

Competence frameworks in international student mobility



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Design: Patrycja Skalska

Photos & Illustrations: Canva

Authors:

Adriana Perez-Encinas

Daniela De Filippo

Eva M. De La Torre

Daniel Alonso

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM)

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Contact: www.project.erasmuscareers.org

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Introduction

Measuring the impact of mobility abroad on students' career development remains challenging and the support they receive from universities in identifying and assessing their competences is often rather modest (Ripmeester, 2022). The Erasmus Careers project (project no. 101049436) aims to ensure that the competences gained on mobility are recognized by students and employers and contribute to the career prospects of Erasmus+ participants. This project has been developed by the following organizations: Erasmus Student Network (ESN), Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), Expertise in Labour Mobility (ELM), The Lifelong Learning Platform (LLL), Tilburg University (TiU), and Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM). Erasmus Careers pursues the following specific objectives:

- Identification of the competences gained by students and trainees during their mobility abroad.
- Better understanding of the learning process that takes place during the International Student Lifecycle.
- Employers' understanding and recognition of the competences gained by students during mobility.
- Students' understanding and recognition of the impact of international student mobility on their career path.
- Recognition and integration in education policies of competences gained abroad.

This report aims at identifying the specific competences that students and trainees gain during their mobility abroad, based on a literature review, analysis of available quantitative data and qualitative fieldwork. Such endeavour is important to understand which competences are gained by students and trainees during their mobility abroad to support students in their learning processes abroad.

Therefore, this research report outlines the impact of international student and trainee mobility on competence development. It provides the necessary background to, later on, identify a competence inventory for international mobile students and trainees also within this WP2 (this inventory is available at the Erasmus Careers website¹:

<https://project.erasmuscareers.org/>). This analysis builds up on the results from the previous **Erasmus Skills Project**, which, among other objectives, analyzed the progress of Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes (KSAs) of university mobile students (De La Torre et al., 2021).

¹This Competence Inventory consists of several competences defined at various levels. In order to ensure its robustness, the Competence Inventory has been tested and validated with external stakeholders.

Table 1 Milestones of the WP2 covered in this research report.

TASK	MILESTONES SET IN THE PROJECT APPLICATION	RESULTS DELIVERED
Literature review	At least 40 peer reviewed articles referenced	<p>✓ 111 peer reviewed publications on competence development in international mobility – see Annex I</p> <p>NEW – open access database with the metadata and pdfs of the publications referenced</p>
	Reviewed and approved by partners in partnership meeting	✓ Reviewed and approved by partners in partnership meeting
	Data analysis report draft	Data set review of 20.000 students
Analysis reviewed and approved by partners in partnership meetings		✓ Analysis reviewed and approved by partners in partnership meetings
Focus group outlines	Focus group outline completed and shared with partners	✓ Focus group outline completed and shared with partners
Focus group reports	4 Focus groups in 4 countries with a minimum of 30 participants	✓ 8 Focus groups in 4 countries with 35 participants
	4 transcripts of the focus groups	✓ All focus group with their transcript
First draft of the Competence Inventory and Framework is validated	Internal publication shared with partners and advisory group for approval with external validation through: -focus group with students and integrated in Impact questions of ESNsurvey 2023 tested with 10.000 answers on the survey	✓ Focus group with students and integrated in Impact questions of ESNsurvey 2023 tested with 10.000 answers on the survey

Table 1 shows the milestones covered in this research report on the impact of international student and trainee mobility on competence development. Consequently, this document is organized as follows: Task 2.1 includes the methods and results of a systematic literature review (or desk research) on competence development during international mobility experiences; Task 2.2 empirically analyzes competence development through study abroad in the European context through the Eurograduate pilot survey 2018 and the ESN Survey 2020; and Task 2.3 presents the results from eight focus groups on study and trainee mobility. Finally, the discussion and conclusions sections include the concluding remarks withdrawn from this research.

2.1 Desk research on competence development during international student mobility



2.1.1 Introduction

This section describes the methodology followed and the results obtained from our systematic literature review on competence development during (study and trainee) international mobility experiences.

In order to assess and narrow down which competences are considered most important and most connected to an international mobility experience, this desk research revises past literature on the impact of international student mobility in competence development. Additionally, a bibliometric and content analysis is carried out in order to explore the context and evolution of the selected texts.

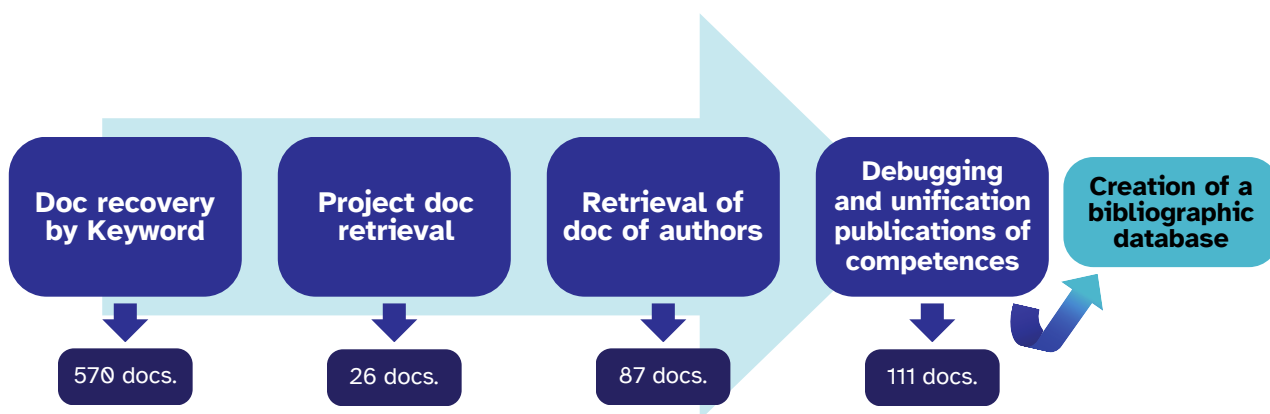
2.1.2 Search methodology for the systematic literature review: selection of documents and construction of a bibliographic database

We have focused on the Web of Science (WoS) database of Clarivate Analytics. This source has been selected because it is a benchmark of international quality, is multidisciplinary and includes different documentary sets of diverse origins and themes.

First, a preliminary search of "all databases" was carried out, but we didn't obtain valid and comparable sets of documents given the diversity of structure, content and quality of the databases included in WoS. Therefore, we have worked -as usual in bibliometric studies- with the three main databases: Science Citation Index (SCI), Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) and Arts and Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI).

Following common procedures in bibliometric studies, our search strategy is based on parallel documents searches, i.e retrieving documents through three alternative paths: keywords, publications from projects, and publications by relevant authors in the field. Figure 1 summarizes the number of documents retrieved in each search phase.

Figure 1 No. of documents retrieved in the literature search in each phase



Regarding document retrieval based on keywords, the most frequent search strategy to identify bibliography on specific concepts or definitions is to look for the most relevant terms in the title or in the summary of the publications. Therefore, we have searched for those relevant terms in the "Title" field (TI) and the "Topic" field (TS): i.e. we have looked for our key selected terms in the title, the summary and keywords of each publication. We are aware that performing a search in the "Topic" field, the results obtained are usually very broad: they include the searched terms but not all documents are necessarily related to the subject of study. On the contrary, the results obtained through the search in "Title"

are usually very specific texts, and embody a subset of the documents collected through the search in "Topic", but relevant documents dealing with the topic analyzed because they do not include the terms searched in the title.

Since the concept of "competences" can be ambiguous when retrieving documents, it has been chosen to use specific terms such as "Erasmus skills", "Erasmus program", "international mobility (AND Erasmus)" or "international mobility (AND student)". Once this search was done, the publications found were analyzed to eliminate those that were not related to the topic "competences".

Table 2 shows the number of papers identified in each search depending on the keywords used. The keyword "Erasmus skills" provided no results. Instead, the keyword "Erasmus program" provided 314 documents in the search by Topic and 56 documents in the search by Title. The documents retrieved in the search by Topic are general texts on various topics related to the Program: impact of international mobility, perception of students, perception of teachers, case studies (implementation of a specific program, assessment of mobility in a certain scientific field, experience in a specific country, etc.) - this documentary set includes 34 publications (11%) that contain the term Erasmus but do not refer to the international mobility program. In the case of the 56 documents found in the search by Title, they are also general texts (many were already included in the previous set). They are more specific and there are fewer documents not related to the topic (only 3 publications that do not talk about the Program, 5%).

As for the search combining the keywords "international mobility" AND Erasmus, showed 19 documents by Topic (there are no documents with these search criteria in the Title - see table 2). They are general texts but focused on the Programme and aspects related to

international mobility. Some talk about the relationship between mobility and employment. They are specific to the topic, but leave out anything that does not include "international mobility" and "Erasmus" in the summary.

Finally, we also searched for the keywords "international mobility" AND student, which returned 161 documents by Topic and 20 documents by Title (see Table 2). The set of publications identified in the search by Topic mention characteristics, effects, consequences, case studies, etc. on different student mobility programs. Instead, the texts identified in the search by Title are more specific than the previous set, but mention several mobility programs, not just the Erasmus one.

Table 2 No. of documents retrieved through the literature search on WoS based on keywords.

Keyword	Query field	No of documents
Erasmus skills	Topic	0
	Title	0
Erasmus program	Topic	314
	Title	56
International mobility AND Erasmus	Topic	0
	Title	0
International mobility AND student	Topic	161
	Title	20

After the first phase, we carried out complementary searches for publications resulting from research projects on the subject. To this end, the database CORDIS² was explored, and six projects related to the topic analyzed have been identified (see Table 3).

Table 3 Previous European R&D projects on competence development through international mobility.

Title	CORDIS reference
Mapping Skills and Competences; Providing Access to Knowledge, Tools and Platforms; and Strengthening, Disseminating and Exploiting Success Outcomes for a Skilled Transatlantic eHealth Workforce	https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/727552
STYLE (Strategic Transitions for Youth Labour in Europe)	https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/613256
New framework for intercultural competences at schools	https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101030992
An Educational Tool for the Assessment of Cross-linguistic and Intercultural Mediation Competences	https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101026747
Intercultural Digital Media Education for Social Inclusion of Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Youth in the Urban Migration Society	https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/841951/results/es
Enhancing skills intelligence and integration into existing PhD programmes by providing transferable skills training through an open online platform	https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/872483/results

Source: CORDIS.

²CORDIS is a database that provides information on the different calls of the EU-supported R&D activities).

With the identifier code from CORDIS, we cross-referenced the identified projects with the data on scientific publications in WoS (documents resulting from funded research must mention the funding agency and the project code in the field "Funding Acknowledgment"). In this way, new publications on the subject were recovered. More specifically, it was possible to detect that two projects (the first two on Table 3) produced 2 and 24 publications respectively, while the others had not produced publications in the Web of Science at the time of the document search (September 2022). In the last search phase, based on the consortium expertise, we identified relevant authors who have worked on competence development, identifying and considering their production in our systematic literature review. Among them the most prominent and most relevant authors in the field were the following:

- Milton J. Bennett (Portland State University) U.S.A.
- Richard E. Boyatzis (Case Western Reserve University, Department of Organizational Behavior)
- Darla Deardorff (Duke University)
- David Clarence McClelland (Harvard University, Department of Psychology and Social Relations) / (Yale University, Connecticut College) / (Wesleyan University)
- Jannecke Wiers-Jenssen (Centre for the study of professions, Oslo Metropolitan University)

87 documents related to the theme of the project have been retrieved from the search on the selected authors. Once the publications were retrieved, different tables have been prepared with all the bibliographic information of each one (title, author, publication journal, year, theme, summary, keywords, number of citations received, references cited, access to the document, etc.). Duplicate posts were then removed.

The selected set was preliminarily reviewed for the classification of each document into two categories according to its content: "competences" (necessary for WP2) and/or "learning experiences and services" (relevant for WP3). Each publication was considered very relevant, little relevant or not relevant with respect to each of these two topics after a preliminary reading. Publications that were considered not relevant in relation to both topics were removed from the study. After document assignment and debugging, a set of 174 unique publications related to one (or both) topics was identified (see Figure 1).

Once the entire documentary corpus to be analyzed was identified, a search of the full text of the documents on the internet was carried out. To this end, different institutional repositories, databases, authors' websites, applications of the academic social web (Research Gate and Academia.edu) as well as editorial pages were consulted.

The metadata of the documents were incorporated into the bibliographic manager ZOTERO (a software of free and open use) as well as the pdf of each publication. This bibliographic database is open access and available at: https://www.zotero.org/groups/4820500/erasmus_project/library. It contains 174 unique documents related to the project theme. All metadata is included and 160 pdfs have been retrieved with the full text (among the 14 missing publications, 7 documents are published in languages such as Turkish or German, without any English version).

Annex I includes the full bibliographic list corresponding to the publications under the "Competences" (111 documents) that are analyzed in this report. 2.1.3 Bibliometric analysis on publications related to competence development in international mobility environments.

2.1.3 Bibliometric analysis on of publications related to competence development in international mobility environments

Introduction

This section describes the methodology followed and the results obtained from our systematic literature review on competence development during (study and trainee) international mobility experiences.

In order to assess and narrow down which competences are considered most important and most connected to an international mobility experience, this desk research revises past literature on the impact of international student mobility in competence development. Additionally, a bibliometric and content analysis is carried out in order to explore the context and evolution of the selected texts.

In this section, we present a descriptive bibliometric study on the 111 documents on competence development in international mobility environments identified through the systematic bibliometric search described in the previous section 2.1.2.

Using the unique Web of Science publication identifier (called UT), a new search has been carried out in the database, in order to export all the information related to each document (title, authors, institutions, publication journals, year, theme, etc.) to a "csv" file to be processed and analyzed in Excel format. Of the 111 publications related to "Competences", 108 have been retrieved and analyzed (the remaining three contained errors that affected the download of bibliometric data).

The resources of the *Web of Science* database (*refine* and *analyze results* options):

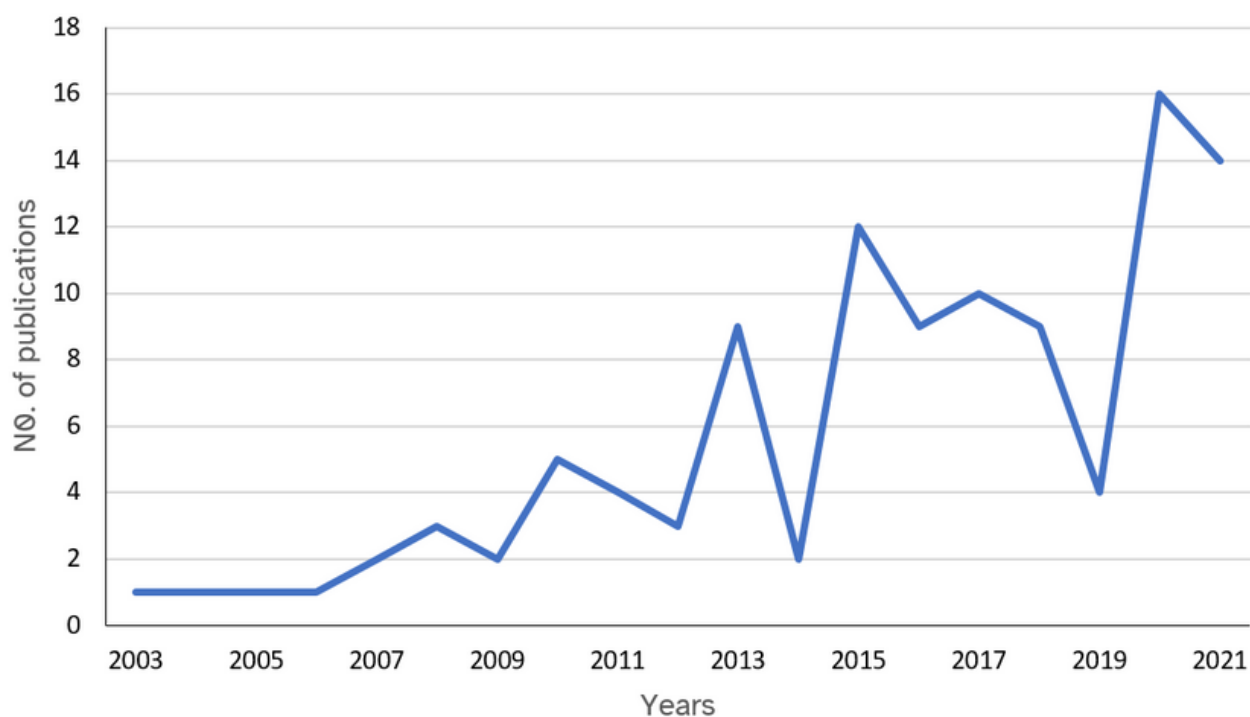
1. **Indicators of scientific activity:** show the evolution of the number of documents in a period, the journals of publication, the topics in which the journals are classified (the 250 categories in which the Web of Science aggregates the information are considered) and the availability of the document according to whether it is in open access (with its five accessibility channels) or access by license or subscription.
2. **Relevant actors:** information related to the name of authors, institutions and countries is obtained.
3. **Topics:** considering the keywords of the documents, it is possible to perform frequency counts as well as obtain clusters that group the documents from the relationships obtained by the co-occurrence of terms.

