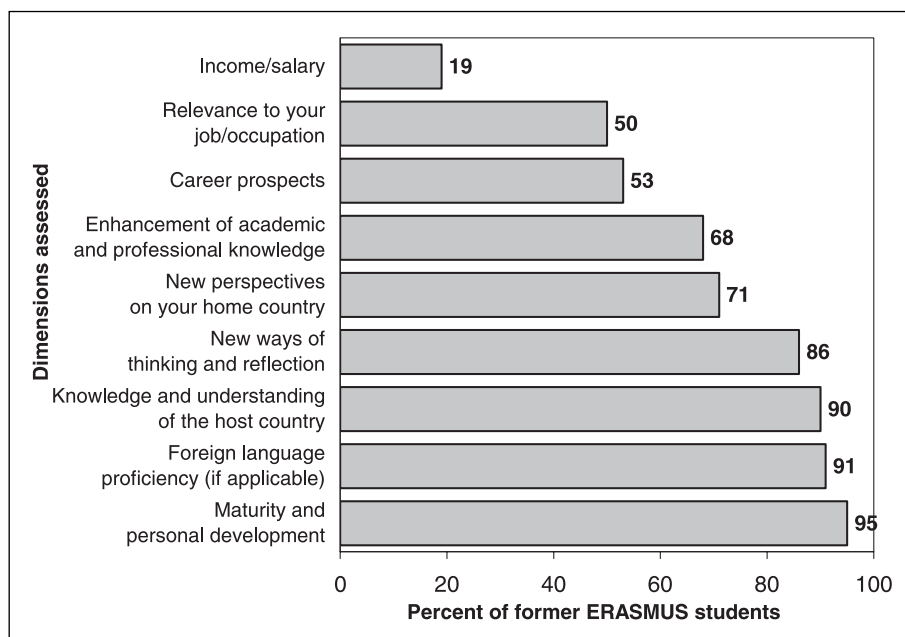
* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very positive impact" to 5 = "very negative impact"

** Country Codes see Table 9

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

their career; moreover, study abroad is often seen as valuable for getting new perspectives on their host country. With respect to income, however, again, less than one fifth of former ERASMUS students consider study abroad as a worthwhile activity.

Figure 12: Positive Assessment of Study Abroad by Former ERASMUS Students (percent*)



Question H2: From your point of view today, to what extent do you consider it was worthwhile for you to have studied abroad with regard to the following?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "extremely worthwhile" to 5 = "not at all worthwhile"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Differences by fields of study, again, turned out to be smaller than one might expect, whereby graduates from medical fields, again, considered the ERASMUS period somewhat less valuable than those from other fields of study (see Table 39). Differences by home country are similar to those in response to the preceding question.

Table 39: Positive Assessment of Study Abroad by Former ERASMUS Students by Field of Study (percent*)

| | Field of study | | | | | | | Total |
|--|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| | HUM | SOC | BUS | ENG | MNAT | MED | Other | |
| Maturity and personal development | 95 | 97 | 96 | 93 | 94 | 95 | 96 | 95 |
| Foreign language proficiency (if applicable) | 93 | 94 | 93 | 90 | 88 | 85 | 91 | 91 |
| Knowledge and understanding of the host country | 92 | 91 | 89 | 88 | 88 | 88 | 91 | 90 |
| New ways of thinking and reflection | 85 | 87 | 87 | 88 | 85 | 84 | 87 | 86 |
| New perspectives on your home country | 72 | 74 | 77 | 71 | 70 | 56 | 63 | 71 |
| Enhancement of academic and professional knowledge | 73 | 64 | 63 | 69 | 69 | 71 | 70 | 68 |
| Career prospects | 46 | 54 | 65 | 56 | 55 | 39 | 51 | 53 |
| Relevance to your job/occupation | 54 | 45 | 51 | 52 | 46 | 42 | 49 | 50 |
| Income/salary | 16 | 19 | 28 | 24 | 17 | 8 | 16 | 19 |
| Count (n) | (1,184) | (692) | (755) | (572) | (431) | (248) | (324) | (4,206) |

Question H2: From your point of view today, to what extent do you consider it was worthwhile for you to have studied abroad with regard to the following?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "extremely worthwhile" to 5 = "not at all worthwhile"

Field of Study codes see p. 29, Table 6

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

3.10 The Views of the Experts and Actors

As the preceding analysis has shown, most former ERASMUS students are convinced that the study period in another European country was helpful in enhancing their knowledge on the host country, increasing their foreign language proficiency and making them competent to act in international environment. It is also obvious that ERASMUS has helped many of them to get work assignments for which their visible international competences are important. Beyond this, they believe that this was a valuable opportunity for maturation of their personality, for comparative insights and understanding of other people, for coping with surprising work tasks as well as strengthening their reflection and understanding of their situation in their own country. Former ERASMUS students are more cautious, though, in concluding that their

study abroad experience contributed to a higher level of general, academic and professional competences as well as to a more successful career. Many of them note a smoother transition to employment, some note advantages as far as some other professionally relevant competences are concerned, and some hope that study abroad will be beneficial for their long-term career. But on average, former ERASMUS students do not see an advantage to non-mobile students as far as income and status during the first years after graduation is concerned.

This study is not only based on responses provided by the former ERASMUS students themselves. As already stated, a broad range of experts as well as university leaders and employers were also asked to state their views of the professional value of ERASMUS. We have to bear in mind, though, that a comparison of their views to those of the former students has some limitations because the questions raised have been in part different, because the additional questionnaires have had to be briefer and have had to address their specific roles. Moreover, while the former students had to refer to themselves as individuals, the other respondents were asked to state how they see the former ERASMUS students in general as compared to the non-mobile students.

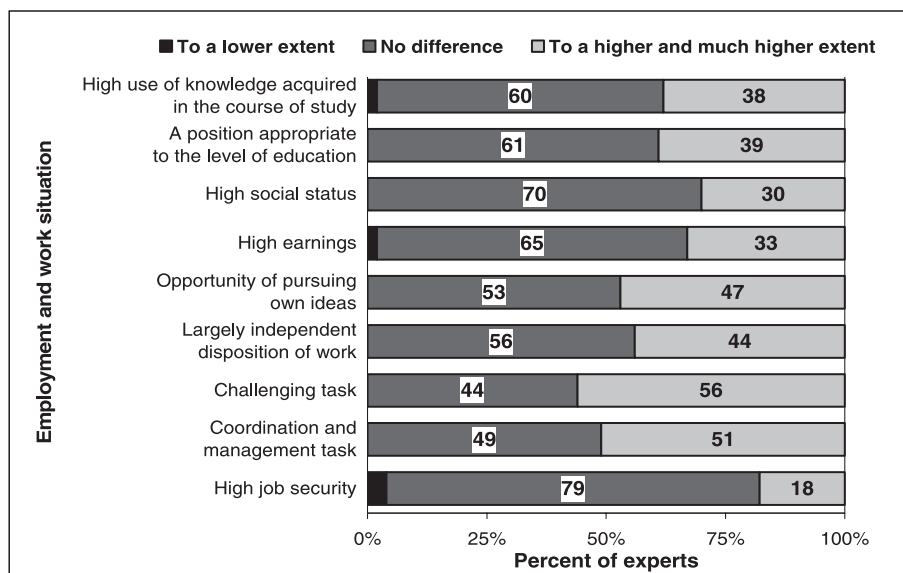
Between about 40 percent and almost 60 percent of the experts surveyed believe that former ERASMUS students have a better chance than formerly non-mobile students to get interesting and demanding work assignments and generally work tasks which fit their competences. A smaller proportion, though, is convinced that the ERASMUS experience helps them to reach more advantageous employment situations. As Figure 13 shows,

- about one third see a better chance to get a higher status and income, and
- 18 percent expect a higher job security.

The responses to an additional question shows that

- 30 percent see a better chance of former ERASMUS students to achieve full-time employment, and
- 24 percent to get a permanent contract.

Figure 13: Employment and Work Situation of Former ERASMUS Students as Compared to Non-Mobile Students in the View of ERASMUS Experts (percent*)



Question C7: To what extent do the following characteristics of employment and work apply to former ERASMUS students as compared to their non-mobile fellow students a couple of years after graduation? (n=58)

* Responses on a 5 point scale from 1 = "to a much lower extent" through 3 = "no difference" to 5 = "to a much higher extent"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Experts 2005

One might argue that experts' views are only slightly more favourable than those of the former ERASMUS students themselves as far as the employment situation of the former ERASMUS students are concerned, but many experts believe that former ERASMUS students succeed in getting interesting and challenging work tasks in general: In the latter respect they assess the former ERASMUS students work situation somewhat more positively than the former ERASMUS students themselves.

Experts from Central and Eastern European countries view the former ERASMUS students' employment and work situation most favourably. But also experts from Southern European countries perceive the situation of former ERASMUS students more favourably than those from other European regions.

Many university leaders obviously also have a quite positive view about the competences, employment opportunities and typical work assignments of former ERASMUS students. When asked how they compare the impact of the ERASMUS experience on the "employability" with the impact of temporary study abroad in other contexts, one quarter of them stated that they see a higher impact of ERASMUS while only 3 percent expected a lower impact

of ERASMUS. As Table 40 shows, notably leaders of large universities are convinced that ERASMUS has a higher impact.

Table 40: Impact of ERASMUS on the Employability of Graduates in the View of University Leaders by Number of Students Enrolled (percent)

| | Number of students enrolled | | | | | | Total |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|-------|
| | Up to 500 | 501 – 2,000 | 2,001 – 5,000 | 5,001 – 10,000 | 10,001 – 20,000 | More than 20,000 | |
| ERASMUS has a higher impact | 18 | 24 | 27 | 23 | 22 | 40 | 24 |
| More or less the same | 78 | 75 | 70 | 74 | 73 | 60 | 73 |
| ERASMUS has a lower impact | 4 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (89) | (143) | (101) | (70) | (73) | (40) | (516) |

Question C4: Have study periods abroad supported by the ERASMUS programme on average a higher or lower impact towards the employability of graduates compared to other types of study abroad, e.g. support from other grant programmes, free-mover mobility?

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA University Leaders' Survey 2005

This finding comes as a surprise. The survey of European university graduates of the academic year 1994/1995 had shown that the former ERASMUS students themselves note a slightly lower professional value of study abroad than other formerly mobile students. The authors of this study had interpreted this finding as not surprising because ERASMUS is generally viewed as a programme mobilizing many students who otherwise would not have gone abroad and as a not highly selective programme. In contrast, the majority of universities themselves underscore that ERASMUS is a selective programme, where grades, language proficiency and substantive links between study at home and study abroad play an important role as selection criteria.

The employer survey, first, confirms the findings of a survey of European graduates 1994/1995, in which formerly mobile and formerly non-mobile students could be compared, that formerly mobile students are clearly more often assigned to international job tasks than formerly non-mobile students. As Table 41 shows, a majority of employers each believe that international work tasks are typical for formerly mobile students, while a minority considers these work tasks as typical as regards the following areas:

- use of foreign languages in conversations and work-related activities,
- work with colleagues or clients from other countries,
- use of information on other countries or European or international relations, and
- travel to other countries.

Table 41: International Work Tasks of Young Graduates With and Without International Experience in the View of Employers (percent*)

| | Young graduates | |
|---|--|---|
| | <i>with</i> international experience | <i>without</i> international experience |
| Using foreign languages in conversations and work-related activities | 86 | 42 |
| Working with colleagues/clients from other countries | 75 | 36 |
| Using information about other countries, European/international relations, etc. | 64 | 28 |
| Professional travel to other countries | 61 | 30 |
| Being sent abroad for extended work assignments | 45 | 14 |
| Count (n) | (190) | (260) |

Question C9: To what extent do young graduates take over the following European/international aspects in their work assignments? Please answer this question both for young graduates with international experience (A) and for those without international experience (B). If you do not employ any young graduate with international experience, please do only answer part B.

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Employer Survey 2005/2006

Work assignments were seen as common for formerly mobile students by less than half of the employers, but this was also substantially less often stated for formerly non-mobile students.

International work assignments both of formerly mobile students and of formerly non-mobile students were more often reported by respondents from large firms. This does not come as a surprise because respondents from large firms stated more often than those from smaller firms that their organisation is quite active internationally.

Table 42 confirms a finding of the survey of former ERASMUS students. Also a higher proportion of employers from Central and Eastern European countries than those from Western European countries state that formerly mobile students are more likely to take over visible international work assignments. But Table 42 shows as well that a higher proportion of Central and Eastern European employers than of their Western counterparts believe that formerly non-mobile students take over visible international assignments. The latter findings relativise the former: more frequent international assignments for former ERASMUS students from Central and Eastern European countries than for Western European countries may not be the result of a stronger impact of student mobility in the former countries, but the result of more fre-

quent international assignments of graduates in general in internationally active institutions in these countries.

Table 42: International Work Tasks of Young Graduates in the View of Employers by European Region (percent*)

| | European Region | | Total |
|---|-----------------|----------------------------|-------|
| | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe | |
| <i>Young graduates with international experiences</i> | | | |
| Using foreign languages in conversations and work-related activities | 83 | 94 | 86 |
| Using information about other countries, European/international relations, etc. | 59 | 73 | 64 |
| Working with colleagues/clients from other countries | 69 | 85 | 75 |
| Being sent abroad for extended work assignments | 37 | 60 | 45 |
| Professional travel to other countries | 55 | 74 | 61 |
| Count (n) | (126) | (64) | (190) |
| <i>Young graduates without international experiences</i> | | | |
| Using foreign languages in conversations and work-related activities | 37 | 53 | 42 |
| Using information about other countries, European/international relations, etc. | 26 | 33 | 28 |
| Working with colleagues/clients | 34 | 41 | 36 |
| Being sent abroad for extended work assignments | 13 | 15 | 14 |
| Professional travel to other countries | 25 | 42 | 30 |
| Count (n) | (179) | (81) | (260) |

Question C9: To what extent do young graduates take over the following European/international aspects in their work assignments? Please answer this question both for young graduates with international experience (A) and for those without international experience (B). If you do not employ any young graduate with international experience, please do only answer part B.

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Employer Survey 2005/2006

Altogether, the majority of the employers surveyed rate the general academic and professional competences of formerly mobile students in many respects superior to those of formerly non-mobile students. Many of them believe as well that the work assignments of formerly mobile students are more demanding and interesting than those of formerly non-mobile students. For example, as Table 43 shows, 42 percent of the employers responding state that former-

ly mobile students are more likely to take over tasks with a high responsibility after some years of work at their organisation. In contrast, only 3 percent believe that former ERASMUS students have a lesser chance in this respect.

Table 43: Higher Professional Responsibility of Internationally Experienced Graduates in the View of Employers by European Region (percent of employers)

| | European Region | | Total |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-------|
| | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe | |
| Yes, substantially more frequent | 11 | 23 | 15 |
| Yes, somewhat more frequent | 26 | 30 | 27 |
| About the same | 59 | 45 | 55 |
| No, somewhat less frequent | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| No, substantially less frequent | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (149) | (69) | (218) |

Question C7: Are internationally experienced graduates more likely to take over work tasks with high responsibility after a couple of years in your organisation?

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Employer Survey 2005/2006

As regards salary, however, only 10 percent of the employers note an advantage of the internationally experienced graduates at the beginning of their career (see Table 44). This is more often the case among private employers (16%) than among non-profit and public employers (4% each).

Table 44: Higher Salary of Young International Experienced Graduates in the View of Employers by Kind of Organisation (percent of employers)

| | Kind of organisation | | | | Total |
|-----------|----------------------|------------|---------|-------|-------|
| | Public | Non-profit | Private | Other | |
| Yes | 4 | 4 | 16 | 0 | 10 |
| No | 96 | 96 | 84 | 100 | 90 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (77) | (26) | (109) | (6) | (218) |

Question C8: Do young graduates in your organisation who have had international experience before get a higher salary on average?

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Employer Survey 2005/2006

About twice as many employers (21%) state that internationally experienced graduates can expect a *higher salary* than others upon about five years of employment. They note on average a surprisingly high income advantage of 27 percent for the internationally experienced graduates. A higher salary for internationally experienced graduates after about five years of professional experience is viewed to be more common in the private sector (30%) than in the non-profit and in the public sectors (13% each). Employers in Central and Eastern Europe (27%) are more frequently inclined to pay higher salaries to graduates with international experience than Western European employers (19%).

Altogether, the experts, university leaders and employers surveyed confirm the view of former ERASMUS students that the ERASMUS period abroad considerably enhances the international competences of students and that they substantially more often take over visible international assignments. The findings are consistent in this respect. As regards general academic and professional competences and regarding career advantages in general, experts consider the chances of formerly mobile students somewhat better and the university leaders and employers in various respects substantially better than their non-mobile counterparts. However, fewer employers believe that study mobility will be rewarded by a higher income level.

4 The Value of ERASMUS Student Mobility in Selected Fields of Study

4.1 Aims and Procedures of the Field-Specific Analysis

Varying Conditions and Potentials

ERASMUS is a programme aiming to serve students from all fields of study. Thereby, the format of support and the criteria for award do not differ according to field of study. Shortly after the establishment of ERASMUS, various evaluation studies have been undertaken to analyse why participation varies by field of study, why students' assessment of the value of ERASMUS is by no means identical on average across fields of study and what measures might be suitable to reduce barriers and to enhance the value of ERASMUS within fields clearly underrepresented among ERASMUS students.

In the framework of this study on the professional value of ERASMUS a decision was taken already in the formulation of the call for tender to pay attention to the specific conditions under which students from certain fields of study learn in other European countries and the possible means to make such a period abroad more valuable. This time, specific conditions and provisions were supposed to be addressed with respect to fields of study well embedded in ERASMUS in order to identify the potentials for improving the professional value of ERASMUS.

Actually, a select thematic range has been addressed in seminars of representatives from four fields of study. The procedure will be briefly explained before the findings are presented.

Selection of the Fields of Study

International experience during the period of study plays a different role in the various fields of study and in various occupational areas. It might be embedded easily into the core knowledge of a field of study, such as foreign languages, European studies or international law. It might be important as field knowledge, for example, in the area of international trade. Or it might just happen to offer other areas of specialisation and other modes of inquiry in fields with a universal knowledge base, e.g. chemistry. Moreover, fields of study vary according to the extent to which they are shaped by academic and by professional perspectives.

Based on the discussion during an expert seminar held at the end of the first phase of the project, four fields of study have been chosen for the in-depth study in order to take into account both different cultures of fields of study and different degrees of academic or professional emphasis:

- *chemistry* as an academically oriented field in the area of science and engineering, where universal knowledge plays a major role,

- *mechanical engineering* as a professionally oriented field in this area,
- *sociology* as an academically oriented field in the area of humanities and social sciences, where international knowledge is often part of the core of the study programme, where it is important as field knowledge or where international knowledge contributes to the generation of theoretical frameworks, and
- *business studies* as a professionally oriented field in the latter area.

Expert Seminars as Mode of Inquiry

According to the initial design of the project, experts and actors in the respective fields of study and professional areas should be asked to provide in-depth information beyond what can be drawn from an analysis of available documents and of the survey findings. Initially, telephone interviews were envisaged in order to gather elaborate explanations from a substantial number of experts and actors.

The participants of the expert seminars held subsequently to the surveys of this study came to the conclusion that the purpose of tracing the potentials of individual fields of study to enhance the professional value of ERASMUS would be better served through small, field-specific expert seminars. It has been hoped that a stimulating process of reflection could be organised. Experts sharing expertise on certain fields of study and related occupational areas, but different according to their roles and the country they come from, ought to be presented key findings of the first stage of the project and asked to interpret the findings. The partly common and partly divergent responses to be expected might help to elicit questions individual interviewers and interviewees might not have thought off, might shed unexpected light on the phenomena discussed and might move tacit knowledge towards manifest knowledge.

Nine to 13 participants have been invited each to the four seminars undertaken, i.e. one each in the four fields of study chosen:

- teachers,
- students,
- employers, and
- representatives of academic or professional associations.

If available, experts have been included as well who had been involved in major studies on the respective field of study and graduate employment and work, for example in “Thematic Networks” supported within the framework of the ERASMUS programme, the TUNING project, etc.

Care has been taken that experts from these categories spread further

- by country: Altogether 19 countries were represented in the four seminars,
- teachers from regular study programmes and those with a specific international or European emphasis,

- current ERASMUS students, students after the study abroad period and graduates,
- employers from industry and services.

The seminars have been held in Frankfurt/Main (Germany), a convenient location both for flights from all parts of Europe and for the project team. They have been held each as a one-day meeting with a dinner on the preceding evening.

All four seminars have been chaired by the same discussion leader addressing the seminar participants, asking questions and summarizing the responses. The discussion leader has been supported by a second project team member making sure that all key topics are covered, all necessary supplementary questions are asked and all participants are addressed. One or two members of the project team had written down the statements and eventually contributed to the progression of the discussion.

The seminar itself has been arranged as a relatively free process of discussion (focus group character). Participants have not been expected to give official presentations, but rather encouraged to contribute on the basis of their or their peers' experience and perspective.

Some days in advance, the participants had received a handout presenting the rationale of the projects as well as the key themes to be addressed at the seminar. At the beginning of each of the seminars a second handout has been distributed comprising the major findings of the former ERASMUS student survey. After a short oral presentation of the purpose of the seminar and findings of the survey, the seminar chair has encouraged the participants to share their own experience and the hearsay known to them rather than closely interpreting the survey findings. Subsequently, he has summarised common elements and differences between the statements made in order to encourage next rounds of reflection and interpretation.

The seminar has been divided into three thematic stages similar to the sequence of the questionnaires: (a) students' competences and work assignments, (b) transition to work, and (c) study provisions and conditions.

The seminars, thus, have been consistently parallel in the overall structure. However, as one might expect, they have differed in style and dynamics of ways issues have been addressed. They have varied in the time spent on various topics, among others the time spent on issues of study, competences, employment and work, they varied as regards the flow of communication, the degree convergence and divergence of views, and last but not least in the extent, to which the status quo has been addressed or recommendations for improvement have been made.

The results for each seminar are not presented in chronological order or following the structure of the agenda. Rather, ideas put forward and argu-

ments presented are sorted according to themes and summarised in order to present the main lines of thought.

4.2 Mechanical Engineering

The Field of Study

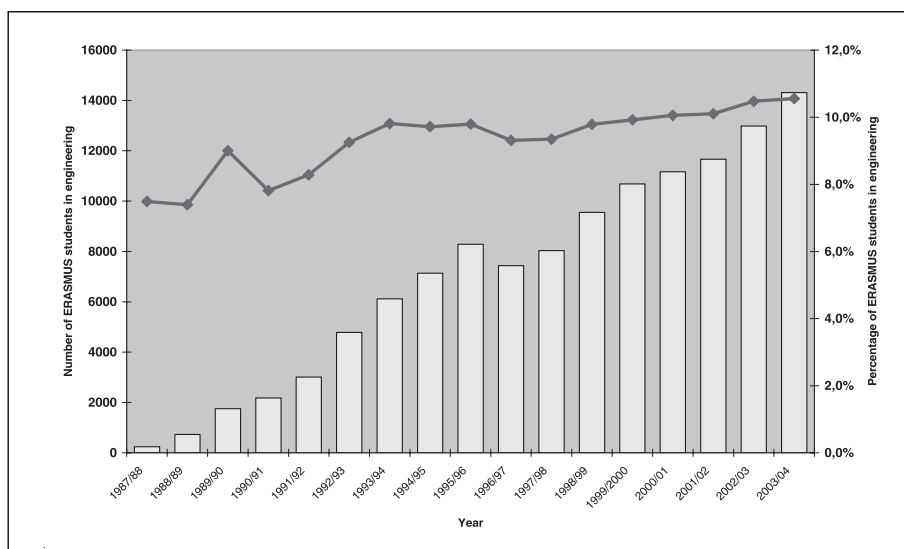
Mechanical engineering has been chosen as a professionally oriented field of study in the area of science and engineering. The mechanical engineering industry is viewed as one of the most important employment and export sectors in the European Union and is highly internationally oriented (EUBusiness Ltd 2006).

Globalisation, technical innovations and the need for cost efficiency challenge companies and study programmes of mechanical engineers. In addition to field-specific knowledge, mechanical engineers have to be able to think and work both interdisciplinary and internationally. The linkages to other areas such as information technology become more and more important, as the complexity of machines and equipments has increased. Companies of mechanical engineering have to develop their products in close cooperation with their customers, and they offer service and maintenance of their products to fulfil the requirements and needs of their customers. Mechanical engineers, therefore, do not only have to be specialists in their respective field, but also need social and communicative skills as well as knowledge of business management. They have to communicate closely with their customers and members of project teams who might have another disciplinary or cultural background in order to integrate different requirements and concepts successfully (Feller and Stahl 2005).

