

ERASMUS MOBILITY: STUDENTS MOTIVATION AND SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

Although the Faculty of Economics, VŠB-Technical University of Ostrava, is a part of the Erasmus programme for a long time and even we continuously make up a system of encouragements for students that should help us increase the number of outgoing students, the numbers of outgoing students do not change in general. And this was the reason to make two surveys among students. One of them was aimed to students' motivation to go abroad; the second one was focused on the students' satisfaction with exchange mobility. Both the surveys were made with the use of questionnaires among almost 200 students. The time period used for the survey was last five years.

INTRODUCTION

Faculty of Economics (EkF), VŠB-Technical University of Ostrava, is a part of the Erasmus programme for more than 10 years. During this time, after a big boom and

students' interest in exchange mobility, nowadays we face a period of stagnancy or even decreasing tendency in mobilities of students. Although we try to give our students all possible information to wake up their interest in the mobility, the numbers of our outgoing students do not change very much, in the last two year we can even say that numbers are declining.

Because we did not have any idea why this situation is happening, we asked two students from our faculty to make a survey among students that can help us to understand our students' needs, their requirements or expectations about study abroad etc.

There were made two different surveys:

- ✓ "Motivation survey" was aimed to students' attitude to the Faculty of Economics, their expectations about studies at the university in general, their information about exchange mobility. It also described their motivation and stimulation factors that have a big influence on students' decision for going or not going to an exchange stay.
- ✓ "Satisfaction survey" was aimed to students, who have already experienced the mobility abroad. This survey was focused on students' satisfaction with information before going abroad, during their exchange stay and satisfaction with the whole exchange stay after coming back.

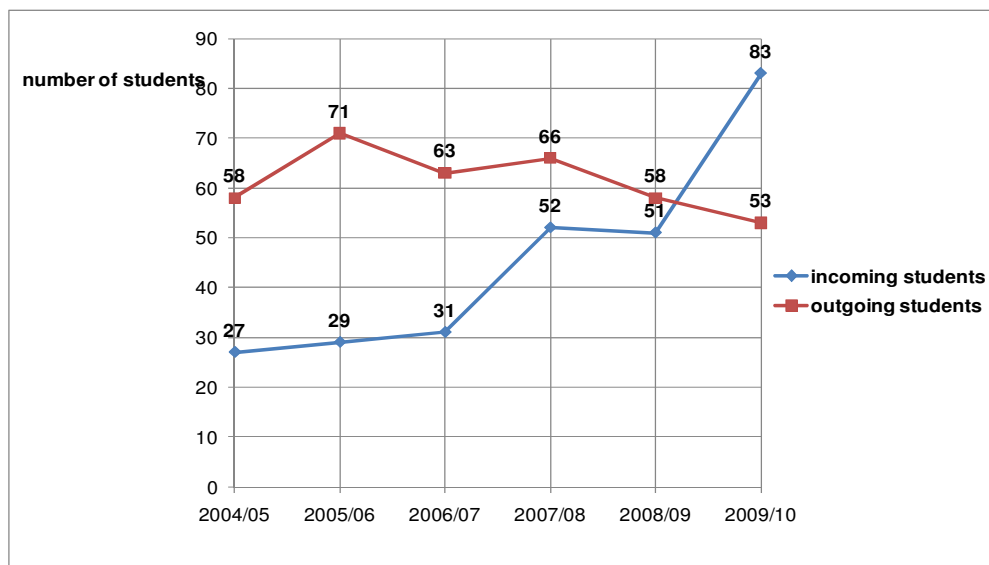
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS IN NUMBERS

- ✓ 1977 – year of foundation
- ✓ 5,500 – number of students studying at the faculty
- ✓ 15 faculty departments
- ✓ 17 Bachelor degree programmes
- ✓ 15 Master degree programmes
- ✓ 4 Doctoral (Ph.D.) degree programmes
- ✓ 1 MBA with John Moores University in Liverpool (UK)
- ✓ 8 bachelor or master degree programmes in English

PRESENT SITUATION AT THE FACULTY OF ECONOMICS

Students at the Faculty of Economics have many possibilities for an exchange study stay abroad. They can use Erasmus programme, but also the grant from the Ministry of Education of the Czech Republic, other EU programmes, such as Ceepus or Leonardo da Vinci, or faculty and university bilateral agreements. But even if they have these possibilities, the number of outgoing students (compared to the total number of students which is about 5,500 at our faculty) is very low, it is only about 1 %. Also compared to the number of incoming students, the number of outgoing students is very low (see the Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Comparison of Incoming and Outgoing Students at the Faculty of Economics from 2004/2005 to 2009/2010