Below, we present the main results obtained from these indicators.

1) Indicators of scientific activity

Figure 2 shows the number of documents on competence development in international mobility environments published overtime (since 2003). Since 2006, the number of publications on this subject presents an unsteady increasing trend, with a peak of publications in 2020 and 2021 (these two years concentrate more than 25% of the scientific production). The year 2022 is not included in Figure 2 since our data does not include the whole year (data collections has been performed in September 2022) and its visualization could be misleading.

Figure 2 Annual evolution of the number of publications on competence development in international mobility environments (2003-2021)



Source: *Web of Science*.

Papers on the topic analyzed have been published in 77 scientific journals included in the *Web of Science* database. These include, among others, Higher Education and Journal of Studies in International Education with 9 papers each of them. Table 4 shows the journals that publish more than one document on competence development in international mobility environments.

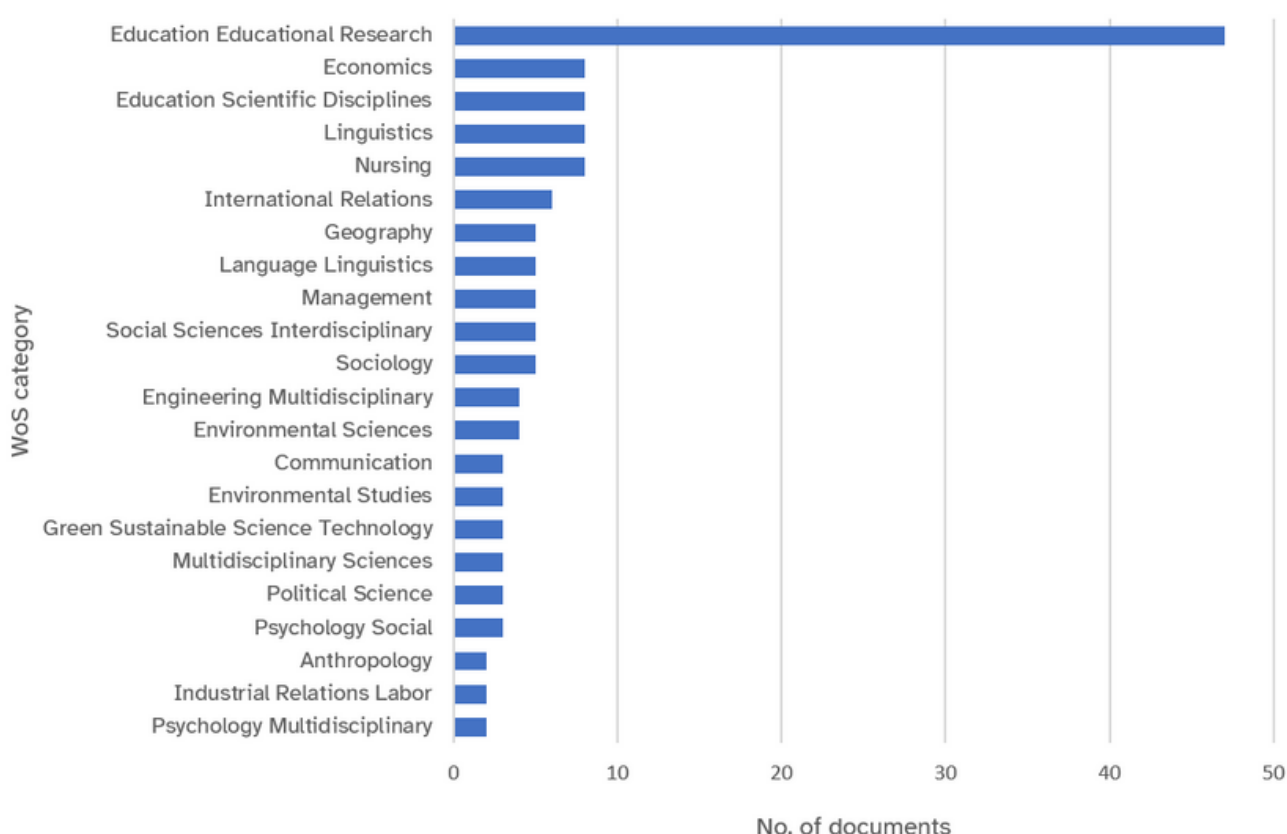
Table 4 Scientific journals with more than 1 publication on competence development in international mobility environments (2000-2022)

Publication Titles	No. docs.
HIGHER EDUCATION	9
JOURNAL OF STUDIES IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION	9
HACETTEPE UNIVERSITESI EGITIM FAKULTESI DERGISI HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF EDUCATION	4
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENGINEERING EDUCATION	3
JCMS JOURNAL OF COMMON MARKET STUDIES	3
NURSE EDUCATION IN PRACTICE	3
NURSE EDUCATION TODAY	3
BALTIC JOURNAL OF ECONOMICS	2
BMC MEDICAL EDUCATION	2
CAMBRIDGE HANDBOOK OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION	2
CAMBRIDGE HANDBOOKS IN LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS	2
EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATION	2
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MANPOWER	2
STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION	2
SUSTAINABILITY	2

Source: *Web of Science*.

According to the research areas of the journals, publications can be grouped into 42 WoS categories. However, almost half of the documents correspond to Education Educational Research (31 documents). Figure 3 shows the knowledge areas in which more than one document has been published. Since a journal may be classified in more than one subject, the total sum of the number of documents in Figure 3 is higher than the number of documents analyzed (108).

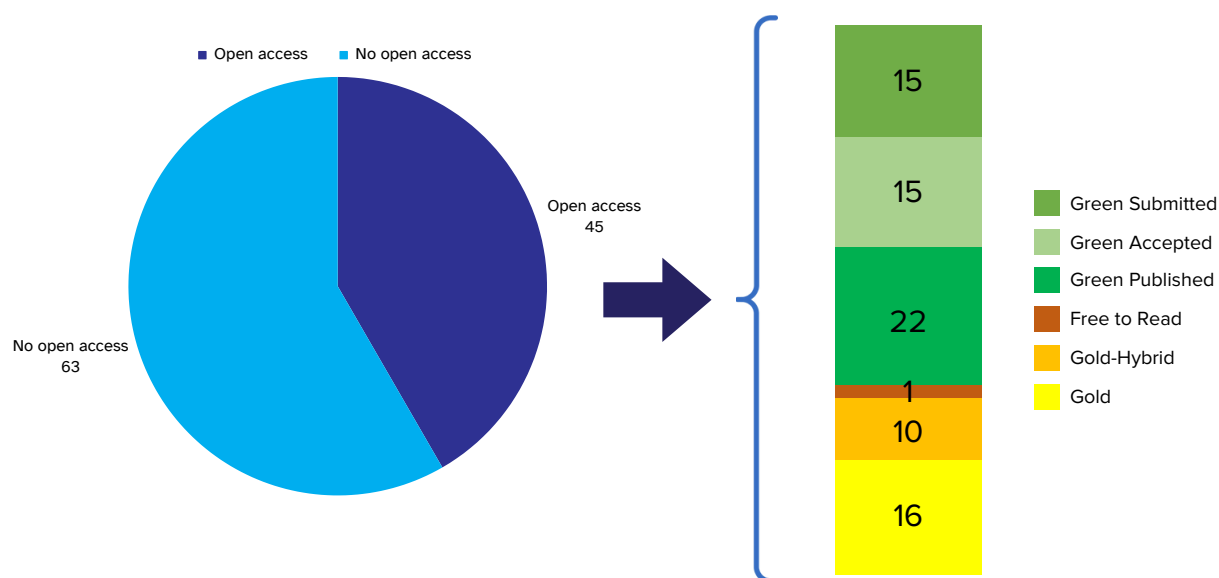
Figure 3 Knowledge areas of publications on competence development in international mobility environments (2000-2022)



Source: Web of Science.

Depending on the availability of documents, it is observed that 42% (45 publications) are in open access. Since there may be several ways of accessing the same document (e.g. gold and green routes to open access³) the sum of values is greater than the actual total (see Figure 4). Within the different access routes, the greenway stands out since publications are mostly available through institutional, thematic and/or regional repositories.

Figure 4 Access routes to publications on competence development in international mobility environments (2000-2022)



Source: Web of Science.

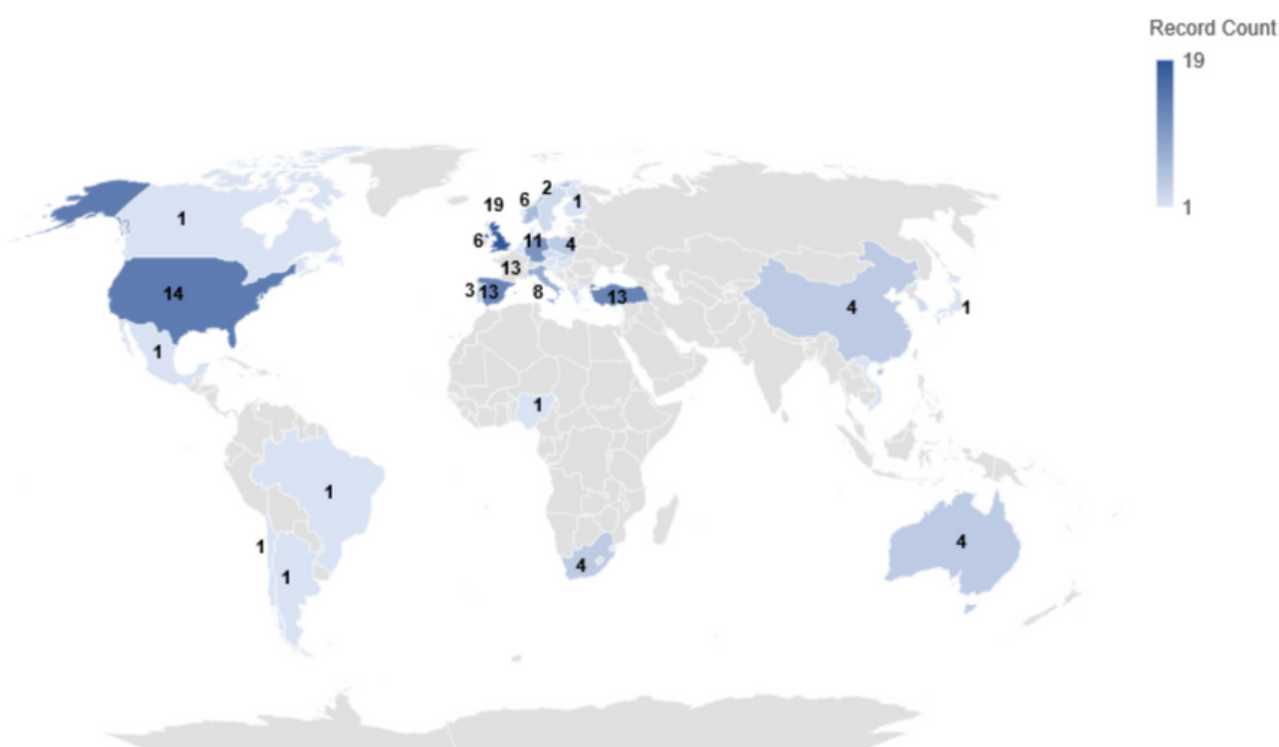
³Clarivate (2021) defines the following access routes to publications:

- **Gold:** Identified as having a Creative Commons (CC) license by OurResearch Unpaywall Database. All articles in these journals must have a license in accordance with the Budapest Open Access Initiative to be called Gold.
- **Gold-Hybrid:** Items identified as having a Creative Commons (CC) license by OurResearch but that are not in journals where all content is Gold. Hybrid Gold open access status is at varying levels of completeness, especially for newly published articles.
- **Free to Read:** The licensing for these articles is either unclear or identified by OurResearch as non-CC license articles. These are free-to-read or public access articles located on a publisher's site.
- **Green published:** Final published versions of articles hosted on an institutional or subject-based repository
- **Green Accepted:** Content is peer reviewed and final, but may not have been through the publisher's copy-editing or type setting.
- **Submitted:** Original manuscripts submitted for publication, but that have not been through a peer review process.

2) Relevant actors

According to the authors' institutional affiliation, our document selection shows that the production of countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States stands out with 19 and 14 documents respectively, followed by Spain (13 documents), Turkey (13 publications) and Germany (11 documents) – see Figure 5.

Figure 5 Countries producing publications on competence development in international mobility environments” (2000-2022)



Source: Web of Science.

We have identified 170 institutions that have authored documents on competence development during international mobility environments, with universities being the institutional sector with the greatest presence. There is a disperse and scarce production at the institutional level, given the high number of institutions publishing in this topic and the low production provided by each one of them: the most productive institutions is Duke University with only 5 documents on the subject (Table 5).

Table 5 Institutions producing more than one publication on competence development in international mobility environments (2000-2022)

Affiliations	No. docs.
DUKE UNIVERSITY	5
HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY	4
OSLO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY OSLO MET	3
UNIVERSITY OF BATH	3
UNIVERSITY OF OVIEDO	3
AKDENIZ UNIVERSITY	2
ANADOLU UNIVERSITY	2
CHARITE UNIVERSITATS MEDIZIN BERLIN	2
FREE UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN	2

Affiliations	No. docs.
GERMAN CTR HIGHER EDUC RES SCI STUDIES DZHW	2
GERMAN MED STUDENTS ASSOC BVMD	2
HUMBOLDT UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN	2
INTERCULTURAL DEV RES INST	2
IZA INSTITUTE LABOR ECONOMICS	2
NIFU	2
SLOVAK GOVERNANCE INST	2
UNIVERSITY OF BERN	2
UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE	2
UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH	2
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD	2
UNIVERSITY OF SURREY	2
UNIVERSITY OF TARTU	2

Source: *Web of Science*.

The 108 publications analyzed have been prepared by 236 authors. Among the most productive are Deardorff and Wiers-Jensen with 5 documents each. Table 6 shows the list of authors who have signed more than one publication in the period analyzed. Three of these authors correspond with the authors considered in our literature search strategy, confirming the suitability of such strategy.