The courses of study in mechanical engineering comprise mathematics, physics, chemistry, construction engineering and electrical engineering as a basis and technical elements such as engineering mechanics, materials and thermodynamics. The importance of computerised simulations is increasing. Courses in business studies and computer sciences are often mandatory. In general, students are required to specialise during their course of study on a selected area of mechanical engineering (DIE ZEIT 2006).

In the wake of growth of the ERASMUS programme, the percentage of engineer students among all ERASMUS students remained quite stable at around ten percent. Students of engineering, thus, are well represented in the ERASMUS programme.

Figure 14: Total Number and Percentage of ERASMUS Engineering Students 1987 – 2004



Source: European Commission, SOCRATES programme,
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/erasmus/stat_en.html

High numbers of ERASMUS participants in the field of mechanical engineering are coming from institutions of higher education in France and Spain followed by Italy and Germany.

Results of the Survey

The student profile: As the survey of former ERASMUS students 2000/01 shows (cf. Chapter 3), the overwhelming majority of former mechanical engineering ERASMUS students are male (87%). The average age at the time of the survey (2005) is 28.

The period abroad: the mechanical engineering students have substantial experience abroad: they have spent about eight months abroad during their ERASMUS supported period in the academic year 2000/2001 and more than one third (39%) of them spent one or more additional periods abroad. Only a few students had been on work placements/internships abroad (2%).

Study conditions and provisions: The graduates from mechanical engineering report a relatively low satisfaction with assistance/guidance/advice provided by their home institution for the study period abroad. Only about half of the respondents have been satisfied with the assistance by their home institution regarding academic matters, administrative matters, information about the host institution and country, accommodation, and language training. But

they have not perceived significant problems during their study abroad. The single most frequent *academic problem* has been related to “obtaining academic credits and credit transfer” (12%); problems regarding financial matters (17%), accommodation (17%) and administrative matters (14%) have been more frequent.

Only about half of the respondents have had frequent contacts with domestic students during course related activities (lectures, seminars, working groups, etc.), extra-curricular activities (e.g. clubs, sport), or other leisure time.

The majority of the courses taken abroad by the mechanical engineering graduates are reported to have been academically equally demanding as courses which they would have taken at the home institution during the same period; 31 percent are reported to have been academically less demanding and 16 percent to be more demanding. As compared to other fields of study, the proportion of less demanding courses is relatively high.

Recognition: ECTS has been only introduced in less than half of the programmes at the time the respondents had been abroad: 41 percent as compared to a percentage of 54 percent to all former ERASMUS students.

The mechanical engineering graduates state a respectable, but not perfect extent of recognition: 79 percent of study achievements abroad have been recognised on average upon return. 41 percent report a prolongation of overall study duration due to the ERASMUS period, in many cases as long as the ERASMUS period (about eight months). These figures are similar to those for all ERASMUS students of that generation.

Competence profile: Former ERASMUS students consider themselves strong with respect to knowledge of other countries (economy, society, culture, etc.), foreign language proficiency, and intercultural understanding and competences (e.g. understanding and tolerance of international differences in culture). This is also the case for those in mechanical engineering.

These three aspects are the clear domain of former internationally mobile students, where they see their competences at the time of return to be better (or even “much” better) than those of non-mobile students. The vast majority also sees advantages regarding “preparation for future employment and work” (72% in mechanical engineering). In contrast, the “academic knowledge and skills (e.g. theories, methods, disciplinary knowledge, reflection, etc.)” are viewed by the majority as equal to non-mobile students (see Table 45).

Table 45: Former Mechanical Engineering ERASMUS Students' Assessment of Their Competences Upon Graduation as Compared to Non-Mobile Students (percent*)

| | Better (1+2) | Equal (3) | Worse (4+5) |
|--|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Knowledge of other countries (economy, society, culture, etc.) | 97 | 3 | 0 |
| Foreign language proficiency | 95 | 5 | 0 |
| Intercultural understanding and competences (e.g. understanding and tolerance of international differences in culture) | 94 | 5 | 1 |
| Preparation for future employment and work | 72 | 24 | 5 |
| Academic knowledge and skills (e.g. theories, methods, disciplinary knowledge, reflection, etc.) | 39 | 55 | 5 |

Question A21: At the time of return, how do you rate your knowledge and competences as compared to non-mobile students in the following areas?

* Responses on a scale from 1 to 5; 1 = "much better", 3 = "equal", 5 = "much worse"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

According to most dimensions listed in Table 46, about three quarters of former ERASMUS mechanical engineering students rate their competences at the time of graduation as high. This profile is surprisingly balanced. Mechanical engineering graduates view themselves relatively strong in analytical competences, and relatively weak in planning, co-ordinating and organising (compared to other former ERASMUS students).

In most areas, job requirements a few years later are more demanding than the competences acquired by former ERASMUS students at the time of graduation. As compared to the average of all former ERASMUS students, mechanical engineering graduates consider their jobs as highly demanding as regards foreign language proficiency and as not so demanding as regards power of concentration as well as applying rules and regulations. Job requirements and competences seem to be balanced as regards theoretical knowledge, loyalty and written communication. Finally, former ERASMUS students seem to have more often high foreign language skills than required on their job.

Table 46: Former Mechanical Engineering ERASMUS Students' Self-assessed Competences at Time of Graduation and Job Requirements a Few Years Later (percent*)

| | Competences at the time of graduation (1) | Job requirements about 2-3 years later (2) | Difference (1 - 2) (3) |
|--|--|---|------------------------------|
| Problem-solving ability | 88 | 95 | -7 |
| Adaptability | 87 | 81 | 6 |
| Field-specific theoretical knowledge | 85 | 74 | 11 |
| Analytical competences | 85 | 86 | -1 |
| Accuracy, attention to detail | 81 | 83 | -2 |
| Initiative | 76 | 92 | -16 |
| Getting personally involved | 76 | 82 | -6 |
| Field-specific knowledge of methods | 74 | 75 | -1 |
| Power of concentration | 74 | 77 | -3 |
| Written communication skill | 74 | 72 | 2 |
| Foreign language proficiency | 70 | 77 | -7 |
| Computer skills | 70 | 76 | -6 |
| Assertiveness, decisiveness, persistence | 69 | 83 | -14 |
| Loyalty, integrity | 68 | 69 | -1 |
| Planning, co-ordinating and organising | 61 | 86 | -25 |
| Applying rules and regulations | 55 | 59 | -4 |

Question B7: Please, state the extent to which you had the following competences at the time of graduation

Question F7: Please, state the extent to which the following competences are required in your current work

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

International professional mobility: A high proportion of former ERASMUS mechanical engineering students has been regularly employed abroad (21%) and has been sent abroad by their employers on work assignments (22%) during the first few years after graduation. Mechanical engineering graduates are clearly above average in both respects.

ERASMUS related work tasks: Mechanical engineering graduates are clearly more frequently assigned visible international work tasks than the average former ERASMUS students, e.g. "using the language of the ERASMUS host country in work-related activities":

- telephone conversation and face-to-face discussions are named by 49 percent of the mechanical engineering students as compared to 37 percent of all ERASMUS students;

- professional travel to foreign countries other than the ERASMUS host country by 50 percent versus 25 percent.

International competences are also important for the current work of a substantial number of ERASMUS graduates in mechanical engineering not active in visibly international jobs.

Further study: The VALERA survey confirms findings of prior studies that an enormously high proportion of former ERASMUS students continue to study after their first degree. In mechanical engineering, 37 percent of graduates take up another study or a PhD programme. Therefore, transition to employment is postponed for many of them.

Job search and transition period: Compared to the results of other studies of graduates in Europe, there are no indications that former ERASMUS students are different from others in terms of start of job search, period of job search, number of employers contacted, etc. Only three percent of the mechanical engineering graduates were employed part-time on their first job, compared to 17 percent of all former ERASMUS students. Their employment conditions were hence comparatively good. But, short-term contracts are more widespread on their first job, even though still less than among all former ERASMUS students (mechanical engineering 43% vs. 55%).

Perceived recruitment criteria: Former ERASMUS students, like other students, are primarily selected by employers according to both their academic knowledge and their personality. Their foreign language proficiency (60%) and their experiences abroad in general (63%) played a role for more than half of the former ERASMUS students in mechanical engineering. Almost half of them report additionally that the “ERASMUS study abroad period” has been an important criterion in the recruitment process as compared to 36 percent of all former ERASMUS students.

Area of employment: Employment in higher education, research and development is very high among former ERASMUS students from mechanical engineering (32%; compared to 16% total). Four out of five (82%) work in an organisation with an international scope. This is clearly more frequent than among all former ERASMUS students (51%).

Retrospective assessment of the ERASMUS study abroad period: The value of the ERASMUS study abroad is substantially more positively assessed as regards personality development, knowledge, reflection, etc. than as regards career and income. Almost all former mechanical engineering ERASMUS students (94%) report that the period has been worthwhile for maturity and personal development. Additionally, more than half state that the study abroad was worthwhile regarding:

- knowledge and understanding of the host country (89%),
- foreign language proficiency (88%),

- new ways of thinking and reflection (84%),
- enhancement of academic and professional knowledge (64%),
- career prospects (61%), and
- 30 percent believe that study abroad had a positive impact on the income level.

Results of the Seminar

Overall, the participants agreed that one should be *cautious not to overrate the impact of study abroad in the framework of ERASMUS*. Evidence of professional success of former graduate students does not suffice, because a comparison with non-mobile students would be needed. Other formerly mobile students might be equally successful, and ERASMUS students are a somewhat select group. Most participants believe that ERASMUS students have been on average superior students already before their stay abroad.

Differences by country are noted in this respect. Students in some countries are hardly interested in study abroad. As a consequence, participation in ERASMUS is hardly selective at all (e.g. United Kingdom). In contrast, study abroad is highly desired, highly selected and believed to boost subsequent professional careers for students from Central and Eastern European countries.

Also, a certain extent of *social selection* is believed to take place normally. Students opting for ERASMUS can afford to have additional expenses and possibly a prolongation of their study. Additionally, some ERASMUS students have been already experienced internationally before they studied abroad.

One university representative has presented an interesting typology of students (see below). According to this typology, on the one hand, there are students not in need of additional motivation or guidance at all and, on the other hand, there are students who have to be motivated and who expect a full service package.

- *Globetrotter*: Self-confident, autonomous; not in need of support; studies and works everywhere.
- *Backpacker*: Curious; short-visit, spontaneous decision to take opportunities; home-base oriented; requires data on opportunities.
- *Holidayer*: Considers study time abroad as holidays; no professional attitude.
- *Programme rider*: Long-term orientation; requires an elaborated and accepted study programme.
- Full package rider: Hesitating; requires full organised service.
- *Forced international student*: No original international orientation; focus on fulfilling rules.

The participants assess the ERASMUS study period abroad consistently as positive. With regard to competence enhancement, an impact of ERASMUS

is mainly seen in the area of so-called “*soft-skills*” and *personality development*. A temporary study period seems to be an asset for students in engineering because they are likely to have a more mature personality, have acquired stronger socio-communicative skills and have improved their foreign language proficiency. This holds true for most students having studied for a period abroad and not just for those who studied abroad under specifically good and suitable conditions. Interestingly, some participants even support the idea that facing complicated bureaucracies abroad – to name an adversary example – will turn out to be a positive challenge for improving one’s abilities. On that basis one might even suggest that a too well organised service package for students would limit the positive impact of “finding one’s way/getting along”. One participant points out, that employers prefer self-organised study programmes because they require high self-motivation, planning capacity and problem-solving ability.

Two possible drawbacks are pointed out: First, if students spend most of the time abroad together with home country fellows, opportunities of gaining international/intercultural competences are lost. Therefore, host institutions should be active in taking care that students cooperate and spend their extracurricular activities with persons from the host country and third countries. Second, the language of instruction obviously is crucial for the linguistic value of study abroad. Study programmes offered in English are seen as important to attract students, but they minimise the chance of learning another European language.

Most participants note as well an improvement of *field-specific knowledge*. Even though mechanical engineering is a field strongly shaped by universal knowledge, there are country-specific elements as well: different professional cultures of engineering as regards problem-solving styles, links between technological and managerial tasks, etc. Students can gain from a temporary study abroad academically by:

- studying at a partner institution of another country where study provisions are academically more demanding in general or in some areas than at the home institution,
- getting exposed to different styles of academic problem-solving, links between technological and managerial task settings and other different styles of engineering knowledge and work,
- using this period for strengthening their own profile in an area in which the host institution has to offer more than the home institution.

According to some voices of participants, students planning to work in the area of service and maintenance are recommended to study in the United Kingdom. In contrast, theoretically oriented students should use their study abroad stay to get accustomed to the high level of mathematics taught at French engineering schools. Obviously, guidance regarding the selection of the host institution is very important.

The overall positive assessment of ERASMUS continues in the discussion about *transition to work and employment prospects of former ERASMUS students*. Employers of mechanical engineers seem to view a study period abroad as favourable in principle, but by no means as a clear indication that the individual applicant is superior. This favourable eye on former ERASMUS students varies by type and activity of the former ERASMUS student during his or her stay abroad. Some students might have considered the study abroad period as extended holidays or a time for adventure, some might have faced difficulties to adapt and to understand, some might have taken courses which do not fit to their profile or are unsuitable to substitute courses at their home institution. Thus, graduates with a temporary study abroad experience “*have a foot in the door*” of the job search and recruitment process but employers tend to inquire specifically what this experience has meant for the individual candidate.

In contrast, the participants agree generally that the *competence enhancement in socio-communicative skills, intercultural abilities and problem-solving abilities is highly valued by employers*. Most employers appreciate these competences, because abilities to work in teams and adaptability or openness to other persons strengthened by international experiences are useful in many work settings.

Moreover, most engineering firms nowadays are embedded in an *international environment*, not merely the globally active and multinational firms: acquiring knowledge from different countries, planning products for international markets or improving contacts with foreign customers has become so much a general phenomenon that inter-cultural experience and understanding is expected from an increasing number of engineers.

Yet, the participants also share the view that temporary study abroad cannot be expected to put mechanical engineers automatically on a career ladder towards leading positions in their company. Certainly, *former ERASMUS students can expect to fare more successfully than in an average career*. They are likely to have an edge in interesting domains of specialisation, problem-solving abilities, socio-communicative skills, language proficiency, and international understanding in order to develop a somewhat better career than other graduates not having this experience. This holds true for former ERASMUS students of most Western European countries. The impact is even stronger for many of those from Central and Eastern European countries and from some Southern European countries.

In the long run, former ERASMUS students in the field of mechanical engineering seem to be *more open for an international career*. The survey results have shown that they are more likely to seek for employment in other countries and to be sent by their employers to extended periods of work to other countries than the average former ERASMUS students (in other fields of study). Temporary study in another country obviously is very

valuable for these professionally mobile graduates, but there are no indications that there is a clear gap between the professional value of ERASMUS study between those graduates opting for international careers and assignments and those active in the home country and being in the mainstream of domestic work assignment. On the other hand, mobility seems to spread the feelings of being “rootless” as well as having problems of reintegration.

At several points during the discussion, participants point out that mechanical engineering clearly is a field of study in which the *selection of the courses taken abroad* – their theme and quality – *is crucial for the academic value of temporary study abroad*. Whereas in many other fields most choices of courses might turn out to be beneficial, the actual study programme during the ERASMUS period in another country is viewed as critical in mechanical engineering:

- Many thematic areas are considered indispensable components of study. Therefore, the risk of not getting recognition is high, if the courses taken abroad do not match the home programme.
- Non-recognition and prolongation is often more harmful for graduate careers of engineers than those from other fields of study.
- Also, establishing and sharpening a specific profile of knowledge through temporary study at another institution of higher education tends to require a careful design of the study period abroad.

Therefore, *close cooperation between the teaching staff at the home and host institution* is viewed as essential. This can be achieved more successfully if the number of partner institutions for student exchange is kept small. Here, representatives of successful international programmes emphasise that they have decided to reduce their number of partners to secure a high-quality exchange programme.

Furthermore, the *importance of teaching mobility for the success of student mobility* is underscored. The experiences abroad and the knowledge of the host higher education and of the colleagues there help both institutions in the recognition process. Teachers having been abroad have a first hand knowledge of the quality and practices of the host institution and are more willing to accept different teaching methods and contents. The participants of the seminar clearly express the view that the current situation of recognition and coordination of course programmes is not satisfactory in many cases. Considerable improvement has to be striven for.

In order to ensure recognition upon return of the achievements during the ERASMUS period, *a firmer integration of the study abroad programme into the curriculum* as well as *a close interaction with partner institutions* are advocated by the participants. Also good counselling and guidance play an important role in the preparatory phase.

Finally, the *Bologna Process* is seen as leading to additional problems in some respects, but generally provides a good opportunity to improve curricular design and advice for individual students in order to increase the academic value and thus the professional impact of study abroad. One participant states that stronger efforts are needed to identify courses abroad which could be recognised upon return, because many universities decided to structure the curricula of Bachelor programmes more tightly.

4.3 Business Studies

The Field of Study

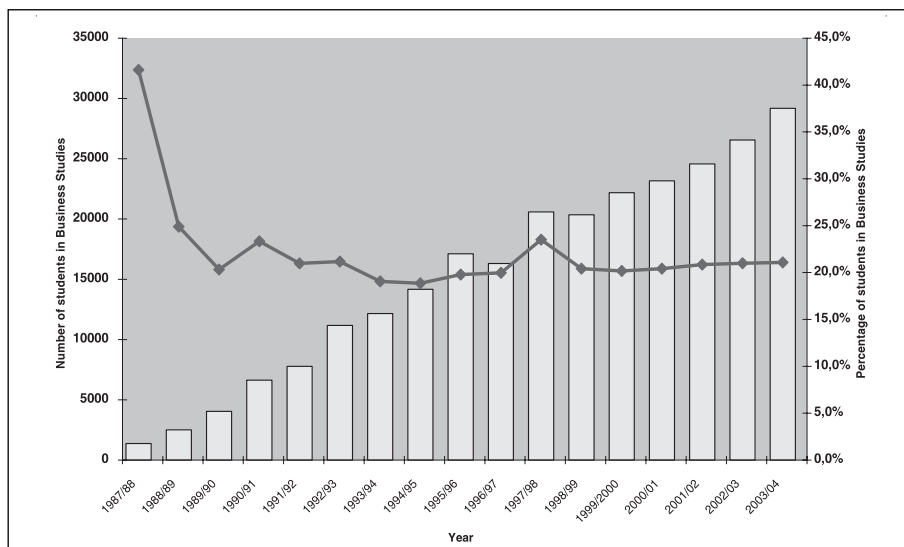
Business studies has been chosen as a professionally oriented field in the area of social sciences. Along with foreign language, it is the field with the highest number or the second highest number respectively of ERASMUS students from the start until now.

“Business studies” is an umbrella term for a wide range of study programmes and specialisations in the field of business, economy and management. The curricula vary by specialisation and focus of each study programme. As a rule, however, they comprise general basic theories and models of business administration and economics, management subjects as well as law, mathematics and statistics. Additional subjects can be: psychology, technical subjects, education, foreign languages, communication, sociology or political sciences. Currently, a growing number of business studies programmes offer also courses teaching so-called soft skills like intercultural communication, team work, presentation techniques and conflict management (DIE ZEIT 2006).

Business studies are a comparatively young field of study at universities covering a broad knowledge about the steering, controlling and management of organisations. By their nature, business studies are relatively strongly oriented to the demands of the labour market. In particular, the growing forces of internationalisation and globalisation have led to an increased number of international business programmes in response to a growing demand of internationally trained graduates.

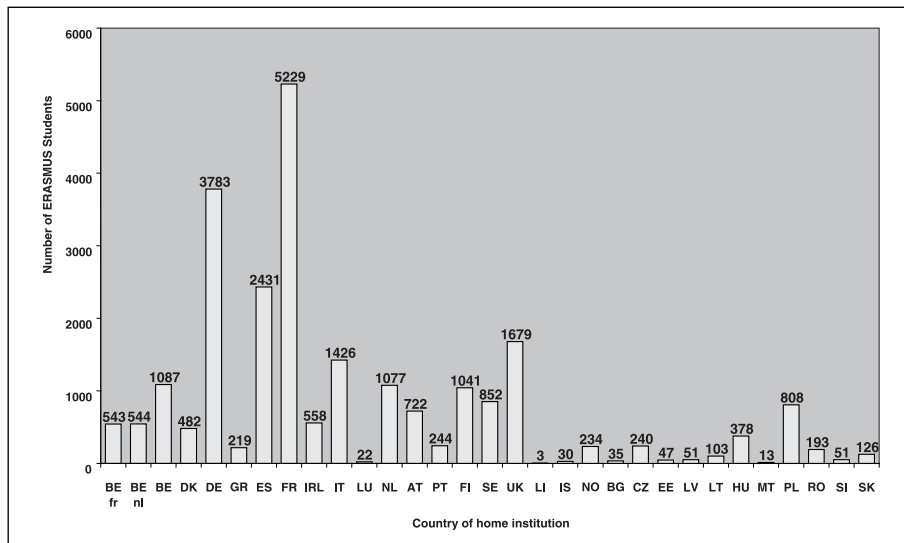
Figure 16 shows the number of outgoing ERASMUS students in the field of business studies distributed over all European countries in the academic year 2000/01. Most students have come from institutions in France, Spain, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Surprisingly high are the numbers of students from institutions in Finland.

Figure 15: Total Number and Percentage of ERASMUS Business Studies Students 1987 – 2004



Source: European Commission, SOCRATES programme,
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/erasmus/stat_en.html

Figure 16: Total Number of ERASMUS Students – Business Studies by Country of Home Institution 2000/01



Source: European Commission, SOCRATES programme,
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/erasmus/stat_en.html

Results of the Survey

The student profile: The majority of former business studies of ERASMUS students are female (53%). The average age at the time of the survey (2005) is 29.

The period abroad: The business studies students have had substantial experience abroad: they have spent about seven months abroad during their ERASMUS supported period in the academic year 2000/2001, and more than one third (44%) have spent one or more additional periods abroad, altogether (including the ERASMUS stay) on average 10.7 months. Compared to the other fields of study, relatively few business studies graduates had been on work placements/internships abroad (1%; all fields: 6%).

Study conditions and provisions: The graduates state a relatively low satisfaction with assistance/guidance/advice provided by their home institution for the study period abroad. Only about half have been satisfied with the assistance of their home institution regarding academic matters, administrative matters and with information about the host institution and country. 43 percent have been satisfied with accommodation and 48 percent with language training.

But the graduates do not report major problems during their study abroad more frequently than those from other fields of study. The single most frequent *academic problem* is related to “obtaining academic credits and credit transfer” (18%). In addition, problems are named regarding financial matters (19%), accommodation (25%) and administrative matters (17%).

More than half of the respondents have had frequent contacts with domestic students during course-related activities.

43 percent of the courses taken abroad by the business studies graduates are viewed to be academically equally demanding as courses which they would have taken at the home institution during the same period; 32 percent are reported to be academically less demanding and 22 percent to be more demanding.

Recognition: ECTS has been introduced in the majority of business studies programmes around the year 2000: 67 percent report application of ECTS at the host institution as compared to 54 percent among all ERASMUS students.

The business studies graduates report a respectable extent of recognition: 78 percent of study achievements abroad have been recognised on average upon return. Less than 50 percent of the former ERASMUS students in Business studies have faced a prolongation of the overall study duration due to the ERASMUS period.

Competence profile: Former ERASMUS students seem to have a unique self-image of competences with respect to

- knowledge of other countries (economy, society, culture, etc.),
- foreign language proficiency, and
- intercultural understanding and competences (e.g. understanding and tolerance of international differences in culture).

Also, former ERASMUS students in business studies perceive their competences in these domains at the time of return to be better than those of non-mobile students. Most see also advantages regarding “preparation for future employment and work” (69%), while the area of academic competences seems to be ambivalent: while 45 percent of former business studies ERASMUS students report to have higher “academic knowledge and skills”, an equal proportion believes to have lower academic competences than non-mobile students (see Table 47).

