



Self-reported Impact of Erasmus + Mobilities on Sancti Petri Students

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Abstract. Using an online questionnaire, we examined the self-reported benefits and satisfaction with Erasmus + mobility of intermediate and higher technical students who participated in internships abroad under the Erasmus + programme. During the academic year 2021–2022, the Sancti Petri Secondary School (San Fernando, Cádiz, Spain) has implemented some Erasmus + mobility projects both in higher education and vocational education and training. Within the context of these projects, 13 students have completed traineeships of less than three months in different companies in several European countries. Identifying the effects and satisfaction levels of students attending Erasmus + mobility is of critical importance to correct and improve these projects. The students who took part in an Erasmus + mobility strongly believed that this experience improved their foreign language skills and enhanced their intercultural understanding. Overall, they considered that the experience was positive, made them mature on a personal level, improved their professional skills, and provided more opportunities to get a job in the future. Finally, 100% of our students would repeat the Erasmus + mobility and 100% of the students would recommend this experience to their friends. Therefore, Erasmus + mobility for traineeships seems to be satisfactory and has a very positive impact on Sancti Petri intermediate and higher technician students.

Research Contribution: Survey findings will help to assess the effectiveness of Erasmus + mobilities and to identify the main skills developed by students during their internships. The results of this study will contribute to the benefit of society given the important role that the Erasmus + programme currently plays at all levels of education.

Keywords: Erasmus · mobility effects · student satisfaction · Spain · student mobility

1 Introduction

Erasmus+ is the EU programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. This programme offers opportunities for students at different educational levels including Higher Education and Vocational Training. Among the activities funded by the Erasmus+ programme are traineeships abroad with a minimum duration of two months and a

maximum of twelve months. The internship must respond to the learning and personal development needs of the student related to their degree and be integrated, whenever possible, into their study program.

Erasmus+ mobility has positive effects on students' educational, personal and professional development by increasing skills and attitudes, promoting greater employability, improving self-confidence and independence, and stimulating understanding of people from other cultures, generating a European feeling [1]. In addition, Erasmus+ enables students to adapt to a changing global work environment, improving the employability of young people and preparing them for highly skilled jobs [2].

Sancti Petri Secondary School (Instituto de Enseñanza Secundaria Sancti Petri) is located in San Fernando, province of Cadiz, Andalusia, Spain. Within the educational offer of this center are secondary education, high school and vocational training in the basic, intermediate and higher grade. Intending to increase the internationalization of our educational center, Sancti Petri, since 2016 has carried out a series of activities within the Erasmus+ programme. These activities funded by Erasmus+ projects Key action 1-102 (for Vocational Education and Training) and Key action 1-103 (for Higher Education) have included both teachers and students. Specifically, in this school year 2021-2022 mobilities have been carried out in which 9 teachers and 13 students have participated. These 13 mobilities of students for traineeships abroad have been carried out by students attending different intermediate and higher vocational training courses corresponding respectively at levels 3 & 5 of the European Qualifications Framework (Table 1) and they are intended to improve the linguistic and professional skills of students to enhance their future employability.

This study aims to evaluate the effect of these mobilities for traineeships on the students of Sancti Petri Secondary School. Specifically, to analyze what improvements the students perceive after their mobilities in some foreign countries. This study will allow us to evaluate the quality of the Erasmus+ mobilities managed by the Sancti Petri Secondary School and to introduce the necessary adjustments. The Erasmus+ programme is widely recognized for promoting the improvement of the personal and professional skills of its participants. In addition, one of the main objectives of the programme is to enhance students' language skills and intercultural knowledge. In this regard, several previous studies highlight that some of the reasons that lead students to participate in these mobilities are to improve their studies, boost their self-confidence, to find a job in the future [3]. Other motivations cited by students are to improve their level in the local language, academic and cultural factors, the desire to get to know a new environment, and to have a European experience [4].

In the literature review, we can find several studies that analyze the impact of Erasmus+ mobility on students of Higher Education Institutes in different European countries such as Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, United Kingdom, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and Russia [5–14]. Among these works, we highlight two carried out in our country, Spain, by Prieto-Arranz *et al* in [5] and Urquía-Grande and Del Campo in [6], corresponding respectively to the University of the Balearic Islands and the Complutense University of Madrid where the benefits perceived by the students after mobility are analyzed, among which an improvement in foreign language skills stands out. On the other hand, a study

conducted by the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes (CMEPIUS) by Flander and Korada in [13] analyzing the perceptions of Erasmus students seems to indicate that they perceive mobility as an important factor for the development of cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and that among the different types of mobility, it is the internships in companies that seem to have a greater implication in the development of these skills.