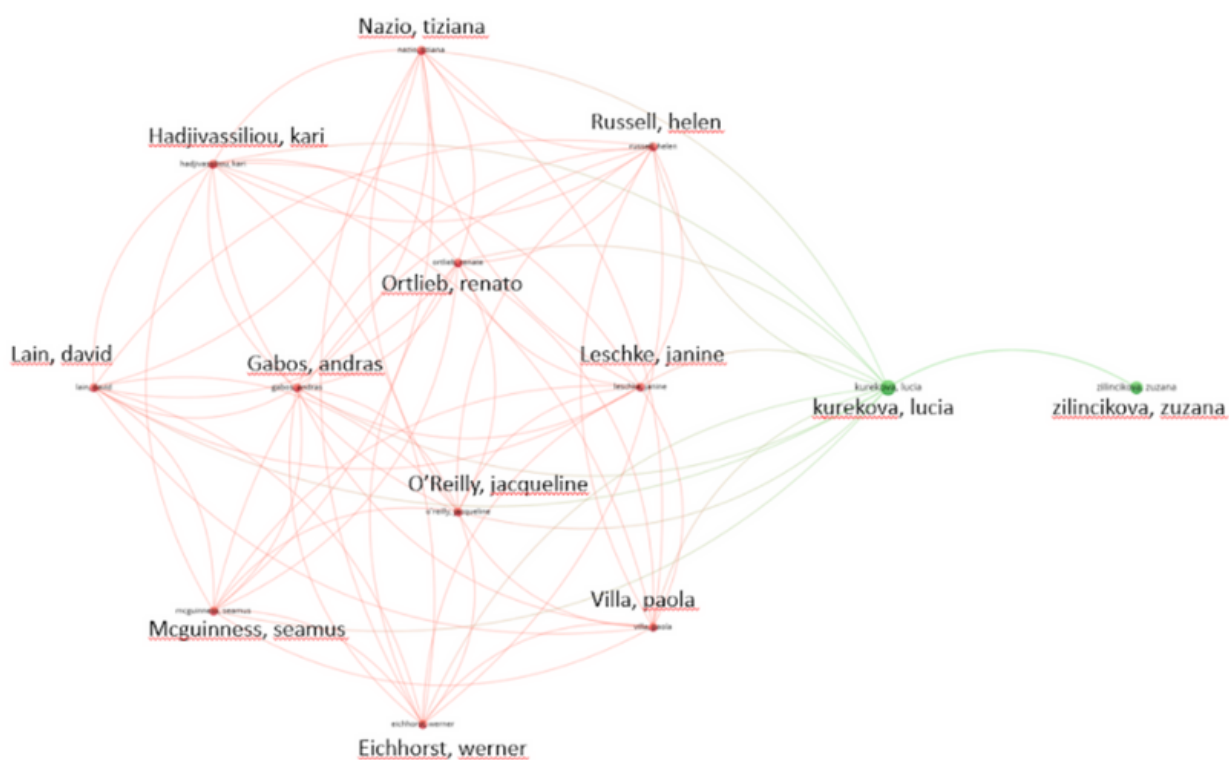
Table 6 Authors producing more than one publication on competence development in international mobility environments (2000-2022)

Author	No. of publications
Deardorff, D.K.	5
Wiers-Jensen, J.	5
Kurekova, L.M.	3
Bennett, M.J.	2
Bozorgmehr, K.	2
Ersoy, A.	2
Menzel-Severing, J.	2
Netz, N.	2
Schubert, K.	2
Tinnemann, P.	2
Yagci, E.	2
Zilincikova, Z.	2

Source: Web of Science.

Figure 6 shows the co-authorship network of the authors with the highest number of collaborations. That is, the authors shown in the figure have at least one jointly signed article with each other.

Figure 6 Main co-authorship relationships in publications on competence development in international mobility environments (>1 document)(2000-2022)



Source: Web of Science.

3) Topics

We have also analyzed the most relevant terms in our document selection by using keyword plus, i.e. the set of standardized keywords generated by the WoS database itself from the documents' list of keywords and the relevant terms in the abstracts. 376 keywords have been identified, including "migration", "higher education" and "mobility" (the most common ones in our 108 documents). Table 7 shows, for each term identified as keyword, the number of documents in which it appears as a relevant word.

Figure 5 Countries producing publications on competence development in international mobility environments” (2000-2022)

Keyword plus	Frequency	Keyword plus	Frequency
MIGRATION	14	COMPETENCES	2
HIGHER_EDUCATION	13	CONTACT_HYPOTHESIS	2
MOBILITY	10	COSMOPOLITAN	2
EDUCATION	8	DETERMINANTS	2
EXPERIENCE	8	DIVERSITY	2
ABROAD	7	DYNAMICS	2
STUDENTS	6	EARNINGS	2
IMPACT	5	EMIGRATION	2
SCIENCE	5	EXPANSION	2
EXCHANGE	4	FIELD	2
IMMIGRATION	4	FLOWS	2
INTERNATIONAL_MOBILITY	4	IDENTITIES	2
LABOR-MARKET	4	INEQUALITY	2
MARKET	4	INNOVATION	2

Keyword plus	Frequency	Keyword plus	Frequency
NETWORKS	4	INTERNATIONAL_STUDENTS	2
UNIVERSITY	4	INTERNET	2
ATTITUDES	3	LABOR	2
CHOICE	3	MAINTAINED_INEQUALITY	2
MODEL	3	NURSING_STUDENTS	2
SATISFACTION	3	PARTICIPATION	2
STUDENT_MOBILITY	3	PLACEMENTS	2
STUDYING_ABROAD	3	POLICY	2
ACQUISITION	2	SCHOOL	2
BENEFITS	2	SOCIAL_CLASS	2
BRAIN-DRAIN	2	SPANISH	2
BUSINESS	2	SUPPORT	2
CAREER	2	WORK	2
CHALLENGE	2	WORLD	2

Source: Web of Science.

The analysis of co-occurrence⁴ of keywords shows that, considering a coincidence of 3 keywords, we can identify 7 cluster of publications based on 43 terms (Figure 7).

Figure 7 Thematic clusters from the co-occurrence of keywords in publications on competence development in international mobility environments (coincidence of 3 or more keywords) (2000-2022)



Source: Web of Science.

⁴The co-occurrence is an above-chance frequency of occurrence of two terms from a text corpus alongside each other in a certain order, i.e. coincidences of groups of keywords in a set of documents.

By reducing the option of co-occurrence to two terms, we obtain a greater number of relationships between texts, and we identify 10 thematic clusters (see Table 8, as well as Figure 8).

Table 8 Thematic clusters from the co-occurrence of keywords in publications on competence development in international mobility environments: coincidence of 2 or more keywords (2000-2022)

CLUSTER 1 (12 ITEMS)	CLUSTER 3 (11 ITEMS)	CLUSTER 5 (9 ITEMS)	CLUSTER 7 (9 ITEMS)	CLUSTER 9 (7 ITEMS)
bourdieu	attitudes	brain-drain	determinants	barriers
choice	contact hypothesis	career	flows	bologna process
cultural capital	engineering education	dynamics	globalization and internationalization	business
diversity	erasmus	impact	internationalization of higher education	erasmus students
earnings	expansion	international students	internationalization of teaching	labor-market
education	international mobility	internet	learning and research	uk
field	maintained inequality	model	mobility of students	virtual mobility
immigrants	participation	satisfaction	university	
inequality	social inequality	support	work	CLUSTER 10 (3 ITEMS)
labor	student mobility			acquisition
social-class	students	CLUSTER 6 (9 ITEMS)	CLUSTER 8 (7 ITEMS)	spanish
teachers		benefits	cosmopolitanism	study abroad
	CLUSTER 4 (9 ITEMS)	higher education	emigration	
CLUSTER 2 (12 ITEMS)	cultural diversity	innovation	identification	
abroad	employability	internationalization	migration	
culture	experience	market	motivation	
erasmus program	intercultural competence	policy	networks	
europe	intercultural sensitivity	science	social networks	
exchange	mobility	sustainable development		
international clinical	return migration	world		
learning	slovakia			
nursing	university students			
nursing education				
nursing-students				
student exchange				
tertiary education				

Source: Web of Science.

Taking a look at the keywords included in each cluster, we can define the following themes:

- Cluster 1: education and socioeconomic inequality.
- Cluster 2: international student mobility programs.
- Cluster 3: international student mobility and inequalities
- Cluster 4: international student mobility impact and intercultural aspect.
- Cluster 5: mobility and employability.
- Clusters 6 and 7: institutional and socioeconomic context for international student mobility.
- Cluster 8: migration trends and networks.
- Cluster 9: mobility within EU.

Cluster 9 does not count towards this classification due to its low number of words.

2.1.4 Content analysis of publications related to competence development in international mobility environments

After reading the abstracts of these 108 publications, we determined that 23 of them are very relevant on the topic of competence development during international student mobility experiences. However, after reading the full papers, only 12 turned out to be very relevant, and 11 were excluded because at least one of the following reasons: 1) either the abstract and the title was in English, but the paper wasn't; 2) the publication dealt with competence development, but not in relation to student mobility; and 3) because it was not as focused on competences as it seemed in an origin. In this way, the content analysis carried out focuses in this final set of 12 publications (see Annex II for a full list of these 12 documents).

In order to get an overview of this set of documents, we have analyzed them by extracting the following information from the papers (see Figure 9): basic descriptors, main topic, scope, theoretical framework & methodology, competences identified, results & conclusions.

Figure 9 Basic descriptors, main topic, scope, theoretical framework & methodology, competences identified, results & conclusions



**THEORETICAL
FRAMEWORK &
METHODOLOGY**

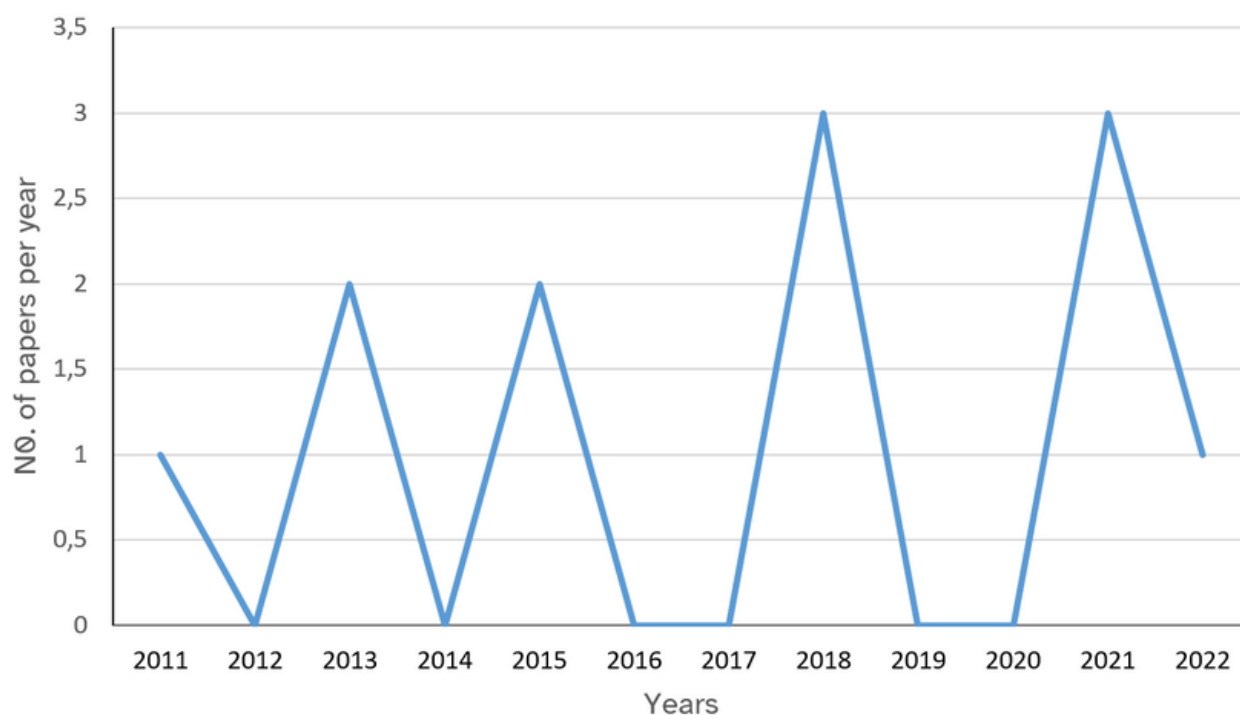
Theoretical background
Methodology: quantitative vs. qualitative
Data source
Methodological approach (e.g. econometrics) and specific method applied (e.g. OLS)
Time period
Sample size
Factors/determinants/sample descriptors

COMPETENCES

Academic gains
Cultural gains
Personal development gains
Employability gains

Starting from the basic descriptors, the evolution overtime of publications in this topic follows a rather biannual trend, with an increase in the number of papers published from 2018 onwards (see Figure 10). Also, this set of 12 documents comprises: nine are research papers, two conceptual papers and only one is a systematic literature review (see Table 9).

Figure 10 Content analysis: number of papers per year



Note: It should be noted that the data collection has been performed in September 2022, so could be more papers published that year.

Table 9 Content analysis: types of publications

Type of publication	No.
Research paper	9
Conceptual paper	2
Systematic literature review	1

As for the scope of the papers, Table 10 shows that most of the research in this topic has been carried out mainly in Europe (mainly in Nordic countries, Mediterranean countries and Anglo-Saxon countries), although three studies have also examined the case of Turkey.

Table 10 Content analysis: countries studied by the publications analyzed

Country of origin of mobility students	No. of publications
Turkey	3
Denmark	3
Spain	2
Ireland	2
United Kingdom	2
Norway	2
Finland	1
Sweden	1
France	1
Germany	1
Italy	1
Croatia	1
Nepal	1

Note: in order to properly analyze this table, please note that a single publication can study several countries at once.

Although half of the publications do not specify the type of mobility being analyzed, almost all of those that clarify it focus on Erasmus mobility, sometimes even specifying the type of program (Erasmus+ KA1, for example) – see Table 11.

Table 11 Content analysis: number of publications by type of student mobility program analyzed

Type of mobility	No. of publications
Erasmus	5
Not specified	7

Note: *in order to properly analyze this table, please note that a single publication can study more than one mobility program at once.*

Also, there is equity between studies focused on short-term (4 documents) and long-term mobilities (4 publications). There are also two papers that deal with international mobility for internships (see Table 12).

Table 12 Content analysis: number of publications by duration of the student mobility experience analyzed

Duration	No. of publications
Degree mobility	3
Credit mobility (short term)	3
Internship	2
Not specified	4

Table 13 classifies the 12 publications according to their methodology. It shows that there is parity in the number of documents using qualitative and quantitative methods. Among the quantitative methodologies, we find data collection ways such as surveys, as well as institutional data sources. On the other hand, the qualitative methods used rely on in-depth interviews, ethnographies, and systematic analysis of the literature.

Table 13 Content analysis: methodologies used by the publications analyzed*

Methodology	No. of documents
Quantitative	5 (surveys and institutional data sources)
Qualitative	5 (interviews, ethnographies, systematic literature review)

Note: we have excluded from this table the two conceptual papers, since their methodology is neither quantitative nor qualitative.

Most of the papers do not ascribe to any theory. However, there are a few that do. Deardorf (2018) explores the impact of Erasmus on rivalries between States and societies, and States that no single framework can adequately describe the complex processes involved in this issue, and therefore adopts a holistic approach. Other theoretical approaches found are phenomenological research (Jansen et al., 2021) or transactionalist theory (Mitchell, 2015).

However, Unlu (2015) produces, probably, the most relevant theoretical framework for the analysis and classification of competences developed during international student mobility experiences. Specifically, considering both the Erasmus Program objectives and participants' expectations, Unlu (2015) classifies the Erasmus's learning outcomes in **Academic Gains** (vocational knowledge, vocational experiences, and professionalism), **Cultural Gains** (learning about different cultures, education training in multi-cultural environments, and attitude toward different cultures), and **Personal Development Gains** (foreign language learning and self-confidence).

If the main competences covered in the selected papers are analyzed, it stands out that the competences related to **intercultural competence** are usually studied together: communicative competences, language skills, cultural awareness, etc. These are, in turn, the most discussed topics. Likewise, other competences in relation to student mobility have also been studied, such as employability, European identity, quality of work, etc.

Conclusions from the systematic literature review

There are several competence frameworks that can be useful for the analysis of competences developed in international student mobility, such as the KSA approach, which considers that competences have three dimensions: **knowledge, skills and attitudes** (De La Torre et al., 2022); or the one used by the European Commission (2022), which adds language skills as an independent category to the previous classification.

In any case, it can be useful to group the competences into several groups. Following the framework produced by Unlu (2015), we group the competences acquired during mobility experiences into three categories: Academic Gains, Cultural Gains and Personal Development Gains. This author focuses on students who want to be teachers, and consequently he includes the competences related to employability within the academic ones. However, other studies state that employability is a competence in itself to be considered in relation to student mobility (see for example the Competence Booklet highlight – Ripmeester, 2021). Therefore, in this study we consider it appropriate to explicitly add a fourth category that includes **Employability Gains** independently.

Table 14 shows the classification of the competences identified by the publications on international student mobility into: Academic Gains, Cultural Gains and Personal Development Gains and Employability Gains. In order to allocate the competences to each category, we have also taken into account the following frameworks: Competence Booklet highlight (Ripmeester, 2021), SkillMill: Guide for users and practitioners (Grannas et al., 2022) and the classification of Skills & Competences of the European Commission (2022).