Table 47: Former Business Studies ERASMUS Students’ Assessment of Their Competences Upon Graduation as Compared to Non-Mobile Students (percent*)

| | Better (1+2) | Equal (3) | Worse (4+5) |
|--|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Knowledge of other countries (economy, society, culture, etc.) | 96 | 2 | 3 |
| Foreign language proficiency | 94 | 2 | 4 |
| Intercultural understanding and competences (e.g. understanding and tolerance of international differences in culture) | 92 | 1 | 7 |
| Preparation for future employment and work | 69 | 5 | 26 |
| Academic knowledge and skills (e.g. theories, methods, disciplinary knowledge, reflection, etc.) | 45 | 9 | 46 |

Question A21: At the time of return, how do you rate your knowledge and competences as compared to non-mobile students in the following areas?

* Responses on a scale from 1 = “much better”, to 5 = “much worse”

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

According to most dimensions listed in Table 48 about three quarters of former ERASMUS students rate their competences as high. This profile is surprisingly balanced. Business studies graduates do not have a distinctive competence profile – their competences are similar to the average of former ERASMUS graduates.

Table 48: Former Business Studies ERASMUS Students' Self-assessed Competences at Time of Graduation and Job Requirements a Few Years Later (percent*)

| | Competences at the time of graduation (1) | Job requirements about 2-3 years later (2) | Difference (1 - 2) (3) |
|--|--|---|------------------------------|
| Adaptability | 83 | 80 | 3 |
| Foreign language proficiency | 82 | 64 | 18 |
| Analytical competences | 77 | 88 | -11 |
| Problem-solving ability | 77 | 94 | -17 |
| Written communication skill | 77 | 76 | 1 |
| Planning, co-ordinating and organising | 76 | 85 | -9 |
| Field-specific theoretical knowledge | 75 | 66 | 9 |
| Power of concentration | 75 | 85 | -10 |
| Getting personally involved | 74 | 82 | -8 |
| Accuracy, attention to detail | 73 | 87 | -14 |
| Loyalty, integrity | 72 | 74 | -2 |
| Assertiveness, decisiveness, persistence | 71 | 86 | -15 |
| Initiative | 69 | 90 | -21 |
| Computer skills | 64 | 80 | -16 |
| Field-specific knowledge of methods | 61 | 67 | -6 |

Question B7: Please, state the extent to which you had the following competences at the time of graduation.

Question F7: Please, state the extent to which the following competences are required in your current work.

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

In most areas, job requirements are more demanding than the competences acquired by former ERASMUS students at the time of graduation. As compared to the average of all former ERASMUS students, business studies graduates consider their jobs less demanding as regards field-specific theoretical knowledge and knowledge of methods. As regards "initiative", "problem-solving ability", "computer skills", "assertiveness, decisiveness, persistence", and "accuracy, attention to detail" business studies graduates report higher job requirements than their competences at the time of graduation. In contrast, they have often higher foreign language skills than required by their job.

International mobility: Some former business studies ERASMUS students have been or are already regularly employed abroad (20%) during the first

years of employment. Almost as many of them are sent abroad by their employers on work assignments (17%).

ERASMUS related work tasks: Business studies graduates are not more frequently assigned visible international work tasks than the average former ERASMUS students, e.g.

- using the language of the ERASMUS host country in work-related activities (business studies students: 35%, all ERASMUS students: 37%);
- professional travel to foreign countries other than the ERASMUS host country (31% vs. 25%).

International competences are also important for the current work of a substantial number of ERASMUS graduates not active in visibly international jobs. Among those in business studies, 52 percent report that professional knowledge of other countries is “important” for doing the current work (compared to 46% of all former ERASMUS students).

Job search and transition period: Compared to results of other studies of graduates in Europe, there are no indications that former ERASMUS students are different from others in terms of start of job search, period of job search, number of employers contacted, etc. But only ten percent of the business studies graduates have been employed part-time on their first job, compared to 17 percent of all former ERASMUS students. Short-term contracts as well are less in business studies (40%) as on average of all former ERASMUS students (54%).

Perceived recruitment criteria: Former ERASMUS students, like other students, are primarily selected by employers according to both their academic knowledge and their personality. Their foreign language proficiency, their experiences abroad in general and specifically the ERASMUS supported study abroad period are named more often as an important criteria in the recruitment process by former students in business studies than by all former ERASMUS students.

Area of employment: Employment is most frequent in financial intermediation (e.g. banking, insurance) and in legal occupations, accounting, book-keeping, auditing, and business consultancy. 66 percent of former ERASMUS business studies students work in an organisation with an international scope as compared to 51 percent of all former ERASMUS students.

Retrospective assessment of the ERASMUS study abroad period: The value of the ERASMUS study abroad is substantially more positively assessed as regards personality development, knowledge, reflection, etc. than as regards career and income. Almost all former business studies ERASMUS students (96%) report that the period has been worthwhile for maturity and personal development. Additionally more than half of the former business studies ERASMUS students state that the study abroad has been worthwhile regarding:

- knowledge and understanding of the host country (88%),
- foreign language proficiency (89%),
- new ways of thinking and reflection (84%),
- enhancement of academic and professional knowledge (61%), and
- career prospects (63%).

Furthermore, 25 percent believe that study abroad has had a positive impact on the income level.

Overall, the participants strongly underscore the importance of an ERASMUS study period abroad for the personality development of graduates. In contrast to the other fields of study addressed in the seminars, experts of business studies emphasise the distinction between participation in the ERASMUS programme and *self-organisation* of a study period abroad. The majority of participants are convinced that self-organised study periods abroad are more highly valued by employers, because students have to be more active as far as organisation, motivation and problem-solving are concerned. Internships abroad are valued highly by employers as well. Accordingly, ERASMUS should not offer a too-well organised service-package for mobile students. Efforts should be made, however, to contribute to well-informed decisions. In their views, also dropping-out of the programme (i.e. early return home) is not necessarily a failure.

In this context, the term “*personality development*” is used to cover several competences and attitudes. First, students are expected to gain in intercultural awareness. They are more sensitive to cultural differences and aware of their own culture. Additionally, the higher adaptability of former ERASMUS students to new environments, new teaching methods and new cultures is emphasised. Overall, former ERASMUS students are described as more flexible, more innovative and more productive in teamwork processes.

As necessary pre-condition for intercultural learning, adaptability and tolerance, the participants underscore the *importance of contacts to local students*. If students spend most of the time abroad together with home country students, opportunities of gaining international/intercultural competences are lost. The host institutions need to foster intercultural interaction. Teachers and ERASMUS coordinators should be active in taking care that students cooperate in their study activities and spend their extracurricular activities with persons from the host country and third countries.

Business studies is a field with a more or less general knowledge strongly influenced by the “American School” adapted to different fields and cultures. A study period abroad can foster the *field-specific knowledge* by learning about varying approaches, markets and processes in different countries. Participants of the seminar underscore the value of contrasting experiences, for example different accounting standards and business laws. They also view the experience of different teaching methods as valuable. Students not

accustomed to teamwork and case studies experience new learning styles. The experts argue that the students often need time to adapt but the medium and long term effects are very positive.

The *academic learning outcomes* seem to be affected by the language of instruction. If the students are more versatile in the language of instruction, the academic value of the study period abroad is higher.

Competences typically fostered by study periods abroad could be viewed in the past as “add-on” competences of a minority. In a globalising world, however, almost all business activities are international, and these *competences gradually become a “must”*. This also explains that internationally versatile students cannot expect high-flying careers as a rule. Rather, temporary study abroad can only be expected to be a “door-opener” in the job search and recruitment process. Having studied abroad is helpful to be considered. In Eastern and Central Europe, this often plays a substantial role in the selection among candidates. In Western Europe, however, it is not anymore an exceptional option.

International mobility plays an important role in the first stage of screening the applicants because formerly mobile students are assumed to be more open, tolerant, ambitious, goal oriented, and engaged in their work. Furthermore, employers expect them to be good team workers and to be able to work in an international environment. As already stated, business today is international; companies serve several national markets, products are adapted to the national cultures and demands. The company itself may have production lines in several countries. Employees need to get along in this international environment. Tolerance, intercultural competences and foreign language proficiency are basic requirements for a career.

Graduates from business studies are assumed to have a good methodological knowledge rather than an in-depth subject-matter knowledge. Business studies are a field with a *medium degree of professional emphasis*. Higher education institutions are expected to foster some basic knowledge in different areas as well as the tools and methods to adapt to changing working environments and working tasks. The employing organisation is expected to take care of the training for the specific work task and the specific business sector.

Overall, the professional value of ERASMUS mobility is viewed as *having in impact predominantly on the first years of the career*. The participants warn against overrating the long-term impacts. Job experience and job performance over the years become increasingly stronger factors in determining the graduates' careers. International mobility, though, *has a long-term career impact in terms of improving networks*. ERASMUS students develop networks in their host country but also with other internationally mobile students.

Prolongation of study due to non-recognition of credits is not viewed as having a negative impact on the transition to work, because a moderate pro-

longation does not seem to be detrimental. Employers rather are likely to explore how the study abroad had been spent usefully.

As study abroad is viewed as a period of learning which could lead to an enhancement of professionally relevant experiences in many ways, proposals for improvements do not address any curricular details but rather call for *more transparency and better information*. The students should be prepared to act as “well-informed” and responsible individuals in deciding about their ERASMUS stay and during the experience itself. Good learning agreements are viewed to depend too strongly on specific conditions and persons. For example, a teacher reports that the partner institution does not accept team presentations as exams. As a consequence, ERASMUS students might be caught in the middle between the requirements of both institutions. Efforts should be made to foster trust between institutions based on better information, thus leaving ample choices for ERASMUS students to make individual strategic decisions how to use the study period in a suitable way.

In general, the participants of the seminar express reservations against higher regulations and homogenisation of study programmes. They advocate a *liberal market orientation* of study abroad: high information level, high degree of transparency and service orientation by all partners involved. The participants criticise that many institutions have too many partners with a low number of exchange students each. A high quantity of institutions makes coordination and exchange of information more complicated.

Examples of a “*dark side of mobility*” are mentioned by the participants as well. Living a short period in another country with a culture very different to one’s own can have the negative effect of confirming prejudices and stereotypes. Also, if students are staying for a longer period abroad, they may lose their contacts at home. Reintegration problems may occur when returning to the home country and the home institution.

The *ERASMUS programme* itself was criticised as being *too standardised*. The Bologna process and growing internationalisation of study programmes will lead to new modes of mobility demanding higher flexibility in the programme structure. Many students will do their Bachelor degree in one country and their (full) Master degree in another country. Tuition fees are being introduced in many European countries. ERASMUS should enable the students to do either their master or PhD degree abroad.

4.4 Sociology

The Field of Study

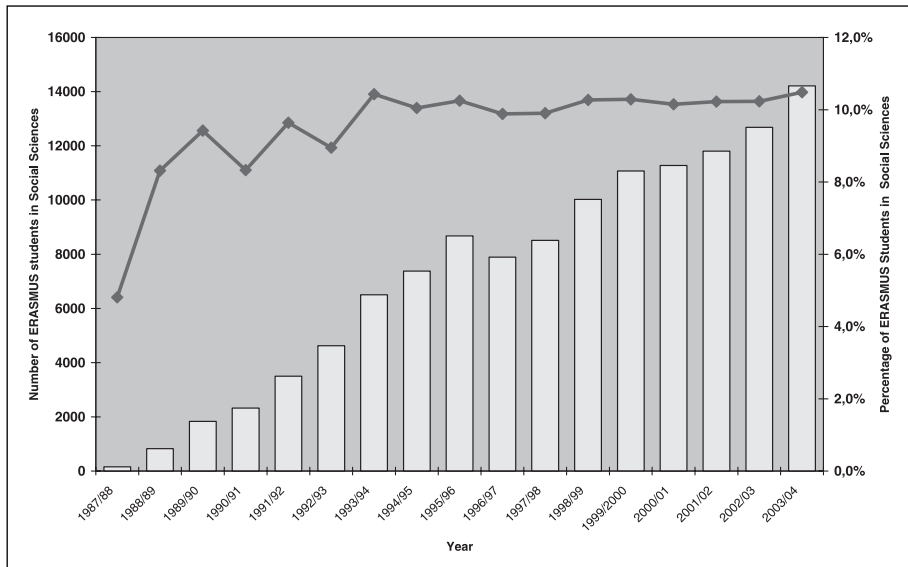
Sociology has been chosen for this study as an academically oriented field in the area of humanities and social sciences. Academic research in the field of sociology, like many other fields in social sciences, has adopted a compara-

tive approach and an increasingly international scope in recent years. As a result, in addition to field specific knowledge, strong language skills and the ability to analyse critically, young sociologists are required to have cross-cultural and interdisciplinary skills. Many young sociologists take up jobs not closely linked to the field since sociology does not lead to a major domain.

European integration is one of the main causes for an increasing number of sociologists working outside their home country or in cooperation with peers from other countries. Sociology programmes vary substantially across countries as far as emphasis on theory, methods and thematic areas of analysis is concerned. Sociology programmes often include courses of neighbouring disciplines, e.g. communication science, political science, economics, and cultural studies. This is expected to widen their scope both for further research tasks and practical professional tasks. Moreover, knowledge of foreign languages, in particular English, is an asset for young sociologists, both for studying relevant research literature and for international communication.

The proportion of students in social sciences among all ERASMUS students has been small during the first years after the inauguration of the ERASMUS programme. After some years, it has reached the level of ten percent and has remained relatively constant thereafter (see Figure 17). Unfortunately, we do not have exact numbers for the field of sociology.

Figure 17: Total Number and Percentage of ERASMUS Social Science Students 1987 – 2004



Source: European Commission, SOCRATES programme,
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/erasmus/stat_en.html

The highest absolute numbers of students in social sciences participating in ERASMUS can be found in Spain, followed by Italy, Germany and France. Also, a relative high number of ERASMUS students in social sciences come from the Netherlands.

Results of the Survey

The student profile: The vast majority of former sociology ERASMUS students are female (74%). The average age at the time of the survey (2005) was 28.

The period abroad: The sociology students have spent about six months abroad during their ERASMUS supported period in the academic year 2000/2001, and more than one third (35%) have had one or more additional periods abroad. Compared to the other fields of study, many sociology graduates have been on work placements/internships abroad (8% as compared to 6%).

Study provisions and conditions: The graduates state a relatively low satisfaction with assistance/guidance/advice provided by their home institution for the study period abroad. Only about half of the sociology respondents have been satisfied with the assistance of their home institution regarding academic matters, administrative matters and with information about the host institution and country. 33 percent have been satisfied with accommodation and 27 percent with language training as compared to 44 percent of all former ERASMUS students.

But the sociology graduates do not report significant problems during their study abroad. The single most frequent *academic problem* has been that of “obtaining academic credits and credit transfer” (16%); more frequently problems are named regarding financial matters (36%), accommodation (27%) and administrative matters (22%).

Recognition: ECTS has been introduced in sociology as often as on average across all fields (54%). The sociology graduates, however, report a relatively low level of recognition: only 63 percent of study achievements abroad have been recognised on average upon return (as compared to 74% for all students). 40 percent, slightly more than average, report a prolongation of overall study duration due to the ERASMUS period.

Competence profile: As in other fields former sociology ERASMUS students believe to be highly competent as regards

- knowledge of other countries (economy, society, culture, etc.),
- foreign language proficiency, and
- intercultural understanding and competences (e.g. understanding and tolerance of international differences in culture).

As Table 49 shows, the majority sees also advantages regarding “preparation for future employment and work” (60%), while the area of academic

competences seem to be ambivalent: while 41 percent of former ERASMUS students in sociology report to have better “academic knowledge and skills”, 52 percent perceive the academic competences to be worse than those of non-mobile students.

Table 49: Former Sociology ERASMUS Students’ Assessment of Their Competences Upon Graduation as Compared to Non-Mobile Students (percent*)

| | Better (1+2) | Equal (3) | Worse (4+5) |
|--|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Knowledge of other countries (economy, society, culture, etc.) | 92 | 0 | 8 |
| Foreign language proficiency | 97 | 0 | 3 |
| Intercultural understanding and competences (e.g. understanding and tolerance of international differences in culture) | 94 | 0 | 6 |
| Preparation for future employment and work | 60 | 0 | 40 |
| Academic knowledge and skills (e.g. theories, methods, disciplinary knowledge, reflection, etc.) | 41 | 6 | 52 |

Question A21: At the time of return, how do you rate your knowledge and competences as compared to non-mobile students in the following areas?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = “much better” to 5 = “much worse”

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

According to most dimensions listed in Table 50, about three quarters of former ERASMUS students rate their competences as high. This profile is surprisingly balanced. Compared with the average ERASMUS graduate, sociology graduates view themselves as strong as regards their written communication skills, adaptability and analytical competences.

Table 50: Former Sociology ERASMUS Students' Self-assessed Competences at Time of Graduation and Job Requirements a Few Years Later (percent*)

| | Competences at the time of graduation (1) | Job requirements about 2-3 years later (2) | Difference (1 - 2) (3) |
|--|--|---|------------------------------|
| Written communication skill | 89 | 87 | 2 |
| Adaptability | 84 | 89 | -5 |
| Analytical competences | 82 | 89 | -7 |
| Planning, co-ordinating and organising | 77 | 91 | -14 |
| Getting personally involved | 77 | 89 | -12 |
| Foreign language proficiency | 74 | 51 | 23 |
| Accuracy, attention to detail | 73 | 83 | -10 |
| Field-specific theoretical knowledge | 72 | 81 | -9 |
| Problem-solving ability | 71 | 94 | -23 |
| Power of concentration | 71 | 89 | -18 |
| Loyalty, integrity | 70 | 72 | -2 |
| Assertiveness, decisiveness, persistence | 68 | 87 | -19 |
| Initiative | 66 | 91 | -25 |
| Applying rules and regulations | 66 | 66 | 0 |
| Field-specific knowledge of methods | 64 | 85 | -21 |
| Computer skills | 60 | 81 | -21 |

Question B7: Please, state the extent to which you had the following competences at the time of graduation.

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Question F7: Please, state the extent to which the following competences are required in your current work.

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

In most areas, job requirements are more demanding than the competences acquired by former ERASMUS students at the time of graduation. As compared to the average of all former ERASMUS students, sociology graduates consider their jobs more demanding as regards written communication skills, getting personally involved and field-specific knowledge of methods. In addition, they consider themselves to be fully prepared as regards initiative, problem-solving ability, computer skills, field-specific knowledge of methods, assertiveness, decisiveness, and persistence. In contrast, former ERASMUS students in sociology have more often higher foreign language skills than actually required on their job.

International mobility: During the first years of employment, few former sociology ERASMUS students have been regularly employed abroad (7% as compared to 17% of all ERASMUS students) or have been sent abroad by their employers on work assignments (7% vs. 12%).

ERASMUS related work tasks: Sociology graduates are also less frequently assigned to visibly international work tasks than the average former ERASMUS students, e.g. frequent use of the language of the ERASMUS host country.

Job search and transition period: Compared to other studies of graduates in Europe, there are no indications that former ERASMUS students are different from others in terms of start of job search, period of job search, number of employers contacted, etc. As regards part-time employment (19% vs. 17%) and short-term contracts (58% vs. 54%), sociology graduates hardly differ from the average of all former ERASMUS students.

Perceived recruitment criteria: Former ERASMUS students, as other students, are primarily selected by employers according to both their academic knowledge and their personality. Their foreign language proficiency played a role for more than half of the former ERASMUS students. More sociology graduates than the average of former ERASMUS students believe that the ERASMUS study abroad period has been an important criterion in the recruitment process (42% vs. 36%).

Area of employment: Employment in social work (16%), research and development (16%) and in higher education (11%) are most frequent for former ERASMUS students from sociology. Only 31 percent of former ERASMUS students in sociology work in an organisation with an international scope (as compared to 51% of the average of all former ERASMUS students).

Retrospective assessment of the ERASMUS study abroad period: The value of the ERASMUS study abroad is substantially more positively assessed as regards personality development, knowledge, reflection, etc. than as regards career and income. Almost all former ERASMUS students in sociology (96%) report that the period has been worthwhile for maturity and personal development. Additionally, more than half of the former sociology ERASMUS students state that the study abroad was worthwhile regarding:

- knowledge and understanding of the host country (91%),
- foreign language proficiency (93%),
- new ways of thinking and reflection (86%),
- enhancement of academic and professional knowledge (60%), and
- career prospects (47%).

Only ten percent (as compared to 20% of all former ERASMUS students) believe that the study abroad was worthwhile regarding income/salary.

Results of the Seminar

The experts invited, as one might expect from representatives of a field of study specialised in analysing the causes and consequences of social behaviour, address the key issues of the seminar in a highly analytic and differentiated way. They hardly agree on any general statement about the professional value of ERASMUS study for students of sociology, but rather refer to *variety of conditions*.

First, the participants underscore that *students in sociology participating in ERASMUS are in various respects a select group*. The university is likely to select the academically best students, if the number of applicants surpasses the number of ERASMUS places available. A temporary study abroad is chosen by students who can afford to cover some of the amount of additional costs abroad. The proportion of ERASMUS students coming from higher socio-economic background is higher than among all students of sociology. Therefore, an above-average career of sociologists participating in ERASMUS cannot be attributed solely to the ERASMUS period in another European country. Moreover, participants point out that the percentage of women among students of sociology going abroad in the framework of ERASMUS is quite high.

Second, reference is made to the *stage of study* chosen for a period in another country. If students go abroad in an early stage of study, one can expect a major impact on the personality development. At later stages of study, academic and professional knowledge is more likely to be enhanced by international experience.

Third, the professional value of temporary study in another country for students of sociology has to be viewed, as the participants point out, in the framework of the *specific character of sociology as a field of study*. During the initial years of study, students get to know a broad range of theories and methods as well as many thematic areas of sociological inquiry. In subsequent years, opportunities of specialisation are provided for a limited thematic area each. A clear divide between a broad first phase and specialised subsequent phases is even more pronounced in a Bachelor-Master programme structure than in the traditionally long university programmes.

Fourth, as already pointed out, neither this early phase of laying the foundation nor the subsequent stage or stages of specialisation are geared to certain professions in the field of sociology. *Transition to employment*, thus, is a *highly individualised process* that requires enormous initiative on the part of all students. As the process of transition is complex and in a substantial number of cases protracted and might include phases of inappropriate employment during the search period, it is not easy to trace the impact of ERASMUS on the transition to employment and the early career.

The participants agree that many sociologists take over assignments in academia or some specialised professional areas, notably in public administra-

tion. Thereby, *areas of assignments seem to grow where systematic knowledge of other countries, cultures and languages is essential*. Or they are recruited by public or private employers for a broad range of assignments on the assumption that sociologists are skillful in analytical thinking, methodologically versatile and able to understand a broad range of socio-communicative and organisational matters. In those cases, employers are likely to consider the study period in another country as an indicator for competences such as taking initiative, being self-competent and ambitious as well as for socio-communicative skills.

This does not mean, however, that there is a clear divide in sociological study programmes between academic learning on the one hand and fostering of personality and socio-communicative skills on the other hand. Rather, sociological study programmes have changed substantially since the 1990s in various respects towards a *closer interrelationship between academic learning and personality development*. First, links have become closer between components of study programmes reinforcing cognitive competences and affective-motivational and socio-communicative competences. Second, a methodological professionalization can be observed. Third, comparative perspectives have become an increasingly important dimension of research, teaching and learning in sociology. For all these developments, study abroad is an asset. Teaching in sociology has become increasingly international. Some participants argue that ethnocentric views still were widespread among the teachers and that, therefore, a growing participation in teaching staff mobility might help to redress this state of affairs.

Moreover, the value of study abroad seems to vary for students from *different regions in Europe*. Many students from Western European countries consider the study period in another European country as a valuable contrasting field experience. They do not expect that this will be a substantial boost for their career perspectives. In contrast, students in sociology going from Central and Eastern European countries to Western European countries are a select group of often highly motivated persons having a relatively profound foreign language proficiency and quite some prior knowledge on the host country; for them, the study period abroad is likely to improve career opportunities.

In response to the diversity of study programmes, abilities and motives of the students and of their career prospects, the participants of the seminar underscore the need for *intensive und highly individualised guidance and counselling* of sociology students prior to their period abroad. One might recommend a different host university depending on the academic and cultural motives of the students, the thematic area interested (for example study in a Scandinavian country might be most valuable for students interested in the “welfare state”) and the stage of study for which a temporary study period in another European country is envisaged.

A prolongation of the overall period of study as a consequence of study in another country is not viewed as a career obstacle, because many students of sociology seem to study somewhat longer in order to enhance their capabilities beyond what might be expected at the end of a normal period of study and thus improve their employment prospects. This also might explain that not so much care is taken for matters of *recognition* and that recognition of achievements of the study period abroad upon return by the host institution obviously is below the average of all fields of study.