Outside the European borders, the studies by Mizikaci and Arslan in [15], Endes in [16], and Fidan and Karatepe in [17] analyze the effect of the Erasmus+ programme on Turkish university students, highlighting among them the acquisition of personal and professional skills for their future careers.

Finally, concerning vocational training, there are few studies on the benefits of Erasmus+ mobility for students, among them we highlight the study of Greek students of Vocational Secondary Education by Kavasakalis and Tzima in [18], in which students express a high degree of satisfaction with the mobility, as well as an improvement in their professional and personal skills.

2 Method

2.1 Sample Selection

In the present study, 13 students from Sancti Petri Secondary School participated, who during the school year 2021-2022 participated in Erasmus+ mobilities for internships in different European countries. There were 46% male students versus 54% female students, with an average age of 20.1 years. The duration of these mobilities was less than three months and the host countries were Germany, Italy and Czech Republic. The students were studying different vocational training degrees at intermediate and higher levels (levels 3 & 5 of the European Qualifications Framework). Table 1 shows the profile of these students including the title of the diploma and the professional family to which it belongs.

2.2 Study Variables and Data Collection

After completing the mobility, students were asked to fill out an *ad hoc* online questionnaire created in Google Forms. All students involved were sent an email inviting them to fill in the questionnaire and, to avoid students answering more than once, only one response per Google Forms user was allowed. As outcome variables, the responses to the questions were assessed on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree, as follows:

- 1) I improved my foreign language skills.
- 2) I improved my intercultural understanding.
- 3) The experience was positive for me.
- 4) It made me mature on a personal level.
- 5) I improved my professional skills.
- 6) It provided me more opportunities to get a job in the future.

Table 1. Study programs of the participants

Title of the diploma /Professional Family	Level of the diploma	Number of students
Higher Technician in Clinical and Biomedical Laboratory /Health	Level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF 5)	3
Technician in Emergency Health Care /Health	Level 3 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF 3)	4
Technician in Auxiliary Nursery Care /Health	Level 3 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF 3)	2
Technician in Telecommunications Installations /Electrical and Electronics	Level 3 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF 3)	2
Technician in Bodywork /Vehicle Transportation and Maintenance	Level 3 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF 3)	2

In addition, to be able to assess the satisfaction of the students with the mobilities, they were asked if they would repeat this experience and if they would recommend it to a friend. The study data were collected in June 2022.

3 Findings and Discussion

3.1 Findings

At the end of their mobility, all students (n=13) completed the online questionnaire and, as shown in Table 2, the answers to all questions produced an average score of ≥ 3.4 . The response with the highest score (4.8) was 'It made me mature on a personal level'. Figure 1 shows the relative frequencies from 1 to 5 of the responses for each of the items of the questionnaire.

Finally, the students were asked if they would repeat the mobility experience and if they would recommend it to their friends. 100% of our students would repeat the Erasmus+ mobility and 100% of the students would recommend this experience to their friends.

3.2 Discussion

One of the main objectives of the Erasmus+ programme is to contribute to the development of the foreign language skills of its participants. As can be seen from the data of our study, the Sancti Petri outgoing students consider that their language skills in English or in the local language have improved considerably as a result of this experience (mean score 4.0). Moreover, this self-perception of the students was endorsed by the fact that in all cases they managed to improve their language levels in the Online Language Support (OLS) platform. Our results are consistent with those of other authors who have similarly concluded that the Erasmus+ programme is linguistically valuable in their research [5,

Table 2. Mean scores for the questionnaire items

Item	Mean score
I improved my foreign language skills	4.0
I improved my intercultural understanding	4.6
The experience was positive for me	4.5
It made me mature on a personal level	4.8
I improved my professional skills	3.4
It provided me more opportunities to get a job in the future	4.6

Notes: 1= Strongly disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly agree