Table 14 Content review: classification of competences developed in international mobility environments

ACADEMIC GAINS	CULTURAL GAINS	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT GAINS	EMPLOYABILITY GAINS
Educational innovation	Intercultural	Time management	Networking
Multidimensional thinking	Cultural	Openness	Collaboration
Interactive learning	Intercultural sensitivity	Listen to others	Teamwork
Language skills	Cultural awareness	Self-awareness	Quality of work
Field of knowledge's competences	Open-mindedness	Self-confidence	Digital
	Communication	Decision making & Judgement	Careers perceptions and future working lives
	Cross-cultural communication	Sense of being successful	Curriculum
	Language skills	Resilience	Language skills
		Equality understanding	Search and analysis of information
		Intelligence	Adaptability
		Sensibility	
		Empathy	
		Adaptability	
		Global mindedness	

ACADEMIC GAINS	CULTURAL GAINS	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT GAINS	EMPLOYABILITY GAINS
		Personal identity	
		Sense of belonging	
		Language skills	
		Self-expression skills	
		Reconciliation competence	
		Conflict competence	

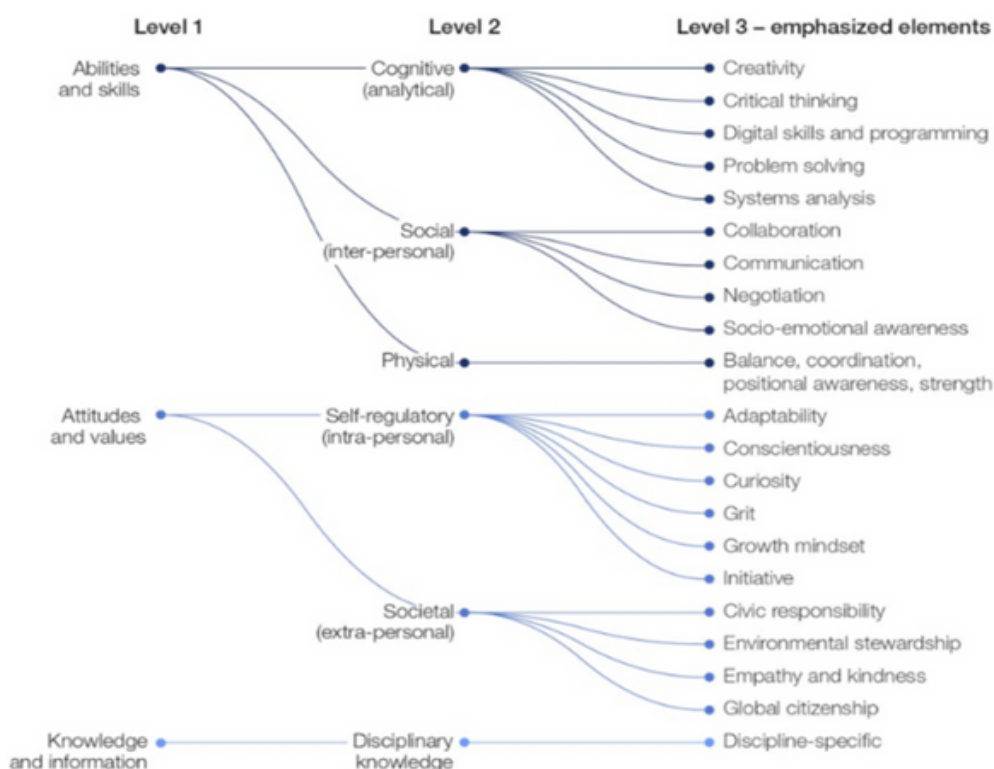
The results of our content review confirms the usefulness of this classification of competences in large groups, since the publications analysed rarely deal with a single competence, but usually focus on a set of competences that often belong to the same cluster (Academic, Cultural, Personal or Employability). It should be noted that some competences have a transversal nature across these clusters, such as the case of "language skills" which belongs to all of them (Academic, Cultural, Personal and Employability Gains).

Also, it is worth mentioning that the previous [Erasmus Skills](#) project classifies competences according to three dimensions: knowledge, skills and attitudes (De La Torre et al., 2021); and within each of these dimensions we consider that competences can be grouped in turn into the categories suggested in Table 14: academic gains, cultural gains, personal development gains and employability gains. Indeed, we find a strong connection between the competences identified in our systematic literature review (Table 14) and the clusters of KSAs suggested by the [Erasmus Skills](#) project: European

Identity and Global Citizenship, Cultural knowledge, Social skills, Curiosity/Openness attitudes, Discipline Awareness, Communication in different languages, Adaptability to Change, Teamwork in diverse environment, Planning & Organizing, and Creativity (De la Torre et al., 2021, pp. 49-56).

To better understand the categorization of competences in knowledge, skills and attitudes, we find also very useful the classification by levels carried out by the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2023) - see Figure 11. The WEF proposes this competence framework with the aim of raising the competences that are necessary to develop young people's education for the future world of work.

Figure 11 Levels of competences



Source: World Economic Forum

This Competence Inventory consists of several competences defined at various levels. In order to ensure its robustness, the Competence Inventory has been tested and validated with external stakeholders.

Coming back to our systematic literature review, Figure 12 depicts which topics and competences are most studied in the publications analyzed: the higher the repetition frequency of a keyword, the larger such keyword is represented in the word cloud.

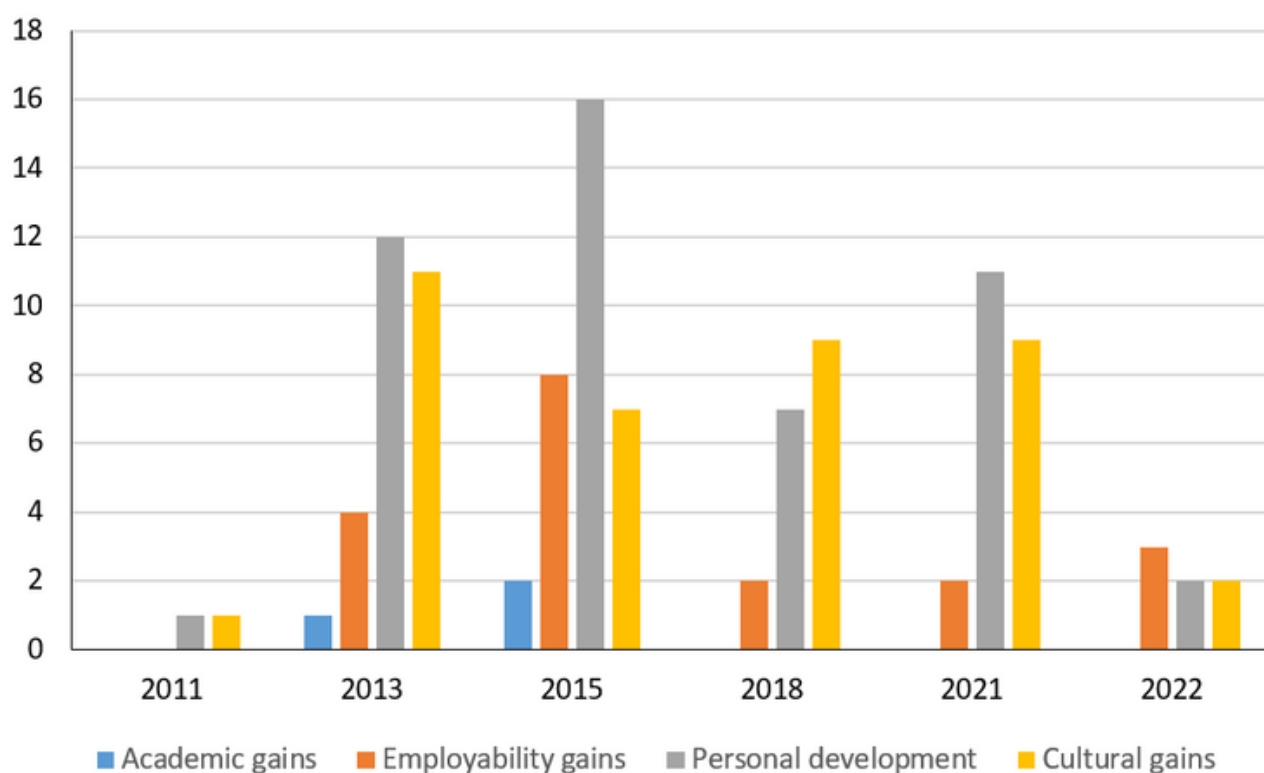
Figure 12 Content analysis: word cloud of keywords



The analyzed publications that focus on cultural gains focus on issues such as global interconnectivity and dominant imaginaries (Koelbel, 2018), the impact of educational exchanges on relations between populations of rival States and societies (Deardoff, 2018) and students' insights on cultural changes when studying abroad (Ilter, 2013). About personal gains, Mitchell (2015) explores the impact of Erasmus mobility on participants' European identity. In the case of academic gains, researchers explore issues such as the learning outcomes of international clinical placements (Jansen et al., 2021). Finally, the study of the employability gains is carried out through the analysis of the employability of students who did degree mobility (Wiers-Jenssen, 2012; Wiers-Jenssen & Storen, 2021).

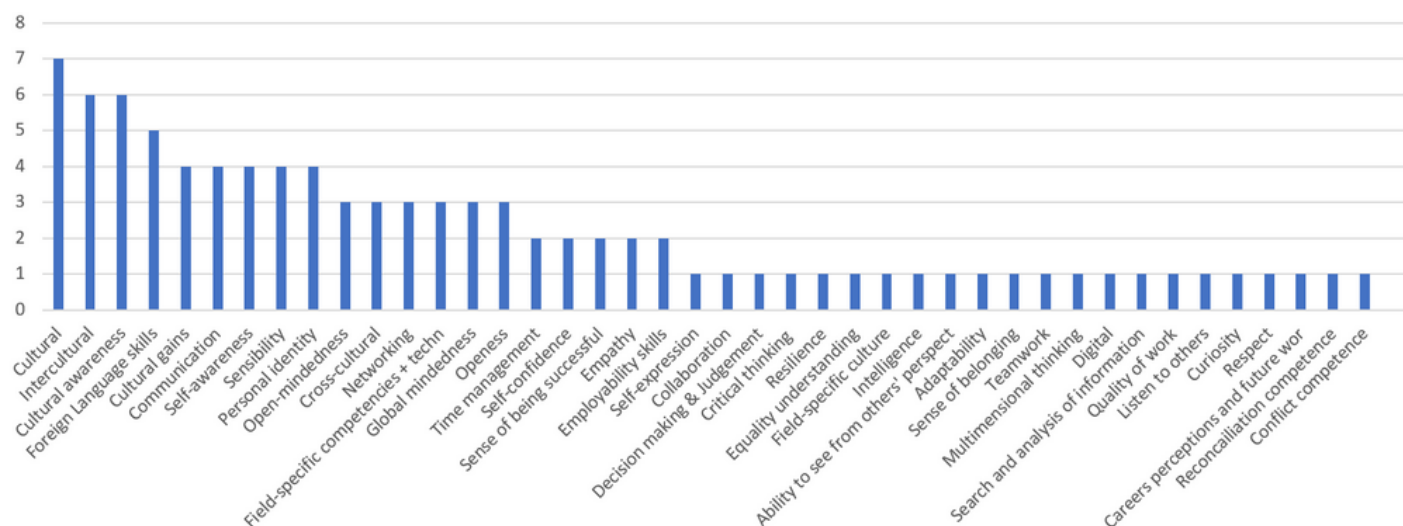
According to figure 13, most of the revised publications focus on personal development and cultural gains, followed by employability gains. The academic gains are hardly analyzed.

Figure 13 Content analysis: number of publications that analyze each competence category per year



On the other hand, Figure 14 presents the number of publications that consider each of the competences identified in our set of documents. Although we categorize a greater variety of competences within "Personal Development" (Table 14), most of the publications analyzed focus on "Cultural Gains" competences (Figure 14).

Figure 14 Content analysis: number of publications that analyze each competence



There is a consensus among practically all the articles analyzed in the fact that mobility experiences are positive for students, since it supports the development of the competences indicated above (see Table 12). However, the main students' motivations for participating in a mobility program are the following: knowing new cultures, improving their foreign language level, increasing their self-confidence or reinforcing their academic development.

Likewise, the literature examined affirms that the Erasmus+ program responds to its objectives, since among other aspects, it creates spaces for cooperation and social interaction among individuals from different cultures, its participants act as ambassadors of intercultural dialogue, and it improves academic knowledge or prepare competent citizens (Unlu, 2017). However, there are certain publications that focus on its harmful

aspects, pointing out that the interaction of local and foreign students in the academic field should be increased (Cirkvenčič & Lončar, 2021), and that mobility programs are not affordable for every student and are affected by (and affect) inequality issues (Koelbel, 2018).

2.2 Data Analysis



After studying the contributions that have been made in the academic literature on competence development in student mobility experiences, in this section we intend to complement it with an analysis of institutional surveys carried out in the field of student mobility. This is done in order to contrast theory with empirical data and to observe whether there is a development of competences in student mobility experiences. This data analysis provides further insights into skill development through study abroad in the European context, taking into account both individual-level treatment effects and context-specific effects.⁵

2.2.1 Introduction

On the website of the University of Leeds, study abroad is promoted in the following way: ‘Studying abroad allows you to explore your academic degree from a completely different perspective while gaining invaluable skills that will enhance your future employability and personal development.’⁶ While this is an example of only one higher education institution, the promotion of study abroad as a valuable way for gaining skills that are relevant in the working life after graduation is used by many other institutions across the world. However, much of the literature on the outcomes of international student mobility relies on study designs whereby the responses of international students are not compared to students who did not study abroad. This is unfortunate, as it is likely that students who participate in study abroad programmes are not a random group of students, but constitute a rather selective group of students that might already be prone

⁵ With individual-level effects we mean how specific individual skills might influence skill development, with context-specific effects we point to the influence and importance of contextual factors (e.g. higher education institution, higher education system, labour markets, etc.) on developmental outcomes.

⁶ (https://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/10300/study_abroad/1156/why_study_abroad, accessed 22 September 2022)

to develop certain skills anyhow. Building further upon the typology developed by Nicolai Netz (2021) on the heterogeneous effects of study abroad, in this report for the Erasmus Careers project we aim to provide further empirical insights into skill development through study abroad in the European context, taking into account both individual-level treatment effects (gender, migration background and social origin) and context-specific effects (country of graduation), based on the Eurograduate pilot survey and the ESN Survey 2020.

2.2.2 Methodology

Data of the 2018 Eurograduate pilot survey

We use the 2018 Eurograduate pilot survey, a survey conducted with higher education graduates in Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Croatia, Lithuania, Malta, and Norway. Importantly, different case-countries used different sampling methods, which means the final study population could be somewhat different. For example, in Austria, Czech Republic and Norway stratified sampling was used, in Germany a stratified cluster sample, in Croatia, Malta and Lithuania full population sampling, and in Greece no sample was drawn at all. Given these different sampling methods, we analyse the data for each country separately. Within each final sample, we particularly focus on the cohort that graduated one year before taking the survey, in order to minimize the time between the study period abroad and the self-reported development of competences. The final sample size is 11,023 respondents. Table 15 provides an overview of respondents per survey country.

Table 15 Number of respondents per survey country. Sample from 2018 Eurograduate pilot survey.

Austria	1,120
Czech Republic	1,015
Germany	914
Greece	866
Croatia	4,278
Lithuania	1,164
Malta	506
Norway	1,160

Variables

The dependent variables are all measured on a 1 to 5 Likert scale, ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘to a very high extent’, indicating to what extent graduates considered their study programme to be a good basis for developing their (1) professional competences (the respective question asked whether graduates considered their study programme a good basis for starting to work); (2) social skills; (3) entrepreneurial skills; (4) literacy skills (defined as e.g. writing reports, handbooks, articles or books); (5) managerial / leadership skills; and (6) personal development.

Our analysis surrounds two independent variables: a dichotomous variable which captures whether the respondent studied abroad during their studies (0 = no, 1 = yes), and a dichotomous variable capturing whether the respondent did an internship abroad during their studies (0 = no, 1 = yes).