Apart from emphasizing the relevance of the individual guidance and counselling, the *participants do not recommend major steps for improvement*. The participating students point out that better advance information on the study opportunities at the partner institution would be desirable, as well as a higher stipend and an introduction of the student mentor system where it does not yet exist. Special programmes for foreign students addressing the culture and society of the host country are viewed especially valuable for mobile students in the field of sociology.

4.5 Chemistry

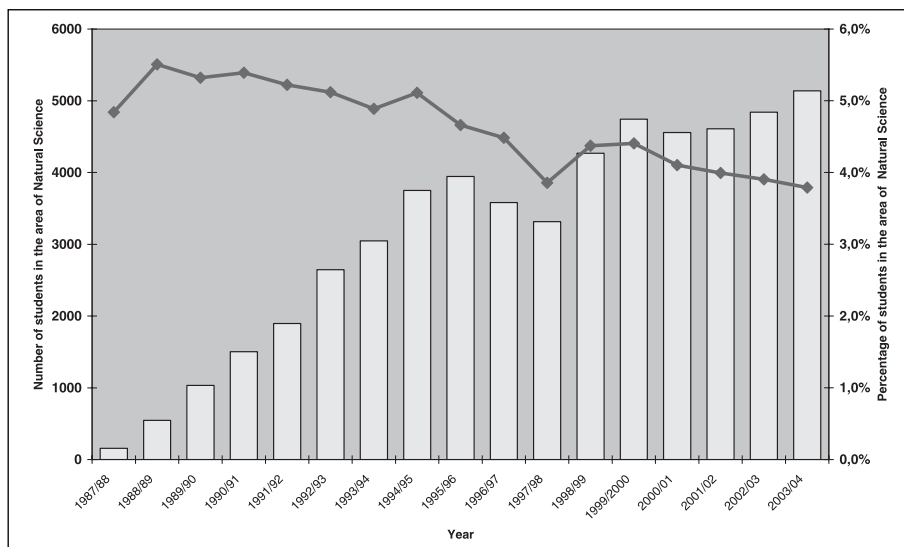
The Field of Study

Chemistry is an academically oriented field in the area of science and engineering. Chemists are working in industry, research laboratories and in smaller numbers also in public agencies. Study programmes in chemistry focus on theoretical knowledge as well as practical experiences in the laboratory.

In general, study programmes in chemistry cover the classical areas of chemistry during the first years: organic, inorganic and physical chemistry supplemented by physics, mathematics, biology, and analytics. During the subsequent years of study, students can choose from a variety of specialisations, e.g. theoretical chemistry, micro-molecular chemistry, biochemistry or technical chemistry. Besides knowledge in chemistry students need a good level of English language proficiency to read and understand the field-specific literature (DIE ZEIT 2006).

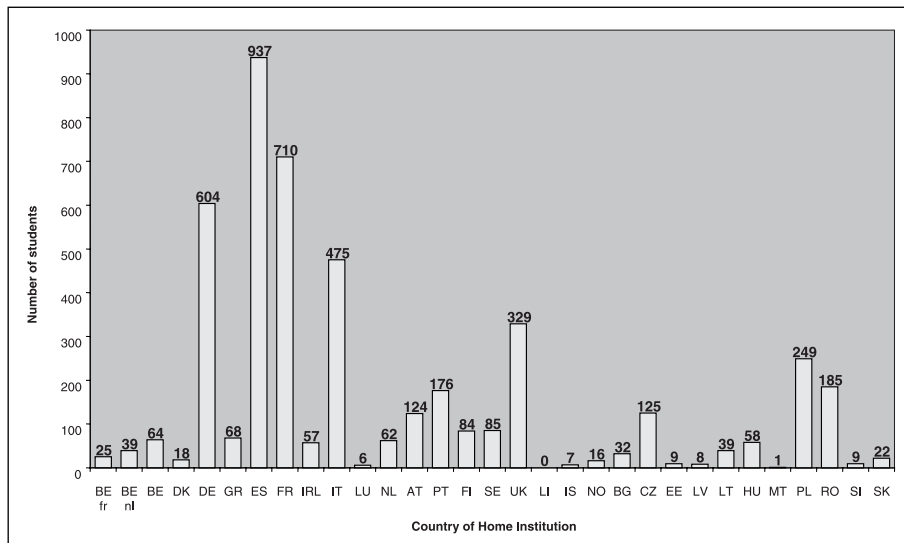
Students in the area of natural sciences do not represent a large group in the ERASMUS programme. Today approximately four percent of all ERASMUS students each year are studying natural sciences. Figure 18 shows that the percentage of students in natural sciences is even decreasing for several years. Unfortunately, we do not have exact numbers for the field of chemistry.

Figure 18: Total Number and Percentage of ERASMUS Natural Science Students 1987 – 2004



Source: European Commission, SOCRATES programme,
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/erasmus/stat_en.html

Figure 19: Total Number and Percentage of ERASMUS Natural Science Students – by Country of Home Institution 2000/01



Source: European Commission, SOCRATES programme,
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/erasmus/stat_en.html

Figure 19 above provides an overview about the distribution by country of all outgoing ERASMUS students in the area of natural sciences. It shows no unusual distribution. The highest numbers of students in natural sciences have come from Spain and from other large European countries.

Results of the Survey

The student profile: The majority of former chemistry ERASMUS students are female (60%). The average age at the time of the survey (2005) is 30.

The period abroad: The chemistry students have substantial experience abroad: they have spent about seven months abroad during their ERASMUS supported period in the academic year 2000/2001 and about one third (35%) one or more additional periods abroad. Compared to the other fields of study, a substantial proportion of chemistry graduates have been on work placements/internships abroad (18% compared to 6% in all fields).

Study provisions and conditions: The graduates state a relatively low satisfaction with assistance/guidance/advice provided by their home institution for the study period abroad. Only about half of the chemistry respondents are satisfied with assistance by their home institutions regarding academic matters and administrative matters. 44 percent are satisfied with information about the host institution and country, 38 percent with accommodation and 40 percent with language training.

But the graduates do not report significant problems during their study abroad. The single most frequent academic problem is related to taking courses in a foreign language (9%); more frequent are problems regarding financial matters (22%), accommodation (14%) and administrative matters (13%).

The majority of courses taken abroad by chemistry students have been viewed to be academically equally demanding as courses which they would have taken at the home institution during the same period; only 19 percent are reported to be academically less demanding and 18 percent to be more demanding.

Recognition: ECTS has been introduced only for less than half of the chemistry students (45% as compared to 54% of all ERASMUS students in 2000/01). The chemistry graduates report a respectable extent of recognition: 75 percent of study achievements abroad have been recognised on average upon return. Only 32 percent report a prolongation of overall study duration due to the ERASMUS period.

Competence profile: Former ERASMUS students in chemistry and other fields seem to have a unique self-image of competences with respect to knowledge of other countries (economy, society, culture, etc.), foreign language proficiency, as well as intercultural understanding and competences. The vast majority sees also advantages regarding preparation for future employ-

ment and work (81%) and report also higher academic competences: academic knowledge and skills are rated by two-thirds of former ERASMUS students in chemistry to be “better” than those of non-mobile students (see Table 51).

Table 51: Former Chemistry ERASMUS Students’ Assessment of Their Competences Upon Graduation as Compared to Non-Mobile Students (percent*)

| | Better (1+2)* | Equal (3)* | Worse (4+5)* |
|--|------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Knowledge of other countries (economy, society, culture, etc.) | 96 | 0 | 4 |
| Foreign language proficiency | 96 | 1 | 3 |
| Intercultural understanding and competences (e.g. understanding and tolerance of international differences in culture) | 94 | 0 | 6 |
| Preparation for future employment and work | 82 | 1 | 17 |
| Academic knowledge and skills (e.g. theories, methods, disciplinary knowledge, reflection, etc.) | 63 | 4 | 34 |

Question A21: At the time of return, how do you rate your knowledge and competences as compared to non-mobile students in the following areas?

* Scale from 1 = “much better” to 5 = “much worse”

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

According to most dimensions listed in Table 52 about three quarters of former ERASMUS students rate their competences as high. This profile is surprisingly balanced. Chemistry graduates consider themselves as relatively strong (compared to other former ERASMUS students) in field-specific theoretical knowledge and knowledge of methods, and relatively weak in written communication skills.

Table 52: Former Chemistry ERASMUS Students' Self-assessed Competences at Time of Graduation and Job Requirements a Few Years Later (percent*)

| | Competences at the time of graduation (1) | Job requirements about 2-3 years later (2) | Difference (1 - 2) (3) |
|--|--|---|------------------------------|
| Field-specific theoretical knowledge | 91 | 77 | 14 |
| Problem-solving ability | 84 | 93 | -9 |
| Adaptability | 80 | 84 | -4 |
| Loyalty, integrity | 79 | 67 | 12 |
| Foreign language proficiency | 76 | 64 | 12 |
| Analytical competences | 76 | 87 | -11 |
| Getting personally involved | 76 | 76 | 0 |
| Field-specific knowledge of methods | 75 | 81 | -6 |
| Power of concentration | 72 | 87 | -15 |
| Accuracy, attention to detail | 70 | 91 | -21 |
| Planning, co-ordinating and organising | 70 | 88 | -18 |
| Applying rules and regulations | 68 | 70 | -2 |
| Initiative | 67 | 90 | -23 |
| Assertiveness, decisiveness, persistence | 66 | 88 | -22 |
| Written communication skill | 65 | 81 | -16 |
| Computer skills | 54 | 68 | -14 |

Question B7: Please, state the extent to which you had the following competences at the time of graduation.

Question F7: Please, state the extent to which the following competences are required in your current work.

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

In most areas, job requirements are more demanding than the competences actually acquired by former ERASMUS students at the time of graduation. As compared to the average of all former ERASMUS students, chemistry graduates consider their jobs highly demanding as regards knowledge of methods. Competences at time of graduation are viewed insufficient as regards initiative, assertiveness, decisiveness and persistence as well as accuracy and attention to detail. In contrast, former chemistry ERASMUS students report more often higher foreign language skills than required on their job.

International mobility: Some former chemistry ERASMUS students have been already regularly employed abroad (13%) or have been sent abroad

by their employers on work assignments (17%) during the first years of employment.

ERASMUS related work tasks: Chemistry graduates are not more frequently assigned visibly international work tasks than the average former ERASMUS students. International competences are also viewed as important for the current work by a substantial number of ERASMUS graduates not active in visibly international jobs. This is hardly true, however, for chemistry graduates: only 16 percent report that professional knowledge of other countries is important for doing their current work compared to 46 percent of all former ERASMUS students.

Job search and transition period: Compared to other studies of graduates in Europe, there are no indications that former ERASMUS students are different from others in terms of start of job search, period of job search, number of employers contacted, etc. Only twelve percent of the chemistry graduates have been employed part-time on their first job, compared to 17 percent of all former ERASMUS students. In contrast, short-term contracts are more widespread on the first job of chemistry graduates (62% as compared to 54% of all former ERASMUS students).

Perceived recruitment criteria: Former ERASMUS students, like other students, are primarily selected by employers according to both their academic knowledge and their personality. The field of study is reported to have been important by 88 percent of the chemistry graduates (as compared to 75% of all former ERASMUS students) and the main subject/specialisation by 80 percent (as compared to 61%). Their foreign language proficiency and their experiences abroad in general have played a role for more than half of the former chemistry ERASMUS students.

Area of employment: Employment in higher education, research and development is frequent among former ERASMUS students from chemistry (55% as compared to 16% of all former ERASMUS students). 58 percent of former chemistry ERASMUS students work in an organisation with an international scope (as compared to 51%).

Retrospective assessment of the ERASMUS study abroad period: The value of the ERASMUS study abroad is substantially more positively assessed as regards personality development, knowledge, reflection, etc. than as regards career and income. Almost all former chemistry ERASMUS students (98%) report, that the period abroad was worthwhile for maturity and personal development. Additionally more than half of the former chemistry ERASMUS students state, that the study abroad was worthwhile regarding knowledge and understanding of the host country (95%), foreign language proficiency (89%), new ways of thinking and reflection (91%), enhancement of academic and professional knowledge (76%), career prospects (66%), and 24 percent believe that study abroad had a positive impact on the income level.

Results of the Seminar

The participants of the chemistry seminar agreed that the main impact of an ERASMUS study period abroad lies in the *improvement of foreign language skills and personality development*. Personal characteristics such as maturity, independence and self-confidence are mentioned as positive consequences of a study period abroad. *Problem-solving and organisation abilities* – as very important personal characteristics for research work – are reported as well as a result of organising one's own ERASMUS study period and of getting along abroad. As ERASMUS students are somewhat dependent on the help of local students to find their way at the host institution, *teamwork skills* are likely to be improved substantially during a period abroad. In contrast, no major gains are seen regarding academic or field-specific knowledge in general. Yet, the overall assessment of the ERASMUS programme in the field of chemistry is very positive. Overall, however, the participants of this seminar do not observe major differences between ERASMUS and non-mobile students. Proficiency of foreign languages and the ability to cope with complex situations are certainly improved, but this can, according to their views, also be attained at later times and in different ways.

Chemistry is a universal and highly standardised subject. Most experts believe that two thirds or more of the curricula are similar across Europe with regard to themes and topics covered. National differences can be found primarily in teaching and methodological approaches, technical skills and in particular in the amount of mandatory practical work in a laboratory. The major impact of an ERASMUS period abroad lies therefore not in a different academic or field-specific knowledge but rather in the experience of different teaching approaches and focuses. *A major learning effect, depending on the host country, can occur in the area of technical skills*. Whereas laboratory work is strongly underscored by German and Austrian universities, it is hardly emphasised by French university programmes in chemistry.

Similar to sociology, a distinction was made as regards chemistry between mobility *in early and subsequent stages of study*. At an early stage, the impact of mobility lies merely in general experiences, personality development and gain in foreign language proficiency. In contrast, students in subsequent stages can profit substantially in academic terms by going abroad. Many students choose their host university based on the research work done there and the available laboratory equipment. Mobility at later stages often provides the opportunity of participating in research groups and doing internships in university laboratories. Existing research co-operations between European universities facilitate mobility for students at this level without any risk of being excluded subsequently from the domestic research and regional networks.

An important characteristic of chemistry as field of study is that a very *high percentage of students continue their education up to a doctoral degree*.

PhD rates of chemistry graduates are higher than 60 percent in some European countries. Actually, many graduates either work at university research institutes or in industrial research and development projects. In the view of the participants, international experience is neither expected from the applicants nor is it a major “eye-catcher” on the CV when graduates apply for a research position. For a position in industry, the participants assume that international experiences may play a more prominent role in large international companies. In the case of small-and-medium-sized companies (SME), as one participant states, it can also be a disadvantage. SME do not want “mobile and rootless” employees having a higher chance of leaving again. The overall impression is that career opportunities are not strong motives for student mobility among chemistry students. Students are rather interested in cultural experience, improvement in foreign language proficiency as well as research. Host institutions can often offer a different research specialisation, research techniques and equipment not available at the home institution.

Separately conducted interviews with *employer representatives show a somewhat different picture*. According to their view, international experience is highly valued by employers. One representative even states that it is more or less mandatory for applicants in the German chemical industry. Employers do not only appreciate proficiency in the English language, because it is needed in the daily work life, but also the social skills fostered by a study period abroad. Particularly SME seem to be less interested in the specialisation of graduates or their grades than in their social skills, ability to think unconventionally, problem-solving abilities, flexibility, and motivation. All these competences are thought to be fostered by a study period abroad.

Another long-term effect of student mobility is the improvement of research contacts. One participant called it the “*networking effect of going abroad*”. Mobile students establish contacts which may help them to find a PhD project abroad and which may even last over their whole career. These contacts may also have an influence on subsequent decisions to move or to work abroad. ERASMUS mobility also might contribute to the chance of being sent to temporary work assignments abroad by the employer.

Similar to other fields of study, *study achievements abroad in chemistry are not consistently recognised upon return by the home institution*. Course descriptions in the native and English language are often not available and thus cause problems for the coordinators to assess and recognise the course content students took abroad. Additionally, chemistry seems to be a subject in which a high degree of ethnocentric views exists. Many professors believe that their curriculum and their equipment are better than abroad. For example, courses abroad teaching the same topics as those at home, have not been recognised in some cases, because different experiments have been employed. All participating students had faced serious problems of recognition. As a consequence, many students prefer to spend their study

period as project work or for their final thesis. For such practical, self-contained learning module recognition is more likely than for attending lectures or seminars. Also, interdisciplinary research might not be accepted by the home institution upon return. Chemistry students going abroad to work in a research project of a neighbouring science (e.g. Physics, Biology) often face serious problems.

Difficulties have been observed in the *transfer or translation of marks gained from the partner institution to the home institution*. Translations of the foreign grading system to the national one are often undertaken arbitrarily. For example, one student participant reports that he just got the average of his previous year grades independent of his performance abroad. The participants call therefore for a European grading scale. As a European grading scale might be too ambitious on a short-term base, an alternative suggestion by the participants is to offer an ERASMUS certificate that should state courses taken abroad, a short description of the course content as well as grades in the respective national scale. Such a document would improve the transparency of the ERASMUS stay for outsiders and future employers.

According to the seminar participants, a *good proficiency of the language of instruction* is more important in chemistry than in other fields of study. Chemists employ many technical terms which differ strongly in many European countries. This causes problems in communication across different languages. Even if the courses are offered in English, students might misunderstand the presentation, because they do not know the terminology. The participants therefore plea for subject-specific language courses at the home and host institution. Some participants also observe limited proficiency of the English language on the side of the teachers which implies the danger of low quality teaching.

In general, *study provisions, counselling and guidance* before and during the ERASMUS stay have not been addressed during the seminar. The participants do not observe any major problems of chemistry students in those respects, because students work in small groups during their laboratory classes. They get to know each other and easily establish contacts with local students. Additionally, chemistry is typically no mass subject. Courses on advanced level are comparatively small. This facilitates the contact with professors and other students at the home but also at the partner institution.

European cooperation and coordination among departments of chemistry is promoted by the "*European Chemistry Exchange Network*" (ECEN). The aims of ECEN are "[...] *to cooperate with one another in order to help promote cultural and scientific development in each ECEN member university and Europe as a whole*" (European Chemistry Exchange Network 2006). This network brings together, in the framework of ERASMUS, 52 European higher education institutes in 19 countries. The advantage of this network is the central point of application for the students for several universities Euro-

pe-wide and the central internet platform providing all relevant information. Additionally, all members of this network agree in their “Memorandum of Understanding” to use the ECTS system and to recognise courses of partner institutions. Recognition is facilitated, because representatives of each institution meet regularly and know each other. They are more willing to trust the teaching and examination modes of the partner institutions in the network.

4.6 Concluding Remarks

ERASMUS seems to play a similar role across the various fields of study in some respects. Unanimously, the main impact of an ERASMUS stay is seen in the personal development of the students. The students do not only mature during their stay but they also gain in competences often summarised as soft or key skills. The actual dimensions addressed varied between the seminars, but the following ones are often referred to across fields of study: socio-communicative skills, intercultural awareness, adaptability, flexibility, innovativeness, productivity, motivation, endurance, problem-solving abilities, and being able to work productively in a team. The participants agree that former ERASMUS students have on average higher competences in those regards, but one has to bear in mind that the ERASMUS students are a somewhat selected group. Therefore, one should not overrate the impact of study abroad in the framework of ERASMUS.

There is a consensus as well that ERASMUS is likely to contribute to an improvement of foreign language proficiency fostered by a study period abroad. Similarly, it is likely to enhance the knowledge on the respective host country.

Representatives of all fields of study addressed underscore the importance of contacts to local students and integration into the host institution for the development of international competences and language skills. The “grouping” of students with other students of the same nationality is often seen as a barrier to benefit from study abroad in those respects. This seems to be a stronger problem in big ERASMUS fields like business studies (one third of all ERASMUS students). In contrast, chemistry students quickly and easily get into contact with local students.

Substantial differences between fields of study are visible regarding the effect an ERASMUS stay has on the academic and field-specific learning. The lowest impact on academic and field-specific learning was reported in chemistry as a universal and highly standardised subject. In business studies and sociology, such a learning effect is underscored with regard to field-specific knowledge about the host country. An enhancement of academic knowledge is more likely in later stages of the study programmes in all four fields of study. After some years of study, students can gain by choosing their host university in accordance to their speciality or thesis topic. In chemistry, a student can profit by going to a university offering better laboratory equipment

for certain experiments, or a student of sociology profits by spending a semester at a university with a good reputation in empirical methodology. Interestingly, the results of the student survey show a different picture. Chemistry is the field of study, in which the highest percentage of students (76%) state that the study period abroad was worthwhile with regard to “enhancement of academic and professional knowledge”. Comparing these results with the statements of the student participants in the chemistry seminar, a possible explanation is the knowledge gain in practical laboratory skills during a study period abroad. Yet, independent of field of study and level of education, all seminar participants emphasise the learning effect of experiencing different teaching and examination methods.

In some respects, the professional value of ERASMUS mobility for the transition to employment is similar across fields of study. ERASMUS is not considered to be the gate to a high-flying career but rather a “door-opener” into the labour market. In the more professionally oriented study fields – business studies and mechanical engineering – the globalisation process and the international business structures today seem to make international competences necessary even for positions in national companies. But also in sociology and chemistry, former ERASMUS students are appreciated by employers as being internationally experienced, because they are expected to be superior as regards the so-called “soft-skills”. Reference to an ERASMUS stay in the CV is taken as an indicator for such competences and can enhance the chances in the application process. Research work in sociology and chemistry were the areas of employment where the lowest impact of ERASMUS mobility is seen.

Long-term career effects of an ERASMUS stay abroad are viewed as being difficult to identify and are not believed to be strong. Yet, the participants agree that formerly mobile students also have a higher probability of being mobile during their career. Mainly long-term networking contacts are mentioned as supportive in this regard by the participants. The former ERASMUS students do not only have contacts in their former host country but all over Europe which makes it not only easier for them to establish further contacts but facilitates also future mobility. Yet, differences seem to be noteworthy by country and region. The overall impression is that ERASMUS has right now a higher professional value for students from Middle and Eastern European countries than from Western Europe.

Major differences between fields of study have emerged in the discussion about study provisions and conditions for ERASMUS mobile students. The participants of the business studies seminar presented a kind of “liberal market” view. They favour a stronger self-organisation approach of student mobility under the conditions of improved information transparency. The experience of total self-organisation secures the highest impact on competences such as problem-solving, endurance and self-confidence. They judge

mobility in the framework of ERASMUS as too standardised and object further regulations regarding curricula design and learning agreement. In contrast, the participants of the mechanical engineering seminar call for a better integration of the study period abroad in the curricula at the home institution. They favour a perfect adjustment of curricula between a limited number of partner institutions making recognition an easy affair. Recognition is also a major concern in the chemistry seminar. The participants pleaded for a better networking inside the regulations of the ERASMUS programme. Course descriptions in English are a necessary pre-condition for the function of learning agreements. The European Chemistry Exchange Network is seen as a good example for enhancing cooperation and coordination. In sociology, the fewest comments have been made with regard to study provisions and conditions. Mobility has still an individual character which might be successful in various institutions and curricular settings.

Although the seminars have concentrated on the impact of ERASMUS student mobility, several comments refer to teaching mobility as having a major impact on the success of student mobility. Mobile teachers can not only motivate students to go abroad, but they also know the partner institutions and can better assess which institution fits the students' interest in the best way. In the recognition process, mobile teachers play a central role. They know the classes and teachers abroad and are, according to the seminar participants, more willing to accept varied curricula and teaching methods. To avoid ethnocentric views of professors and to make the recognition process more efficient, the participants, in particular in the chemistry and mechanical engineering seminar, favour the model of mutual recognition of courses in order to facilitate individual recognition.

Summing up, the overall assessment of the ERASMUS programme and its impact on the students by the participants of the seminar on specific fields of study turns out to be very positive. Yet, representatives of the individual fields or group of fields of study point out that there are potentials – varying by field – where the individual institutions and departments could undertake activities to enhance the desired competences of mobile students which eventually would be beneficial as well for former ERASMUS students' employment and work.

5 ERASMUS Teaching Staff Mobility

5.1 Introduction

Teaching staff mobility in the framework of ERASMUS does not serve primarily the professional enhancement of the teachers themselves. Rather, it is expected to contribute to students' learning – both that of the non-mobile and the mobile students. In addition, teaching staff mobility is expected to serve the development of the knowledge base of the departments as well as the improvement of curricula both at the home and the host university.

