

Erasmus+ as an Instrument of Encouraging International Cooperation and Developing Cultural Awareness of Students

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Abstract

The aim of the research described in this article was to look into the usefulness and benefits of the Erasmus+ Programme. The research also included university students' reflections and evaluations of their own experience during the period spent on Erasmus+ exchange, focusing on the cultural aspects of their experience. To establish the importance of Erasmus+, it was first necessary to define what the concept of 'culture' encompasses. Furthermore, it was important to look into the development of cultural awareness and intercultural learning of participants within such an exchange programme – people from different cultural backgrounds. For that purpose, a questionnaire was designed, which was filled in by 100 students from 22 countries, including Croatia. The results have shown that the participants learned very much about the culture of the particular country in which they were on exchange. In addition, they learned about the cultures of the other participants in the programme. Most participants replied that during the exchange they had felt a difference between their own culture and other cultures, and they emphasized possible future benefits. According to the results, the Erasmus+ Programme facilitates to a great extent the participants' understanding and accepting of foreign cultures. Therefore, the young people who have had the opportunity to participate in the programme feel considerable advantages in their personal development. In addition, they believe that the multicultural experience will bring about multiple opportunities in their professional lives.

Key words: *academic mobility; civilisation; culture; interculturality; intercultural learning.*

Introduction

Richness can only be enjoyed in company.
Erasmus of Rotterdam

Almost a quarter of a century after it was launched in 1987, the Erasmus Programme is still confirming the importance of student exchange programmes within the European Union, and to what extent such programmes are needed. Over three million university students who participated in the Erasmus Programme by 2013 testify to that. Those students obtained the opportunity to participate in the Erasmus Programme by visiting one of the 33 participant countries (*Erasmus+ What's in it for higher education*, 2013). Following the European Commission's presentation of the academic mobility programmes to the public, Erasmus proved to be one of the most influential programmes of high quality, and at the same time widely accepted by students. Erasmus was one of the key factors of advancement and new possibilities in the field of higher education, and its potential was emphasized by the growing involvement of the community.

Nevertheless, it has to be pointed out that this article focuses on students' involvement in a newer version of the programme – the Erasmus+ Programme, launched in 2014. The article looks into the impact of the Erasmus+ Programme on students, a kind of impact that is potentially more influential than studying itself: the experience of living in a different culture, accepting differences, and readiness for lifelong learning. The Erasmus+ Programme is envisaged as a stimulus for international collaboration and the development of cultural awareness.

There is a growing number of studies on intercultural experience of international students (Gu, Day, & Schweisfurth, 2010; Stepanoviene, 2011), but literature on the impact of the Erasmus Programme in general, or Erasmus+ Programme is rather sparse. To the authors' knowledge, the only comprehensive study to date is the one conducted by the European Commission, made public in its 2016 report, but the said study looked primarily into the satisfaction of the participants in the Erasmus+ Programme.

The Concept of Culture

The concept of 'culture' has been researched since ancient times. Herodotus, Plato, Aristotle, Roman philosophers, Arab writers and thinkers, European medieval writers and philosophers like Rabelais, European writers and thinkers of the 17th century, such as Descartes and Montesquieu, they all wrote about culture. European historians and ethnologists of the 16th and 17th centuries and evolutionists of the 19th century, such as Spencer, also incorporated culture in their work. With the advent of cultural anthropology at the beginning of the twentieth century, culture became the subject of numerous studies and discussions (Zergollern-Miletić, 2011).

The concept of 'culture' has several meanings, and numerous definitions. In 1952, American anthropologists Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn published a book in which they listed and categorized as many as 160 definitions of culture (Andraka, 2014).

The word 'culture' originates from the Latin word *colere*, which means "to look after, to take care of, to tend to, to plant, to grow, to protect, to respect". Its metaphorical meaning "cultivation through upbringing" was first noted around the year 1500. We can encounter that term in the 18th century, and in the first half of the 19th century in the German language, where it primarily denoted the concept of "high culture", "higher values and an enlightened society", as well as carefully chosen, valuable and cultured artefacts of a society, or "the intellectual side of civilisation" (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, p. 35, as cited in Andraka, 2014). Today, the concept of 'culture', when human society is concerned, has two basic meanings:

1. The entirety of material and spiritual goods, ethical and social values produced by humanity. Anthropologists call it 'Culture with a capital C' (Kottak, 1991, p. 37);
2. The entirety of spiritual, moral, social and productive activities of a society or an era ('culture with a small c', Kottak, 1991, p. 3).

There is a third meaning, which corresponds to the entirety of education, knowledge, ethical and social sense, the social interaction and behaviour of one individual to another (civility, cultured behaviour) (Zergollern-Miletić, 1998).

The literature about culture is very rich since culture has been researched by a number of fields of studies, primarily anthropology, ethnology, sociology, linguistics and psychology. There are also numerous discussions about the difference between the notions of 'culture' and 'civilisation', 'society' and 'nation' (Kottak, 1991). Bratanić (1991) states that Ruth Benedict (1934) made a significant contribution to the modern outlook on culture with her definition of culture as "a human society's pattern of thought and action which characterises all their activities and differentiates them from all other people". This is the definition of culture that we are focusing on in this article. What we are also interested in is the notion that culture is learned (Kottak, 1991, p. 32). There are three types of learning: individual situational learning, possessed by humans and animals, social situational learning (also shared by humans and animals) and cultural learning. Cultural learning is a characteristic of humans. It depends on the uniquely developed capacity to use symbols and signs that have no necessary connection with the things for which they stand.

It could be said that the concept of 'culture' is so wide that "there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by it" (Hall, 1977, p. 14, as cited in Andraka, 2014, p. 5). Milardović describes culture as the "most conspicuous and most problematic force of social integration" (1999, p. 176). The development of technology and science in the second half of the twentieth century facilitated the interconnection of different cultures. For that reason, cultures started opening up to the world, so

people consequently felt the need for better communication and cooperation. In order for different cultures to attain harmony, at the same time respecting mutual differences, it is necessary to develop in each member of a culture an understanding of that culture – for its past, as well as for its future (Fei, 2015, p. 20). Since attitudes about a culture are relative and depend on a particular person, we should not prematurely judge the traditions of a particular culture, before we entirely and accurately grasp the culture that we are studying (Haviland, 2002, p. 51). This is in line with one of anthropology's main goals, and that is to combat ethnocentrism, the tendency to apply one's own cultural values in judging the behaviour and beliefs of people raised in other cultures (Zergollern-Miletić, 2011). Considering the fast modernization and globalization of the modern world, Fei emphasizes the importance of the integration of various cultures. This is in fact also demanded by the European Union, which attempts to encourage cooperation between numerous states and cultures on the territory of a socially and economically expanding Europe (Fei, 2015, p. 35). Since the contemporary world requires modern people, unlike their ancestors, they have to distance themselves from the past and become more tolerant and open to other cultures. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to develop cultural awareness in each individual.