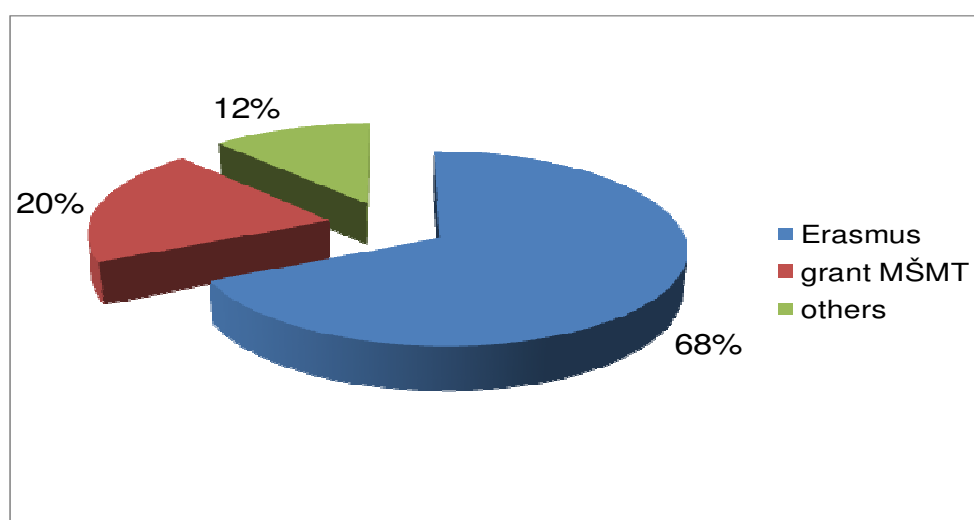
MOTIVATION SURVEY

The motivation survey was aimed not only to get some ideas how to motivate students to go abroad, but generally to their attitude to study at the university, what do they expect from this education, if the Faculty of Economics was their first

choice or how did they decide for the particular university. The other part of the survey was aimed to students' knowledge of the EU programmes, about possibilities for exchange stay at our faculty and factors that play an important role in their decision-making process.

During the survey it was shown, that 100 % of students know that as students from the Faculty of Economics, they have a possibility to study abroad, some of them were even able to name some mobility programmes (for details see Figure 2).

Figure 2 – Awareness of Exchange Study Programmes



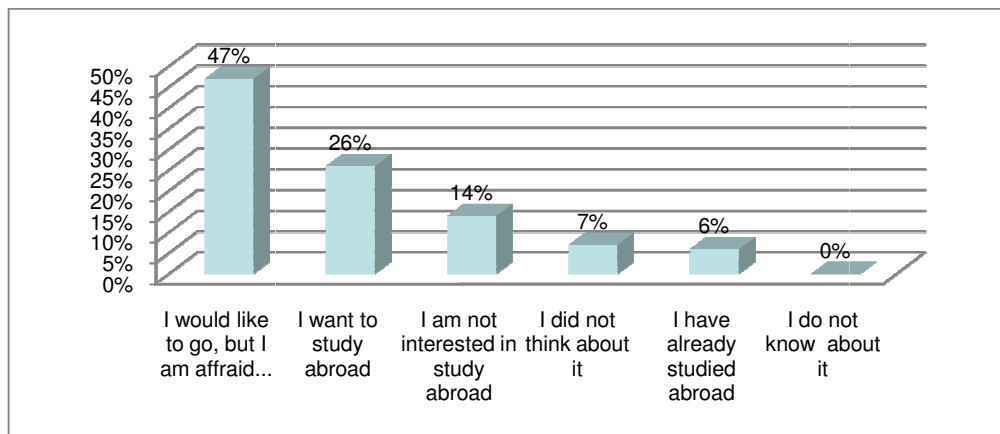
From the survey, we found out, that our students are very well informed. The most often used sources of information are faculty websites, notice boards of the International Office and personal sources – International office staff, friends and schoolmates. This is very important piece of information for us – we must focus on these sources to promote the mobility.

But even students are very well informed, they needn't to be interested in going abroad. Generally we can divide our students into 3 groups:

1. Students, who **ever wished** to study abroad or they already spent some time abroad on the mobility.
2. Students, who **never** wished to study abroad and who are **not interested** in it at all.
3. Students, who **think about going abroad but** they have some BUT...