However, teaching in other countries and other ERASMUS related activities on the part of the teachers are likely to improve the competences of the mobile teachers themselves. Therefore, teaching abroad might be expected to add value to the work tasks and to deserve reward which ultimately will be visible in the careers of the formerly mobile teachers. Therefore, a survey of persons having taught in another European country in the academic year 2000/01 in the framework of ERASMUS has been conducted. Before the major findings will be reported, the major relevant results of prior studies should be summarised.

5.2 Prior Studies

Two former surveys of teaching staff mobility in the framework of ERASMUS elicited some findings relevant for this new evaluation study: Questionnaire surveys of teachers mobile in the framework of ERASMUS during the academic years 1990/91 (Kreitz and Teichler 1997) and 1998/99 (Maiworm and Teichler 2002).

More than half of the number of teachers having been mobile in 1998/99 with the support of ERASMUS had stated subsequently that teaching in the framework of SOCRATES helps to

- enhance their own international and intercultural understanding,
- become familiar with teaching methods not used at the home institution, and
- improve their research contacts.

A broader spectrum of possible impacts on the teachers themselves had been addressed in prior surveys. More than half of the mobile teachers of the academic year 1990/91 had reported in addition that the teaching period in the framework of ERASMUS helps to

- get contacts for the purpose of teaching and
- improve foreign language competences.

Both evaluation studies support the view that temporary teaching in the framework of ERASMUS is not as highly appreciated in their departments as the mobile teachers themselves consider appropriate. For example, many

mobile teachers had reported that they have had to undertake the ERASMUS supported teaching activities besides their regular teaching and research activities. Moreover, many mobile teachers had not been satisfied with the administrative and financial support of their departments for their teaching activities abroad.

Actually, only one out of six mobile teachers of the academic year 1990/91 had believed subsequently that their teaching activities abroad had improved their career prospects. Eight years later, though, one out of three mobile teachers had been convinced that their teaching abroad would enhance their career prospects. Thus, we observe a striking change over time: a substantial increase from the early 1990s to the late 1990s in the proportion of mobile teachers expecting a positive career impact of their teaching mobility in the framework of ERASMUS. And this holds true, even though the average duration of the teaching period abroad had become substantially shorter.

5.3 The Profile of 2000/01 ERASMUS Teaching Staff

As already noted, 775 of the 2000/01 ERASMUS teachers responded to the questionnaire – about one quarter of those requested to do so.

As available data suggest, the respondents are by and large representative for the “population” of all teachers mobile in 2000/01 in the framework of ERASMUS. Actually, their profile can be described on the basis of the responses as follows:

- The average age has been 47 years in the academic year 2000/01, i.e. the year when they taught abroad. Actually, the average age has been more or less identical to that of the mobile teachers 1990/91 (46 years) and 1998/99 (47 years) who had responded to previous surveys (Teichler 2002, p. 139). Mobile teachers from Central and Eastern Europe (46 years) have been two years younger on average than those from Western Europe (48 years).
- 88 percent of the ERASMUS supported teachers informing about their professional position both in 2000/01 and five years later have been full professors or in other senior academic positions while teaching abroad, while only 12 percent have been in junior positions. Among the 1998/99 respondents, 18 percent had been in junior positions.
- 67 percent of the mobile teachers surveyed are men and 33 percent women. In 1990/91, only 18 percent of the mobile teachers had been women; up to 1998/99 this proportion had risen to 31 percent. Among the recent respondents, 36 percent from Central and Eastern Europe are women as compared to 32 percent of their Western European colleagues.
- The clear majority are in a stable full-time position. Actually, only two percent of the Central and Eastern European teachers and four percent of the Western European teachers are employed part-time at the time the

survey was conducted. 18 percent of Central and Eastern European respondents and eight percent of Western European teachers have a short-term contract.

- The largest group of respondents comes from engineering fields. 17 percent of the respondents teach engineering, 12 percent languages/philology and less than ten percent each other fields. Among the teachers from Central and Eastern European countries, the proportion of those teaching engineering is substantially higher than among Western European teachers.

As one might expect, the largest numbers of the respondents have taught during the ERASMUS supported period in the academic year in one of the large Western European countries: France (15%), Germany (14%), Spain and the United Kingdom (9% each). The flows of mobile teachers, however, have been concentrated to a lesser extent on a few large countries than the flow of mobile students.

In looking at the four most frequent destination countries, we note that

- one fifth of all teachers going to *France* have come from Romania and almost the same proportion from Germany (18%). Most of those going to France have taught engineering (21%), foreign languages (15%) and natural sciences (12%).
- *Germany* has been a frequent target country for teachers from France (13%), Poland (12%) and Italy (9%). About one quarter of the respondents going to Germany have taught engineering and one fifth foreign languages.
- *Spain* notably has been chosen by teachers from France (14%) and Germany (12%) as well as from Austria, Italy and Romania (10% each). A large proportion of those temporarily going to Spain have taught foreign languages (17%) and business studies (13%).
- Finally, many of those going to the *United Kingdom* as a country of temporary teaching abroad have come from Germany (34%), i.e. the country with the largest number of mobile teachers among the respondents. Sizeable proportions of those going to the United Kingdom have taught engineering, education (19% each) and business studies (11%).

5.4 Motives for Teaching Abroad and Actual Activities

The decision to teach for some time abroad with the support of ERASMUS often has been taken because prior contacts existed. Prior institutional contacts with the host institutions are named by 81 percent and prior individual contacts with staff of the host institution by 85 percent of the respondents. 73 percent of the teachers state that they have decided to teach abroad in order to make their expertise available to the host university. Table 53 shows that altogether a broad range of motives has played a role for the teachers' decision to spend a period in another European country.

Table 53: Teachers' Reasons for Teaching Abroad in the Framework of ERASMUS by Home Country (percent*)

| | Home country 2000/01** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total | | | | |
|--|------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|-------|
| | AT | BE | CZ | DK | FI | FR | DE | GR | HU | IT | NL | NO | PL | PT | RO | ES | | SE | UK | CEE | OT |
| Existence of cooperative relations between the study programmes/faculties involved | 83 | 67 | 86 | 90 | 85 | 72 | 85 | 82 | 68 | 80 | 100 | 86 | 74 | 79 | 96 | 74 | 75 | 92 | 85 | 67 | 81 |
| Existence of co-operative relations beyond your programme/faculty | 48 | 42 | 79 | 56 | 46 | 47 | 38 | 59 | 46 | 56 | 82 | 43 | 65 | 54 | 70 | 38 | 48 | 45 | 59 | 67 | 50 |
| Good personal relations to, or prior co-operation with staff of the host institution | 78 | 80 | 71 | 90 | 79 | 86 | 83 | 88 | 84 | 88 | 91 | 79 | 85 | 80 | 85 | 89 | 83 | 97 | 100 | 87 | 85 |
| Recommendations of colleagues of your study area | 41 | 46 | 36 | 40 | 28 | 36 | 23 | 59 | 48 | 30 | 60 | 29 | 42 | 46 | 62 | 17 | 35 | 44 | 39 | 33 | 37 |
| The high academic standard of the host institution | 66 | 49 | 64 | 50 | 40 | 41 | 45 | 76 | 54 | 66 | 40 | 36 | 70 | 69 | 94 | 50 | 33 | 70 | 80 | 67 | 56 |
| Innovative teaching strategies of the host institution | 45 | 36 | 36 | 20 | 32 | 28 | 32 | 65 | 52 | 28 | 36 | 36 | 62 | 51 | 79 | 26 | 26 | 41 | 75 | 20 | 40 |
| Your general interest in a visit to the host country | 78 | 61 | 43 | 70 | 67 | 54 | 79 | 76 | 63 | 49 | 70 | 71 | 57 | 50 | 56 | 57 | 67 | 84 | 52 | 53 | 64 |
| Your good command of the language of the host country | 23 | 38 | 57 | 20 | 36 | 43 | 43 | 59 | 58 | 38 | 30 | 64 | 69 | 45 | 63 | 42 | 42 | 42 | 58 | 27 | 44 |
| Making your knowledge available to a higher education institution abroad | 85 | 78 | 86 | 50 | 57 | 63 | 80 | 71 | 78 | 62 | 82 | 62 | 78 | 67 | 88 | 58 | 63 | 86 | 79 | 47 | 73 |
| Being able to link the teaching period abroad with research activities abroad | 46 | 38 | 57 | 40 | 43 | 54 | 56 | 82 | 58 | 68 | 36 | 62 | 67 | 56 | 81 | 57 | 38 | 56 | 71 | 47 | 56 |
| Count (n) | (41) | (41) | (14) | (10) | (47) | (86) | (136) | (17) | (25) | (42) | (11) | (14) | (28) | (42) | (48) | (38) | (24) | (38) | (27) | (15) | (744) |

Question B3: Regarding the ERASMUS programme: How important were the following aspects for your decision to teach abroad in the framework of ERASMUS in the academic year 2000/01?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very important" to 5 = "not important at all"

** Country Codes see Table 9 (CEE = other Central and Eastern European countries, OT = Others)

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Teaching Staff Survey 2005/06

Altogether, mobile teachers from Central and Eastern European countries name a longer list of important aspects for them to teach abroad than teachers from Western European countries. Teachers from Central European countries more frequently have aimed to go abroad not only, because they have hoped to get acquainted with innovative teaching practices (66% as compared to 34% of the Western European teachers) and because they have appreciated the high academic standard of the host institution (77% as compared to 52%), but also, because they have been convinced to have a good command of the language of the host country (62% as compared to 40%). Table 54 compares the responses by the region of origin and by the region of destination. The data presented suggest that the motives have varied clearly according to the host region in many respects and to a somewhat lesser extent according to the home region. In some cases, the combination of home and host region is most indicative.

Table 54: Teachers' Reasons for Teaching Abroad in the Framework of ERASMUS by Direction of Mobility (percent*)

| | Direction of mobility 2000/01 | | | | Total |
|--|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| | West-West | East-East | West-East | East-West | |
| Existence of co-operative relations between the study programmes/faculties involved | 81 | 67 | 72 | 86 | 80 |
| Existence of co-operative relations beyond your programme/faculty | 47 | 67 | 47 | 63 | 50 |
| Good personal relations to, or prior co-operation with staff of the host institution | 83 | 67 | 85 | 88 | 84 |
| Recommendations of colleagues of your study area | 32 | 0 | 29 | 53 | 35 |
| The high academic standard of the host institution | 54 | 0 | 42 | 78 | 56 |
| Innovative teaching strategies of the host institution | 36 | 0 | 22 | 69 | 40 |
| Your general interest in a visit to the host country | 71 | 67 | 60 | 58 | 66 |
| Your good command of the language of the host country | 43 | 33 | 15 | 66 | 43 |
| Making your knowledge available to a higher education institution abroad | 71 | 100 | 71 | 80 | 73 |
| Being able to link the teaching period abroad with research activities abroad | 53 | 33 | 48 | 66 | 54 |
| Other | 63 | 50 | 67 | 60 | 63 |
| Count (n) | (329) | (3) | (101) | (103) | (536) |

Question B3: Regarding the ERASMUS programme: How important were the following aspects for your decision to teach abroad in the framework of ERASMUS in the academic year 2000/01?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very important" to 5 = "not important at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Teaching Staff Survey 2005/06

For example, a good command of the language of the host country has been important for the decision to teach abroad notably for teachers spending the ERASMUS supported teaching period in Western European countries. But this motive is more frequently named by teachers from Central and Eastern European countries going to Western European countries (66%) than by teachers from Western European countries going to other Western European countries (43%).

Innovative teaching strategies at the host institutions also have been expected most frequently as an attraction in Western European countries. Again, this motive is more frequently named by teachers from Central and Eastern European countries going to Western European countries (69%) than by teachers from Western European countries going to other Western European countries (36%). In contrast, innovative teaching methods at Central and Eastern European institutions is named as an important aspect only by 22 percent of the Western European teachers and by none of the small group of Central and Eastern European teachers going there.

Similarly, a high academic standard of the host institution has been seen often as an attraction to go to Western European countries. Again, teachers coming from Central and Eastern European countries going to Western European countries (78%) name this reason more frequently as important than teachers from Western European countries going to other Western European countries (54%). A high academic quality of the host institution is named as important reason by some teachers from Western European countries going to Central and Eastern countries (42%), but by none of the – few – teachers from Central and Eastern European countries going to other Central and Eastern European countries.

5.5 Institutional Conditions for Teaching Staff Mobility

Information about institutional conditions for teaching staff mobility has not only been provided by the mobile teachers themselves. This theme has been also addressed in the university leader survey.

According to the university leaders responding, teaching staff mobility is positively viewed at more than one third of the higher education institutions and valued to a certain extent also by more than one third. Most positive ratings are reported from middle-sized universities, i.e. institutions with between 5,000 and 20,000 students (see Table 55).

Table 55: The Value of ERASMUS Teaching Staff Mobility in the View of University Leaders by Number of Students Enrolled (percent; multiple responses)

| | Up to 500 | Number of students enrolled | | | | | Total |
|---|--------------|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------|-------|
| | | 501 2,000 | 2,001 5,000 | 5,001 10,000 | 10,001 20,000 | More than 20,000 | |
| Highly valued | 33 | 40 | 27 | 44 | 45 | 42 | 38 |
| Valued to a certain extent | 35 | 37 | 44 | 47 | 38 | 35 | 39 |
| Perceived as an activity of the individual teacher | 29 | 29 | 28 | 21 | 22 | 30 | 27 |
| Largely perceived as a burden | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Not much appreciated | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 104 | 110 | 106 | 114 | 104 | 107 | 108 |
| Count (n) | (91) | (145) | (102) | (73) | (74) | (43) | (528) |

Question D1: In general, how does the administration of your institution perceive or treat teaching staff mobility - including non-ERASMUS mobility?

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA University Leaders' Survey 2005

Altogether, teaching staff mobility seems to be more highly appreciated at Central and Eastern European universities than at Western European institutions. Especially the Baltic States, Romania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Slovenia are interested in raising their international reputation through participation of academic staff in the ERASMUS programme.

The general attitude to teaching staff mobility obviously has improved over time. 57 percent of the university leaders responding note a more positive assessment than a decade ago. The attitudes on the part of the departments and the teaching staff seem to have become even more frequently positive (see Table 56).

Table 56: Universities' Improvement of Attitudes Towards Teaching Staff Mobility According to the University Leaders by Number of Students Enrolled (percent*)

| | Up to 500 | Number of students enrolled | | | | | Total |
|---------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------|-------|
| | | 501 2,000 | 2,001 5,000 | 5,001 10,000 | 10,001 20,000 | More than 20,000 | |
| University administration | 52 | 53 | 57 | 64 | 61 | 60 | 57 |
| Departments | 62 | 53 | 70 | 77 | 68 | 71 | 65 |
| Individual teaching staff | 66 | 71 | 69 | 81 | 75 | 63 | 71 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (92) | (138) | (101) | (73) | (76) | (43) | (523) |

Question D2: Has the attitude towards teaching mobility changed during the last decade?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "becomes more positive" to 5 = "becomes more negative"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA University Leaders' Survey 2005

The formerly mobile teachers perceive the appreciation by their institutions' administration less positive even though they also report more often a supportive than an obstructive environment. They state that teaching mobility is highly appreciated on the one hand at only about one fifth of the higher education institutions each at the institutional level, at the departmental level and on the part of their colleagues. Almost one third of the mobile teachers responding note somewhat of an appreciation or that mobility is just perceived as an individual activity. On the other hand, only less than one tenth note that teaching mobility is not much appreciated or viewed as a burden within their institution of higher education, again similarly at the institutional level, at the departmental level and on the part of their colleagues (see Table 57).

Mobile teachers from Central and Eastern European countries perceive the attitudes at their higher education institutions similarly at institutional level and somewhat more positive on the departmental level as well as on the part of their colleagues than mobile teachers from Western European countries. These differences can be interpreted as relatively small if we take into consideration that mobile teachers from Central and Eastern Europe, as will be shown below, assess the value of teaching abroad substantially more positive than their colleagues from Western European countries.

Table 57: Appreciation of Teaching Mobility Within the Higher Education Institution in the View of Former ERASMUS Teachers by Home Region 2000/01 (percent)

| | At the institutional level | | | At the departmental level | | | On the part of colleagues | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------|-------|---------------------------|-------|-------|---------------------------|-------|-------|
| | Western Europe | CEE | Total | Western Europe | CEE | Total | Western Europe | CEE | Total |
| Highly valued | 23 | 21 | 22 | 21 | 28 | 22 | 16 | 29 | 19 |
| Valued to a certain extent | 37 | 42 | 38 | 37 | 45 | 38 | 32 | 38 | 33 |
| Perceived as an individual activity | 33 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 22 | 32 | 42 | 28 | 39 |
| Largely perceived as a burden | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| Not much appreciated | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 5 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (592) | (140) | (732) | (595) | (141) | (736) | (544) | (137) | (681) |

Question C4: In general, how is teaching mobility assessed at your higher education institution today at the following three levels? At the institutional level, at the departmental level, by your colleagues

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Teaching Staff Survey 2005/06

Similarly to the university leaders, about half of the mobile teachers responding believe that the attitude toward ERASMUS teaching mobility has become more positive over the recent decade. The attitude seems to have changed simultaneously at the institutional level, at the departmental level and on the part of the colleagues of the mobile teachers (see Table 58). A shift towards a more positive attitude is observed somewhat more frequently by teachers from Central and Eastern European countries than by teachers from Western European countries.

The university leaders also have been asked to characterise the concrete institutional support given as a rule to teachers mobile within the framework of ERASMUS. More than half of the respondents each actually report that the mobile teachers have received administrative support regarding the two dimensions addressed in that question, i.e. their leave of absence and their visit abroad. Only slightly more than one third each report a release of work tasks at home: both regarding teaching and research and regarding administrative functions. Only 12 percent state that efforts are made to find replacements at home for the mobile teachers.

Table 58: Improvement of Attitudes at Institutions of Higher Education towards Teaching Mobility in the View of Former ERASMUS Teachers by Home Region 2000/01 (percent*)

| | Home region 2000/01 | | Total |
|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe | |
| At the institutional level | 49 | 65 | 52 |
| At the departmental level | 49 | 70 | 53 |
| By your colleagues | 44 | 65 | 48 |
| Count (n) | (594) | (142) | (736) |

Question C5: How has the attitude towards teaching mobility changed during the last 10 years at your higher education institution?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "became much more positive" through 3 = "remained the same" to 5 = "became much more negative"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Teaching Staff Survey 2005/06

By and large, administrative support is more frequently provided at small than at large institutions of higher education. Again, Central and Eastern European institutes regard teaching staff more highly and support it more often administratively (see Table 59).

Table 59: Support Provided for Mobile Teachers by Their University According to the University Leaders by Home Region (percent*)

| | Home region | | Total |
|---|----------------|----------------------------|---------|
| | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe | |
| Temporary release from teaching or research commitments | 36 | 44 | 38 |
| Temporary release from administrative commitments | 30 | 47 | 34 |
| Finding replacement staff | 12 | 28 | 16 |
| Support in administrative matters regarding leave of absence | 50 | 73 | 55 |
| Preparatory organization of administrative matters with the host institution abroad | 52 | 69 | 56 |
| Others | 66 | 64 | 66 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (423) | (124) | (549)** |

Question D4: Concerning the following aspects, up to what extent your institution is able and willing to support the teaching assignments abroad of its staff within the framework of the ERASMUS Programme?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a considerable degree" to 5 = "not at all"

** Including two other respondents

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA University Leaders' Survey 2005

The result of the teaching staff mobility survey, again, is less positive than the university leaders' statements. According to the majority of mobile teachers surveyed (61%) teaching abroad is an additional work load. Most of the remaining 39 percent for whom teaching abroad has been part of their normal workload have had no release from normal commitments. Only 12 percent have been explicitly relieved from regular teaching and research loads and six percent from other duties. Table 60 shows that teaching abroad is slightly more often an integral part of the total work load at Central and Eastern European than at Western European higher education institutions.

Table 60: Usual Proceedings Regarding Workload of Teaching Abroad in the View of Mobile Teachers by Home Region 2000/01 (percent)

| | Home region 2000/01 | | Total |
|---|---------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe | |
| is part of the normal professional tasks or outgoing staff will be relieved of teaching, research or other duties | 38 | 44 | 39 |
| means extra work for outgoing staff without receiving any compensation | 62 | 56 | 61 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (584) | (141) | (725) |

Question C3: Regarding compensation of teaching periods abroad, what is the most usual proceeding at your current home institution today? (Multiple responses possible)

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Teaching Staff Survey 2005/06

The findings presented refer to the current situation at the mobile teachers' institution of higher education. Asked to compare the current practices with those about five years earlier, when the respondents have gone abroad, the respondents – in contrast to the surveyed university leaders – did not state any substantial difference.

Table 61 suggests that the respondents have been treated quite differently as regards the work load of teaching abroad according to their field. More than half of the mobile teachers from medicine, geography, art and design, education, and architecture have taught abroad as part of their normal work. This holds true only for about one third of the teachers from law, mathematics, economics and the humanities.

Table 61: Support for Teaching Abroad in 2000/2001 According to the Teachers by Teaching Subject (percent; multiple responses)

| | Teaching subject* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|---|-------------------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| | Agri | Arch | Art | Bus | Edu | Eng | Geo | Hum | Lan | Law | Math | Med | Nat | Soc | Com | Oth | |
| You were relieved of teaching and research duties | 21 | 10 | 15 | 8 | 13 | 8 | 20 | 2 | 9 | 7 | 2 | 12 | 0 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 8 |
| | 7 | 20 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 15 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 12 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 3 | 6 |
| | 21 | 30 | 55 | 23 | 40 | 35 | 40 | 31 | 36 | 23 | 17 | 52 | 36 | 46 | 33 | 44 | 35 |
| | 50 | 40 | 35 | 70 | 59 | 65 | 50 | 71 | 61 | 77 | 79 | 44 | 68 | 59 | 58 | 56 | 62 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 110 | 108 | 119 | 112 | 125 | 107 | 111 | 110 | 106 | 120 | 107 | 112 | 108 | 110 | 111 |
| Count (n) | (14) | (10) | (20) | (64) | (63) | (113) | (20) | (45) | (87) | (30) | (47) | (25) | (44) | (41) | (12) | (63) | (698) |

Question D1: Did your home institution relieve you of certain work to compensate your teaching period abroad during the academic year 2000/01?

* Agri = Agriculture; Arch = Architecture; Art = Art and Design; Bus = Business Studies; Edu = Education; Eng = Engineering; Geo = Geography; Hum = Humanities; Lan = Languages; Math = Mathematics; Med = Medical Sciences; Nat = Natural Sciences; Soc = Social Sciences; Com = Communications and Information Sciences; Oth = Other

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Teaching Staff Survey 2005/06

Finally, more than 40 percent each of the formerly mobile teachers state that their departments both frequently have received ERASMUS teachers from other countries and frequently have sent some of their staff abroad. According to the respondents, staff has been exchanged often at about the same proportion of departments involved in staff mobility in Western Europe and in Central and Eastern Europe. Surprisingly, Central and Eastern European respondents (62%) state more often than Western European respondents (41%) that the teaching staff exchange between their department and all of their partner departments abroad is more or less balanced.

5.6 The Impact of Teaching Staff Mobility on the Home University

Teaching staff mobility is expected not only to be beneficial for the host university where the mobile teachers are active for some period, but also to have a positive impact on their home institution. Actually, the majority of mobile teachers surveyed confirm such a view. In response to a general question regarding such impact, we note substantial differences by the teaching subject of the responses. A positive impact is most often reported by teachers from agriculture (69%), art and design (67%), geography (65%), and medicine (64%).

In contrast, a positive impact is relatively seldom stated by respondents from mathematics (35%), law (30%) and communication science (29%).

Further, respondents have been asked to state in which way teaching staff mobility has turned out to be beneficial for their home institution of higher education. Among 12 aspects addressed, teaching mobility is rated most often as helpful for

- improvement of advice given to mobile students (63%) and
- providing knowledge on other countries (58%).

In addition, more than 40 percent of the respondents each note a positive effect on the coordination of study programmes between the home and host institution, the range of foreign language teaching, the development of new study concepts and contents, and the increase of comparative approaches.