Cultural Awareness and Intercultural Learning

Cultural awareness is acquired through knowledge, through the understanding of the relationships between an individual's immediate society and the individual's broader society, taking into account the two societies' similarities and differences. Cultural awareness also includes an 'awareness of national stereotypes' that can appear following a perspective that one society may have on another (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 103). Cultural awareness is based on people's attitudes towards the interaction between themselves and people who have been socialized in different ways, who have different beliefs, types of behaviour and values. It is also based on the appreciation of such differences. According to Merino and Avello (2014), cultural awareness can best be developed during a stay in a foreign country and during the exposure to a foreign language (L2). In such conditions people feel as foreigners, so they are compelled to participate in some interaction with people with a different cultural background, consequently developing cultural awareness. The very contact with people belonging to different cultures, together with developed awareness, leads to an individual's deeper and adapted knowledge, perspectives and behaviour, given the fact that they start to question their everyday acts, comparing them with those of the members of the other culture, and finally adapting their ways in communication (Jackson, 2010, p. 41). In addition, people realize to what extent their own culture may help in interaction, and how it can contribute to the environment they find themselves in. Kinginger (2013, p. 78) points out that individuals, when outside their cultural group, develop and change their attitudes, and sometimes succeed in altering their social identity and the way they

observe themselves. Identity starts developing in humans at a very young age. In most cases we form it and shape it influenced by our own social and cultural environment, but it can also be transformed when we are introduced to a new environment, and interacting with others (Jackson, 2008, p. 33). Bearing in mind differences between cultures, a person exposed to another culture needs to be aware that a particular culture will affect them, and that they will, in turn, affect that culture. Therefore, according to Fei (2015, p. 47), it is important to broaden our horizons and knowledge of other cultures in advance, in order to contribute to the development of humanity.

Intercultural learning is one of the main targets of the European Youth Network. A rather urgent need for intercultural learning appeared after WWII. This need is still present and demands special skills for intercultural learning and for a dialogue between multicultural societies – from the local level to the global level (Ramberg, 2009).

Academic Mobility Through International Cooperation

The fast globalization and international mobility in the modern world demand from people to adjust and to reshape their own identity in order to enter the new global arena (Pujolar, Fernandez, & Subriana, 2011). Globalization can be defined as a cluster of economic, social, cultural and political processes which lead to closer connections and interdependence of various parts of the world. At the same time, it is a process of economic, social, cultural and political activities that goes beyond the borders of nation states (Čolić, 2004). International cooperation is an indicator of cultural development and social openness for all that is new in modern society. The process of European integration has considerably helped the cooperation between the member states, and it has also brought about a new space which enables a unique exchange of attitudes and ideas between people. The signing of the Bologna Declaration, as well as the removal of borders within the EU, has meant a significant move towards academic mobility. In addition to personal advancement and the benefits that an individual gains through an exchange programme and through their learning about the culture they find themselves in, that transfer on an international level certainly has positive impact upon the individual's country of origin, since the individual can communicate their new experience, and make it a part of their original community.

The concept of academic mobility presupposes completing a part of the studies (a term, an academic year) at a foreign university. Studying, learning, working on a seminar paper or the final thesis, doing research – all these provide new knowledge, learning about new technologies, the communication and exchange of experience with people of different cultural backgrounds. Students who have spent a part of their studies at a foreign university have more opportunities in getting employed – in their own country, as well as in the international job market. “In addition to the enhancement of the academic and personal development of a particular student, student mobility is regarded as one of the factors that contribute to the quality of the

education system, and the building of Europe based on knowledge” (The international student exchange, University of Zagreb, n.d.).

The data for the year 2009 show that 3.3 million students participated in studies outside their country of origin, which means a 65% increase in European student mobility since 2000 (Mckeown, 2009). Each modern country participating in a programme that enables student mobility encourages international relations, and regards mobility and exchange as a key component of the exchange of knowledge and values. In addition, each modern country focuses on the intellectual capital and promoting competences in the globalized world. Mobility and exchange may lead to mutual understanding and collaboration, which is of utmost importance in the present climate of heightened control, problems concerning security and political turmoil.

The Definition of Erasmus and its Development

What is the origin of the name Erasmus? The inspiration was the famous Dutch philosopher Erasmus of Rotterdam (Croatian Encyclopedia, n.d.), whose work left important marks in the fields of education, culture and the research of social relationships. The fifteenth century gave the world many well-known schools of theoreticians and practitioners who are still regarded as very influential in the field of education. Erasmus of Rotterdam, as an exponent of the humanistic circle of the time, engaged in the research of intercultural relations and education, therefore the programme was named in his honour.

The first idea about a student mobility programme appeared in 1987. After the programme was launched, it grew from the original 11 participant countries to 34 countries, with 3.3 million student participants by the academic year 2013/2014. This brought the programme’s name an additional meaning: “EuRopean Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students” (European Commission, 2015).

Erasmus+

The international development strategy within the EU Parliament’s policies puts special emphasis on youth policy. It reached a new level with the introduction of a new version of the international programme of academic and professional mobility. Today, this new programme is widely known as the Erasmus+ programme. The advantage of the new EU mobility programme is that it includes a larger number of participant states, which can, but do not necessarily have to be EU members. Erasmus+ is known to be providing linguistic support to participants in foreign countries. Further on, it provides support to people with special needs, as well as more significant support to those of a lower socioeconomic status and those from rural areas. It also guarantees financial support to university students (Erasmus+ What’s in it for higher education, 2013).

In the older version of the programme (Erasmus), the focus was put on encouraging mobility with the purpose of individual advancement and socioeconomic growth of

each participant. Erasmus+ differs from the older version by its contents, goals and possibilities that enable faster and simpler organisation on a higher level, a level of better quality. The European Commission, in its 2017 Erasmus+ Guide, states the improvements, as well as their purpose (European Commission, 2017):

Erasmus+ focuses on expanding knowledge and skills, and enhances the possibilities of employment of European citizens. In addition, it ameliorates education, professional training, as well as work in the area of youth and sports. It is especially focused on linking education, professional training and the youth sector with the business sector, and is open for their joint projects. Erasmus+ offers the possibility of international mobility for individuals, and international cooperation for organisations. All the above can be acquired through spending a period of time studying abroad, through practical training, further training, voluntary work, youth exchange and participating in international projects focused on the modernisation and internationalisation of education, training, youth and sports. The most important novelty in this programme is a stronger connection of EU policies with financial aid programmes, together with making its structure and the implementation easier. This means that activities are organised systematically according to their fields, calculations of financial support are rendered simpler, emphasis is put on the quality of a particular project (the content of mobility, the product/result). In addition, the new programme also includes enhanced dissemination and a better usage of the results of a particular project, the sustainability of the results of a completed project, and a better connection to the needs of the labour market. According to the 2016 annual report of the European Commission, Erasmus+ offered financial support for 725 000 cases of mobility, attaining the number of additional 2 million participants compared to the time of its commencement in 2014. If Erasmus+ proceeds at this pace, it could attain the goal of 4 million participants in 2020.

Methodology

The research described in this article is a result of the authors' interest in cultural awareness, and their interest in establishing the importance of the Erasmus+ exchange programme.

Aims of Research

The aims of this research were as follows:

1. To establish the reasons for applying for the Erasmus+ programme.
2. To establish whether the respondents noticed a difference in their knowledge of the culture of their host country between the period before and the period after the programme.
3. To establish what the respondents learned about the culture(s) of the other Erasmus+ participants.

4. To establish what the respondents learned communicating with people belonging to other cultures.
5. To establish what is the proportion of cultural differences that the respondents felt between their own culture and another culture.
6. To establish the usefulness of the Erasmus+ programme in the respondents' future academic and professional advancement.