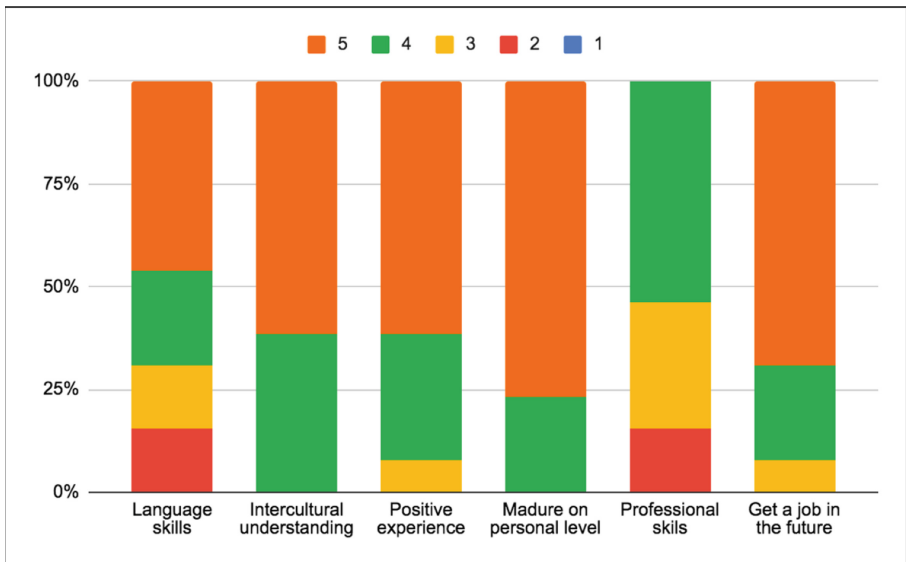


Fig. 1. Relative frequencies for the questionnaire items. Notes: 1= Strongly disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly agree

6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15–18]. Students who participated in the Erasmus+ programme had the opportunity to live, interact or work with people from different cultures. During these interactions, students were able to learn more about the customs of the host country and the countries of other Erasmus students. For this reason, Sancti Petri students reported that this experience greatly improved their intercultural understanding (mean score 4.6). This positive effect has been previously reported in other scientific studies [6, 7, 11, 14, 16, 17].

On the other hand, the Erasmus+ programme claims to be a boost in the life of the students not only on an academic level but also on a personal level. In this sense, it is worth mentioning in our study that the item with the highest score among the students surveyed is personal maturity (mean score 4.8), more than 75% of our respondents strongly agree that the experience has led to greater personal growth or maturity in their lives. This fact seems logical if we take into account that most of our students are very young (20.1 years old) and live with their families in Spain. Therefore, this is the first time they have had to face the fact of living alone in a foreign country with a language different from the one they master. It is therefore logical that our students express that the participation in the Erasmus+ mobility has contributed to the development of their growth on a personal level. Previous research findings supported these results [5, 7, 8, 14, 15, 18].

The Erasmus+ programme contributed positively not only to individual development but also to the professional development of its participants by allowing them to carry out internships in various companies in foreign countries. In this sense, Sancti Petri students believe that this experience contributed to the development of their professional skills (mean score 3.4). In the same sense, other authors support the positive effect of mobility on the acquisition of professional competencies [12, 14–16, 18]. However, as this item scored the lowest, we believe that further research is needed to explore this aspect in more detail. For example, in the following mobilities, aspects such as satisfaction with the internship company or adjustment of the work placement with the study program should be evaluated.

It seems reasonable that if students feel they have improved their foreign language proficiency, matured on a personal level, and developed new professional skills, they will find it easier to find a job in their future careers. Thus, more than 50% of our respondents strongly agree that the internship abroad will help them find a job in the future. This fact is of enormous importance for our students, as our region has one of the highest unemployment rates in Spain. Previous studies also show that students are more confident that they will find a job more easily after mobility [11, 15, 18]. In this sense, we believe that it is necessary to carry out a further study to check if these students have a higher rate of employability in their future compared to students who did not participate in an Erasmus+ mobility.

Finally, there are multiple previous studies in which students indicate that their mobility has been very positive for them and they report being very satisfied with their Erasmus+ experience [9, 11, 12, 18]. In our case, Sancti Petri students consider that the Erasmus+ mobility has been a very positive experience for them and this high level of satisfaction of the students is reflected in the answers to the following questions in which 100% of the students answer that they would repeat the experience or would recommend it to a friend. The fact that our students are satisfied with their Erasmus+ mobility is very important for Sancti Petri Secondary School as it reflects a great extent the quality of the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme.

4 Conclusions

The internationalization of education is a very relevant issue that is increasing over the years in an increasingly globalized world. Student mobility within the Erasmus+

programme is a key element in this process. Through an online survey, we examined the self-reported impact of Sancti Petri students who participated in internship mobility in the school year 2021-2022. They highlighted the following benefits: growing personal maturity, improving language skills and cultural understanding, improving professional skills, and believing that they would find a job more easily after the experience. The students generally considered that their Erasmus+ experience was very positive and 100% of the students would not hesitate to repeat it or recommend it to a friend. Therefore, participation in internships abroad seems to have very positive effects on Sancti Petri intermediate and higher technician students, both personally and academically, better preparing them for the demanding global marketplace. One of the main limitations of this study is its sample size so the generalization of these findings is difficult and cannot be considered representative of Spanish Erasmus students. However, this study is useful to continue supporting the participation of our students in Erasmus+ mobilities and to validate the quality of the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme by Sancti Petri Secondary School.

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