Table 62: Impact of ERASMUS Teaching Staff Mobility on the Home Institution in the View of Mobile Teachers by Home Region 2000/01 (percent*)

| | Home region 2000/01 | | Total |
|--|---------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe | |
| Improvement of guidance/advice available to mobile students | 62 | 69 | 63 |
| Providing knowledge on other countries, Europe, etc. | 58 | 57 | 58 |
| Co-ordination of programmes between home programme and partner programmes | 47 | 46 | 47 |
| Provision of courses in a foreign language | 39 | 64 | 44 |
| Development of new concepts and contents for study programmes | 35 | 64 | 41 |
| Addressing issues comparatively | 40 | 47 | 41 |
| Use of publications in a foreign language | 33 | 64 | 39 |
| Providing knowledge on international relations or supranational organisations | 38 | 39 | 38 |
| Addressing disciplinary/theoretical discussions originating from partner country/from abroad | 37 | 43 | 38 |
| Setting up double degree programmes | 36 | 28 | 34 |
| Development of new teaching methods | 26 | 55 | 32 |
| Integration of language courses into the curriculum | 25 | 42 | 29 |
| Count (n) | (587) | (138) | (725) |

Question E6: In general, how would you rate the impact of ERASMUS teaching staff mobility on your home institution regarding the following aspects?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Teaching Staff Survey 2005/06

Overall, a higher percentage of respondents from Central and Eastern European countries (67%) see a positive impact than those from Western European countries (47%). This notably holds true for increased provision of courses in a foreign language, use of publications in foreign languages, innovation of the concepts and contents of study programmes as well as the development of new teaching methods. Regarding some aspects addressed, however, responses by formerly mobile teachers from Central and Eastern European countries are similar to those by their colleagues from Western European countries.

The surveyed university leaders reinforce this positive assessment of the responding teachers. Interestingly, they not only observe a positive impact regarding teaching and learning, but also on some areas not addressed in the teachers' survey, i.e. the reputation of the higher education institution, and regarding research cooperation:

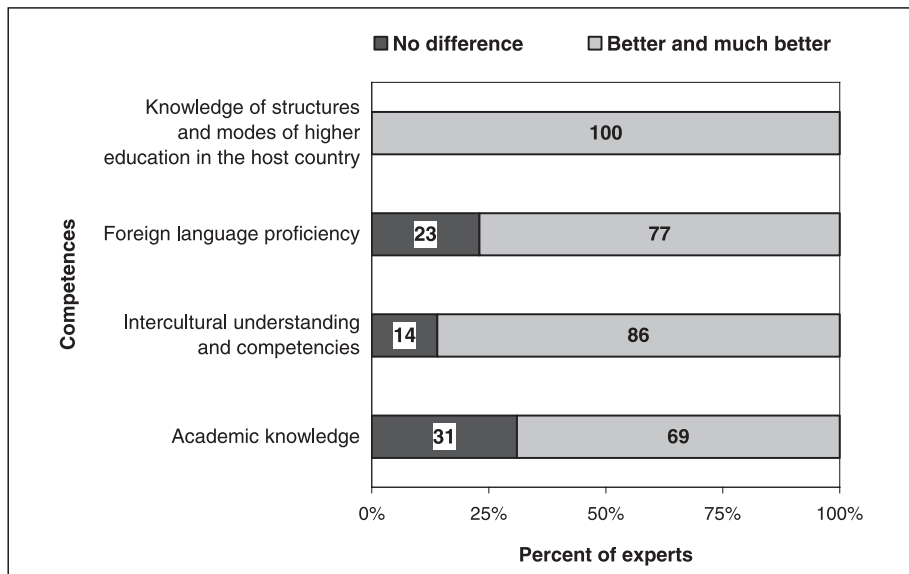
- 77 percent note a strong contribution to the international reputation of the institution,
- 59 percent to the initiation of international research cooperation,
- about half each to the development of new curricula and teaching methods, and
- 37 percent to the establishment of double degree programmes.

5.7 The Professional Value of Teaching Abroad for the Subsequent Work and Career

Competences of Mobile Teaching Staff Upon Return

Due to the on average comparatively short stay of mobile teachers abroad, no substantial competence gain can be expected. Yet, the results of both the expert survey and the teaching staff survey suggest that teachers' competences are enhanced through the ERASMUS supported teaching period in another European country. Most of the experts surveyed consider mobile teachers upon return to their home institution as more competent than their non-mobile colleagues in all the four areas addressed in the survey (see Figure 20).

Figure 20: Competences of Former ERASMUS Teachers Upon Return as Compared to Non-Mobile Teachers in the View of ERASMUS Experts (percent*)



Question A1 (teacher): At the time of return, how do you rate mobile teachers as compared to non-mobile teachers in the following areas?

* Responses on a scale from 1 = "much worse" through 3 = "no difference" to 5 = "much better"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Experts 2005

The results might be viewed as not surprising, as far as the three aspects of “international competences” are concerned. Here, the experts note somewhat higher competences on the part of the teachers, while they often rate the mobile students’ competences much higher than those of the non-mobile students. This notion of a more moderate improvement of competences on the part of the teachers certainly reflects that many mobile teachers have already been internationally experienced and competent prior to the ERASMUS supported period abroad and that short periods of teaching in another country of mostly one or two weeks are less likely to have profound effects than the study period abroad of half a year or one year.

As compared to prior surveys of mobile teachers, this expert survey shows a surprisingly high confidence, that mobile teachers are superior to non-mobile teachers with regard to their general academic knowledge. 69 percent of the experts responding consider the mobile teachers to be superior in this respect which is certainly not generally viewed a prime aim or a prime spin-off of teaching abroad. The open comments given by the experts suggest that the gain in academic knowledge is viewed in some cases only as knowledge of teaching methods. The experts argue that the teachers get to know new teaching methods abroad; they can discuss teaching methods and contents with colleagues at the host institution and reconsider their own teaching methods in the light of practices at the host institution. These findings correspond with the results of the earlier surveys that the teachers consider their teaching period in another country as being worthwhile for their acquaintance with other teaching methods and the enhancement of the content of their lectures.

In the open comments to this question, the overall very positive assessment is expressed more cautiously. The responding experts argue that the impact depends on the preparation before the teaching period abroad and the overall length of this period. Furthermore, it is argued that the knowledge is enhanced only regarding the situation at the host institution. Finally, some experts point out that the enhancement in foreign language proficiency is often limited to one of the three most commonly employed languages, i.e. English, German or French. Some experts, in addition, point out that the superior competences of mobile teachers to those not teaching abroad cannot be attributed solely to the teaching period as such. Rather, they note a positive self-selection as far as the readiness for teaching abroad is concerned.

The formerly mobile teachers themselves, first, have been asked how the teaching period helped raising their knowledge on issues of various teaching-related matters. Their responses confirm the experts’ observation. Accordingly:

- 86 percent have got to know the structure of higher education in their host country;
- 51 percent have learned new teaching and learning methods not common at home, and

- 39 percent have got acquainted with quality assurance procedures for teaching and learning so far unfamiliar to them.

Again, impact of teaching in another European country in those respects is most frequently stated by teachers from Central and Eastern European countries spending the teaching period in Western European countries (see Table 63). However, getting acquainted with different concepts and content of study is viewed as valuable result of teaching abroad almost equally according to regions of origin and regions of destinations. This is most often emphasised by teachers from the United Kingdom, Austria, the Netherlands, and Romania.

Table 63: Value of Teaching Abroad for Enhancement of Knowledge in the View of Mobile Teachers by Direction of Mobility (percent*)

| | Direction of mobility 2000/01 | | | | Total |
|---|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| | West-West | East-East | West-East | East-West | |
| The structure of higher education in your host country | 88 | 33 | 77 | 93 | 86 |
| Concepts and contents of study courses which are different from those of your home programme(s) | 85 | 67 | 71 | 78 | 81 |
| Forms of teaching and learning not generally used in your home programme(s) | 51 | 33 | 28 | 74 | 51 |
| Quality assurance procedures for teaching and learning not generally used in your home programme(s) | 34 | 33 | 25 | 69 | 39 |
| Count (n) | (328) | (3) | (102) | (103) | (536) |

Question E1: Do you think that teaching abroad in the framework of ERASMUS was valuable for you in becoming acquainted with

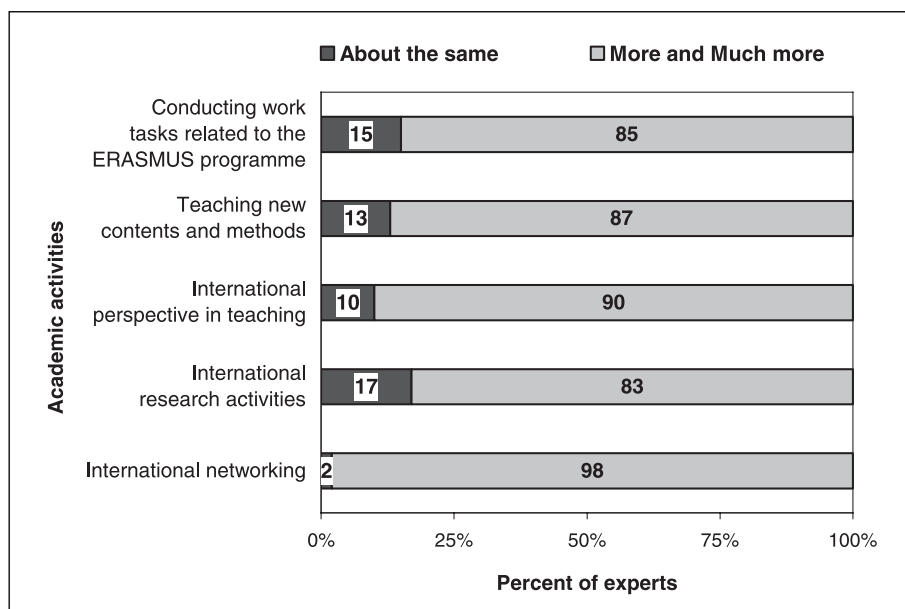
* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very valuable" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Teaching Staff Survey 2005/06

Enrichment of Academic Competences and Activities

Almost all experts surveyed are convinced that ERASMUS supported mobile teachers are more active after the teaching period than previously in international activities of teaching and research and that they improve those activities on the basis of their experiences acquired during the period of teaching abroad. This holds true for all five areas of activities addressed in the questionnaire: International networking, international perspective in teaching, teaching new contents and methods, conducting work tasks related to the ERASMUS programme, and international research activities (see Figure 21).

Figure 21: Changes of the Mobile Teachers' Academic Activities Upon Return in the View of ERASMUS Experts (percent*)



Question B1: In your opinion, in how far do the following activities of ERASMUS mobile teachers change after their return as compared to the situation before their departure?

* Responses on a scale from 1 = "much less" through 3 = "about the same" to 5 = "much more"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Experts 2005

It should be noted that among those perceiving such changes, about two-thirds do not rate them as substantial ("much more"), but rather as moderate ("more"). Altogether, experts from Eastern European countries more frequently observe changes of mobile teachers' activities upon return than their colleagues from Western Europe. Similarly, experts professionally active in ministries and those representing companies and employers' organisations are more inclined than other experts surveyed to assume that mobile teachers intensify their international activities after the teaching period abroad.

The teachers themselves hold similar views as the experts. Asked whether the ERASMUS supported teaching period has turned out to be productive for their subsequent academic activities, the respondents even state more frequently an impact on their general academic activities and their research activities than their specific teaching related activities (see Table 64):

- 65 percent have generally improved their research contacts,
- 60 percent have been able to broaden their specialist knowledge,
- 53 percent report that disciplinary and theoretical discussions have originated from the country or the institution of their temporary teaching period,

- 45 percent have changed the content or methods of their teaching at home as the consequence of their experiences at the host university, and
- 40 percent have developed und implemented new teaching methods.

The perceived impact varies by field taught. Scholars in agriculture and in geography underscore the general academic and the research value of a temporary teaching period in another European country. In contrast, scholars in architecture point out the value of teaching abroad for subsequent teaching-related activities (see Table 64).

Table 64: Impact of Teaching Abroad in the View of Mobile Teachers by Teaching Subject (percent*)

| | Teaching subject* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|---|-------------------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------------|
| | Agri | Arch | Art | Bus | Edu | Eng | Geo | Hum | Lan | Law | Math | Med | Nat | Soc | Com | |
| Enhancing your international/intercultural understanding | 86 | 90 | 100 | 91 | 94 | 96 | 91 | 91 | 94 | 77 | 91 | 100 | 93 | 88 | 93 | 92 |
| Improving your professional/career perspectives | 57 | 44 | 62 | 37 | 47 | 47 | 48 | 33 | 26 | 20 | 26 | 46 | 42 | 27 | 21 | 38 |
| Improving research contacts | 79 | 60 | 60 | 58 | 64 | 69 | 78 | 72 | 70 | 70 | 72 | 68 | 70 | 29 | 50 | 65 |
| Broadening your specialist knowledge | 57 | 67 | 76 | 52 | 72 | 65 | 61 | 59 | 62 | 48 | 43 | 61 | 56 | 66 | 43 | 60 |
| Developing and implementing new teaching methods | 23 | 60 | 48 | 37 | 42 | 49 | 26 | 30 | 43 | 31 | 36 | 46 | 45 | 40 | 36 | 40 |
| Changing of courses you offer in the home study programme(s) with regard to content, method, form, etc. | 43 | 60 | 57 | 46 | 43 | 58 | 52 | 42 | 36 | 40 | 40 | 41 | 47 | 48 | 21 | 37 |
| Addressing disciplinary/theoretical discussions originating from the partner country/countries | 71 | 60 | 52 | 46 | 60 | 49 | 65 | 65 | 50 | 43 | 53 | 59 | 49 | 46 | 36 | 59 |
| Developing new co-operation activities/joint projects with the partner programme(s)/the host institution(s) | 86 | 60 | 57 | 70 | 63 | 68 | 73 | 73 | 71 | 40 | 78 | 68 | 67 | 65 | 57 | 60 |
| More competent use of the foreign language in which lectures were taught abroad | 93 | 30 | 57 | 55 | 61 | 67 | 41 | 60 | 49 | 43 | 62 | 54 | 47 | 68 | 31 | 61 |
| More intensive use of scientific foreign language publications for own teaching | 43 | 20 | 52 | 33 | 45 | 53 | 36 | 43 | 38 | 40 | 28 | 36 | 33 | 54 | 21 | 32 |
| Count (n) | (14) | (10) | (21) | (67) | (64) | (118) | (23) | (47) | (89) | (30) | (47) | (28) | (45) | (41) | (14) | (63) (721) |

Question E2: To what extent did you find your ERASMUS teaching period/periods abroad productive with regard to the following?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

* Agri = Agriculture; Arch = Architecture; Art = Art and Design; Bus = Business Studies; Edu = Education; Eng = Engineering; Geo = Geography; Hum = Humanities;

Lan = Languages; Math = Mathematics; Med = Medical Sciences; Nat = Natural Sciences; Soc = Social Sciences; Com = Communications and Information Sciences;

Oth = Other

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Teaching Staff Survey 2005/06

Again, respondents from Central and Eastern European countries consider the teaching period abroad as having been more productive for their subsequent academic activities than respondents from Western European countries (see Table 65). The difference, however, is smaller than various other dimensions of impact addressed above.

Table 65: Select Dimensions of Impact of Teaching Abroad in the View of the Mobile Teachers by Home Region 2000/01 (percent*)

| | Home region 2000/01 | | Total |
|---|---------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe | |
| Improving research contacts | 60 | 80 | 64 |
| Broadening your specialist knowledge | 57 | 78 | 61 |
| More competent use of the foreign language in which lectures were taught abroad | 52 | 76 | 57 |
| Addressing disciplinary/ theoretical discussions originating from the partner country/countries | 49 | 64 | 52 |
| Changing of courses you offer in the home study programme(s) with regard to content, method, form, etc. | 40 | 64 | 44 |
| Count (n) | (603) | (142) | (745) |

Question E2: To what extent did you find your ERASMUS teaching period/periods abroad productive with regard to the following?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Teaching Staff Survey 2005/06

In response to an additional question, 17 percent of ERASMUS supported teachers hold the view that the teaching period abroad has been helpful for them getting more grants for research projects. This is stated twice as often by respondents from Central and Eastern European countries (29%) than by those from Western European countries (14%).

Finally, it might be pointed out here that 9 percent of mobile teachers responding are employed five years later in a country different from that where they were based prior to the teaching period abroad. In many cases, they subsequently have moved to the country where they had taught in the framework of ERASMUS.

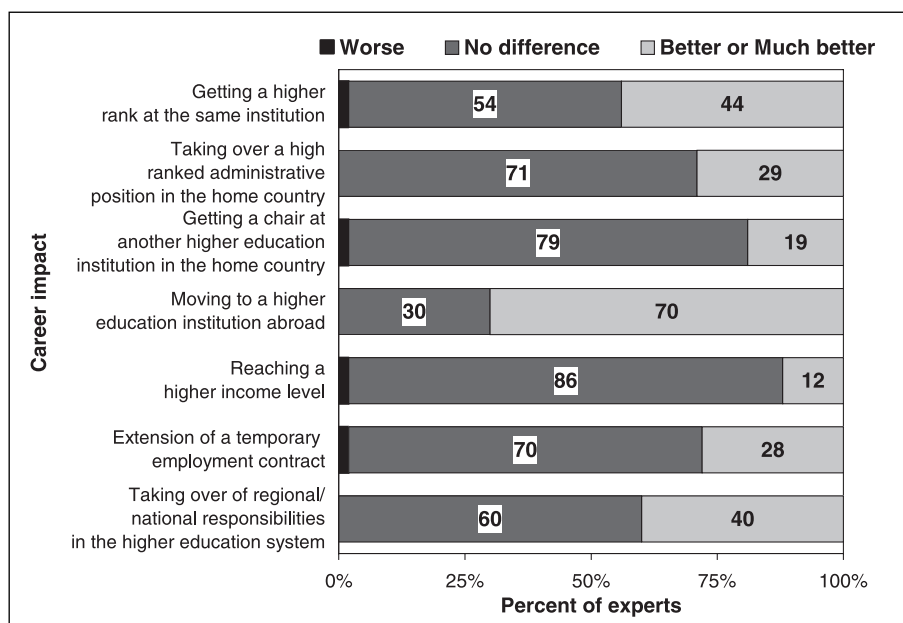
Career Enhancement

The experts also have been asked to state whether they rate the long-term ("in about a 10 years period") career opportunities of ERASMUS mobile teachers more favourably than those of non-mobile teachers. Certainly, first, one hardly could expect that a short activity of teaching abroad would turn out as career break-through for a large number of academics. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that hardly any expert surveyed perceives

“much better” career opportunities for ERASMUS mobile teachers. Second, one could have expected that teaching abroad facilitates primarily “horizontal” career changes, i.e. moving to a higher education institution abroad without “vertical” career changes, e.g. climbing upwards on the career ladder or taking over international assignments in their own country.

In fact, the majority of experts responding are convinced that teaching abroad in the framework of ERASMUS enhances somewhat the opportunity of moving permanently towards a university in another country. 44 percent, too, believe that mobile teachers have a chance of getting a higher rank at their home institution. As Figure 22 shows, however, the percentages are smaller with respect to individual dimensions of career enhancements, i.e. being promoted to a chair holder or reaching a higher income level.

Figure 22: Long-term Career-Opportunities of Former ERASMUS Teachers as Compared to Non-mobile Teachers in the View of ERASMUS Experts (percent*)



Question C1: In about a 10 years period, how do you rate the opportunities of former ERASMUS mobile teachers regarding the following career aspects as compared to non-mobile teachers?

* Responses on a scale from 1 = “much worse” through 3 = “no difference” to 5 = “much better”

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Experts 2005

The experts, however, note enhanced career opportunities as a consequence of teaching abroad only for mobile teachers of a selected number of disciplines. They name business management and social sciences as well as

communication and languages, i.e. areas where former students as well note a high professional value of study abroad. In addition, the experts name engineering and architecture as an area where teaching abroad is likely to be professionally valuable. Teachers in latter areas are assumed to gain new technical knowledge which can be transferred by teaching to the students.

The university leaders – in their position as “employers” of the teaching staff – assess the career impact of ERASMUS mobility more cautiously. Only a few note clear career benefits of teaching abroad at their institution of higher education:

- 11 percent a frequent career advancement,
- 7 percent additional financial support for their assignments, and
- 2 percent a higher income.

International activities of teachers, however, seem to play a role more often when new academic staff is hired. According to the university leaders, the majority of institutions seem to appreciate international contacts, international teaching and research activities as well as foreign language proficiency in the process of recruiting academic staff. Again, all these aspects play a more prominent role at institutions of higher education in Central and Eastern European countries than in Western European countries (see Table 66).

Table 66: Importance of International Experiences in the Recruitment of New Academic Staff According to University Leaders by Home Region (percent*)

| | Home region | | Total |
|---|----------------|----------------------------|---------|
| | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe | |
| Teaching assignments abroad | 47 | 70 | 52 |
| International scientific contacts | 66 | 84 | 70 |
| Former participation in international research projects | 60 | 80 | 64 |
| Foreign language competences | 58 | 85 | 64 |
| Others | 74 | 75 | 74 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (412) | (124) | (538)** |

Question D7: Up to what extent several aspects of a professional foreign assignment as listed below play a less or major role during application procedures of new academic staff?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1= “very important” to 5 = “not at all important”

** Including two respondents from other European countries

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA University Leaders’ Survey 2005

More specifically, between a third and half each of the university leaders state that involvement in various ERASMUS supported activities plays a role when new academic staff is hired. As one might expect, teaching staff mobil-

ity (49%) and involvement in student mobility activities (45%) are most frequently named in this respect (see Table 67).

Table 67: Importance of ERASMUS Experience in the Recruitment of New Academic Staff According to the University Leaders by Number of Students Enrolled (percent*)

| | Up to 500 | Number of students enrolled | | | | | Total |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------|-------|
| | | 501 2,000 | 2,001 5,000 | 5,001 10,000 | 10,001 20,000 | More than 20,000 | |
| ERASMUS student mobility | 48 | 45 | 39 | 54 | 39 | 49 | 45 |
| ERASMUS Curriculum Projects | 36 | 31 | 33 | 52 | 50 | 32 | 38 |
| ERASMUS teacher mobility | 47 | 49 | 45 | 54 | 50 | 51 | 49 |
| ERASMUS Intensive Programmes | 28 | 30 | 29 | 42 | 41 | 38 | 33 |
| ERASMUS Thematic Networks | 32 | 33 | 29 | 48 | 38 | 35 | 35 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (83) | (133) | (99) | (69) | (68) | (39) | (491) |

Question D8: During such application procedures, does your institution honour the involvement of the candidates in different components of the SOKRATES / ERASMUS programme?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a considerable degree" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA University Leaders' Survey 2005

The mobile teachers themselves seem to agree with the more cautious viewpoint of the university leaders. Only 12 percent respond affirmatively to the question whether teaching temporarily in another European country has contributed to a career enhancement in terms of getting on a higher academic rank. One has to bear in mind, though, that altogether only 15 percent climbed to a higher rank within the first five years after the teaching period abroad. Therefore, the figures suggest that teaching abroad was a positive factor in the majority of all the cases of visible career enhancement.

Table 68 illustrates the impact of teaching mobility as perceived by the former mobile teachers responding on all three dimensions of professional development and career addressed in the questionnaire. It suggests, as one might expect on the basis of previous findings, that teaching mobility has a stronger impact for teachers from Central and Eastern European countries than those from Western European countries.

Table 68: Professional Value of ERASMUS Teaching Assignments in the View of Mobile Teachers by Home Region 2000/01 (percent*)

| | Home region 2000/01 | | Total |
|--|---------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe | |
| Positive impact on professional development | 53 | 81 | 58 |
| Enhancement of professional/career perspectives | 33 | 63 | 38 |
| Contribution to getting a higher academic rank | 7 | 30 | 12 |
| Raise of income level | 1 | 10 | 3 |
| Extension of temporary employment contract | 4 | 16 | 6 |
| Taking over a high ranking administrative position | 7 | 33 | 12 |

Question E4: In general, how would you rate the impact of your ERASMUS teaching assignment(s) abroad with regard to your professional development?

Question E2: To what extent did you find your ERASMUS teaching period/periods abroad productive with regard to the following?

Question E3: During the last five academic years, to what extent were the following changes in your professional career influenced by or linked to your ERASMUS teaching assignment(s)?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very positive" (E4); "to a very high extent" (E2, E3) to 5 = "no impact at all" (E4); "not at all" (E2, E3)

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Teaching Staff Survey 2005/06

Only three percent of the former mobile teachers state that the ERASMUS teaching period contributed to a raise of the income level. As more respondents report a career advancement, we might assume that most of the advancements referred to have been smaller than a step upwards on the career ladder.

A further 6 percent employed temporarily while teaching abroad state that their extension of the contract has been influenced by their teaching activity abroad. As only 10 percent had been on a short-term contract at that time of teaching abroad, this figure can be viewed as remarkably high.