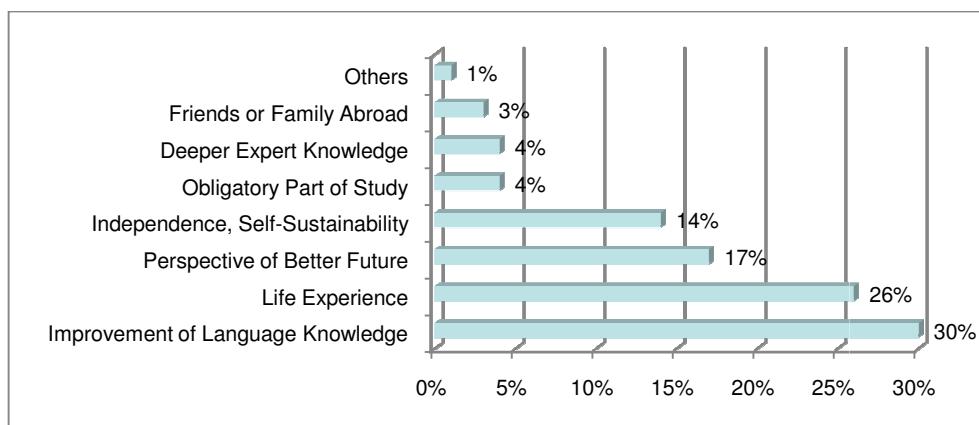
The third group of students should be our target group, here we should aim our promotion activities, information meetings and try to persuade them to change their mind. Detailed information about students' approach to study abroad is in the Figure 3.

Figure 3 – Students Approach to Study Abroad



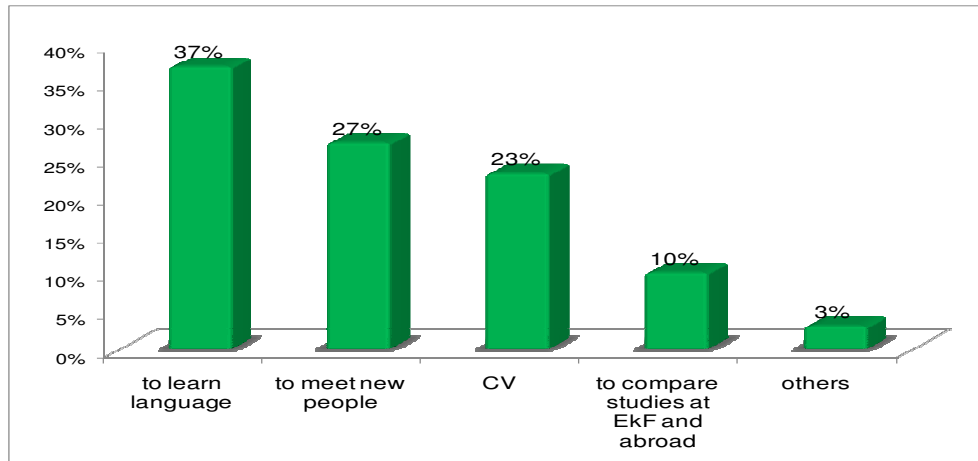
As we have our target group, we must find out, what will motivate such a student to go abroad. Whether there are some factors which will persuade him or her to study in a foreign country. The overview of motivation factors is shown in the Figure 4.

Figure 4 – Motivation Factors to Study Abroad



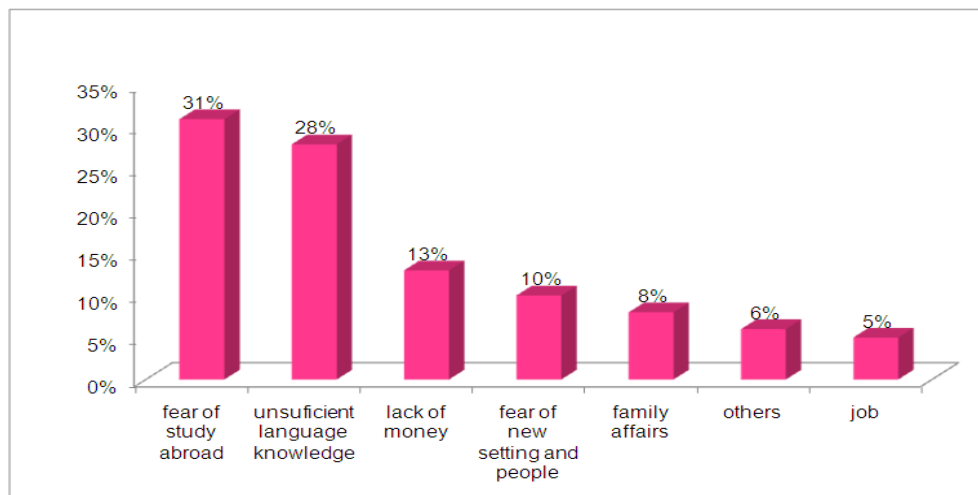
When students are comparing pros and cons of the study abroad, they also include these factors into their decision making process (Figure 5):