Instrument

Since the targeted respondents were former participants in the Erasmus+ Programme from different states, the Internet was chosen as the fastest and easiest way of communication. The questionnaire was compiled on the Google Disc Platform, and distributed through social networks and e-mail. This manner of investigation gives the respondent a chance to decide not to fill in the questionnaire, or to decide not to proceed, with no consequences for the research. In addition, the respondents had unlimited freedom in expressing their opinions and attitudes. What is more, their anonymity was guaranteed. The questionnaire contains twelve questions, out of which there are two open-ended ones. The questionnaire is in English, and is contained in the appendix section of this article.

Sample

The research was conducted on the sample of 100 respondents. The respondents were supposed to have participated in the Erasmus+ Programme during their university education. Out of the total number of respondents (N=100), 75% participants were female, while 25% were male.

The respondents' age was between 19 and 30. The largest number of respondents (N=28), or 28%, was 23 years old, while the smallest number of respondents were those aged, respectively, 19 (N=1), 29 (N=1) and 30 (N=1). One respondent did not provide an acceptable answer. 'Unacceptable answers' were those that did not answer a particular question.

The Respondents' Profile

The research included respondents from 22 different states. Out of the total number of respondents (N=100), the most numerous were those from Croatia and Spain – 16 from each. The fewest respondents came from the following countries: The United Kingdom, South Korea, Slovenia, Latvia, Greece, Finland and Denmark —only 1 respondent per country (Table 1).

The results about the participation in the programme (question number 4) show that 87% of the respondents participated in the Erasmus+ Programme once, and 11% participated twice. Two participated three times.

Table 1
The Respondents' Countries of Origin

COUNTRY	Frequency
Austria	5
Belgium	5
Croatia	16
Denmark	1
Finland	1
France	11
Germany	2
Greece	1
Hungary	2
Italy	8
Latvia	1
Poland	8
Romania	2
Slovakia	2
Slovenia	1
South Korea	1
Spain	16
Sweden	2
The Czech Republic	7
The Netherlands	2
UK	1
Turkey	5
Total	100

Results and Discussion

Two software programmes were used for this research. The quantitative data were processed in SPSS Statistics, while the qualitative data were analysed using the MAXQDA programme.

After establishing the age, gender and the home country of our respondents, as well as the number of times they had participated in the exchange programme, we focused on our respondents' reasons for applying for an Erasmus programme (Question number 5: *Why did you decide to apply for an Erasmus Exchange Programme?*). The obtained answers were divided into the following categories: *travelling, a compulsory aspect of the studies, entertainment, better educational and professional possibilities, breaking prejudice (openness), personal development, recommendations and other people's connections, the acquisition of language skills, learning about other cultures*, and 'an unacceptable answer' (Table 2). Since the first question was an open one, the number of obtained answers is larger than the number of the respondents (N=100). The most frequent answer was 'personal development'. That answer was provided by 69 respondents (31.8%). Some of the answers categorised as personal development are

as follows: a wish for a change and for experiencing something new, life and studies abroad, gaining new experience and independence. A relatively high percentage of answers (28.57%) contain cultural elements. Those are the answers such as ‘getting to know other new people, traditions and characteristics of their Erasmus state’. A slightly lower percentage of answers (20.28%) were related to language skills – be it the improvement of an already partially learned language, or a new one. The category ‘breaking prejudice’ obtained the lowest number of answers, together with the category ‘entertainment’ (0.92% in both respective categories). According to the results, we can notice that the respondents’ main motivation for applying for the Erasmus+ Programme was developing their personality. The first step towards cultural awareness is an individual’s personal development, which is then followed by the individual’s transferring their personality on other societies and people of different cultures.

Table 2

The categorisation of the answers to question 5 — “Why did you decide to apply for the Erasmus+ programme?”

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Better educational and professional possibilities	14	6.45
A compulsory aspect of the studies	4	1.84
Personal development	69	31.8
Recommendation and other people’s connections	4	1.84
Travelling	12	5.53
Breaking prejudice/Openness	2	0.92
Learning about other cultures	62	28.57
The acquisition of language skills	44	20.28
Fun	2	0.92
An unacceptable answer	4	1.84

To question number 6 — “Did you know something about the culture of your Erasmus country before the mobility?”, a high percentage of respondents (71%) answered positively, while 29% stated that they had not known anything (Figure 1).

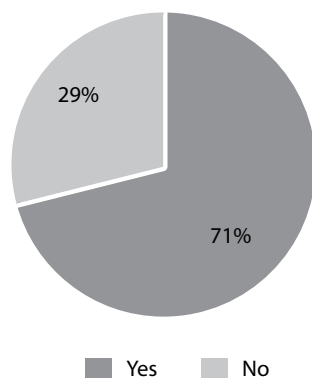


Figure 1. The categorisation of the answers to the question “Did you know something about the culture of your Erasmus country before the mobility?” (question 6)

In our research we also checked the percentage of the respondents' agreement with some statements. They marked their answers on the Likert scale from 1 to 5, where 1 stood for "nothing", and 5 stood for "a lot".

To the question "How much had you learned about the culture of the Erasmus+ country you were visiting by the end of the mobility?" (question number 7), most respondents (30%), replied that they were not sure how much they had learned (3), while the answer 4 (something), and the answer 5 (a lot) were chosen by the same number of respondents (N=27). On the other hand, one respondent answered that they had learned nothing (1) upon the completion of the programme (Table 3).

Table 3

The answers to the question "How much had you learned about the culture of the Erasmus+ country you were visiting by the end of the mobility?" – estimations according to the Likert Scale

VALID	Percent
1	1.0
2	15.0
3	30.0
4	27.0
5	27.0
Total	100.0

When asked how much they had learned about the cultures of the other participants in the Erasmus+ Programme (question number 8), most respondents (41%) answered that they had learned something (4), while a similar percentage of respondents (39%), answered that they had learned a lot (5). On the other hand, 17% respondents were not sure how much they had learned (3), while the percentage of those who claimed to have learned a little (2), and those who had learned nothing (1) is almost negligible (Table 4).

Table 4

The answers to the question "How much did you learn about the cultures of the other people included in the Erasmus+ Programme?" (question 8) — estimations according to the Likert Scale

VALID	Frequency
1	1
2	2
3	17
4	41
5	39
Total	100

Another aspect that interested us was our respondents' feelings about the differences between their own culture and the cultures of the other Erasmus+ participants (question number 9). Most respondents (30%), were not sure (3) how much difference they had felt, while 27% gave the answer *somewhat* (4). The same percentage of

respondents provided the answer *a lot* (5). A considerably lower percentage of respondents (15%) answered that they had felt no significant difference between their own culture and the other cultures (2), while only one respondent (1) claimed not to have felt any difference (Figure 4).