In addition, 12 percent of respondents report that teaching abroad has helped them to move towards a high-ranking administrative position within higher education. Again, this was by far more often stated by formerly mobile teachers from Central and Eastern European countries (33%), notably those from Poland and Romania, than by formerly mobile teachers from Western European countries (7%).

In both previous surveys already addressed above, almost 20 percent of the respondents each had stated that ERASMUS teaching abroad had improved their career perspectives. This smaller percentage cannot be interpreted as a sign that career impact has grown recently. One has to take into account that both previous surveys had been undertaken shortly after the period abroad therefore mostly mirroring expectations of future career enhancements rather than experiences.

International Views and Activities

It is generally known that many teachers opt for a teaching period abroad who had been already involved previously in various ERASMUS related activities. Most experts believe that the teaching period abroad will lead to even more frequent and more intensive activities in this domain. The experience of being mobile and living in a foreign country helps and motivates to be active as a counsellor or advisor for ERASMUS students and teachers. Former ERASMUS teachers often work as promoters for the ERASMUS programme. Some experts also report that mobile teachers are working as representatives of the home institution at the host institution, thereby preparing and broadening the cooperation.

The majority of experts consider an ERASMUS teaching period abroad as having an impact on the teachers' activities and involvement in the ERASMUS programme upon return. More than 80 percent see a positive change and argue that teachers get more involved, motivated and enthusiastic about the programme after first-hand experience. About 15 percent of experts, however, do not perceive any changes in those respects. They argue that the involvement does not increase generally but is merely determined by personal characteristics and engagement.

Academics mobile for a teaching period in another European country supported by ERASMUS tend to be internationally mobile thereafter. 94 percent of all surveyed former mobile teachers report that they have been abroad for academic reasons at least occasionally in the subsequent five years. The proportion is almost identical among Western European and Central and Eastern European teachers. But

- Central and Eastern European scholars have spent on average 29 days annually in other countries, while
- respondents from Western European countries have spent only 23 days abroad annually.

Over the period of five years,

- 83 percent have attended conferences in other countries,
- 55 percent have undertaken research activities abroad,
- 41 percent have taught again in other countries,
- 26 have made teaching-related visits in the framework of ERASMUS, and
- 38 percent have undertaken other activities related to the international cooperation.

These types of activities hardly differ between Western European teachers and their Central and Eastern European colleagues.

Table 69: Teachers' Activities Abroad Subsequent to Teaching Mobility by Home Country 2005/06 (percent; multiple responses)

| | Home country 2005/06* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|------|-----|------|------|-------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|-----|------|-------|
| | AT | BE | DK | FI | FR | DE | GR | HU | IR | IT | NL | NO | PL | PT | RO | ES | SE | UK | CEE | OT | |
| Teaching abroad outside SOCRATES/ ERASMUS | 45 | 48 | 44 | 35 | 29 | 50 | 46 | 41 | 17 | 57 | 40 | 31 | 25 | 28 | 37 | 41 | 48 | 44 | 33 | 43 | 41 |
| Other teaching-programme related visits abroad in the context of SOCRATES/ERASMUS | 28 | 15 | 11 | 27 | 31 | 21 | 38 | 24 | 33 | 26 | 40 | 15 | 33 | 22 | 37 | 29 | 22 | 31 | 11 | 23 | 26 |
| Other internationalisation activities outside SOCRATES/ERASMUS | 41 | 39 | 44 | 41 | 41 | 38 | 62 | 41 | 33 | 48 | 30 | 38 | 33 | 22 | 39 | 38 | 43 | 31 | 11 | 30 | 38 |
| Research activities abroad | 48 | 39 | 33 | 43 | 63 | 47 | 77 | 47 | 50 | 76 | 30 | 62 | 54 | 67 | 49 | 62 | 57 | 50 | 67 | 77 | 55 |
| Participation in conferences, workshops, etc. abroad | 86 | 73 | 100 | 73 | 77 | 83 | 92 | 82 | 100 | 93 | 90 | 85 | 79 | 94 | 82 | 88 | 83 | 75 | 89 | 87 | 83 |
| Other (please specify) | 14 | 24 | 11 | 24 | 7 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 12 | 12 | 13 | 6 | 11 | 0 | 10 |
| Total | 262 | 239 | 244 | 243 | 249 | 247 | 315 | 235 | 233 | 307 | 230 | 238 | 233 | 239 | 257 | 271 | 265 | 238 | 222 | 260 | 253 |
| Count (n) | (29) | (33) | (9) | (49) | (70) | (126) | (13) | (17) | (6) | (46) | (10) | (13) | (24) | (36) | (51) | (34) | (23) | (32) | (9) | (30) | (660) |

Question B2: During the last five academic years, how many days have you spent altogether abroad for the following activities? Please estimate the days approximately

* Country Codes see Table 9 (OT = Others)

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Teaching Staff Survey 2005/06

As already pointed out above, nine percent of the respondents have moved permanently to a higher education institution in another country in the five years subsequent to their temporary study abroad. Six percent of the respondents, i.e. the majority of those professionally mobile, state that their border-crossing mobility has been linked to their ERASMUS supported teaching period abroad.

Some formerly mobile teachers have been involved in other activities supported by the ERASMUS Programme:

- 28 percent in Intensive Programmes, among them nine percent frequently and 19 percent occasionally,
- 9 percent in ERASMUS Curriculum Development projects, and
- 10 percent in ERASMUS Thematic Networks.

Thereby, the percentage of Western European teachers involved in other ERASMUS activities has been slightly higher than that of the Central and Eastern European teachers.

The formerly mobile teachers have been asked, in addition, about international activities during the subsequent five years influenced by or linked to their ERASMUS teaching assignment. As Table 70 shows,

- 49 percent observe an enhancement of international scientific cooperation,
- 38 percent growing cooperation in international research projects,
- 36 percent an increase of international cooperation, and
- 16 percent taking over European or international responsibilities in higher education.

Table 70: Teachers' View of Academic Impact of ERASMUS Teaching Assignments Abroad in the Home Region 2000/01 (percent*)

| | Home region 2000/01 | | Total |
|---|---------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe | |
| Enhancement of international scientific co-operation | 47 | 60 | 49 |
| Increasing co-operation in international research projects | 34 | 56 | 38 |
| Increase of invitations abroad | 33 | 50 | 36 |
| Enlargement of tasks which your work involves | 31 | 36 | 32 |
| Taking over an administrative position in the SOCRATES programme | 10 | 35 | 15 |
| PAward of funds for research projects by national/international research promotion agencies | 14 | 29 | 17 |
| Taking over of European/International responsibilities in higher education | 15 | 20 | 16 |
| Taking over of regional/national responsibilities in the higher education system | 9 | 23 | 12 |
| Count (n) | (556) | (137) | (693) |

Question E3: During the last five academic years, to what extent were the following changes in your professional career influenced by or linked to your ERASMUS teaching assignment(s)?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Teaching Staff Survey 2005/06

This does not mean, however, that formerly mobile teachers view international research activities or general higher education policy activities as the major impact of the teaching period abroad. Rather, a higher proportion of them consider the ERASMUS teaching period as productive for international dimensions of teaching in various respects:

- 67 percent have been encouraged to start new educational projects with partner institutions abroad,
- 57 percent note a more competent use of foreign language in their teaching abroad, and
- 40 percent use academic publications written in foreign languages more frequently in their own classes.

In all three respects, teachers from Central and Eastern European countries report a substantial impact of the ERASMUS teaching period abroad on the international dimensions of their teaching activities almost twice as often as teachers from Western European countries.

In the previous surveys of ERASMUS supported teachers mobile in the academic years 1990/91 and 1998/98, somewhat different questions had been asked about the general academic impact of teaching abroad. Some questions had been similar. In both previous surveys, about half of the mobile

teachers responding had stated that the teaching period abroad was helpful for getting acquainted with other teaching methods, and also about half of the respondents each had stated that the teaching period abroad has been valuable for establishing research contacts. Thus, we can conclude that the value of ERASMUS teaching mobility for understanding and undertaking international activities of teaching and research by and large has not changed over time. This can be viewed as a success of the ERASMUS programme because teaching mobility has expanded substantially over the years.

The Overall Value as Seen by the Formerly Mobile Teachers

In response to a general question, 58 percent of the formerly mobile teachers state a positive impact of the ERASMUS teaching period abroad on their professional development. In contrast, 26 percent note a small or no impact at all on their professional development.

As one might expect, a general positive impact is by far more frequently stated by teachers from Central and Eastern European countries (81%) than by teachers from Western European countries (51%), but we note exceptions according to individual countries. Leaving aside countries with less than 10 respondents, highest proportions of positive impact are reported by respondents living prior to the teaching period abroad in Romania (86%), the Netherlands (82%) and Portugal (76%) and lowest among teachers from France (31%), Norway (36%) and Germany (43%). Among Western European teachers those teaching abroad in other Western European countries perceive more often a positive impact on their professional development (55%) than those teaching temporarily in Central and Eastern European countries (42%).

The ratings vary substantially by field of study. A positive impact is reported most often by those teaching art and design (81%), agricultural sciences (79%) and medical sciences (70%) and least often by those teaching law (33%). Again, we do not take into account fields of study with less than ten respondents.

In response to the question to which extent teaching abroad has turned out to be productive in various respects, 38 percent of the formerly mobile teachers state that teaching temporarily abroad has helped them to improve their professional and career perspectives. Almost twice as many teachers from Central and Eastern European countries (63%) held this view as teachers from Western European countries (33%). But, again, we do not note a clear divide in this respect. Positive ratings are most frequent among formerly mobile teachers from Greece (82%) and Romania (79%) and least frequent among those from France (12%), Estonia (31%), Italy, Portugal and the United Kingdom (32% each).

5.8 Concluding Remarks: The Professional Value of Teacher Mobility

Teaching staff mobility has become a component of ERASMUS certainly not with the teachers primarily in mind. Rather, mobility of teachers had been viewed from the outset as a valuable complementary activity to student mobility. It can serve both to broaden the perspectives and the learning environment at the host institution of higher education for those students who do not study in another European country temporarily and it can reinforce ERASMUS student mobility in various respects: as a tool for advice for mobile students and in contributing to curricular coordination and integration. Previous evaluation studies of ERASMUS had highlighted the strengths and also some problems of teaching staff mobility primarily from such a perspective even though they also had addressed the conditions under which the teachers were mobile and the benefits of these experiences for themselves. In this study, the professional value of teaching staff mobility for the teachers themselves is the key theme.

The teachers themselves as well as the experts and the university leaders point out first, that teaching abroad is valuable for the teachers foremost in *broadening their experiences and their competences relevant for teaching*. They learn about different contents, concepts and methods of teaching. They become more competent in using a foreign language of teaching, and they are more open to comparative approaches and foreign literature and publications in their teaching activities.

This enhancement of perspectives and competences as regards teaching does not remain an asset of the teaching persons. The respondents of the various surveys agree that this transcends to the subsequent teaching activities of the formerly mobile teachers and thus turns out to be *valuable for the students, for the curriculum development and possibly for the teaching functions of the institution of higher education as a whole*. These findings are not surprising as such, but it is worth noting that so many of the respondents perceive a relatively strong impact of ERASMUS in those respects. One could have expected more cautious observations, because those teaching in another European country in the framework of ERASMUS often have been internationally experienced prior to that period and because the ERASMUS teaching period abroad is relatively short in most instances.

In addition, it is interesting to note that many mobile teachers describe their teaching period abroad as having offered the opportunity for stimulating discourses which has turned out to be relevant for subsequent academic work beyond teaching. Even though the strongest impact is reported with respect to teaching, a majority of formerly mobile teachers note *improvements of their research contacts and subsequently more international research collaboration* as a consequence of teaching abroad.

The responses are less enthusiastic when the surveys address questions how the institutions of higher education respond to this favourable impact of teaching in another European country. Most institutions do not have drawn the conclusion that teaching mobility should become a normal element of the job roles of academics to that extent that teaching mobility would not remain anymore an additional load for the enthusiasts. A reduction of other assignments and substantial administrative support for teaching mobility are reported only in a minority of cases.

Finally, the responses are also cautious with respect to the question whether the teaching mobility is rewarded visibly in subsequent decisions determining the career of formerly mobile teachers. Between about five and 20 percent each of the teachers, experts and university leaders note favourable *career impact* of temporary teaching abroad with regards to various aspects of career enhancement: transition from temporary to permanent employment, promotion to a higher academic position, transition to a high-level administrative position, mobility to another country, etc. But one might view these indications of career impact as quite impressive, because most of the minority of those teaching abroad supported by ERASMUS some years ago who actually had a visible career change of the kinds named above, report that their teaching activities in the framework of ERASMUS were clearly important for this career enhancement.

In most respects addressed in the surveys, respondents from Central and Eastern European countries report a more substantial professional value of teaching in the framework of ERASMUS than respondents from Western European countries. This does not hold true across all thematic areas and is not consistently true for all Central and Eastern European countries on the one hand and all Western European countries on the other hand. But altogether, we note a striking difference in those respects. There are also moderate differences according to disciplines, as had been already pointed out with respect to students. Teaching abroad turns out to be somewhat more beneficial in fields where foreign language competence, field knowledge on other countries and communication with persons from other cultures plays a direct role. But altogether, the differences by fields are less striking than the differences as regards temporary teaching staff mobility on the part of teachers from Central and Eastern European countries as compared to those from Western European countries. In this respect, ERASMUS seems to play a role for Central and Eastern European countries moving from what was often called “countries in transition” to partners in Europe on equal terms.

6 Major Results and Recommendations

6.1 Transition from Study to Employment

Temporary student mobility obviously stimulates former ERASMUS students to be interested in *advanced education*. Two out of five of the 2000/01 students – about as many as in previous generations – have transferred to advanced study within the first five years after the study period abroad: most of them immediately after graduation and some of them somewhat later. This advancement rate is about twice as high among former ERASMUS students than among European students in general.

Former ERASMUS students of the year 2000/01 have started slightly later than previous generations to seek for employment. The average search period, however, has been less than four months and thus has been *shorter* than that of previous generations of ERASMUS students surveyed. We do not know whether this can be viewed as a somewhat changing effect of the ERASMUS experience or whether it indicates a general change in the transition patterns from higher education to employment.

Many former ERASMUS students believe that the ERASMUS study period in another European country turns out to be *supportive in obtaining the first job*. But this advantage seems to decline over time: it had been perceived by 71 percent of the 1988/89 ERASMUS students, by 66 percent of former ERASMUS students graduating in 1994/95 and only by 54 percent of the 2000/01 ERASMUS generation (see Table 71).

Table 71: Positive Impact of ERASMUS Study Period on Employment and Work Perceived by Former ERASMUS Students – a Comparison with Previous Surveys of Former ERASMUS Students (percent)

| | ERASMUS students 1988/89 (surveyed 1993) | ERASMUS graduates 1994/95 (surveyed 2000) | ERASMUS students 2000/01 (surveyed 2005) |
|----------------------------|---|--|---|
| Obtaining first job | 71 | 66 | 54 |
| Type of work task involved | 49 | 44 | 39 |
| Income level | 25 | 22 | 16 |

Question H1: What impact do you feel that your study abroad experience has had with regard to your employment?

Source: Maiworm and Teichler 1996; Jahr and Teichler 2002; University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

During their first years of employment – the respondents have been employed less than three years on average at the time the survey has been conducted – more than half of the former ERASMUS students have changed their employer. According to the survey of the 1994/95 university graduates, this early change of employer is more common among former ERASMUS students than among formerly non-mobile persons.

The former 2000/01 ERASMUS students surveyed in 2005 as well as the employers surveyed in 2006 confirm that employers put a strong emphasis on *academic achievement* and *personality* in recruitment. These two new surveys, however, differ from previous surveys in showing that *other criteria have become more important* than previously, among them computer skills according to the employers and foreign language proficiency according to both the former students and the employers. Half of the former ERASMUS students believe that their international experience had been among the important criteria for their employers to recruit them, and about one third of employers confirm that international experience is among the important criteria in selecting among graduates from higher education in general. As compared to prior studies, international experience, among it the ERASMUS experience, is in the process of gaining importance when employers select among applicants.

6.2 Initial Career and Status a Few Years After Graduation

Six percent of former 2000/01 ERASMUS students report five years after studying in another European country that they are unemployed. This is higher than for the ERASMUS students 12 years earlier, when four percent had been unemployed five years later.

The former ERASMUS students of the academic year 2000/01 have moved to more stable employment conditions than at the time of their career start. While 54 percent have had a fixed-term employment when employed for the first time after graduation, only 35 percent report such a short-term of employment at the time the survey is conducted, i.e. after about three years of employment on average. Similarly, the rate of part-time employed graduates has declined from 17 percent to 10 percent during that early career period. In comparison to the 1988/89 ERASMUS students five years later, the recent generation of ERASMUS students is more frequently employed for a fixed-term period (only 27% among the 1988/89 generation) (see Table 72).

Table 72: Former ERASMUS Students' Employment Situation Five Years Later – a Comparison with Previous Surveys (percent of employed graduates)

| | ERASMUS students 1988/89 (surveyed 1993) | ERASMUS graduates 1994/95 (surveyed 2000) | Non-Mobile graduates 1994/95 (surveyed 2000) | ERASMUS students 2000/01 (surveyed 2005) |
|-------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| Employed, self employed | 84 | 81 | 82 | 71 |
| Study/training | 7 | 12 | 7 | 14 |
| Unemployed | 4 | 3 | 5 | 6 |
| Job mobility | * | 67 | 58 | 53 |
| Temporary contract | 27 | 27 | 27 | 35 |
| Part-time employment | 10 | 7 | 10 | 10 |
| Public sector | * | 29 | 39 | 36 |
| Research and higher education | 13 | * | * | 16 |

Summarizing tables about questions E1, E5, E6, E9 and E10; Question E1: What is your current major activity?

Question E5: What is the type of your current contract?

Question E6: Do you work full-time or part-time?

Question E9: Do you work in the public or private sector?

Question E10: In which economic sector are you currently working?

* Question not asked

Source: Maiworm and Teichler 1996; Jahr and Teichler 2002; University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

72 percent of the 2000/01 ERASMUS students employed five years later believe that the *level of position and income is appropriate* to their level of educational attainment. In previous surveys, similar responses had been given (72% and 76%), whereby formerly mobile students had reported more frequently an appropriate employment than graduates who had not been mobile during the course of study (see Table 73).

Table 73: Links Between Study and Subsequent Employment and Work Perceived by Former ERASMUS Students – a Comparison with Previous Surveys (percent of employed graduates)

| | ERASMUS students 1988/89 (surveyed 1993) | ERASMUS graduates 1994/95 (surveyed 2000) | Non-Mobile graduates 1994/95 (surveyed 2000) | ERASMUS students 2000/01 (surveyed 2005) |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| High use of knowledge | 67 | 44 | 47 | 61 |
| Field of study the only possible/ the best for area of work | + | 31 | 39 | 41 |
| Appropriate level | 72 | 76 | 67 | 72 |
| High satisfaction with current work | 52 | 74 | 63 | 67 |

Table summarises three questions of the current evaluation study; Question G2: If you take into consideration your current work tasks altogether: To what extent do you use knowledge and skills acquired in the course of study? Question G3: How would you characterise the relationship between your field of study and your area of work? Question G5: Altogether, to what extent are you satisfied with your current work?

+ Different formulation or question not asked

Source: Maiworm and Teichler 1996; Jahr and Teichler 2002; University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

In contrast, the proportion of former ERASMUS students considering their *income* to be higher than that of their peers not having spent any study period abroad is on the decline. The respective figure has been 25 percent among former ERASMUS students 1988/89, 22 percent among ERASMUS students graduating in 1994/95 and only 16 percent among those studying in another European country with the help of ERASMUS in 2000/01. The last figure is even smaller than those who, in contrast, perceive a *lower* income than that of their mobile peers.

As regards the career of formerly mobile students, *employers* surveyed in 2006 *express a more positive view*. More than 40 percent are convinced that internationally experienced graduates are likely to take over professional assignments with *high professional responsibility*. Ten percent consider such an income advantage as likely from the very beginning and 21 percent after a few years of employment (see Table 74). A substantial proportion of 2000/01 ERASMUS students, this might be added, believe as well that international experience will be helpful for them in their subsequent career.

Table 74: Higher Salary of Internationally Experienced Young Graduates After Five Years of Employment According to Employers by European Region (percent)

| | European Region | | Total |
|-----------|-----------------|----------------------------|-------|
| | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe | |
| Yes | 19 | 27 | 21 |
| No | 81 | 73 | 79 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (143) | (62) | (205) |

Question C8: Do graduates with five years of work experience in your organisation who have had international experience before get a higher salary on average?

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

The *experts* surveyed at the beginning of this study even have a more favourable view in this respect. About one third each believe that former ERASMUS students can expect a higher status, higher earnings as well as a better chance of reaching a position appropriate to their level of education than formerly non-mobile students.

Also, most *university administrators* surveyed are convinced that ERASMUS students have better job opportunities. Four fifth of them believe that a study abroad often increases the chance of getting a reasonable job. More than half state that ERASMUS students are more likely than non-mobile students to get a position appropriate to their level of educational attainment. Moreover, one quarter believe that ERASMUS has a more positive impact on the employability of graduates than any other type of study abroad, and only three percent perceive a lower impact in this respect. Finally, most university leaders perceive an increase of the professional value of temporary study abroad over the last decade (see Table 75).

Table 75: Changed Significance of Study Periods Abroad in the View of University Leaders by Number of Students Enrolled (percent)

| | Up to 500 | Number of students enrolled | | | | | Total |
|---|--------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------|
| | | 501 – 2,000 | 2,001 – 5,000 | 5,001 – 10,000 | 10,001 – 20,000 | More than 20,000 | |
| Considerable higher value as compared to the past | 16 | 18 | 18 | 14 | 15 | 26 | 17 |
| Higher value compared to the past | 62 | 56 | 63 | 73 | 69 | 58 | 63 |
| Stayed the same | 22 | 25 | 18 | 12 | 15 | 16 | 19 |
| Lower value than ten years ago | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Count (n) | (86) | (133) | (96) | (66) | (72) | (38) | (491) |

Question C8: Did the value of temporary study periods abroad change during the last decade as a criteria for employment?

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA University Leaders' Survey 2005

6.3 Competences and Work of Former ERASMUS Students

When surveyed five years later, the 2000/01 ERASMUS students rate their *competences* retrospectively at the time of graduation as *high in many respects*. Most of them consider themselves as highly competent, as far as academic knowledge, foreign languages and various work attitudes and work styles are concerned. According to the survey of those graduating in 1994/95, former ERASMUS students have rated only their foreign language competences clearly more often as high as those who had not spent a period abroad during their course of study, and they have rated their competences in many respects more moderately and, in contrast, in only a few respects slightly more favourably than their non-mobile peers.

We do not know whether there has been an increase of the impact of study in general or of the impact of international experience. But one factor is obvious: The most recent survey includes Central and Eastern European countries where former ERASMUS students obviously have a more positive view on the professional value of ERASMUS and other kinds of international experience.

Table 76: Competences of Young Graduates With International Experience Rated by Employers and Self-rated by Graduates (percent*)

| | Employers' rating of competences | ERASMUS Students' self-rating of competences |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| Field-specific theoretical knowledge | 62 | 77 |
| Field-specific knowledge of methods | 64 | 64 |
| Foreign language proficiency | 88 | 78 |
| Computer skills | 69 | 57 |
| Analytical competences | 70 | 73 |
| Problem-solving ability | 70 | 75 |
| Initiative | 79 | 71 |
| Assertiveness, decisiveness, persistence | 75 | 70 |
| Power of concentration | 63 | 76 |
| Accuracy, attention to detail | 59 | 74 |
| Planning, co-ordinating and organising | 67 | 71 |
| Applying rules and regulations | 58 | 62 |
| Loyalty, integrity | 66 | 78 |
| Getting personally involved | 79 | 78 |
| Written communication skill | 70 | 77 |
| Adaptability | 81 | 83 |
| Count (n) | (187) | (4,342) |

Student Questionnaire: Question B7: Please, state the extent to which you had the following competences at the time of graduation.

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Employer Questionnaire: Question C4: Please rate the competences of the young graduates in your organisation. To what extent do they have competences in the following areas on average?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Employers 2005/06

By and large, employers rate the competences of internationally experienced graduates as favourably as the former ERASMUS students themselves (see Table 76). However, there are differences with regard to individual dimensions – some of them more favourably assessed by the graduates and some by the employers. *Altogether, employers believe far more often and in more respects that internationally experienced young graduates have higher competences than those without international experience:* accordingly, interna-

tional experience seems to reinforce adaptability, initiative, the ability to plan and assertiveness. 15 percent of the employers surveyed even consider the competences of former ERASMUS students to be higher than of those otherwise mobile in the course of study.