We controlled for several confounding variables in our analysis, based on the existing literature on international student mobility. First, we focused on three classical sociological markers that constitute individual-level treatment effects. More precisely, we included gender (0 = female, 1 = male), migration background (0 = no migration background, 1 = first generation migrant, 2 = second generation migrant, one parent born abroad, and 3 = second generation, both parents born abroad), and social origin, using parental education as a proxy (0 = both parents higher educated; 1 = one parent higher educated, 2 = first generation student). Second, we controlled for age at graduation, which was captured as a categorical variable in the dataset (0 = up to 24 years old, 1 = 25-29, 2 = 30-34, 3 = 35-39, 4 = 40-49, 5 = 50 and older). Third, we included four study characteristics control variables, namely the level of graduation (0 = Bachelor, 1 = Master), the study field in which they graduated (1 = education, 2 = arts and humanities, 3 = social sciences, journalism and information, 4 = business, administration and law, 5 = natural sciences, mathematics and statistics, 6 = information and communication technologies, 7 = engineering, manufacturing and construction, 8 = agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary, 9 = health and welfare, 10 = services), their enrollment status (full-time = 1, part-time = 0), and the type of higher education institution (1 = university, 0 = non-university).

An overview of descriptive statistics can be consulted in table 16.

Table 16 Descriptive statistics of the sample

Variable	%	Range	N
Professional competences			10,725
1 - not at all	15.2		1,631
2	16.1		1,726
3	25.0		2,677
4	21.9		2,347
5 - To a very high extent	21.9		2,344
Social skills		1-5	10,761
1 - not at all	10.3		1,104
2	16.5		1,780
3	26.3		2,835
4	26.7		2,872
5 - To a very high extent	20.2		2,170
Entrepreneurial skills		1-5	10,705
1 - not at all	22.3		2,384
2	23.2		2,487
3	25.3		2,709
4	17.6		1,887
5 - To a very high extent	11.6		1,238

Variable	%	Range	N
Literacy skills		1-5	10,734
1 - not at all	11.3		1,208
2	17.4		1,866
3	24.6		2,644
4	26.8		2,881
5 - To a very high extent	19.9		2,135
Leadership skills		1-5	10,760
1 - not at all	19.9		2,142
2	21.2		2,285
3	27.2		2,930
4	20.1		2,160
5 - To a very high extent	11.6		1,243
Personal development		1-5	10,741
1 - not at all	8.2		881
2	11.4		1227
3	21.4		2,303
4	30.0		3,218
5 - To a very high extent	29.0		3,112

Variable	%	Range	N
Participation in exchange		1-2	10,900
No	81.9		8,932
Yes	18.1		1,968
Participation in internship		1-2	10,818
No	90.6		9,799
Yes	9.4		1,019
Gender		1-2	10,897
Male	37.1		4,040
Female	62.9		6,857
Educational background		1-3	9,689
First generation graduate	55.1		5,339
Second generation graduate – one parent is graduate	24.6		2,385
Second generation graduate – both parents are graduate	20.3		1,965

Variable	%	Range	N
Age at graduation		1-6	10,781
Up to 24	52		5,603
25 to 29	31.2		3,360
30 to 34	7.1		764
35 to 39	3.4		366
40 to 49	4.8		516
50 plus	1.6		172
Migration background		1-4	10,188
No migration background	79.7		8,123
First generation . Graduated in a country not born in or lived at age 16	4.3		435
Second generation – one parent born in different country	9.6		979
Second generation – both parents are born in different country	6.4		651
Level of highest degree		1-2	10,900
Bachelor	51.6		5,626
Master	48.4		5,274

Variable	%	Range	N
Study field		1-10	10,896
Education	10.2		1,113
Arts and humanities	9.3		1,016
Social sciences, journalism and information	10.9		1,189
Business, administration and law	20.9		2,274
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistic	7.1		772
Information and communication technologies (icts)	5.2		571
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	18.7		2,042
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	2.7		289
Health and welfare	11.8		1,290
Services	3.1		340
Enrolment status		1-2	10,900
Full-time student	84.9		
Part-time student	15.1		

Variable	%	Range	N
Type of higher education institution		1-2	10,900
University	75		8,170
Non-university	25		2,730
Country		1-8	10,900
Austria	10.2		1,114
Czech Republic	9.3		1,010
Germany	8.4		912
Greece	7.9		861
Croatia	39.2		4,272
Lithuania	10.7		1,162
Malta	3.8		411
Norway	10.6		1,158

Analytical strategy

We first analysed the data descriptively, in order to get an overview of whether any reported developed skills differ between those graduates with international experience and without. We relied hereby on non-parametric tests, given the ordinal nature of the dependent variables and the fact that tests on the assumption of normality indicated the data was not normally distributed.

For our main analysis we estimated ordered logit models and multinomial logistic regressions to examine how the probability of developing specific skills vary depending on whether a graduate participated in an international experience during their studies. The independent variables studying abroad and doing an internship abroad were regressed on the odds of developing professional competences, social skills, entrepreneurial skills, literacy skills, leadership skills and developing personally throughout the studies. The choice for either ordered logit models or multinomial logistic regression models depended upon the fit statistics of the models, that is, how good the statistical model fits the data at hand. If the fit statistics indicated in a majority of countries a poor fit for e.g. the ordered logit models, we used multinomial logistic regression models. We indicate this clearly in the tables, by presenting alternative models in italics and indicating the model on top, adding also some grey shading. The multinomial logistic regression models always report two models which respectively estimate a negatively reported impact (1 or 2) or positively reported impact (4 or 5) versus a baseline category of a score of 3 – which might indicate a ‘medium impact’.

2.2.3 Results

Descriptive results

In the descriptive analyses, we analysed all countries together. This analysis reveals that although there seem to be **no significant differences** in the development of **professional competences** ($U = 8761651$, $p = .09$), **social skills** ($U = 8523311$, $p = 0.38$), **literacy skills** ($U = 8398879,5$, $p = 0.16$), and **personal development** ($U = 8433006,5$, $p = 0.19$) through student exchanges, exchange students differ **significantly** in the **development** of entrepreneurial skills ($U = 7926443$, $p < .001$), and **leadership skills** ($U = 8221224$, $p = 0.00$).

A similar pattern can be observed when looking at those with an international work experience compared to those that did not do an internship abroad. No significant differences are found in the development of **social skills** ($U = 5011223,500$, $p = 0.44$), literacy skills ($U = 4829298$, $p = 0.40$), **leadership skills** ($U = 4753491,500$, $p = 0.05$), and personal development ($U = 5047720$, $p = 0.19$). Nevertheless, the analysis indicates significant differences in the development of **professional skills** ($U = 5226879$, $p = 0.0$), and **entrepreneurial skills** ($U = 4586778$, $p = 0.0$).

Importantly, however, these descriptive results do not control for potential confounding variables, which is what we do in the next section.

Multivariate analysis

Table 17 presents the results of the multivariate analyses, whereby we control for confounding variables. To facilitate interpretation of the table, the asterisks indicate whether a result is statistically significant or not. When the value of an odds ratio is below 1, it indicates a negative relationship – namely that those who did participate in an exchange / internship abroad are less likely to indicate to have developed a certain skill during their degree, whereas a value above 1 indicates a positive relationship – namely that those who did participate in an exchange internship abroad are more likely to indicate to have developed a certain skill throughout the study programme.

Table 17 Logit and multinomial logistic regressions

	Professional competences (LR)	Social skills (LR)	Entrepreneurial skills (MLR)		Literacy skills (LR)	Leadership skills (MLR)		Personal development (LR)	
			-	+		-	+	-	+
Austria			-	+		-	+	-	+
Participation in exchange abroad (ref: no)	0.80	1.07	1.34	1.35	0.99	0.96	1.02	3.07**	1.17
Participation in internship abroad (ref: no)	1.28	1.42	0.80	0.73	0.76	0.82	0.60	0.43	1.20
Model fit	0	0	0		0	0		0.01	
Pearson	0.342	0.146	0.178		0.07	0.115		0.948	
Nagelkerke R ²	0.116	0.059	0.228		0.058	0.208		0.078	
N	1,074	1085	1076		1082	1085		1083	

	Professional competences (LR)	Social skills (LR)	Entrepreneurial skills (MLR)		Literacy skills (LR)	Leadership skills (MLR)		Personal development (LR)	
			-	+		-	+		
Czech Republic			-	+		-	+		
Participation in exchange abroad (ref: no)	1.12	0.97	1.48	0.86	0.92	2.18*	1.47	0.79	
Participation in internship abroad (ref: no)	1.11	1.36	0.43*	1.34	1.95*	0.48	1.18	1.32	
Model fit	0	0	0		0	0		0	
Pearson	0.299	0.685	0.209		0.159	0.202		0.363	
Nagelkerke R ²	0.058	0.121	0.175		0.141	0.143		1.02	
N	962	971	961		970	970		971	

	Professional competences (LR)	Social skills (LR)	Entrepreneurial skills (MLR)		Literacy skills (LR)		Leadership skills (MLR)	Personal development (LR)	
			-	+	-	+		LR	-
Germany			-	+	-	+	LR	-	+
Participation in exchange abroad (ref: no)	0.81	1.24	1.29	2.46**	1.39	1.41	1.63	2.21	1.54
Participation in internship abroad (ref: no)	1.47	0.96	0.72	0.71	0.89	0.85	0.81	0.88	0.57
Model fit	0	0	0		0		0	0.006	
Pearson	0.096	0.065	0.133		0.041		0	0.085	
Nagelkerke R ²	0.064	0.074	0.195		0.131		0.167	0.089	
N	868	881	876		881		883	882	

	Professional competences (LR)		Social skills (LR)		Entrepreneurial skills (MLR)		Literacy skills (LR)		Leadership skills (MLR)		Personal development (LR)
	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	
Greece					-	+			-	+	
Participation in exchange abroad (ref: no)	1.12	0.97	1.48	0.86	1.16	0.93	0.93	0.93			0.93
Participation in internship abroad (ref: no)	1.11	1.36	0.43*	1.34	1.13	1.29	1.29	1.29			1.29
Model fit	0.028	0	0.05	0.006	0.016	0.001					
Pearson	0.285	0.408	0.739	0.135	0.202	0.063					
Nagelkerke R ²	0.042	0.06	0.075	0.049	0.143	0.057					
N	816	818	814	818	970	814					

	Professional competences (LR)		Social skills (LR)		Entrepreneurial skills (MLR)		Literacy skills (LR)		Leadership skills (MLR)		Personal development (LR)
	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	
Croatia											
Participation in exchange abroad (ref: no)	1.13	0.92	1.09	0.87	1.15	0.84	1.84*	1.31	0.88	0.75	0.79
Participation in internship abroad (ref: no)		0.80	1.00	0.94	0.91	1.09	0.61	0.70	1.08	1.20	1.05
Model fit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pearson	0.25	0.006	0.181	0.03	0.092	0.091					
Nagelkerke R ²	0.066	0.05	0.054	0.041	0.049	0.025					
N	4,071	4,071	4,063	4,060	4,072	4,065					

	Professional competences (LR)		Social skills (LR)		Entrepreneurial skills (MLR)		Literacy skills (LR)	Leadership skills (MLR)		Personal development (LR)
	-	+	-	+	LR			-	+	
Lithuania					-	+			LR	
Participation in exchange abroad (ref: no)	1.05		1.07		0.96	0.66	0.84		0.89	0.66
Participation in internship abroad (ref: no)	1.29		1.11		0.93	1.14	1.11		1.18	1.60
Model fit	0.04		0		0		0.036		0.001	0.001
Pearson	0.1		0.223		0.278		0.274		0.411	0.246
Nagelkerke R ²	0.044		0.073		0.112		0.044		0.06	0.061
N	789		792		783		791		792	791

	Professional competences (LR)		Social skills (LR)		Entrepreneurial skills (MLR)		Literacy skills (LR)	Leadership skills (MLR)		Personal development (LR)
	-	+	-	+	LR			-	+	
Malta					LR					
Participation in exchange abroad (ref: no)	1.36	1.51	0.65	0.55	1.28		0.55	1.02	1.01	0.79
Participation in internship abroad (ref: no)	1.07	2.28	2.11	2.09	0.81		1.67	1.61	2.07	0.83
Model fit	0.034		0.162		0.017		0.011	0.005		0
Pearson	0.187		0.368		0.043		0.053	0.79		0.013
Nagelkerke R ²	0.158		0.135		0.093		0.098	0.159		0.131
N	400		401		397		398	401		396

	Professional competences (LR)	Social skills (LR)		Entrepreneurial skills (MLR)		Literacy skills (LR)	Leadership skills (MLR)		Personal development (LR)
Norway		-	+	-	+		-	+	
Participation in exchange abroad (ref: no)	1.00	0.89	1.01	0.97	0.88	0.92	1.18	1.07	0.92
Participation in internship abroad (ref: no)	0.99	0.91	1.08	1.11	0.98	0.73	1.00	0.83	0.90
Model fit	0	0.156		0.007		0.003	0.01		0
Pearson	0.302	0.288		0.136		0.12	0.167		0.095
Nagelkerke R ²	0.057	0.051		0.069		0.041	0.066		0.065
N	1,106	1,106		1,102		1,103	1,106		1,103

Source: Eurograduate 2018, own calculations; controlled for gender, migration, study level, type of enrollment, type of higher university; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ *** $p < 0.001$; LR = logistic regression, MLR = multinomial logistic regression

The results in table 17 show that overall, there is limited evidence that those who participate in an international student exchange or internship throughout their studies report differently about the skills and competences developed throughout their higher education degree, which includes their international experience, compared to students who did not go abroad. However, there are some exceptions. The findings indicate, surprisingly, that Austrian students who went to study abroad are more likely to report a negative impact of their study career on personal development. Furthermore, our results suggest that Czech students who participated in an international internship are more likely to report the development of literacy skills throughout their study programme, and

they are less likely to report no significant impact of their study programme on their entrepreneurial skills. In addition, Czech students that participated in study abroad are much more likely to indicate that they had no effect of their study programme on leadership skills. Among German students, we observe that those who went abroad for study purposes report more development of entrepreneurial skills compared to graduates who did not go on exchange. Nevertheless, a substantial interpretation of this finding should happen cautiously as the alternative model's results are not significant. Furthermore, both findings might be the result of the composition of the sample according to the study fields. In the German sample, for example, the share of students in the sample who graduated in education, arts and humanities, or the social sciences, journalism and information, which are disciplines where less entrepreneurial skills might be developed, is only 11%, whereas this share is much higher in the other case countries. Overall, it is quite likely that these results are spurious results, leading to a conclusion that we do not find significant relationships between participation in exchanges/internships abroad and differences in the development of various skills and competences.

Data of the ESNsurvey 2020

ESN regularly organizes non-probability surveys, whereby students all over Europe are asked to complete an online questionnaire. This leads to a quite heterogeneous sample in terms of the profile of respondents, as no random selection took place. In order to cope with the heterogeneity of the sample and to truly approximate the impact of an exchange period, we decided to limit our sample to (1) native students (students who

have the same nationality as the country where their home institution is located); and (2) students who went abroad in 2018-2019 or the first half of the 2019-2020 academic year. We did so to reduce recall bias, as well as to avoid any bias related to experiencing a study abroad period during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our final sample hence consists of 3,299 respondents.

Operationalization

From the ESN survey, we used six variables capturing the impact of an Erasmus stay abroad. These variables were all measured on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1=Strongly disagree, 2= Rather disagree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4= Rather agree, 5= Strongly agree. The analyzed statements include: (1) "I improved a foreign language", (2) "I developed my soft skills", (3) I improved my intercultural skills, (4) "I enhanced my future employability in my home country", (5) "I enhanced my future employability abroad". Furthermore, we checked for the impact of Erasmus on the professional network which was measured by the same scale reaching from 1 - 5 and grasped by the statement "I built up a professional network".

Additionally, we descriptively analysed several demographic variables to give an idea about the composition of the sample. First, age is measured continuously by the question "What year were you born in?". Second, gender was measured by "How do you identify yourself?" with the answer possibilities: "A woman", "A man", "Non-binary", "Gender non-conforming", "Gender fluid", "Other", and "Prefer not to disclose". As in the sample the categories of gender fluid, gender non-conforming, non-binary and other have no more

than fifteen cases, to not distort the analysis, these categories were merged, constituting 1,2% of the sample. Third, household income was measured by the question “When you were under the age of 18, would you consider your family household income to be:” and respondents could choose from the following answer possibilities “Below average”, “Slightly below average”, “Average”, “Slightly above average”, “Above average”, “Prefer not to disclose”. Finally, whether parents attended higher education themselves was asked in the following way: “Did any of your parents or guardians attend university?”. Participants could answer “Yes”, “No”, “Don’t know”, or “Prefer not to disclose”.