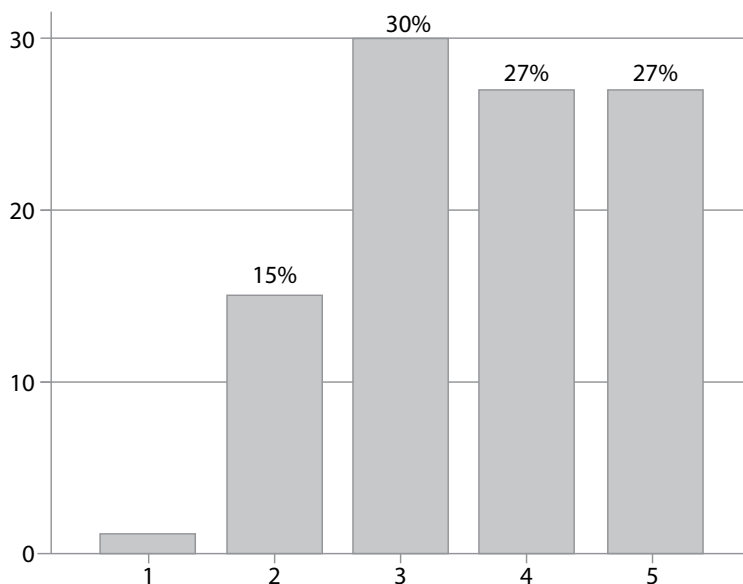


Figure 2. The answers to question 9 —“How much did you feel the difference between your own and the other cultures?” – according to the Likert Scale

Further investigation looked into the knowledge which our respondents acquired by communicating with people from different cultures (question number 10). The highest percentage of answers (39.26%) mentioned culture. Under ‘culture’ we categorized the following answers: understanding and respecting other cultures, learning about the indigenous music, food and drinks, new insight into different religions, traditions, manners, values and attitudes, insight into the histories and political situations of different countries, ways of living, and similarities between people and countries. From the answers listed in the category which we named ‘openness’ (25.19% answers), we can conclude that the respondents became more open to other cultures – breaking prejudice, accepting differences and understanding other people’s habits. The category with the lowest percentage of acceptable answers was 13.33%. These answers included learning and discovering new things and gaining new information, such as team work and learning how to overcome misunderstandings generated by linguistic and cultural barriers. Out of the total number of answers to the question (N=135), 10 answers were not clear, which amounts to 7.41% (Figure 3).

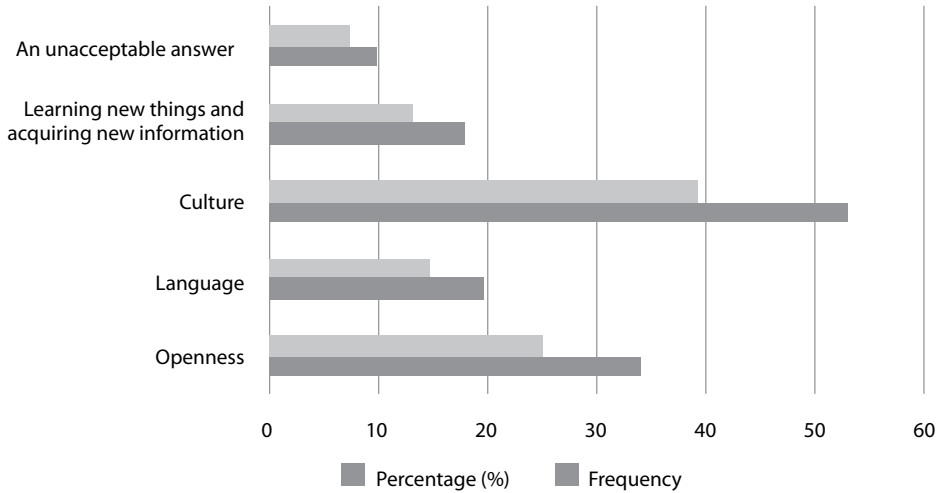


Figure 3. The categorization of the answers to the question "What did you learn by communicating with people from other cultures?" – question 10

Following this, the respondents were asked to evaluate the usefulness of the Erasmus+ Programme for their future (*How much will your Erasmus+ Exchange Programme experience help you in the future?* – question number 11). They were asked to use the Likert Scale (1-5), where 1 represented *not at all*, and 5 represented *a lot*. The respondents (95%) claimed that the Erasmus+ Programme proved to be a little useful or very useful for their future (Table 5). After establishing the usefulness of the Erasmus+ Programme, the respondents were asked to clarify their answer (*In what sense/How?* – question 12). Most of the answers (N=60) could be categorized as *openness*. This category contains answers such as accepting differences, breaking prejudice and developing intercultural awareness. Relatively high percentages can be linked to the answers about developing linguistic skills (31%) and communication skills (21%). The answer *a wish for future travels* was given by 35% of the respondents (Table 6).

Table 5

Estimation on the Likert Scale – the question "How much will your Erasmus+ Exchange Programme experience help you in the future?" – question 11

VALID	Percent
2	1.0
3	4.0
4	35.0
5	60.0
Total	100.0

Table 6

The categorization of the answers to the question "In what sense/How will your Erasmus+ Exchange Programme help you in the future?" — question 12

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
International connections	17	9.19
Personal development	1	0.54
Openness	60	32.43
Improved language skills	31	16.76
Improved communication skills	21	11.35
Employment	9	4.86
A wish for future travels	35	18.92
Not sure	5	2.7
An unacceptable answer	6	3.24

According to the results of the research presented in this article, over 70% of respondents had been acquainted with the culture of their Erasmus+ country before the mobility programme, while over a half of the respondents (54%) pointed out that they had learned something or a lot about that country during the mobility programme. According to these data, Erasmus+ seems to be an instrument for broadening horizons. In addition, 80% of the respondents learned something or a lot about the other participants in the mobility programme and 54% of the respondents felt some or considerable difference between their own culture and other cultures.

The positive results regarding the benefits of the Erasmus+ Programme obtained in the present study can be compared to the positive results made public by the European Commission in its 2016 Report (European Commission, 2016). In that report the European Commission published the results of a survey in which 95% students were questioned about their satisfaction with the mobility programme they had participated in. The results showed that the respondents felt their adaptability had increased (92%), that they felt more confident about new challenges (90%), that they had become more tolerant towards people whose values and behaviour are different (87%), that they had learned how to better collaborate with people from other cultures (87%), and that their learning skills had increased (83%).

Conclusions and Proposals for Future Research

Basing our conclusions on the above presented research and results, we can say that a significant majority of respondents confirmed that the main reasons why they had applied for an academic mobility programme were a wish to learn about other cultures, as well as their own personal development.

Taking into consideration all the above said, we would like to conclude that Erasmus+ is very important in the development of individuals, as well as in the development of society as a whole.

In order to learn more about the Erasmus+ Programme, it would be advisable to further investigate the profile of the respondents: their fields of studies, their interests,

their position on the importance of learning about other cultures, and their interest for learning the language of their Erasmus+ country.

It would also be good to conduct a study investigating possible negative experience by the Erasmus+ participants, so that such negative experience could be avoided in the future.

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Appendix
Questionnaire

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Home country
4. How many times have you participated in an Erasmus+ Exchange Programme?
5. Why did you decide to apply for an Erasmus+ Programme?
6. Did you know something about the culture of your Erasmus+ country before the mobility?
7. How much had you learned about the culture of the Erasmus+ country you were visiting by the end of the mobility?
8. How much did you learn about the cultures of the other people who were involved in the Erasmus+ Exchange Programme?
9. How much did you feel the difference between your own and the other cultures?
10. What did you learn by communicating with people from other cultures?
11. How much will your Erasmus+ Exchange Programme experience help you in the future?
12. In what sense (How)?