The *experts* surveyed at the beginning of this project have a substantially more positive view of the ERASMUS students. 73 percent of them consider the academic knowledge of ERASMUS students upon return from the study period abroad to be better than of non-mobile students, and 82 percent view the former as better prepared for future employment and work. Moreover, almost all experts state that ERASMUS students have higher socio-communicative competences at the time of graduation than non-mobile students, and about three quarters believe that they excel in problem-solving and in leadership competences.

These overall quite positive ratings do not suggest that graduates are viewed as more or less completely prepared for their subsequent assignments. In many respects, graduates perceive more demanding job requirements a few years after graduation than they have been prepared to cope with at the time of graduation. However, many of them only believe that their *foreign language proficiency* is clearly higher than the respective job requirements.

61 percent of the 2000/01 ERASMUS students employed five years later state that they can *use the knowledge acquired during the course of study* on the job to a high extent. This had been stated by 67 percent of the ERASMUS students 1988/89 five years later. The survey of graduates 1994/95 is not exactly comparable, but findings of this study suggest that formerly mobile graduates had not seen a closer link between their knowledge and their work assignments than graduates who had not been mobile during their course of study.

39 percent of 2000/01 ERASMUS students employed five years later state that the ERASMUS period has had a *positive influence on the type of work tasks* involved. This percentage, again, is on the decline: from 49 percent among the 1988/89 ERASMUS students employed five years later and 44 percent among ERASMUS students graduating in 1994/95. Moreover, this positive rating most likely is not based on all major dimensions of work assignment, but certainly to a high degree on the link between international experience and visible international work tasks.

Similarly, 41 percent of the experts surveyed believe that ERASMUS students have a better opportunity than non-mobile students to take over job assignments closely linked to their academic knowledge. Only three percent believe that non-mobile students have better opportunities than ERASMUS students in this respect.

About three quarters of former ERASMUS students express a *high degree of satisfaction* with their employment and work situation. Asked about satisfying

characteristics of their professional situation, they state most often that they have largely independent work tasks, can use their competences, have challenging work tasks and have opportunities for continuous learning. The majority of experts surveyed even believe that former ERASMUS students have better opportunities than non-mobile students to take over independent work tasks, and almost half of them believe that they have more challenging work tasks.

6.4 International Assignments of Former ERASMUS Students

All studies undertaken in the past on the professional value of temporary study in another European country have shown consistently that formerly mobile students differ most clearly from formerly non-mobile ones in taking over international assignments. This recent study confirms what already can be viewed as a conventional wisdom.

18 percent of the 2000/01 ERASMUS students employed five years later have been *regularly employed abroad* – at least for some time - after graduation. Of the 1988/89 ERASMUS students employed five years later, even 18 percent had been employed abroad at that time, and among the former ERASMUS students graduating in 1994/95, 20 percent had been employed abroad at least at some time over the subsequent five years. This is a strikingly high proportion, because only about three percent of all graduates surveyed in 1994/95 had been employed abroad during the first few years after graduation. One might add that 12 percent of the 2000/01 ERASMUS mobile students recently surveyed have been sent abroad by their employers for some time; this figure was clearly lower than in the preceding survey, but, again, a higher proportion of ERASMUS students are sent abroad for some periods by their employers than formerly non-mobile students.

Of the 2000/01 ERASMUS students, half have considered working abroad and almost one quarter have sought employment abroad. These figures are clearly lower than those of previous cohorts of ERASMUS students surveyed.

About half of the 2000/01 ERASMUS students employed note that their employing organisation has an *international scope*, and even a higher proportion report substantial international activities. Almost one third of the graduates themselves see their own work to be embedded into an international context. An even larger proportion consider their international competences as important for doing their current work: About two-thirds communicating in foreign languages and working with people from different background, more than half their knowledge and understanding of varying cultures and societies, and almost half their knowledge of other countries (see Table 77).

Table 77: Professional Importance of Former ERASMUS Students' International Competences by Field of Study (percent of employed graduates*)

| | Field of study | | | | | | | Total |
|--|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| | HUM | SOC | BUS | ENG | MNAT | MED | Other | |
| Professional knowledge of other countries (e.g. economic, sociological, legal knowledge) | 52 | 46 | 52 | 37 | 31 | 32 | 47 | 45 |
| Knowledge/understanding of international differences in culture and society, modes of behaviour, life styles, etc. | 68 | 56 | 60 | 48 | 40 | 50 | 58 | 57 |
| Working with people from different cultural backgrounds | 69 | 61 | 71 | 65 | 60 | 67 | 69 | 66 |
| Communicating in foreign languages | 72 | 63 | 74 | 71 | 66 | 61 | 72 | 69 |
| Count (n) | (930) | (570) | (684) | (530) | (357) | (226) | (273) | (3,570) |

Question F4: How important do you consider the following competences for doing your current work?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "very important" to 5 = "not at all important"

Field of Study codes see p. 29, Table 6

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

Actually asked how much they use their *international competences*, a substantially smaller proportion state that they use such abilities frequently. Only somewhat more than one third often communicate in foreign languages, about one quarter frequently use firsthand knowledge of other countries and cultures, and only one of seven frequently travels to other countries. Thereby, it is interesting to note that the 2000/01 ERASMUS students consider their international competences more often as important, but that they actually take over these tasks less often than former ERASMUS students (see Table 78).

Table 78: ERASMUS Related Work Tasks of Former ERASMUS Students – a Comparison with Previous Surveys (percent of employed graduates*)

| | ERASMUS students 1988/89 (surveyed 1993) | ERASMUS graduates 1994/95 (surveyed 2000) | ERASMUS students 2000/01 (surveyed 2005) |
|---|---|--|---|
| Using the language of the host country orally | 47 | 42 | 38 |
| Using the language of the host country in reading and writing | 47 | 40 | 38 |
| Using firsthand professional knowledge of host country | 30 | 25 | 25 |
| Using first hand knowledge of host country culture/society | 30 | 32 | 24 |
| Professional travel to host country | 17 | 18 | 14 |

Survey 2005 Question F6: To what extent do the responsibilities of your work involve the following?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: Maiworm and Teichler 1996; Jahr and Teichler 2002; University of Kassel, VALERA Survey of Former ERASMUS Students 2005

However, the previous survey had suggested that former ERASMUS students twice as often take over visibly international work tasks than formerly non-mobile students. This corresponds to the responses of employers stating twice as often that internationally experienced students take over international tasks than students without international experience; employers state this both regarding international tasks in general as well as specially regarding the use of foreign languages, international cooperation, using information and travel abroad. Also most of the experts surveyed are convinced that former ERASMUS students take over such assignments substantially more often than formerly non-mobile students.

6.5 The Professional Value of Study Abroad in General

One has to bear in mind, that competences, transition to employment, career and professional assignment of former ERASMUS students cannot be attributed predominantly to the temporary study experience in another European country. Their employment and work success might be caused to some extent by other factors:

- Mobile students are more likely to have been internationally mobile prior to their course of study than non-mobile students, and early mobility might have a major impact on interest in subsequent mobility and in acquiring international competences. Moreover, half of the ERASMUS

students are internationally mobile during the course of study beyond the ERASMUS supported period.

- ERASMUS students are to a certain extent a select group in various respects, notably regarding academic achievement, interest in study abroad, foreign language proficiency and according to some observers, though to a lesser extent, as well socially selected in their ability to fund a more costly study.
- Students temporarily mobile during the course of study in other contexts than ERASMUS might be equally well or even better prepared for employment and work in general and for international professional mobility and for visibly international work assignments. This suggests that several other modes and contexts of temporary study abroad might be similarly successful.

In many respects, *ERASMUS has a mobilizing and reinforcing value*, and often it has some value added as regards graduate career and notably international mobility and international work assignments, but the differences observed in employment and work between former ERASMUS students and other students cannot be attributed totally to the ERASMUS programme and its implementation at the European institutions of higher education.

The ERASMUS programme intends to serve students from all eligible countries to more or less the same extent. But, certainly, *former ERASMUS students from some countries benefit more strongly than those from other countries*. The most noteworthy variation between individual countries is the fact that former ERASMUS students from Central and Eastern European countries report advantageous employment and work in general as well as international assignments more frequently than their peers from Western Europe. The former ERASMUS students from Central and Eastern European countries are a more select group, but they also benefit more strongly from the study period abroad.

There are *differences according to field of study* as regards the professional value of studying for some period in another European country. But in most respects, they are not so substantial that one may consider the professional value for some fields as marginal and for others as overwhelming. Altogether, students from the humanities and social sciences seem to benefit from temporary study abroad more strongly than students from science and engineering.

The study has focussed selectively on four fields of study in order to elaborate distinctions by field of study more in-depth – also with the help of expert workshops – in an exemplary way. The four fields chosen were mechanical engineering, chemistry, business studies and sociology.

Many findings of the initial and the subsequent phase of the study programmes are similar in these four fields: temporary study in a later phase of

the study programme is more likely to contribute to improvement in the professionally relevant knowledge base. Unanimously, however, the *major impact is seen in the maturity, the personal development and the general competence enhancement of mobile students*. Strong differences in the four seminars are visible in the impact an ERASMUS stay has on the academic and field-specific learning. The lowest impact on academic and field-specific learning is reported in chemistry as a universal and highly standardised subject. In contrast, the learning effect with regard to field-specific knowledge about the host country society respectively market is underscored most strongly in business studies and sociology.

The overall professional value of ERASMUS mobility does not differ sharply by field of study. The overall assessment was that ERASMUS is *not the entrance to a high-flying career but rather a successful "door-opener" into the labour market*. In the more professionally oriented fields of study – business studies and mechanical engineering – it was argued that the globalisation process and the international business structures today make international competences necessary even for positions in national settings; altogether, experts note a stronger professional value of ERASMUS in these two fields than the other two fields addressed in-depth. In addition, one strength is reported as well for sociology and chemistry, two fields of study with stronger national dimensions of the labour market and a stronger academic emphasis during the course of study: international experience provided by ERASMUS does not only enhance international competences and opportunities to be assigned international work tasks, but also contributes to various "soft skills" highly valued by employers today. An ERASMUS study period on the CV is seen as an indicator for such competences and can enhance the chances in the job search process.

It is interesting to note that the experts participating in the workshops suggested different *strategies for enhancing the professional value* of the ERASMUS supported period in another country. Each field-specific workshop ended with a different approach for enhancement. As regards mechanical engineering, experts view the *establishment of learning agreements* for the individual ERASMUS students as not sufficient. They suggested close co-operation with partner institutions in order to identify equivalent courses as well as opportunities for students to strengthen a profile in areas of specialisation at the host university. In contrast, the representatives in the seminar covering the field of business studies do not recommend tight curricular designs and learning agreements. Rather, they favour a stronger self-organisation approach of student mobility under the conditions of improved information transparency; widely self-organised study is expected to contribute to competences such as problem-solving, endurance and self-confidence. Apart from *improvement of guidance and counselling* before the ERASMUS study period, few suggestions are made with regard to study provisions and conditions by the experts of sociology. Mobility has still a predominantly

individual character in this field of study which does not seem to need any strong institutional framework. As regards chemistry, *recognition* is named by the participants of the expert seminar as a main concern. A call is voiced for better *networking* with the ERASMUS programme, and the European Chemistry Exchange Network is viewed as a good example in that direction.

The experts surveyed at the beginning of this study also have been asked to suggest possible means of improving the ERASMUS programme and related activities at institutions of higher education. In response, they do not suggest any significant change of the character of the ERASMUS programme and the typical related activities at all, but rather consistent improvements within the given logics of the established practices in various respects: more intensive preparation, more academic, administrative and financial support for the students while abroad, better means of assessment and recognition, closer links between higher education and the employment system, more money and complicated administrative processes (application, reporting, etc.) of the European Commission, and – last not least – stronger efforts to make the benefits of ERASMUS known outside higher education.

Altogether, the findings of this project, first, suggest, that the former ERASMUS students note a more modest professional value of their temporary study in another European country than employers and other experts addressed in this study. As most experts view temporary study in another country as desirable, they might tend to overrate its impact. Moreover, employers and other experts might state a positive impact in general when they assume that this might be advantageous only for some former ERASMUS students; thus, the methods of asking experts about the value for the ERASMUS students in general might lead to an exaggerated result.

Second, a comparison of the survey of 2000/01 ERASMUS students five years later with similar surveys of earlier cohorts of ERASMUS students suggests *that an advantageous employment and work situation and a visibly more international role of former ERASMUS students as compared to formerly non-mobile students declines over time in many respects*. The more international components of employment and work become common and the more students acquire international competences, the less – so we might conclude – former ERASMUS students can expect an advantageous career as compared to non-mobile persons. Some of the findings, however, suggest that international competences might have grown among students – notably mobile students – more quickly than international work tasks: As a consequence, a lower proportion of former ERASMUS students take over visibly international work tasks. We cannot establish clearly how far these two directions of explanations are suitable.

6.6 The Professional Value for Mobile Teachers

ERASMUS is highly appreciated by the mobile students themselves, because a relatively long period under conditions contrasting those at home at an early stage of the formation of competences relevant for employment and work is viewed as strongly influential in many respects. The conditions for a professional value of teaching abroad are completely different. Persons already in the middle of their career (47 years old on average) and mostly already internationally experienced spend a period of about two weeks on average in another country with the support of ERASMUS. One should not be surprised, if the professional value of temporary teaching in another country was viewed substantially more modest than the professional value of temporary study in another country.

Surprisingly, though, *the formerly mobile teachers note a substantial value of temporary teaching abroad in the framework of ERASMUS*. Temporary teaching abroad notably, first, is appreciated for its *enhancement of subsequent academic work* of the formerly mobile teachers. 58 percent of the respondents note a positive impact on their own professional development in general. Asked more specifically,

- 65 percent report a general improvement of their research contacts,
- 60 percent have broadened their academic knowledge while teaching abroad,
- 53 percent have got involved in academic discussions originating from the country or the institution of their temporary stay abroad,
- 45 percent have improved their teaching as a consequence of the experiences abroad, and
- 40 percent have developed and implemented new teaching methods.

These responses show that the academic value of teaching abroad is not limited to curricular issues and teaching methods. On the contrary, even a higher proportion of teachers underscore the *value for research and their general academic activities* affecting both research and teaching. The experts surveyed at the beginning of this study, in contrast, perceive a slightly stronger spread of subsequent innovation in teaching than improvement of research and general academic activities.

Similarly, the *experts* surveyed at the beginning of this study believe that teaching abroad contributes positively to the mobile teachers' general academic knowledge. The majority of them state that former ERASMUS teachers are *better*, as far as *academic competences* are concerned, than those not mobile for teaching purposes.

Second, temporary teaching abroad is viewed by the mobile teachers themselves as valuable as well as regards the *international dimensions of their subsequent career*. In the subsequent years, they have spent on average altogether almost one month abroad annually – mostly to attend confe-

rences, but often as well to undertake research activities or to teach. Asked about the causal link, half of the formerly mobile teachers believe that the teaching period in another European Country has enhanced their international scientific cooperation activities, while one third each see an increase of invitations from abroad and of cooperation in research project as a consequence of their ERASMUS teaching period.

The experts surveyed present an even more optimistic view about the *improvement of international competences* on the part of the mobile teachers. More than three quarters each believe that mobile teachers are superior to non-mobile teachers after the teaching period abroad in their knowledge of higher education of the host country, intercultural understanding and competences as well as foreign language proficiency.

Third, the majority of formerly mobile teachers are convinced that ERASMUS teaching mobility has a *positive impact on their institution of higher education*. More specifically, more than half of them argue that teaching mobility has been helpful for improving advice provided to mobile students and for enhancing knowledge on other countries in general. Almost half the respondents consider teaching mobility beneficial to improve the coordination of study programmes between the participating institutions of higher education, to increase the range of foreign language teaching, to develop new study concepts and to increase the relevance of comparative approaches (see Table 79).

Table 79: Impact of ERASMUS Teaching Staff Mobility on the Home Institution in the View of Mobile Teachers by Home Region 2000/01 (percent*)

| | Home region 2000/01 | | Total |
|--|---------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe | |
| Improvement of guidance/advice available to mobile students | 62 | 69 | 63 |
| Providing knowledge on other countries, Europe, etc. | 58 | 57 | 58 |
| Co-ordination of programmes between home programme and partner programmes | 47 | 46 | 47 |
| Provision of courses in a foreign language | 39 | 64 | 44 |
| Development of new concepts and contents for study programmes | 35 | 64 | 41 |
| Addressing issues comparatively | 40 | 47 | 41 |
| Use of publications in a foreign language | 33 | 64 | 39 |
| Providing knowledge on international relations or supranational organisations | 38 | 39 | 38 |
| Addressing disciplinary/theoretical discussions originating from partner country/from abroad | 37 | 43 | 38 |
| Setting up double degree programmes | 36 | 28 | 34 |
| Development of new teaching methods | 26 | 55 | 32 |
| Integration of language courses into the curriculum | 25 | 42 | 29 |
| Count (n) | (587) | (138) | (725) |

Question E6: In general, how would you rate the impact of ERASMUS teaching staff mobility on your home institution regarding the following aspects?

* Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "to a very high extent" to 5 = "not at all"

Source: University of Kassel, VALERA Teaching Staff Survey

Also, the leaders of the higher education institutions surveyed note a very positive effect of teaching staff mobility on their institution. More than three quarters believe that teaching staff mobility has contributed to the international reputation of their institution. More than half observe a positive effect on international research activities, and about half of them – surprisingly not more – each name positive effects with respect to various dimensions of teaching and learning.

Fourth, it is worth noting that 9 percent of the formerly mobile teachers are professionally active five years later in another country than the country where they had taught immediately prior to the ERASMUS supported period – in many cases in the country of their temporary teaching period abroad.

This is certainly a higher degree of *mid-career international mobility* than one could have anticipated.

Among the experts surveyed, even more than two-thirds believe that teaching abroad *increases the opportunity for international academic mobility*. Certainly, however, one cannot expect that a similar proportion of academics actually will be mobile.

The professional value of teaching abroad for *status and income looks more modest* at first glance; as a consequence of teaching abroad:

- 3 percent observe a raise of income,
- 6 percent an extension of a temporary contract, and
- 12 percent the move towards a high-ranking administrative position.

But one has to bear in mind on the one hand that the overall number of teachers reaching a higher position since the teaching period abroad has not been very high. On the other hand, more than one third of the mobile teachers surveyed state that teaching abroad enhanced their career perspectives. This suggests that a large proportion of them note smaller steps of enhancements or prospects for future enhancement as a consequence of teaching abroad.

Also, the *university leaders* surveyed present a cautious view as regards the career impact of temporary teaching abroad. 11 percent argue that career advancement is frequent and two percent that a higher income is customary as a consequence of teaching abroad. In contrast, the experts surveyed initially more frequently expect better opportunities for a higher income level (12%), a higher position at another institution of higher education (19%), and a higher rank at the same institution (44%).

Altogether, the *professional value of teaching in another European country seems to be substantially higher for academics from Central and Eastern European countries than for those from Western European countries*. This difference is far more striking for teachers than for students. To illustrate this difference for the teachers:

- 10 percent of teachers from Central and Eastern European countries, but only one percent from Western European countries note a raise of income level,
- 30 percent of the former and 7 percent of the latter perceive a contribution of teaching abroad to getting a higher rank, and
- 81 percent of the former and 53 percent of the latter report a positive impact on the overall professional development.

These differences are striking, but this finding does not suggest that the perceived professional value of teaching abroad is altogether small for Western European academics. For example, 60 percent of the Western European teachers state that teaching abroad helped improving international research

contacts. This is less frequent than among teachers from Central and Eastern European countries (80%), but, yet, it is remarkably high.

Though the professional value of teaching temporarily in another country with the help of ERASMUS is viewed as extraordinarily high, teachers, university leaders and experts surveyed by no means consider the state of affairs as more or less ideal. Critique is frequently voiced that most academics have to take care of the temporary teaching period abroad outside their regular assignments, i.e. as an additional work load, instead of integrating it into the regular work assignments. Moreover, measures are recommended by a substantial number of respondents to take temporary teaching abroad into account in any decisions as regards career advancement.

6.7 Recommendations as Regards Specific Fields

As a consequence of the findings of this study with respect to the relevance, impact and durability as well as some dimensions of effectiveness, the actors and experts invited in the second phase of the project to field-specific seminars have been encouraged to consider means how the professional value of ERASMUS student mobility could be enhanced. Moreover, the experts surveyed at the beginning of this evaluation study also have been asked to consider possible improvements.

It is interesting to note that the experts participating in the workshops suggest different strategies for enhancing the professional value of the ERASMUS supported period in another country. Each field-specific workshop has ended with a different approach for enhancement.

As regards mechanical engineering, the experts view the emergence of learning agreements for the individual ERASMUS students as not sufficient. They suggest close cooperation with partner institutions in order to identify equivalent courses as well as opportunities for students to strengthen a profile in areas of specialisation at the host university. In contrast, the representatives in the seminar covering the field of business studies do not call for tight curricular designs and learning agreements. Rather, they favour a stronger self-organisation approach of student mobility under the conditions of improved information transparency. Self-organised mobility seems to secure the highest impact on competences such as problem-solving, endurance and self-confidence.

Other than suggesting improvement of guidance and counselling before the ERASMUS stay, the fewest comments are made with regard to study provisions and conditions in the seminar about sociology. Mobility has still a predominantly individual character in this field of study which does not need a strong institutional framework. As regards the chemistry seminar, recognition is named as a main concern. The participants demand a better networking with the ERASMUS programme and consider the European Chemistry Exchange Network as major step in this direction.

Also the experts surveyed at the beginning of this study have been asked to suggest possible means of improving the ERASMUS programme and related activities at institutions of higher education. In response, they do not suggest any significant change of the character of the ERASMUS programme and the typical related activities at all, but rather consistent improvements within the given logics of the established practices in various respects: more intensive preparation, more academic, administrative and financial support for the students while abroad, better means of assessment and recognition, closer links between higher education and the employment system, more money and complicated administrative processes (application, reporting, etc.) of the European Commission, and – last not least – stronger efforts to make the benefits of ERASMUS known outside higher education.

6.8 Overall Recommendations

Taking the suggestions stated by the actors and experts into account, the authors of this evaluation study conclude that the ERASMUS programme will have better chances in the future if it becomes again more ambitious as far as the quality of the experience abroad is concerned. In the predecessor programme, the Joint Study Programme, as well as in the early years of the ERASMUS programme, strong emphasis had been placed on the curricular integration of the study experience in another country which eventually should ensure a high degree of recognition and a high academic and professional value of learning in a contrasting educational environment. Over the years, more attention has been paid to participation of large numbers and representative composition by countries, fields and socio-biographic background as well as to efficient administrative processes. Moreover, it has turned out to be difficult to assess the institutional activities for ERASMUS support according to criteria of academic quality and administrative soundness.

This evaluation study, however, shows that temporary study in another European country as such is gradually losing its uniqueness, but it continues to be viewed as potentially highly valuable. Moreover, the actors and experts see the opportunity of improving the quality of the ERASMUS experience through more targeted ways of embedding the experience abroad into the overall study programmes, whereby different models might be suitable between fields of study as well as individual study programmes and partnerships within a field of study. Thus, the time seems to be ripe for another major approach of ERASMUS student mobility, where more ambitious curricular aims will be intertwined with the financial support for mobile students.

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Since 1987, the European mobility programme ERASMUS enabled over two million students to study in another European country. The programme was and remains a success story. After a series of comprehensive evaluation studies the European Commission initiated a study on the impact of ERASMUS, notably on the subsequent careers of formerly mobile students and teachers. This study, called 'The Professional Value of ERASMUS' (VALERA), points out a paradox of continuity and change. The immediate value of the ERASMUS experience for students seems to be unchanged: the eye-opening value of a contrasting learning experience in another European country. But former ERASMUS students of the academic year 2000 report a less impressive career impact five years later than prior generations of ERASMUS students did. The authors of the study argue that internationalisation in general has progressed in Europe so much that the ERASMUS experience is bound to lose its exceptionality over time. They draw the conclusion that more ambitious curricular thrusts might be needed to turn a temporary study period abroad again into a clear 'value added'. Finally, the study shows that temporary teaching abroad, though being a short activity in the midst of the career, is highly relevant for the academics' subsequent professional activities.

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