Next to control variables of demographic nature we also decided to descriptively analyse the sample in terms of exchange and study characteristics. The type of exchange was measured by the question “How did your mobility take place?” with the possibility to indicate “Physically”, “Virtually”, or “Blended (combination of virtual and physical learning activities)”. The satisfaction with the social life abroad was measured by “How satisfied were you with the social life experienced during your mobility?”. Respondents could indicate their corresponding satisfaction on the following five point Likert scale “1 - Very dissatisfied, 2 - Dissatisfied, 3 - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4 - Satisfied, 5 -Very satisfied”. Similarly, the students’ integration in the local community was measured by “How well did you feel integrated into the local community?” with the following scale as answer possibility: “1 - Totally not integrated, 2 - Not integrated, 3 - Neutral/Unsure, 4 - Integrated, 5- Totally integrated”. Furthermore, we controlled for the study level of respondents which was measured by the question: “What was/is your study level during your stay abroad?” with the answer categories “Bachelor or equivalent”, “Master or equivalent”, “Doctorate (PhD) or equivalent”, and “Other, specify”. Due to not enough

cases in the category of PhD, we decided to recode study level as a binary variable keeping only the categories of Bachelor and Master. Lastly, we controlled for the study field of respondents using the question “In which of these disciplines does your study programme fit best?”. Answer possibilities were “Education”, “Arts and humanities”, “Social sciences, journalism and information”, “Business, administration and law”, “Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics”, “Information and Communication Technology”, Engineering, manufacturing and construction”, “Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary”, “Health and welfare”, and “Services”.

Sample description

The majority (67.4%) of the sample is female, and about 23 years old. However, the oldest person in the sample was born in 1952 and the youngest in 2002. Most students went abroad during their bachelor (73.8%); studied business, administration and law (23.1%); and 82.5% went physically abroad. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents come from academic families with parents who attended higher education themselves (59.3%). The self-reported household income is mostly indicated as ‘average’ (41.3%) to ‘slightly above average’ (30.2%). Less than a fifth of the sample reports a household income that is below average. Thus, most of the respondents in the sample come from families belonging to the financially better-off segments of society, which is a widely reported finding in the academic literature (see e.g. Netz 2021 for a recent overview). A further description of the sample is given in table 18.

Table 18 Descriptive statistics. Sample from ESN 2020

Variable	Mean	SD	Range	N
Impact on language development	4.44	0.77	1-5	3,253
Impact on Soft Skills	4.27	0.72	1-5	3,258
Improvement intercultural skills	4.44	0.65	1-5	3,281
Enhance future employability in my home country	3.87	0.92	1-5	3,222
Enhance future employability abroad	4.03	0.83	1-5	3,235
Impact on professional network	3.19	1.14	1-5	3,182
Age	23.43	2.9	17-68	3,284
Satisfaction with social life abroad	4.29	1.02	1-5	3,289
Integration in local community	3.61	0.99	1-5	3,286

Variable	%	Range	N
Parental education		0-1	3,237
No HE	40.7		1,317
HE	59.3		1,920
Household income		1-5	3,155
Below average	6.1		191
Slightly below average	12.3		388
Average	41.3		1,303
Slightly above average	30.2		954
Above average	10.1		319
Mobility type		1-3	3,290
Physically	85.2		2,804
Virtually	0.9		30
Blended	13.9		456
Gender		1-3	3,271
Female	67.4		2,205
Male	31.4		1,026
Other	1.2		40

Variable	%	Range	N
Study level		0-1	3,299
Bachelor	73.8		2,436
Master	26.2		863
Study field		1-10	3,298
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	2.9		94
Arts and humanities	21		691
Business, administration and law	23.1		762
Education	6.8		225
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	13.4		441
Health and welfare	7.2		239
Information and Communication technologies	4.3		143
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	8.3		273
Services	1		32
Social Sciences, journalism and information	12.1		398

Analysis

In the sample, responses on the investigated concepts of language-, soft-, and intercultural skill improvement and enhancement of employability at home and abroad are heavily skewed to the right, showing a very strong positive effect. Most respondents indicate that they rather- or strongly agree with the statements. Notable is that enhancement of employability in the home country seems to be the least affected in comparison. A one-way ANOVA (not presented) shows that the high impact of Erasmus on the tested skills and employability items do not statistically differ between respondents with parents who attended higher education and respondents who are the first generation in their family studying at university. We cannot conclude whether the skills and employability items differ by gender or household income as the data could not meet the statistical assumption of homogeneity of variance. Given the skewed nature of the data as well as the number of missing values on most of the variables, no further multivariate analyses were conducted.

Conclusion

The results presented above provide limited evidence for a direct link between study or internships abroad and the development of (1) professional competences; (2) social skills; (3) entrepreneurial skills; (4) literacy skills; (5) managerial / leadership skills; and (6) personal development when using the Eurograduate survey data, which allows to include a control group of non-mobile students, which is vital to make any sound comparisons and firm conclusions.

Nevertheless, the Eurograduate data also has its drawbacks: graduates report on the influence of their entire study programme on these skills, which for some of them includes international experience, but they were not asked directly for the link between international experience and developing certain skills.

The ESNsurvey did ask for this link directly, and shows that overall respondents document a positive impact on **linguistic, soft** and **intercultural skills** as well as on employability and graduates' professional network. However, we have to keep in mind here that the respondents, being affiliated or somehow connected to ESN, very likely compose a very specific kind of group of individuals who might be more prone to think positively about their exchange experience.

The fact that all scales are skewed to the right is very likely an indication of this. In order to improve our understanding of the link between international experience and the development of skills, we need data that tracks students before and after the exchange experience, including also a control group of students who do not go abroad. In addition, focus groups and in-depth interviews could also provide valuable information on this assumed link.

2.3 Focus Groups



2.3.1 Introduction

To complement the desk research and the data analysis, the Consortium has carried out eight focus groups (FGs) with students and trainees. These FGs were organized in Belgium (ESN), Spain (UAM), Greece (AUTH) and the Netherlands (TiU), to collect qualitative input on the competences that students gain during mobility and understand which competences are considered to be most important from the student's perspective. This qualitative input complements the desk research (Task 2.2) and data analysis (Task 2.3) in the elaboration of our Erasmus Career's competence inventory.

2.3.2 Methodology

Eight focus groups (FGs) were carried out in 4 countries: Belgium (ESN), Spain (UAM), Greece (AUTH) and the Netherlands (TiU). FGs were organised separately for students and for trainees, so each one of the four institutions organizing the focus groups organised two FGs in which a total of 35 students and trainees participated in both. All FG participants were students or trainees that were abroad between 2 and 6 months.

In all FGs a consent form was shared with the participants before starting the interviews, as a prerequisite for the use of information. Such consent form is a clear privacy and confidentiality statement on how the data provided during the FGs will be stored and used within the project (see Annex IV).

Below, we present the instructions provided to the FGs facilitators, in order to guarantee that the same methodology was followed in all the 8 FGs.

- Collect basic information on participants: see document “ECareers_WP2_Focus groups_Subject Information”.
- Participants were recruited after sending an email to students at each university who had been on Erasmus inviting them to participate.
- Face-to-face discussion, if possible. If not, a virtual focus group could be organized.⁷
- Language: English.
- Focus groups were recorded and transcribed, participants were made aware of this before the FG⁸.
- A report with the conclusions per partner. A template document has been created for the reporting.
- A comfortable environment was provided, with circle seating.

The Research Team

1. Moderator

Main mission: To conduct and maintain the discussion facilitating group interactions

- Skillful in group discussions
- Uses pre-determined questions
- Establishes permissive environment

⁷ Of the 8 FGs carried out, 5 were face-to-face and 3 were online.

⁸ Transcripts are available upon request.

2. Recorder / Rapporteur (Assistant Moderator) Skills

Main mission: To sum up and present the most significant topics resulting from discussions)

- Help with equipment & refreshments
- Arrange the room
- Welcome participants as they arrive
- Sit in designated location
- Take notes throughout the discussion
- Operate recording equipment
- Do not participate in the discussion
- Ask questions when invited
- Give an oral summary
- Debrief with moderator
- Give feedback on analysis and reports

Conducting a Focus Group (useful info)

1. Establish a welcoming and open environment with some basic ground rules:

- Emphasize there are no right or wrong answers to the questions.
- Ask participants to listen respectfully to each response.
- Have all attendees turn off cellphones.
- Require that only one person speak at a time.

2. **Role of Moderator:**

- Facilitate the conversation.
- Present questions in a conversational style, one at a time, and allow processing time if needed.
- Probe deeper into responses by providing appropriate prompts.
- Manage the conversation to encourage equal time for all participants.

3. **Role of Recorder:**




- Record focus group basics such as date, time, topic, and number of participants.
- Briefly summarize responses including both positive and negative points of view.
- Capture interesting quotes and note non-verbal communication that may be useful.
- Assist the moderator in monitoring time.
- Emphasize there are no right or wrong answers to the questions.
- Ask participants to listen respectfully to each response.
- Have all attendees turn off cellphones.
- Require that only one person speak at a time.
- Remind that participants should feel free to express themselves so they should not feel forced to reply if they do not want

4. **Moments of the focus:**


- Reception of the students. Everyone will have a paper with their name and if it is possible and appetizer such as cookies water, coffee, etc.
- Introduction to the main concept of the focus group. Why are we here?
- Presentation of participants and moderator.

- Beginning of the subject: the moderator asks initial questions about the knowledge of the Erasmus program and the reasons that led them to start the program.
- Discuss the focus of the meeting. Start showing the Erasmus skills division of the ‘Knowledge, skills and attitudes’ and after that, start with the open-ended questions (see next point). Table 19 classifies the competitions according to the KSA approach (De La Torre et al., 2022) which classification will be taken into account.

Table 19 Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes for mobility-related competences

 KNOWLEDGE	 SKILLS	 ATTITUDES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sociolinguistic awareness • Technical skills • Selfawareness • Cultural knowledge • Educationatontext 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analytical skills • Problemsolving • Activity design • Teamwork • Organizational skills • Communication skills • Negotiation skills • Language skills • Adaptability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence • OpenMindedness • Proactivity and Engagement • European identity • Equality & equity • Transcultural understanding

ERASMUS SKILLS

 Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

- Closure of the discussion and revision of main conclusions. As a proposal, the moderator can ask each of the participants to highlight or sum-up the discussion from the focus group with their own words. First, the participants can have 1-2 minutes of reflection about it (maybe some time to write it down, if they like) and then share it with the group. Finally, the moderator does a short summary of the full discussion.
- Thank you words and a voucher or little reward for each participant.

The question script of the FGs was divided into the following blocks: (1) initial expectations, (2) impact of mobility experience on personal development, (3) impact on study experience, (4) impact on professional life and (5) a general review. Figure 1 presents the questions included in each block (also available in Annex III).

Table 19 Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes for mobility-related competences

INITIAL EXPECTATIONS

- Why did you choose to go abroad (for studies or traineeships)?
- What are the most important competences/skills that you gained during your mobility period?

IMPACT ON STUDY EXPERIENCE

- In what way do you think this experience was valuable for your university career?
- Were studies/lessons/teaching carried out differently than in your home country?
- Which differences were valuable for you and which not? Can you mention any example?

GENERAL REVIEW

- Could you please give some recommendations to students who are going to study abroad, on how they can maximize their experience for their future career?
- Has the mobility experience met your expectations?

IMPACT ON PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- How has the mobile experience impacted your personal development?
- Could you give examples of what you learnt during your mobile experience?
- How would you describe your adaptation process during your mobility experience?

IMPACT ON PROFESSIONAL LIFE

- How do you think that your mobility experience will impact your professional life?
- During the mobility period, did your expectations on what jobs you would like to do change?
- How will you use the mobility experience in your professional career (e.g. job applications etc.)?
- Did you receive any guidance by the university in developing your professional career in relation to your international experience?
- Do you think additional support is needed? If so, what kind of support?

2.3.3 Results

This section contains the preliminary results. These results have been extracted from the information collected in the observation sheets and from the notes taken by the moderators of the FGs.

Table 19 Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes for mobility-related competences

Number of participants	35
Time abroad of the participants	Between 2 and 6 months
Gender of participants	Mixed
Academic disciplines	Mixed
FG of students	4
FG of interns	4
Average duration	1 hour and 10 minutes

Initial expectations

The motivations for participating in a mobility experience are similar across countries, regardless of the type of participation: as a student or as an intern. These include, among others: to meet other people, to learn about another culture, to know what it feels like to live independently, to gain autonomy, to improve languages (mainly English, but it is not

the only one), and to enhance the employability skills. In other words, the personal motivations are more important than the academic ones (Jacobone & Moro, 2014). Additional motivations that the FGs participants pointed out are the opportunity to study in other universities and educational systems. Some decided to go abroad because the Erasmus mobility offered them an opportunity to travel that they did not have before. In the case of mobile trainees, the issue of employability is significantly more important than for those who participated in a study mobility experience. Trainees generally place employability related issues first when talking about their motivation to move abroad, together with their personal development motivations.

In summary, the motivations most mentioned as initial expectations to go abroad are: to develop language skills, to get acquainted with foreign educational systems, and to acquire/improve competences related to personal development (see next section).

Impact on personal development

Both students and interns value having gained independence, autonomy and having stepped out of their comfort zone. All these are competences related to personal development. Also, they acknowledge that being exposed to socializing and leaving behind their shyness is important to them. It stands out positively that, during mobility, students and interns may be less concerned of being judged, because after the mobility period they will leave the host country and will not meet most people again: this makes them feel free.

Among the FGs participants there were also specific cases who had problems socializing at the beginning of their mobility. Some of the participants hold the view that a longer duration of the mobility period would help in this sense, because it takes time to socialize. On the contrary, others believed that one semester was enough time for the duration of the mobility experience.

Reflections on international experience

The integration and the social aspects of the mobility experience do not only support the development of personal skills, but also cultural competences. This section focuses on aspects related to socialization and interactions in the host country.

Several FGs participants pointed out that they perceive a gap between mobile students and local students: although they made friends during their mobility experience, they did not feel fully integrated into the universities that hosted them. Furthermore, young mobile trainees experienced more difficulties to integrate than young mobile students, since on Erasmus studies it is easier to spend time with other Erasmus students, while on Erasmus internships there is not always that possibility.

In addition, most of the people who go abroad interact with students from countries other than their own, but also have a safe group with several people of the same nationality with whom to "rest" and be able to speak in their mother tongue. Such a pattern is probably due to wanting to have a connection with one's roots, looking for spaces of comfort among so much adaptation to the strange. Likewise, once they have

returned to their countries of origin, the people they met during Erasmus with whom they continue to maintain the most contact are those of the same nationality. Furthermore, there are also several students that go abroad and only interact with people from their home country.

Language is also sometimes an issue for those whose mobility experience takes place in non-Anglo-Saxon countries (with a native language different to English). On the one hand, those who need to take native language classes in the host country; on the other hand, others initially try to learn the native language but end up communicating in English.

According to the FGs participants, how positive the mobility experience turns out depends a lot on the productivity and open-mindedness of the mobile student/trainee. Students mention the need to have certain previous skills to participate in Erasmus mobilities. For example, there are some who felt lonely and for whom “be left on your own” was the biggest challenge. Housing was another big issue and students believe that institutions should provide some support in this area.

Participants became more appreciative of their culture of origin during their period abroad, and, in general, increased their awareness of cultural differences. There are several students from southern Europe who even became aware of many prejudices and stereotypes towards them. There is even a student who participated in an internship in central Europe who claimed to suffer racism from his employer, since he reproached her “south European attitude”.

In the academic aspect, young participants in Erasmus studies observe differences in the teaching methods applied in their home and host countries. Students tend to prefer the host country model when these differences are mentioned though problems with group work or, in general, to adapt to different educational models were reported. Such culture shock is shown, for example, in the way of communicating with teachers or in how normalized it is in some countries, unlike in others, to copy in exams.

In the case of the trainees, they did not have academic experience as such, since they were doing internships, so their experience is more related to their professional life and is described in the following section.