Figure 5 – Reasons why to study abroad



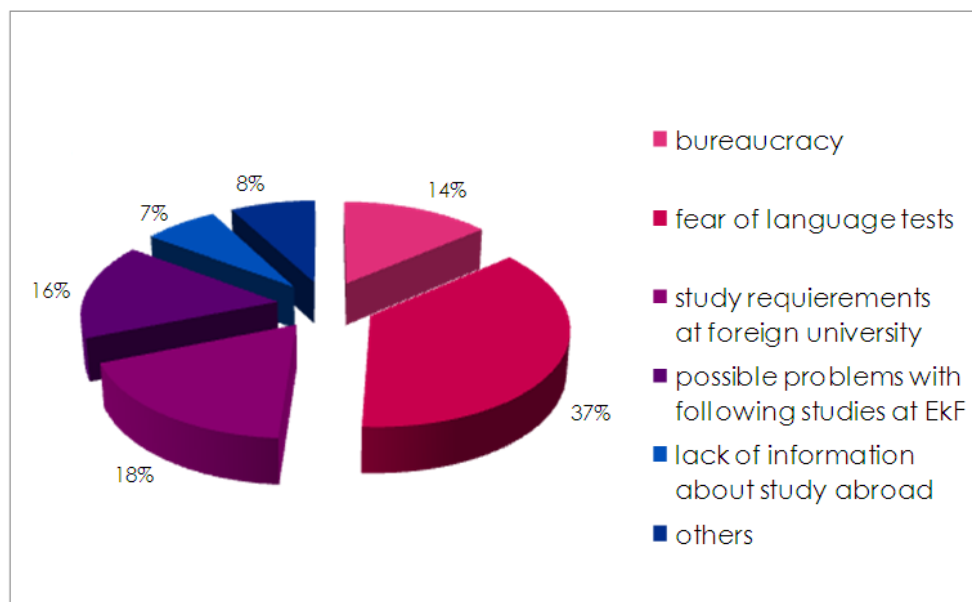
And Figure 6 shows the main reason why not to study abroad:

Figure 6 – Reasons why NOT to study abroad



But even if you persuade a student to think about exchange mobility, there are still obstacles, that can ruin your activity and that do not allow your student to go abroad. Figure 7 shows the main things, that students are afraid of.

Figure 7 – Obstacles for Study Abroad



This survey has shown us, where we should aim our activities, which sources are the most important for our students and that we must work with students from the beginning to show them all the possibilities they have.

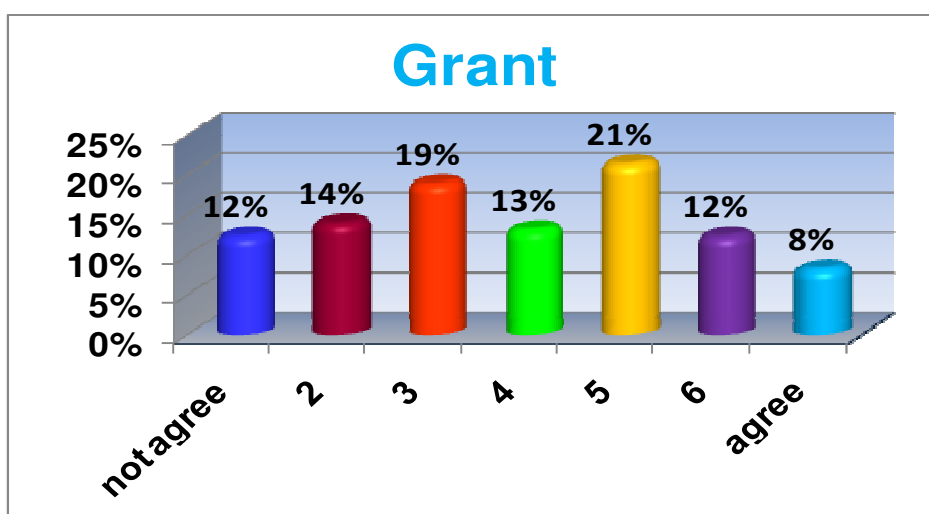
SATISFACTION SURVEY

This second survey was aimed to students who already have been abroad; we aimed to their satisfaction, information and personal and academic benefits. This survey and all the information we have gained can also serve (after revision and small adaptations) as a promotional material for other students and as a guide for those, who are not sure how to choose the appropriate host university. Students were asked about information they received from the home and host university, about accommodation, social life as well as about their studies or language knowledge.