Erasmus+ kao instrument poticanja međunarodne suradnje i razvitka kulturne svjesnosti studenata

Sažetak

Cilj istraživanja opisanoga u ovome radu bio je ispitati prednosti Erasmus+ programa i promišljanja studenata o vlastitim iskustvima tijekom provedenoga vremena na Erasmus+ razmjeni studenata, s time da je težište na kulturnom aspektu. Kako bi se dokazala važnost programa Erasmus+, najprije je bilo potrebno pobliže objasniti i proučiti što je to kultura. Zatim je bilo potrebno proučiti kulturnu svjesnost i međukulturno učenje kao posljedice iskustva razmjene, i to s gledišta osoba različitih kulturnih pozadina. S tom svrhom sastavljen je upitnik koji je ispunilo 100 studenata iz 22 različite države, uključujući i Hrvatsku. Rezultati su pokazali kako su ispitanici naučili vrlo mnogo i o kulturi same države u kojoj su bili, a isto tako i o kulturi drugih sudionika programa. Najviše je ispitanika odgovorilo kako su tijekom mobilnosti osjetili razliku između vlastite i tuđe kulture i istaknuli su koristi koje će zbog spomenutoga iskustva imati u budućnosti. Prema dobivenim rezultatima možemo zaključiti kako je program Erasmus+ važan i koristan što se tiče shvaćanja i prihvaćanja tuđih kultura te da osobe koje su imale priliku sudjelovati u programu osjećaju prednosti, kako u svom osobnom razvitku tako i u povećanim mogućnostima za uspjeh u budućnosti.

Ključne riječi: akademska mobilnost; civilizacija; međukulturnost; međukulturno učenje.

Uvod

Bogatstvo se može uživati samo u društvu.

Erazmo Roterdamski

Gotovo četvrt stoljeća nakon što je 1987. godine pokrenut, program Erasmus iz godine u godinu potvrđuje važnost i potrebu za studentskom razmjenom unutar područja Europske unije. U prilog tomu svjedoči brojka od više od tri milijuna studenata na sveučilišnoj razini koji su do 2013. dobili priliku doživjeti iskustvo programa Erasmus iz prve ruke diljem 33 zemlje pristupnice programa (*Erasmus+ What's in it for higher education*, 2013). Nakon što je Europska komisija predstavila

i upoznala javnost s programima akademske mobilnosti, Erasmus se pokazao kao jedan od najutjecajnijih i najkvalitetnijih programa, a istodobno široko prihvaćen od studenata. Erasmus kao jedan od ključnih činitelja napredovanja i novih prilika u području visokog obrazovanja svoj potencijal potvrđuje sve većom uključenosti zajednice u njegovo izvođenje. Važno je napomenuti da se ovaj rad osvrće na sudjelovanje studenata u novoj inačici programa, pokrenutoj 2014. godine. U ovom se radu istražuje utjecaj programa Erasmus+ na studente, utjecaj koji je širi od samog studiranja — iskustvo života u različitoj kulturi, prihvaćanje različitosti i spremnost na cjeloživotno učenje. Program Erasmus+ sagledava se kao poticaj na međunarodnu suradnju i razvitak kulturne svjesnosti.

Studentska iskustva tijekom međunarodne razmjene postaju predmetom sve brojnijih istraživanja (Gu, Day i Schweisfurth, 2010; Stepanoviene, 2011), međutim, rijetki su naslovi koji se bave programom Erasmus ili Erasmus+. Prema spoznajama autora jedino opsežnije istraživanje provela je Europska komisija. Rezultati su objavljeni u izvješću Europske komisije za 2016. godine, no spomenuto istraživanje prije svega je usmjereno na zadovoljstvo studenata programom Erasmus+.

Pojam kulture

Pojam 'kulture' istražuje se od davnih dana. O kulturi su pisali Herodot, Platon, Aristotel, rimski filozofi, arapski pisci i mislioci, europski srednjovjekovni pisci i filozofi poput Rabelaisa, kao i europski pisci i mislioci sedamnaestoga stoljeća poput Descartesa i Montesquieua. Europski povjesničari i etnolozi šesnaestoga i sedamnaestoga stoljeća, kao i evolucionisti devetnaestoga stoljeća, poput Spencera, također su u svoje radove uključili kulturu. Razvitkom kulturne antropologije početkom dvadesetoga stoljeća kultura je postala predmetom brojnih studija i rasprava (Zergollern-Miletić, 2011).

Pojam 'kultura' višeznačan je i postoje njegove brojne definicije. Američki antropolozi Alfred Kroeber i Clyde Kluckhohn objavili su 1952. godine knjigu u kojoj navode i katalogiziraju čak 160 različitih definicija kulture (Andraka, 2014).

Riječ 'kultura' potječe od latinske riječi *colere* koja znači „paziti, brinuti se za, njegovati, saditi, uzgajati, štiti, štovati”. Figurativno značenje „kultivacija putem odgoja“ prvi je put zabilježeno oko 1500. godine, a u 18. stoljeću i prvoj polovini 19. stoljeća izraz nalazimo u njemačkom jeziku, gdje se uglavnom odnosi na koncept „visoke kulture“, na „više vrijednosti ili prosvijećenost društva“, odnosno na odabrane, vrijedne i kultivirane artefakte nekoga društva ili „intelektualnu stranu civilizacije“ (Kroeber i Kluckhohn, 1952, str. 35, prema Andraka, 2014). Danas pojam 'kulture', kada se govori o ljudskoj zajednici, ima dva temeljna značenja:

1. Ukupnost materijalnih i duhovnih dobara, etičkih i društvenih vrijednosti što ih je stvorilo čovječanstvo (antropolozi to nazivaju Kulturom – pisano velikim slovom – npr. Kottak, 1991, str. 37);
2. Ukupnost duhovne, moralne, društvene i proizvodne djelatnosti jednoga društva ili epohe (kultura pisana malim slovom, Kottak, 1991, str. 37).

Postoji i treće značenje koje uključuje ukupnost obrazovanja, znanja, etičkih i socijalnih osjećaja, društvenog ophođenja i ponašanja jednoga pojedinca prema drugome (uljuđenost, uljudno ponašanje) (Zergollern-Miletić, 1998).

O pojmu kulture postoji bogata literatura budući da se kulturom bave brojne znanosti, prije svega antropologija, etnologija, sociologija, lingvistika i psihologija. Postoje također i brojne rasprave o razlučivanju pojmova 'kulture', 'civilizacije', 'društva' i 'nacije' (Kottak, 1991). Bratanić (1991) ističe da je suvremenom shvaćanju kulture doprinijela Ruth Benedict (1934) definicijom kulture kao „obrasca mišljenja i djelovanja neke ljudske zajednice koji obilježava sve njihove aktivnosti i čini ih različitim od svih drugih ljudi“. Nas u ovome radu zanima upravo ta definicija kulture. Ono što nas također zanima jest tvrdnja da se kultura uči (Kottak, 1991, str. 32). U tome smislu postoje tri vrste učenja: individualno situacijsko učenje (koje posjeduju i životinje), društveno situacijsko učenje (koje također posjeduju i životinje) i kulturno učenje. Kulturno učenje svojstveno je samo čovjeku i oslanja se na čovjekovu sposobnost služenja simbolima, znakovima koji ne moraju nužno biti povezani s onim što predstavljaju.

Možemo reći da je značenje pojma kultura toliko široko da „ne postoji nijedan vid ljudskog života koji ona ne dotiče ili ne mijenja“ (Hall, 1977, str. 14, navedeno u Andracka, 2014, str. 5). Milardović opisuje kulturu kao „najuočljiviju i najproblematičniju silu društvene integracije“ (1999, str. 176). Razvitkom tehnologije i znanosti u drugoj polovini dvadesetoga stoljeća omogućena je veća povezanost različitih kultura. Upravo zbog toga kulture su se počele otvarati prema svijetu te su ljudi dobili potrebu da postignu bolju komunikaciju i suradnju. Kako bi različite kulture postigle sklad, pritom poštujući međusobne različitosti, potrebno je u svakome članu pojedine kulture razvijati njegovo razumijevanje za nju, kako za njezinu prošlost tako i za budućnost (Fei, 2015, str. 20). S obzirom na to da je pogled na kulturu relativan i ovisi od osobe do osobe, običaje određene kulture ne bismo trebali preuranjeno prosuđivati, dok god u potpunosti i pravilno ne shvatimo kulturu koju proučavamo (Haviland, 2002, str. 51). Ta je tvrdnja u skladu s jednim od osnovnih ciljeva antropologije, a to je prevladavanje etnocentrizma, sklonosti prosuđivanja ljudi iz drugih kultura na temelju svojih vrijednosnih sudova (Zergollern-Miletić, 2011). S obzirom na brzu modernizaciju i globalizaciju današnjega svijeta, Fei (2015, str. 35) ističe važnost integracije različitih kultura, što potiče i Europska unija koja pokušava stvoriti suradnju između različitih država i kultura na području socijalno i gospodarski rastuće Europe.

Kako moderni svijet podrazumijeva i moderne ljude, oni se moraju udaljiti od prošlosti te postati tolerantniji i otvoreniji prema drugim kulturama, za razliku od svojih predaka. Stoga je ključno u čovjeku neprestano razvijati kulturnu svjesnost.

Kulturna svjesnost i međukulturno učenje

Kulturna svjesnost postiže se znanjem, sviješću i razumijevanjem odnosa između čovjekove vlastite zajednice prema široj zajednici, uzimajući u obzir njihove sličnosti

i razlike. Ona podrazumijeva i 'svijest o nacionalnim stereotipima' koji mogu nastati ovisno o perspektivi koju jedna zajednica ima prema drugoj (Council of Europe, 2001, str. 103). Kulturna svjesnost zasniva se na čovjekovu stavu prema interakciji s ljudima koji su socijalizirani na drugačiji način te imaju drugačija vjerovanja, ponašanja i vrijednosti te na njegovu poštivanju tih različitosti. Prema Merino i Avello (2014) kulturna svjesnost može se najbolje razviti prilikom boravka u stranoj državi i izloženosti stranome jeziku (L2). U takvim uvjetima ljudi se osjećaju kao stranci te su prisiljeni sudjelovati u interakciji s ljudima drugačije kulturne pozadine i na taj način razviti kulturnu svjesnost. Samim kontaktom s ljudima različitih kultura i razvitkom svjesnosti povećava se mogućnost produblivanja i adaptacije vlastitih znanja, perspektiva i ponašanja, s obzirom na to da pojedinci počinju propitivati svoje svakodnevne postupke, uspoređujući ih s pripadnicima druge kulture te im se na kraju krajeva prilagođavajući prilikom komunikacije (Jackson, 2010, str. 41). Međutim, dolaze i do spoznaje koliko vlastita kultura može pomoći u interakciji te koliko zapravo ona može pridonijeti sredini u kojoj se nađu. Kinginger (2013, str. 78) ističe da pojedinci izvan svoje kulturne zajednice razvijaju i mijenjaju svoje stavove te ponekad uspijevaju promijeniti svoj socijalni identitet i način na koji gledaju sami sebe. Identitet se kod čovjeka počinje razvijati još u najranijoj dobi. Najčešće ga formiramo i oblikujemo pod utjecajem svoje socijalne i kulturne sredine, no on se može transformirati i prilikom upoznavanja s novom sredinom i interakcijom s drugima (Jackson, 2008, str. 33). S obzirom na razlike među kulturama, čovjek koji se izlaže drugoj kulturi mora biti svjestan da će ona utjecati na njega, isto kao što će i on utjecati na nju. Zato je, prema Fei (2015, str. 47), bitno unaprijed proširiti vidike i razumijevanje prema drugim kulturama, kako bismo izbjegli moguće probleme pri njihovom susretu i na taj način pridonijeli razvitku čovječanstva.

Međukulturno učenje jedan je od središnjih ciljeva Europske mreže mladih. Sve veća potreba za njime javila se nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata, a i danas je ona prisutna i zahtijeva posebne vještine za interkulturno učenje i dijalog među multikulturnim zajednicama – od lokalne, pa sve do globalne razine (Ramberg, 2009).

Akademski mobilnost putem međunarodne suradnje

Suvremeni svijet, koji karakterizira ubrzana globalizacija i internacionalna mobilnost, zahtijeva od ljudi da prilagode i preoblikuju vlastiti identitet kako bi ušli u novu globalnu arenu (Pujolar, Fernandez i Subriana, 2011). Globalizaciju možemo odrediti kao sklop gospodarskih, socijalnih, kulturnih i političkih procesa koji vode sve većoj povezanosti i međuovisnosti pojedinih dijelova svijeta. Istodobno, to je proces gospodarskog, socijalnog, kulturnog i političkog djelovanja koje nadmašuje granice nacionalnih država (Čolić, 2004). Osim osobnog napretka i dobrobiti koju pojedinac dobiva razmjenom i upoznavanjem kulture u kojoj se nalazi, taj transfer na međunarodnoj razini svakako pozitivno utječe i na matičnu zemlju pojedinca jer svoje novostečeno iskustvo pojedinac može dalje prenijeti i ugraditi u kulturnu osnovu

matične zajednice. Međunarodna suradnja pokazatelj je kulturnog razvoja i društvene otvorenosti za novitete modernoga društva. Proces integracije europskih zemalja uvelike je pomogao suradnji njezinih članica te omogućio stvaranje nove prostorne cjeline koja nam omogućuje jedinstvenu razmjenu stavova i ideja. Potpisivanje Bolonjske deklaracije i brisanje granica unutar područja EU značilo je i velik pomak u poticanju akademske mobilnosti.

Pojam akademske mobilnosti podrazumijeva ostvarivanje dijela studijskoga programa (semestra, akademske godine) na stranome sveučilištu. Učenje, studiranje, pisanje seminarskog ili diplomskoga rada ili provođenje istraživanja u inozemstvu studentu omogućava stjecanja znanja, upoznavanje novih tehnologija, komunikaciju i izmjenu iskustava s ljudima iz različitih kulturnih sredina. Studenti koji su dio studija proveli na stranome sveučilištu imaju veće mogućnosti pri zapošljavanju, kako u domicilnoj sredini tako i na međunarodnome tržištu rada. "Osim što pridonosi akademskom i osobnom razvoju pojedinoga studenta, studentska mobilnost smatra se jednim od čimbenika koji pridonose kvaliteti obrazovnog sustava i izgradnji Europe utemeljene na znanju" (The international student exchange, University of Zagreb, n.d.).

Podaci za 2009. godinu pokazuju da je tada 3,3 milijuna studenata studiralo izvan matične zemlje, što znači 65% povećanja mobilnosti od 2000. godine u Europi (McKeown, 2009). Ne samo da svaka suvremena zemlja, sudionica u nekom od programa akademske mobilnosti koja podupire međunarodnu suradnju radi na promicanju međunarodnih odnosa i gleda na akademsku mobilnost i razmjenu kao ključnu komponentu za razmjenu znanja i vrijednosti, već se usmjerava na jačanje intelektualnoga kapitala i promicanja kompetentnosti u globaliziranome svijetu. Također, to je i poticaj da se osigura i razvije međusobno razumijevanje i suradnja, što je iznimno važno u trenutnom ozračju povećanoga nadzora, problema vezanih uz sigurnost i političkih previranja.