Impact on professional life

Most FG participants believe that experiencing international mobility will improve their CV: an employer may perceive it as a guarantee of a certain level of foreign language skills, or mobile students gain experience and values that make them stronger candidates.

Also, some participants believe that Erasmus specially facilitates working in international companies or working abroad. In fact, several of the trainees interviewed focused on networking for this last purpose.

In the case of interns, they consider their Erasmus experience as the beginning of their working life: it improves their employability outcome because it is a work experience that

they can include in their CV. Interns also believe that employers see this experience as added value for their profile and they see it as a positive aspect in job interviews and job search.

General review of the Erasmus+ Program

In general, FGs participants make a very positive evaluation of the Erasmus program, highlighting among its most positive aspects the opportunity to learn about foreign countries' cultures. In fact, some participants participate in Erasmus Internship because they enjoyed the Erasmus studies experience. However, the two mobility experiences are different. A FG participant pointed out an interesting observation on a difference between both programmes: in the case of Erasmus studies, there are a lot of international students, including students from the home country, which makes it possible to stick to the home culture; however, during an Erasmus internship, interacting with locals is needed.

Nevertheless, there are specific FG participants who highlight that Erasmus is not the best experience of a lifetime, so it is better not to generate that expectation on future mobile students/trainees. The aforementioned statement shows that some participants are not so satisfied, although they do not delve into it. Furthermore, looking at the internship mobility experience, there are some participants who believe that the skills they developed during their internship would also have been acquired in their country of origin.

There are several FG participants who have no complaints towards their home university about the management of the Erasmus, but that they had not been given sufficient information prior to their departure. In general, students highlight a lack of information about Erasmus from the university and lack of promotion of it. Students feel that they have to search for almost all the information for themselves and believe that during the whole process the interaction with the university and the university support was poor. Almost all the participants seem to be disappointed by the amount and quality of the involvement of their home university in their experiences abroad: they felt very little support from their university before, during and after the Erasmus experience. However, there is a particular FG participant that went through a tragic event during his mobility period, in which his university did support him. Some students would welcome a broader variety of host countries.

After discussing their mobility experience in the FGs, students consider that it would be positive for Erasmus students if universities promoted contact with other Erasmus students who belong to the same sending university and with former Erasmus students to act as mentors. Also, some would reduce contact with the home university during the mobility period.

The main results of the FGs collected in this document are summarized in Figure 16.

Figure 16 Main results of FGs

INITIAL EXPECTATIONS

Reasons to go abroad:

- Are mainly related to personal growth, language learning and, especially in the case of internships, increasing their employability

IMPACT ON PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- The most developed competences during Erasmus are autonomy, independence, social skills, language skills, employability or flexibility
- It is important to have these skills beforehand to be able to adapt to situations and develop them

PERSONAL LIFE

- Most people who do Erasmus think that this experience will improve their employability
- After the Erasmus internship, in the work interviews employers have highlighted this experience

IMPACT ON INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

- There is not a full integration of Erasmus students in the host universities
- They tend to get together more with other Erasmus students than with local students
- There are language barriers
- The students tend to prefer the host country educational model than the model of their country
- The student's behavior also varies in each country. It could be a shock for the Erasmus students

IMPACT ON INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

- For most people, the experience is positive, but not for everyone
- Someone who does the Erasmus as a student are so satisfied that they do it again as an internship
- Students highlight a lack of information about Erasmus from the university
- They believe that it would have been positive for their experience to have had a mentor at their host university

DISCUSSION

This discussion section collects the interpretation of the results obtained along the research activities carried out in WP2 “Report on competence frameworks in international student mobility”: desk research, survey data analysis and focus groups.

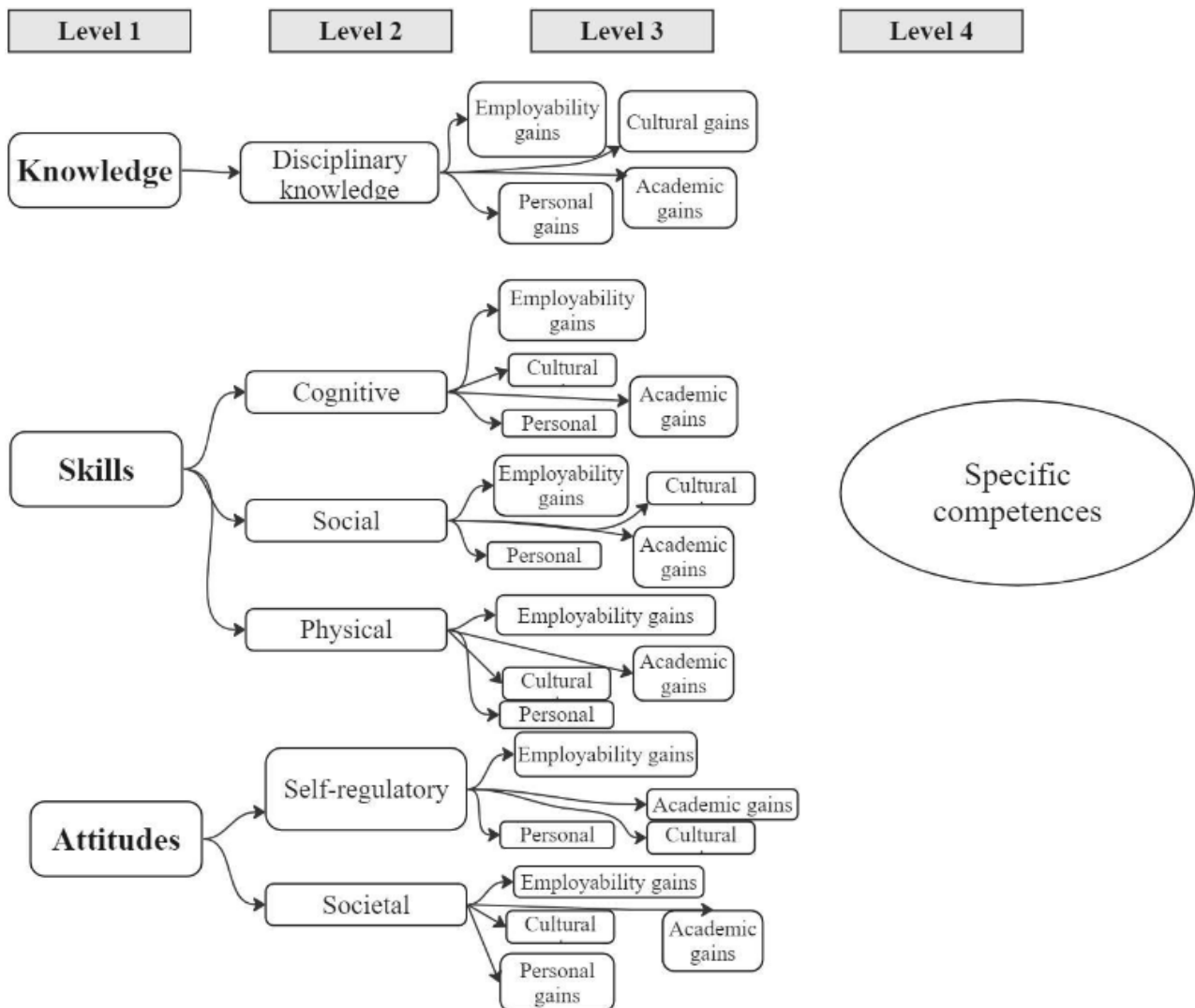
This discussion might serve to better understand the specific competences that students and interns gain during their mobility experiences: this is the first step to ensure that the competences gained on mobility are recognized by students and employers and contribute to the career prospects of mobility programs.

Competences can be defined as behaviors or actions (outputs) that rely on values, personality traits, motivations, and other individual characteristics to emerge (Boyatzis, 1982). However, this concept is not only limited to observable behaviors as it arises from other psychological and social phenomena (ibid.). The previous Erasmus Skills project classifies competences according to three dimensions: knowledge, skills and attitudes (De La Torre et al., 2021), a classification that has also been carried out by other authors (e.g. Meng et al., 2017; Council of Europe, 2018; WEF, 2023). There are also some variations of this framework, such as the one used by the European Commission (2022), which adds language skills as an independent category to the previous classification. In any case, due to the great variety of existing competences and studies that talk about them, it can be useful to group competences into several groups to have a more general overview of all of them.

Following the framework produced by Unlu (2015), we group the competences acquired during mobility experiences into three categories: Academic Gains, Cultural Gains and Personal Development Gains; to which we add a fourth category: Employability Gains. Unlu (2015) focuses on students who want to be teachers, and consequently he includes the competences related to employability within the academic ones. However, other studies state that employability is a competence to be considered in relation to student mobility (see for example the Competence Booklet highlight – Ripmeester, 2021). Therefore, in this study we consider it appropriate to explicitly add a fourth category that includes Employability Gains independently. The results of our systematic literature review confirm the usefulness of this classification of competences in large groups: the publications analyzed rarely deal with a single competence, but usually focus on a set of competences that often belong to the same cluster (Academic, Cultural, Personal Development or Employability).

We consider this classification to be compatible with the KSA approach, since the dimensions that make up the competences (knowledge, skills or attitudes) can also be easily classified as academic, cultural, personal development and employability gains. Based on the classification of the World Economic Forum (2023), Figure 17 shows graphically the integration of these frameworks.

Figure 17 Classification of competences related to mobility: embedment of KSA approach and the academic, cultural, personal development and employability gains



Authors' elaboration on the basis of De La Torre et al. (2021), World Economic Forum (2023) and the theoretical classification proposed in this report based on Unlu (2017).

As depicted in Figure 17, the KSAs that build up each competence (Level 1), can be classified into a number of categories (Level 2) that, according to WEF (2023), are the relevant ones for education experts and employers. In turn, each one of the elements at Level 2 can be classified as academic, cultural, personal development and employability gains (Level 3) and later on combined to build up specific competences developed by students.

The analyzed publications in the desk research that cover on cultural gains focus on issues such as global interconnectivity and dominant imaginaries (Koelbel, 2018), the impact of educational exchanges on relations between populations of rival states and societies (Deardoff, 2018) and students' insights on cultural changes when studying abroad (Iltter, 2013). About personal gains, Mitchell (2015) explores the impact of Erasmus mobility on participants' European identity. In the case of academic gains, researchers explore issues such as the learning outcomes of international clinical placements (Jansen et al., 2021). Finally, the study of the employability gains is carried out through the analysis of the employability of students who did degree mobility (Wiers-Jenssen, 2012; Wiers-Jenssen & Storen, 2021). Moreover, most of the revised publications focus on personal development and cultural gains, followed by employability gains: the academic gains are hardly analyzed. It should also be noted that personal development was more important for research ten years ago than it is today, since the number of publications analyzing it has progressively decreased. On the other hand, although we categorize a greater variety of competences within "Personal Development", most of the publications analyzed focus on competences classified as "Cultural Gains".

There is a consensus among practically all the publications analyzed and the results of the focus groups in the fact that mobility experiences are positive for students and help them to develop competences. In fact, Erasmus participants are satisfied, being something common for Erasmus trainees to have previously been Erasmus students. Additionally, the main motivations for students to participate in a mobility program are related to personal growth, knowing new cultures, improving their foreign language level, reinforcing their academic development or, especially in the case of internships, employability increase. This can be seen in both the results of the desk research and the focus groups.

Likewise, the literature examined affirms that the Erasmus program responds to its objectives, since among other aspects, it creates spaces for cooperation and social interaction among individuals from different cultures, its participants act as ambassadors of intercultural dialogue, and it improves academic knowledge or prepare competent citizens (Unlu, 2017). Especially the first aspects are also shown in the results of the focus groups.

In spite of the fact that in certain countries it was not easy for students to identify the competences acquired during Erasmus, the results of focus groups and desk research show that Erasmus (studies and traineeship) participants gain different competences. According to this, the data analysis of ESN survey (2020) shows that overall ESN members document a positive impact on linguistic, soft and intercultural skills as well as on employability and graduates' professional network. However, we have to keep in mind here that the ESN members very likely compose a very specific kind of group of

individuals who might be more prone to think positively about their exchange experience. The fact that all scales are skewed to the right (most positive answers) is very likely an indication of this. Contrary to these results, the data analysis of the Eurograduate survey (2018) does not provide evidence that participation in mobility programmes is related to higher development in various competences.

Likewise, focus group and desk research show that the most developed competences during Erasmus are, among others, autonomy, independence, social skills, language skills, employability and flexibility. However, it is important to hold these skills beforehand to be able to adapt to situations and further develop them. Having an open mind is pointed out as fundamental for the mobility experience. This means that it is not as easy for everyone to socialize at first or adapt in general and it may be that the ability to acquire and develop competences is influenced by aspects such as adaptability or proactivity.

There is not a full integration of Erasmus students in the host universities, as they rather tend to socialize with other Erasmus students as opposed to with the local ones. Also, it is common to become part of a group of friends from the same country, and some students and trainees even relate only to this group. For the internships, it is even more difficult to integrate because they do not easily find colleagues with whom to socialize in their free time.

In addition, there are certain publications of desk research that also focus on some negative aspects of mobility programmes, pointing out that they are not affordable for every student, are affected by (and affect) inequality issues (Koelbel, 2018), and that the

interaction of local and foreign students in the academic field should be increased (Cirkvenčić & Lončar, 2021).

Among the cultural differences observed, it should be noted that teaching methods, working practices or behavior of people vary depending on each country. This is sometimes a shock for Erasmus students (finding also supported by the [Erasmus Skills](#) project - see De La Torre et al., 2021). The language, especially when English is not spoken in the host country, is also a major barrier. However, despite the shock regarding teaching methods, academic gains are the least studied competences in the academic literature, as we have seen in the systematic literature review. After discussing their mobility experience in the FGs, students consider that it would be positive for Erasmus students if universities promoted contact with other Erasmus students who belong to the same sending university and with former Erasmus students to act as mentors.

CONCLUSIONS

The desk research has allowed us to propose a classification of the competences acquired during mobility experiences into four categories: academic gains, cultural gains, personal development gains and employability gains. Results obtained from desk research, data analysis and focus groups (FGs) reveal that carrying out a mobility experience generates several competences. The most predominant competences acquired or developed during mobility programmes are, among others, the following:

- Academic gains: interactive learning and educational innovation.
- Cultural gains: intercultural sensitivity, cultural awareness and language skills.
- Personal development gains: autonomy, independence and social skills.
- Employability gains: finally work experience, professional competences and networking.

According to the FGs, the most important competences for those who have had a mobility experience are those related to personal development, although for interns the employability gains are also very relevant. About employability, both students and interns consider that they have more chances of being hired, since employers value participation in mobility programs. In this line, the ESN survey 2020 reports that mobile students document a positive impact on linguistic, soft and intercultural skills as well as on employability and graduates' professional network. In recent years, research on international mobility, meanwhile, have studied mainly competences related with self-awareness, cultural-awareness and, in general, personal development.

This report proposes a classification of mobility-related competences into four categories, which in turn can be included in a wider competence framework. As mentioned in previous sections, there are authors who analyze competences according to three dimensions: knowledge, skills and attitudes (e.g. de la Torre et al., 2022; WEF, 2023; Hunter, 2004; Erasmus Skills project (De La Torre et al., 2021)); and each of these dimensions can be grouped in turn into academic gains, cultural gains, personal development gains and employability gains (see figure 17).

Furthermore, academic publications as well as students and interns (in our FGs) agree that the mobility experience is very positive and that mobility programs largely meet their objectives. Among other reasons, publications, students and interns state that mobility experiences generate interactions among different cultures, they improve academic knowledge, and they increase the language learning or strengthen cooperation between the world of education and training and the world of work. However, there are some aspects of mobility programmes that can still be improved. For example, the desk research results show that not everyone can afford this experience, or students and interns from FGs conveyed difficulties in integrating with locals. Likewise, language is a barrier in those countries whose population does not speak English.

Greater assistance and support by universities before, during and after mobility can improve the experience of students and trainees. Thus, they would have more information and feel more institutionally supported. Additionally, Erasmus students believe that the setup of mentorship schemes from their home university who have experienced the same situation as them could be useful to facilitate their adaptation to the host university.

Such recommendations from students to institutions can be complemented with the results from the Erasmus Skills project, where students participating in the Erasmus studies programme requested the institutional support portrayed in Table 21.