One of the most important categories to decide to do mobility is the grant – financial support that students receive from their home university. Respondents were asked in the questionnaire if they were satisfied with the financial support they received. Most satisfied students were studying in Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland

or Greece. Less satisfied were students in Norway, Great Britain or Ireland. But generally, students were quite satisfied with the amount of money. In Figure 8 you can see the details of their answers.

Figure 8 – Satisfaction with the Erasmus Grant (Erasmus financial support was sufficient)



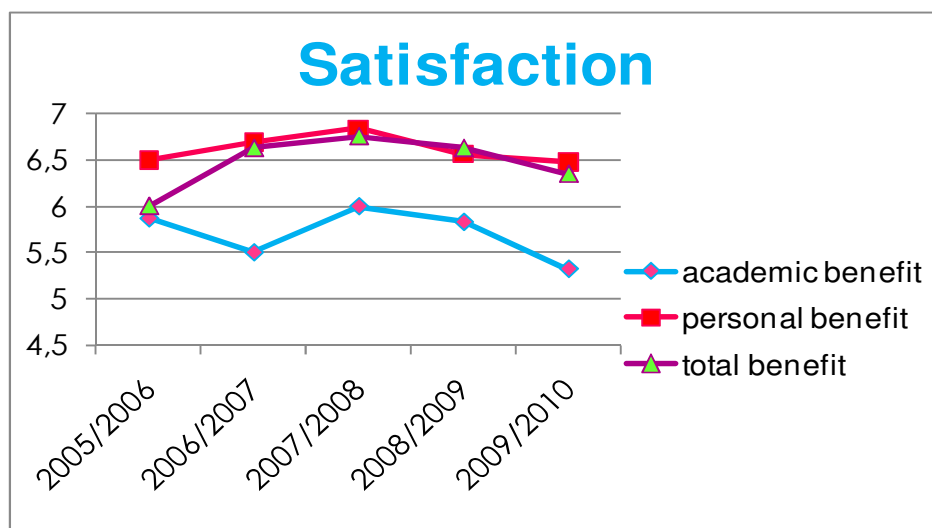
Also the table in Figure 9 can be very useful – it shows the total costs during the exchange stay.

Figure 9 – Total Costs on Study Abroad (EUR/month)

Total Costs on Study Abroad (in EUR per month).				
250-300	350-400	400-450	450-500	500-550
Poland	Great Britain	Slovakia	Ireland	France
	Greece	Germany	Belgium	
	Slovenia	Spain	Switzerland	
		Finland	Norway	
		Denmark	Portugal	
		the Netherlands		

Within the “satisfaction survey”, students were asked to evaluate their language knowledge before and after the mobility, to evaluate also their academic and personal benefit from the mobility etc. These evaluations were very high, students were really very satisfied with the mobility and almost 90 % of respondents evaluated their study stay as an invaluable and unique experience and would recommend the mobility to their friends and schoolmates. (The graph with the students’ satisfaction and the development of academic and personal benefit is shown in Figure 10).

Figure 10 – Total Benefit from Erasmus mobility



CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

We live in a modern society where travelling, studying and working abroad, foreign languages and life in a foreign country is not taken as some exception or as a fad but as a competitive advantage on the labour market. All universities and education institutions try to be internationalized and prepare their students for their future career and life. But unfortunately, students do not see this point when they are studying; they consider mobility and exchange stay to be very bureaucratic and money demanding, they underestimate themselves, do not trust in their own language and professional knowledge. Then it is up to us to persuade them that Erasmus and other programmes are made exactly for them – to find out, if they can

take care about themselves, to learn new things, to cooperate, but also to find friends and gain unforgettable experience.

Both the surveys showed our weak and strong points. If we should evaluate our results, we can say we have chosen the right direction – we know who our “clients” are, where to put effort when promoting exchange programmes etc. But still there are many things that can be improved.

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