Definicija Erasmusa i njegov razvoj

Kako je nastalo ime programa *Erasmus*? Inspiracija za ime programa bio je poznati nizozemski filozof Erazmo Roterdamski (*Croatian Encyclopedia*, n.d.), koji je svojim radom i djelovanjem obilježio područje poučavanja, kulture i istraživanja ljudskih međuodnosa. Petnaesto je stoljeće stvorilo mnoge poznate škole teoretičara i praktičara koji i danas slove kao najutjecajniji i najvažniji u području obrazovanja, a upravo je Erazmo Roterdamski, kao jedan od predstavnika tadašnjega humanističkoga kruga, proučavao međukulturne odnose i načine poučavanja pa je u njegovu čast program nazvan. Prva ideja o programu studentske mobilnosti javila se 1987. godine, a nakon što je pokrenut, program je rastao od prvotnih 11 zemalja sudionica do 34 zemlje sudionice s 3,3 milijuna studenata zaključno s akademskom godinom 2013./2014. Time je ime programa 'Erasmus' dobilo novo značenje: "EuRopean Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students" (European Commission, 2015).

Ciljevi istraživanja

Ciljevi ovog istraživanja bili su:

1. Provjeriti razlog prijave studenata na Erasmus+ program.
2. Provjeriti jesu li ispitanici primijetili razliku u poznavanju kulture zemlje u kojoj su boravili prije i nakon završetka programa.
3. Provjeriti koliko su ispitanici naučili o kulturi drugih sudionika Erasmus+ programa.
4. Provjeriti što su ispitanici naučili komunicirajući s ljudima drugih kultura.
5. Provjeriti kolike su kulturološke razlike sudionici osjetili u odnosu na svoju kulturu.
6. Provjeriti percepciju vezanu uz korisnost Erasmus+ programa u budućem akademskom i poslovnom napredovanju.

Instrument istraživanja

Budući da su ciljani ispitanici bivši sudionici programa Erasmus+ iz različitih država, kao najbrži i najlakši oblik komunikacije odabran je internet. Upitnik je konstruiran na Google Disc platformi, a ispitanicima je prosljeđen putem društvenih mreža i elektronske pošte. Takav način ispitivanja ne obvezuje ispitanika na ispunjavanje upitnika te on u svakome trenutku može odustati bez posljedica za daljnju provedbu istraživanja. Osim toga, omogućena je potpuna sloboda u izražavanju mišljenja i vlastitih stavova ispitanika te je očuvana njihova anonimnost. Upitnik sadrži dvanaest pitanja, od kojih su dva pitanja otvorenoga tipa. Upitnik je u cijelosti proveden na engleskome jeziku i nalazi se u prilogu rada.

Uzorak

Istraživanje je provedeno na uzorku od 100 ispitanika. Uvjet koji su ispitanici morali zadovoljiti jest da su tijekom svoga visokoškolskog obrazovanja bili sudionici Erasmus+ programa. Od ukupnog broja ispitanika (N=100), 75% ispitanika činile su žene, a 25% su bili muškarci.

Dob ispitanika kretala se u rasponu od 19 do 30 godina. Najveći broj ispitanika (N=28), odnosno njih 28%, imao je 23 godine, a najmanji je broj ispitanika imao 19 (N=1), 29 (N=1) i 30 (N=1) godina. Jedan ispitanik nije dao prihvatljiv odgovor. Neprihvatljivim odgovorima smatraju se oni koji na određeno pitanje ne nude odgovor.

Profil ispitanika

Istraživanje je provedeno na ispitanicima iz 22 različite države. Od ukupnog broja ispitanika (N=100) najviše ih je bilo iz Hrvatske i Španjolske (po 16). Najmanje ispitanika bilo je iz Ujedinjenog Kraljevstva, Južne Koreje, Slovenije, Latvije, Grčke, Finske i Danske – po jedan ispitanik (Tablica 1).

Tablica 1

Rezultati o sudjelovanju (pitanje broj 4) pokazuju da je 87% ispitanika bilo samo jednom, a 11% dva puta na Erasmus+ programu. Dvoje ispitanika sudjelovalo je tri puta.

Rezultati i rasprava

U istraživanju su se koristila dva softverska programa. Kvantitativni podatci obrađeni su u SPSS programu, a kvalitativni su analizirani uz pomoć MAXQDA programa.

Nakon što smo sudionike ispitali o njihovoj dobi, spolu, matičnoj zemlji i broju sudjelovanja u programu razmjene, zanimalo nas je koje su sve razloge za prijavu na program ispitanici imali (*Why did you decide to apply for an Erasmus Exchange Programme?* – pitanje broj 5). Dobivene odgovore razvrstali smo u sljedeće kategorije: *putovanja, obaveza na fakultetu, zabava, bolje obrazovne i poslovne mogućnosti, razbijanje predrasuda (otvorenost), osobni razvitak, preporuke i poznanstva drugih ljudi, usvajanje jezičnih vještina, upoznavanje drugih kultura* i 'odgovor nije prihvatljiv' (Tablica 2). Budući da se radilo o otvorenom tipu pitanja, dobiveno je više odgovora nego što je bilo ispitanika (N=100). Razlog je tome što su ispitanici imali potpunu slobodu u odgovaranju i stoga su mogli dati po nekoliko različitih odgovora, od kojih je svaki svrstan u jednu od kategorija. Kao najčešći odgovor pojavljivao se *osobni razvitak*. Taj odgovor dalo je 69 ispitanika, odnosno 31,8%. Neki od odgovora kategoriziranih kao *osobni razvitak* želja su za promjenom i kušanjem nečeg novog, život i studij u inozemstvu, stjecanje novih iskustava i samostalnost. Relativno visok postotak odgovora (28,57%) vezan je upravo uz kulturu, s odgovorima kao što su *upoznavanje novih ljudi, običaja i karakteristika države u koju su ispitanici planirali otići*, a nešto manji postotak (20,28%) odnosio se na *usvajanje jezičnih vještina*, bilo da se radi o usavršavanju postojećega znanja jezika ili učenju novoga. Najmanji broj odgovora odnosio se na zabavu i razbijanje predrasuda (0,92% u svakoj od kategorija). S obzirom na dobivene rezultate uočavamo kako su ispitanici prijavom na sudjelovanje u Erasmus+ programu ponajprije htjeli razviti svoju osobnost. Prvi korak prema kulturnoj svjesnosti jest razvitak samoga pojedinca, a tek potom i prenošenje vlastite osobnosti na društvo i ljude različitih kultura.

Tablica 2

Na pitanje broj 6, jesu li znali nešto o kulturi Erasmus zemlje prije mobilnosti (*Did you know something about the culture of your Erasmus country before the mobility?*), ispitanici su u većem postotku (71%) odgovorili potvrdno, a njih 29% izjavilo je kako nije ništa znalo (Prikaz 1).

Prikaz 1

U istraživanju smo provjerili i postotni udio slaganja ispitanika s određenim tvrdnjama. Svoje odgovore procijenili su na Likertovoj skali od 1 do 5, gdje je broj 1 predstavljao tvrdnju "ništa", a broj 5 "jako puno".

Na pitanje broj 7, koliko su naučili o kulturi Erasmus države na kraju mobilnosti (*How much had you learned about the culture of the Erasmus+ country you were visiting by the end of the mobility?*), najveći je broj ispitanika, točnije 30%, odgovorio kako nisu sigurni koliko su naučili (3), a jednak je broj ispitanika (N=27) odgovorio ocjenom 4 (*ponešto*) i 5 (*jako puno*). S druge strane, samo je jedan ispitanik odgovorio kako nije naučio ništa (1) nakon završetka programa (Tablica 3).

Tablica 3

Kada smo ispitanike pitali koliko su naučili o kulturi drugih ljudi uključenih u Erasmus+ program (*How much did you learn about the cultures of the other people who were involved in the Erasmus+ Exchange Programme – pitanje broj 8*), najveći broj ispitanika (41%) odgovorio je kako su naučili *ponešto* (4), a vrlo je sličan postotak, njih 39%, odgovorio *jako puno* (5). Nadalje, 17% ispitanika nije sigurno koliko su naučili (3), a postotak onih koji su malo naučili (2) i koji nisu ništa naučili (1) gotovo je neznan (Tablica 4). Otprilike polovina ispitanika naučila je *ponešto* (4) o kulturi drugih sudionika Erasmus+ programa.

Tablica 4

Još jedan aspekt koji nas je zanimalo bio je vezan uz osjećaj razlike između kulture ispitanika i ostalih kultura (*How much did you feel the difference between your own and the other cultures? – pitanje broj 9*). Većina ispitanika (30%) *nije sigurna* (3) koliko su razliku osjetili između svoje i ostalih kultura, a postotak onih koji su odgovorili *ponešto* (4) i *jako puno* (5) bio je jednak (po 27%). Nadalje, znatno manji broj ispitanika (15%) odgovorio je kako nisu mnogo osjetili razliku između svoje i tuđih kultura (2), a samo je jedan ispitanik odgovorio kako nije uopće osjetio navedenu razliku (Prikaz 2). Većina je ispitanika (80%) *ponešto* i mnogo osjetila razliku između svoje i drugih kultura.

Prikaz 2

Daljnijim ispitivanjem provjerili smo što su ispitanici naučili komunicirajući s ljudima drugih kultura (*What did you learn by communicating with people from other cultures? – pitanje broj 10*). Najveći postotak odgovora (39,26%) odnosio se na kulturu. U kategoriju kulture svrstali smo odgovore kao što su: razumijevanje i poštivanje drugih kultura, upoznavanje s autohtonom glazbom, hranom i pićem, nove spoznaje o različitim religijama, običajima, manirama, vrijednostima i stavovima, uvid u povijest i političke situacije Erasmus država, način razmišljanja i života, sličnosti među ljudima i državama. Iz druge kategorije, u koju je svrstano 25,19% odgovora, moglo se zaključiti kako su ispitanici postali otvoreniji prema drugim kulturama u smislu razbijanja predrasuda, prihvaćanja različitosti i razumijevanja tuđih navika. Najmanji postotak prihvatljivih odgovora iznosio je 13,33%, a odnosi se na naučene i otkrivene nove stvari i informacije kao što su rad u timu i spoznaje o tome kako prebroditi nesporazume nastale zbog jezičnih i kulturnih barijera. Od ukupnog broja odgovora na to pitanje (N=135), njih 10 (7,41%) nije bilo jasno (Prikaz 3).

Prikaz 3

Ispitanike smo potom zatražili da odrede korisnost Erasmus+ programa za svoju budućnost (*How much will your Erasmus+ Exchange Program experience help you in the future?* – pitanje broj 11) na Likertovoj skali od 1 – 5 (1 – *nimalo*, 5 – *mnogo*). Ispitanici (95%) su izjavili kako Erasmus+ program donosi ponešto ili mnogo koristi za njihovu budućnost (Tablica 5). Nakon određivanja korisnosti Erasmus+ programa u budućnosti, od ispitanika se tražilo detaljnije pojašnjenje (*In what sense (How?)* – pitanje broj 12). Pretpostavili smo kako će najveći broj odgovora biti vezan uz prihvaćanje različitosti, veće mogućnosti zapošljavanja, usvojenost jezičnih i komunikacijskih vještina. U ovom slučaju naša je pretpostavka većinom bila potvrđena s obzirom na to da je najveći broj odgovora (N=60) svrstan u kategoriju *otvorenost*. U toj kategoriji javljali su se odgovori kao što su *prihvaćanje različitosti*, *razbijanje predrasuda* i *razvijanje svijesti o međukulturnosti*. Nadalje, relativno visoki postotci pripadaju *razvijanju jezičnih* (31%) i *komunikacijskih vještina* (21%). Ono što nismo predvidjeli jest želja za daljnjim putovanjima, što je odgovorilo 35% ispitanika (Tablica 6).

Tablica 5 i 6

Rezultati prikazanog istraživanja pokazuju kako je više od 70% ispitanika poznavalo kulturu zemlje u kojoj su proveli program mobilnosti, a da je više od polovine ispitanika (54%) istaknulo kako je naučilo ponešto ili mnogo o toj zemlji za vrijeme mobilnosti. Taj podatak govori nam o Erasmus-u kao sredstvu širenja vidika. Osim o Erasmus zemljama, 80% ispitanika naučilo je ponešto ili mnogo o drugim ljudima koji su bili uključeni u program. Nadalje, 54% ispitanika osjećalo je ponešto ili mnogo razliku između svoje i tuđih kultura.

Te pozitivne rezultate možemo usporediti s pozitivnim rezultatima koje je objavila Europska komisija u svome izvješću 2016. godine (European Commission, 2016). U tom izvješću prikazani su rezultati dobiveni ispitivanjem zadovoljstva više od 95% studenata nakon njihove mobilnosti. Rezultati pokazuju kako se povećala studentska prilagodljivost (92%), kako osjećaju veću samouvjerenost prema novim izazovima (90%), kako su postali tolerantniji prema ljudima drugačijih vrijednosti i ponašanja (87%), da su naučili bolje surađivati s ljudima drugih kultura (87%) te da su se njihove vještine učenja povećale (83%).

Zaključak i prijedlog za daljnja istraživanja

Na temelju provedenog istraživanja i dobivenih rezultata možemo zaključiti da je značajna većina ispitanika potvrdila da su upoznavanje drugih kultura i osobni razvitak razlog zbog kojega su se odlučili prijaviti na program akademske mobilnosti.

S obzirom na sve navedeno smatramo kako je Erasmus+ vrlo bitan u razvitku ne samo pojedinca već i cijeloga društva.

Kako bismo još bolje upoznali Erasmus+ program, trebalo bi dodatno istražiti profil ispitanih studenata, njihovo područje studija i interesa, njihov odnos prema važnosti upoznavanja druge kulture i interes za učenjem jezika zemlje u kojoj su sudjelovali u programu mobilnosti.

Osim toga, bilo bi uputno istražiti moguća negativna iskustva sudionika u programu Erasmus+, kako bi se takva negativna iskustva u budućnosti izbjegla.

Dodatak

Upitnik

1. Dob
2. Spol
3. Matična država
4. Koliko ste puta sudjelovali na Erasmus+ programu?
5. Zašto ste se odlučili prijaviti na Erasmus+ program?
6. Jeste li znali nešto o kulturi Erasmus zemlje prije mobilnosti?
7. Koliko ste naučili o kulturi Erasmus zemlje na kraju mobilnosti?
8. Koliko ste naučili o kulturi drugih ljudi uključenih u Erasmus+ program?
9. U kojoj ste mjeri osjetili razliku između svoje kulture i ostalih kultura?
10. Što ste naučili komunicirajući s ljudima drugih kultura?
11. Koliko će Vam iskustvo Erasmus+ programa pomoći u budućnosti?
12. U kojem smislu će Vam Erasmus+ program pomoći u budućnosti?