Table 21 Suggestions from students on institutional support in Erasmus mobility.

University	Suggestions
Home institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the bureaucratic process as easy as possible. • International Relationships Office: wide opening hours, updated website with clear information, friendly staff, effective and efficient staff that answers calls and e-mails. • Communication/coordination between the tutors/coordinators of the home and host institutions. • Control of the quality of the tutor/coordinator: list of equivalent subjects in the home and host institutions in order to standardise the criteria applied by coordinators/tutors in learning agreements. • Erasmus grant: the amount of the grant should be closer to the cost of living of the home city. • Network – Platform with former Erasmus Students who share their experience and useful insights of the host universities
Receiving institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about necessary paperwork and bureaucracy. • Improvement of digitalization and communication process with administrative staff before mobility and arrangement for housing • Concrete program of studies, flexibility in the evaluation of the Erasmus Students, reduction of recognition problems. • Academic support: There should be a specific guide for courses, in which the bibliography, as well as the demands of the course should be outlined, in order for the Erasmus students to be able to know what is expected from each course. • Language Courses in the local language free of charge, obligatory for Erasmus Students, practical and with local students invited to help in the running of the courses • Integration activities: meetings, parties, social events and activities not only with mobility students but also with native students. • ESN or similar structures - Use of Erasmus+ App

Source: De La Torre et al. (2021, p.58).

Finally, as it has been observed in the results of the FGs, there are differences between the mobility experiences of students and interns, so it is considered correct to have carried out the FGs separately.

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ANNEX I: List of documents on competence development in international mobility environments identified in the systematic bibliographic search

These documents are available (along with full metadata and pdfs) at a open access bibliographic database at:

https://www.zotero.org/groups/4820500/erasmus__project/library (among the 14 publications missing, 7 documents are published in languages such as Turkish or German, without any English version).

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ANNEX II: List of references analyzed for content analysis

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ANNEX III: Questions on mobility-related KSAs included in the self-assessment questionnaires

Cluster	Question	KSA		Subdimension	Reference
European Identity and Global Citizenship	I am interested in knowing what happens in Europe daily (politics, economy, culture, education, etc.).	A	European identity	Openness, curiosity and discovery to intercultural opportunities	European Commission (2014, p.129)
	I feel European.	A	European identity	Openness, curiosity and discovery to intercultural opportunities	European Commission (2014, p.129)
	I feel like a global citizen.	A	Global identity	Openness, curiosity and discovery to intercultural opportunities	OECD (2018)
	I respect the views and the thoughts of others even if they are significantly different from mine.	A	Equality & equity	Tolerance and respect to cultural differences and ambiguity	Petrova (2010, p.2), Deardorff (2004)
	I respect and follow the principle of equality in humanity.	A	Equality & equity	Tolerance and respect to cultural differences and ambiguity	Petrova (2010, p.2), Deardorff (2004)
	I am interested in knowing what happens in the world daily.	A	Proactivity and engagement	Openness, curiosity and discovery to intercultural opportunities	McKinnon (2012, p.2), Lorent et al. (2014)
Cultural knowledge	I have a clear sense of my own cultural identity.	K	Cultural knowledge	Cultural self-awareness: knowledge on one's own culture in the global context	Bennett (2008), McKinnon (2012, p.2)
	I am aware of how my culture influences my perception of what is "normal" in behaviours, communication styles or values.	K	Cultural knowledge	Cultural self-awareness: knowledge on one's own culture in the global context	Bennett (2008), McKinnon (2012, p.2)
	I am aware of the assumptions that I hold about people of different cultures than my own.	K	Cultural knowledge	Cultural self-awareness: knowledge on one's own culture in the global context	Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society (n.d)

Cluster	Question	KSA		Subdimension	Reference
Cultural knowledge	I am aware of the political and economic life of the host country.	K	Cultural knowledge	Deep cultural knowledge: knowledge about the other culture in question;	McKinnon (2012, p.2), Social Erasmus+ (n.d.)
	I am aware of the customs, traditions, religion in the host country.	K	Cultural knowledge	Deep cultural knowledge: knowledge about the other culture in question;	McKinnon (2012, p.2), Social Erasmus+ (n.d.)
Social skills	I enjoy meeting and cooperating with people from different cultural backgrounds.	A	Transcultural understanding	Openness, curiosity and discovery to intercultural opportunities	Deardorff (2004), McKinnon (2012, p.2), Keeley (2014), Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society (n.d)
	I see the value of interacting with different cultures.	A	Transcultural understanding	Openness, curiosity and discovery to intercultural opportunities	Deardorff (2004), McKinnon (2012, p.2), Keeley (2014), Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society (n.d)
	I am able to (effectively) communicate my ideas in intercultural social environments.	S	Language skills	Skills to listen, observe, and relate, as well as communicate and connect with people from other cultural backgrounds	Reid et al. (2010), McKinnon (2012, p.2)
	I can understand well nonverbal communication and gestures across cultures.	S	Communication skills	Skills to listen, observe, and relate, as well as communicate and connect with people from other cultural backgrounds	Reid et al. (2010), Evrard and Bergstein (2016)
	I put effort in meeting new people.	A	Transcultural understanding	Openness, curiosity and discovery to intercultural opportunities	Deardorff (2004), McKinnon (2012, p.2), Keeley (2014), Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society (n.d)

Cluster	Question	KSA		Subdimension	Reference
Curiosity/ Openness attitudes	I feel comfortable when I encounter differences in race, colour, religion, language or ethnicity.	K	Cultural knowledge	Global knowledge: understanding of global issues, processes, trends, and systems	Bennett (2008), McKinnon (2012, p.2)
	I accept that today's globalised societies are characterized by diversity.	A	Open mindedness	Tolerance and respect to cultural differences and ambiguity	McKinnon (2012, p.2)
	I see the value of interacting with different cultures.	A	Open mindedness	Openness, curiosity and discovery to intercultural opportunities	McKinnon (2012, p.2)
	I am tolerant of other persons' values and behaviours.	A	Equality & equity	Tolerance and respect to cultural differences and ambiguity	Petrova (2010, p.2), Deardorff (2004)
	I am ready to live abroad and learn new things.	A	Open mindedness	Openness, curiosity and discovery to intercultural opportunities	McKinnon (2012, p.2), Lorent et al. (2014)
Discipline Awareness	I am aware that my field of studies can be applied differently in other countries.	K	Educational context	Specific higher education knowledge (higher education system, methods and field-related knowledge)	Bracht, et al. (2006), Social Erasmus+ (n.d.)
	I am aware of the teaching and educational methods used in the host university.	K	Educational context	Specific higher education knowledge (higher education system, methods and field-related knowledge)	McKinnon (2012, p.2.), European Commission (2014)
	In my discipline, I am able to handle problems from different perspectives and think in an original or creative way.	S	Problem solving	Ability to acquire, analyse, evaluate information, use cultural references to think critically and solve practical learning problems;	Petrova (2010, p. 2), Reid et al. (2010), McKinnon (2012, p.2)
	I feel prepared to enter the (international) labour market of my discipline.	A	Confidence	Openness, curiosity and discovery to intercultural opportunities	Petrova (2010, p.2), Reid et al. (2010), Keeley (2014)

Cluster	Question	KSA		Subdimension	Reference
Communication in different languages	I do not let my language level hold me back from speaking with people.	S	Language skills	Skills to listen, observe, and relate, as well as communicate and connect with people from other cultural backgrounds	Reid et al. (2010), McKinnon (2012, p.2)
	I can explain clearly to local people of the host country what I need and why I need it.	S	Language skills	Skills to listen, observe, and relate, as well as communicate and connect with people from other cultural backgrounds	Reid et al. (2010)
	I have working knowledge of the language spoken in the host country.	K	Sociolinguistic Awareness	Sociolinguistic Awareness	McKinnon (2012, p.2)
	I feel confident about giving a presentation in a language different from my mother tongue.	S	Communication skills	Skills to listen, observe, and relate, as well as communicate and connect with people from other cultural backgrounds	Reid et al. (2010), Evrard and Bergstein (2016)
	I am able to communicate my ideas and thoughts to people from other cultures.	S	Communication skills	Skills to listen, observe, and relate, as well as communicate and connect with people from other cultural backgrounds	Reid et al. (2010), Evrard and Bergstein (2016)
Adaptability to Change	I understand that open-mindedness regarding new challenges is important.	A	Open mindedness	Openness, curiosity and discovery to intercultural opportunities	McKinnon (2012, p.2), Lorent et al. (2014)
	I apply logic and reasoning to identify alternative solutions and approaches to problems.	S	Problem solving	Capacity to use acquired knowledge to extend one's access to learn the unknown	Petrova (2010, p. 2), Reid et al. (2010), McKinnon (2012, p.2)
	I create solutions in difficult or challenging contexts.	S	Problem solving	Capacity to use acquired knowledge to extend one's access to learn the unknown	Petrova (2010, p. 2), Reid et al. (2010), McKinnon (2012, p.2)
	I am able to adapt to new environments.	S	Adaptability	Capacity to use acquired knowledge to extend one's access to learn the unknown	Petrova (2010, p. 2), Reid et al. (2010)
	I feel confident enough to deal with unexpected events.	S	Adaptability	Capacity to use acquired knowledge to extend one's access to learn the unknown	Reid et al. (2010)

Cluster	Question	KSA		Subdimension	Reference
Teamwork in diverse environment	I am able to work collaboratively in teams	S	Team work	Skills to listen, observe, and relate, as well as communicate and connect with people from other cultural backgrounds	McKinnon (2012, p.2)
	I can work easily in intercultural groups	S	Team work	Skills to listen, observe, and relate, as well as communicate and connect with people from other cultural backgrounds	McKinnon (2012, p.2)
	I am able to interact with people who hold different interests, values, or perspectives	S	Team work	Skills to listen, observe, and relate, as well as communicate and connect with people from other cultural backgrounds	McKinnon (2012, p.2)
	I am able to work together with people from a different scientific discipline.	S	Team work	Skills to listen, observe, and relate, as well as communicate and connect with people from other cultural backgrounds	McKinnon (2012, p.2)
	I feel confident in expressing my honest opinion in a group.	S	Team work	Skills to listen, observe, and relate, as well as communicate and connect with people from other cultural backgrounds	McKinnon (2012, p.2)
	When different opinions are arising in a group, I am able to reconcile.	S	Negotiation skills	Skills to listen, observe, and relate, as well as communicate and connect with people from other cultural backgrounds;	Keeley (2014)

Cluster	Question	KSA		Subdimension	Reference
Planning & Organizing	I consider myself able to plan and organise tasks and activities.	S	Organizational skills	Ability to set goals and priorities through the selection and distribution of tasks and resources. It also encompasses time management, organization, responsibility, and self-reliance.	Evrard and Bergstein (2016), Ornellas et al. (2018)
	I am effective at managing time.	S	Organizational skills	Ability to set goals and priorities through the selection and distribution of tasks and resources. It also encompasses time management, organization, responsibility, and self-reliance.	Evrard and Bergstein (2016), Ornellas et al. (2018)
	I am able to synthesize information and to provide analysis with a critical point of view.	S	Analytical skills	Ability to acquire, analyse, evaluate information, use cultural references to think critically and solve practical learning problems	McKinnon (2012, p.2)
	I am able to gather, analyse and articulate information from resources from different backgrounds in order to solve problems and make decisions.	S	Analytical skills	Ability to acquire, analyse, evaluate information, use cultural references to think critically and solve practical learning problems	Haselberger et al. (2012), Ornellas et al. (2018)
	I am capable of setting priorities.	S	Organizational skills	Ability to set goals and priorities through the selection and distribution of tasks and resources. It also encompasses time management, organization, responsibility, and self-reliance.	Evrard and Bergstein (2016)
	I am capable of keeping deadlines.	S	Organizational skills	Ability to set goals and priorities through the selection and distribution of tasks and resources. It also encompasses time management, organization, responsibility, and self-reliance.	Ornellas et al. (2018)

Cluster	Question	KSA		Subdimension	Reference
Creativity	I know how to develop an idea and put it into practice.	S	Creative thinking	Capacity to use acquired knowledge to extend one's access to learn the unknown	European Commission (2019)
	I can express myself creatively.	S	Communication skills	Skills to listen, observe, and relate, as well as communicate and connect with people from other cultural backgrounds	Reid et al. (2010), Evrard and Bergstein (2016)
	I am able to think outside of the box to bring new ideas to solve problems or seek solutions to a particular situation.	S	Creative thinking	Capacity to use acquired knowledge to extend one's access to learn the unknown	European Commission (2019)

Note: Questions are inspired by the indicated references; however, some of the questions have been simplified after testing and validation of the questionnaire in order to facilitate its understanding.

Source: De la Torre et al. (2021, pp. 49-56).

ANNEX IV: Focus Group Questions

✓ **Use open-ended questions**

INITIAL EXPECTATIONS

1. Why did you choose to go abroad (for studies or traineeships)?
2. What are the most important competences/skills that you gained during your mobility period?

Depending on the answers they give, one of the following blocks has to be covered first. The order of the next blocks can vary.

IMPACT ON PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

3. How has the mobile experience impacted your personal development?

4. Could you give examples of what you learnt during your mobile experience?

Depending on their answers, we can specifically ask about the following topics:

- 4.1 How was your experience establishing contacts abroad? Do you maintain them?
- 4.2 What would you say about your ability to communicate in different languages?
- 4.3 How organized do you consider yourself? (Before and after the mobility experience)
- 4.4 In which ways did your mobility experience influence your awareness of your own culture and the culture of others?;

5. How would you describe your adaptation process during your mobility experience?

If students do not provide any examples: Would you share with us an example of a problem during your experience abroad, and how did you solve it?

IMPACT ON STUDY EXPERIENCE

6. In what way do you think this experience was valuable for your university career?

7. Were studies/lessons/teaching carried out differently than in your home country?

7.1 Which differences were valuable for you and which not? Can you mention any example?

IMPACT ON PROFESSIONAL LIFE

8. How do you think that your mobility experience will impact your professional life?

9. During the mobility period, did your expectations on what jobs you would like to do change?

10. How will you use the mobility experience in your professional career (e.g. job applications etc.)?

11. Did you receive any guidance by the university in developing your professional career in relation to your international experience?

12. Do you think additional support is needed? If so, what kind of support?

GENERAL REVIEW

13. Could you please give some recommendations to students who are going to study abroad, on how they can maximize their experience for their future career?

14. Has the mobility experience met your expectations

ANNEX V: Consent form

Students Focus Group - Consent Form

By now, most Europeans agree on the benefits of the Erasmus+ Programme. Its positive contribution to graduate employability has been established in, for example, two Erasmus Impact Studies (2014 and 2019). However, it is also important that students are provided with an opportunity to "unpack" what they have gained while being abroad. The aim of the Erasmus Careers project is to ensure that competences that are gained on mobility contribute to the career prospects of Erasmus+ participants.

The main objectives are:

- Competences gained by students and trainees during their mobility abroad are identified
- A better understanding for the learning that takes place during the International Student Lifecycle
- The competences gained by students during mobility are better understood and recognised by employers
- Students understand the impact of international student mobility on their career path
- Competences gained abroad are recognised and integrated in Education policies.

In order to accomplish these ambitious aims and objectives, six partner organisations with diverse backgrounds - representing students, universities, career services, researchers and employers - have gotten together to launch the Erasmus Careers project. In this project we will among other things outline learning paths for students with different means of verifying their competences, do research about employability of international student graduates and, building on the ESCO transversal competence framework as a basic tool, create an updated competence framework for Erasmus students.

In the focus group we intend to discuss several issues related to the period of student mobility (studies and traineeships) in order to understand which of the competences developed during mability are more relevant for students.

Thus, we request the authorization of the participant so that this same discussion is recorded for analysis of information. We request your active and voluntary participation to answer the various questions. There are no correct or incorrect answers, you should only respond with your reality.

The information will be treated confidentially. Only aggregate information will be published.

I confirm that I have read the information sheet, I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and I have received satisfactory answers to these questions, and any additional details requested. I consent that my participation in this study is voluntary. I understand my answers will be audio-recorded, stored and encrypted for 10 years unless I request otherwise. I understand that I may withdraw from the study without penalty at any time by advising the researchers of this decision. I understand my data will be anonymously used for scientific publications and reports over the next 10 years.

Name and surname:

Signature:

