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**THE INTERCULTURAL IMPACT OF THE ERASMUS PROGRAMME ON  
HUNGARIAN STUDENTS, WITH SPECIAL REGARD TO STUDENTS OF  
MEDICINE AND HEALTH CARE**

*PhD Dissertation*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEGEE	Association des États Généraux des Étudiants de l'Europe (European Students' Forum)
ECTS	European Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ERA	European Research Area
ESN	Erasmus Student Network
ESU	European Student Union
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IaH	Internationalisation at Home
IcC	Intercultural Competence
OECD	Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## **PREFACE**

Along with the growing internationalisation of many economic sectors, globalization has not only brought about the rapid spread of new technologies, political and information systems, but also significant migration of work force, which have resulted in regular contacts of people with multicultural backgrounds. Due to globalization and geopolitical factors, Europe has changed radically since the end of the Second World War, not only in its geographical, political, economic and demographic structures, but in the mentality and quality of life of its people as well. Many Europeans start their studies in one country, continue in another and work in a third one. European societies are hence stimulating world-wide migration and changes, which have an impact on all social institutions, including education. The diversity of people coming from different countries and working together in multicultural groups may lead to cultural synergy as well as misunderstandings. As a result, cultural diversity is becoming an increasingly fundamental challenge for the health care system. What kind of competences should students of medicine and health care possess in order to easily adapt to the culture of their new working environment if they start their career in a foreign country or at home working with colleagues and patients from different cultural backgrounds? Is higher education prepared to integrate these needs into the curricula?

Hungary joined the European Union in 2004. Since then the number of migrants has been continuously growing in the country parallel with the outward migration tendencies, including a substantial number of health and medical care professionals. Some settle for good, while others relocate for shorter or longer periods of time for the purposes of professional development, to gain more experience and know-how and return with the possession of newly acquired knowledge, skills and techniques. Moreover, EU membership has brought along the increase of the value of degrees and diplomas, thus calling forth the escalation in the number of international students across the country.

Therefore, it has become an imperative for Hungarian health care and medical education to address the above issues and contribute to the development of skills and competences both for students and staff which are indispensable in the multicultural world. Still, there was no

research found in Hungary focusing on and measuring these effects related to medical and health care. Therefore, the present dissertation aims to attain deeper knowledge about the intercultural impact of the Erasmus programme on Hungarian students, with special regard to students of medicine and health care, who were involved in outward mobility during the academic year of 2010/2011.

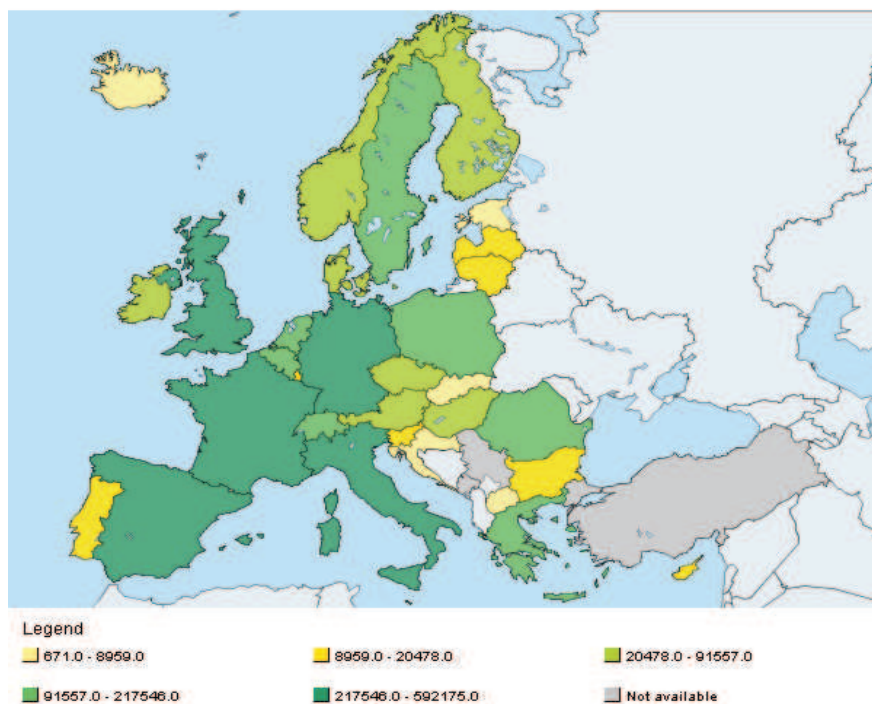
*“Globalization is not something we can hold off or turn off...it is the economic equivalent of a force of nature – like wind or water”*

*Bill Clinton (Clinton, 2013)*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. The impact of globalisation on higher education

The world today has become a global village. One can like or dislike globalization, agree or disagree with it, however, as Kofi Annan claims “arguing against globalization is like arguing against the laws of gravity” (Blanton & Kegley, 2012, p. 499). With each passing year Hungary is becoming increasingly multicultural. Comparing the latest census data with that of 2001, there is a significant increase in the number of foreign nationals residing in the country (KSH, 2013). The number of Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Vietnamese nationals has more than tripled during the past ten years, whereas the number of those claiming to be Hungarians has decreased by more than a million. This latest figure also indicates the outward migration tendencies of the Hungarian population, including a significant number of professionals from the medical and health care fields.



**Figure 1 Immigration in Europe, 2012**

Source: Eurostat, 2014

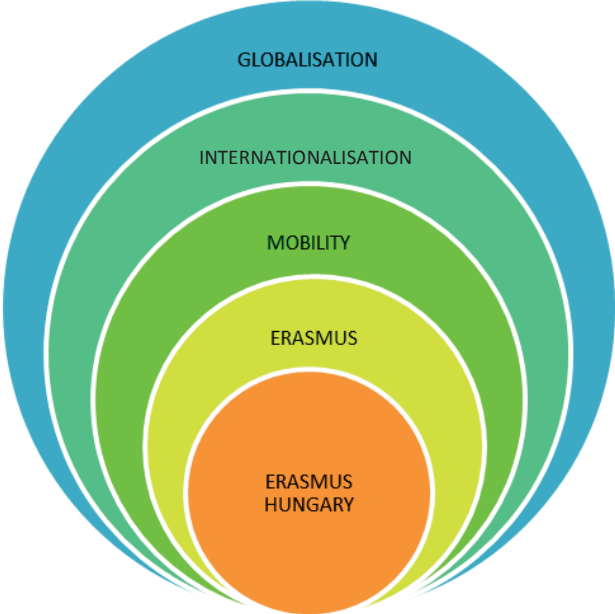


Eurostat (2014) estimates indicate the number of immigrants in Hungary to be between 20,478 and 91,557. The number of immigrants settling in Hungary has been increasing by 22–25,000 annually since the country joined the European Union in 2004. At the same time, in 2012 there was an estimated 230,000 Hungarians living outside the country in one of the EU member states, though close to 500,000 is projected (Világgazdaság Online, 2013).

In this transformed continent the European student environment is also undergoing radical changes. More and more students go to study abroad through several bilateral agreements or European Union-level mobility programmes, such as the Erasmus. Apart from mobility programmes, globalization and world-wide migration are also part of the reasons why the scope of higher education has completely changed over the past few decades thus enabling increased contact of diverse cultures (Németh et al., 2009). Therefore, a clear cut need has emerged over the past few decades for the implementation of international dimensions in the curricula, in other words, to internationalise higher education worldwide (Knight, 1993; Barakonyi, 2002; Betlehem et al., 2003). In the Communiqué of the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education even more emphasis was put on the importance of international partnerships and university networks which contribute to a better multilateral cooperation at all ends. For UNESCO (2009), as claimed, it is an imperative to encourage world-wide mobility and exchanges of students and staff.

Several international studies have proved (Nilsson, 1999; Wächter, 2000; BIHUNE, 2003; Callen and Lee, 2009) that a period spent abroad enriches students' lives not only in the academic field but also in the acquisition of intercultural skills and self-reliance. In the globalised world an international education is a must-have for talented young people, however, abundant research on the topic has highlighted (McCabe, 2006; Flakerud, 2007; Callen and Lee, 2009) that mere international knowledge is not enough and encounters with diverse cultures are vital in providing a learning environment for the development of intercultural competences. The experiences students gain during their stay abroad change their lives forever and have a reverberating impact on their environment. Most employers already understand that, hence they want and need globally-minded and experienced employees. They seek for mobile, flexible, cosmopolitan-minded and multilingual staff, which they can find partly attributed to mobility programmes (Németh, 2010).

The figure below summarizes the global processes described above and demonstrates the overlapping focal areas of the present research.



**Figure 2 From globalisation to Erasmus**

Source: Author

*"As the world grows 'flatter,' the value of an international approach to higher education cannot be overstated."*

*Dr. Joseph Olander (Olander, 2012)*

## **1.2. Internationalisation of higher education**

As Olander (2012) claims, internationalising higher education is inevitable today. Although internationalisation is a relatively new concept in Hungary, it has been in use for several centuries in political science and governmental relations, but has become a buzz word in higher education since the late 1980s early 1990s. However, it means different things to different people and is often confused or used interchangeably with the term of globalisation. Knight (1997) argues that whilst *globalisation is the flow of technology, economy, people and culture across borders, internationalisation of higher education is one of the ways a country can react to the challenges and impact of globalisation*. Therefore, these terms can be interpreted as different in meanings, but closely interrelated dynamic processes. As Knight claims, „*globalisation can be thought of as the catalyst, whilst internationalisation as the response, albeit a response in a proactive way*” (Knight, 1999, p. 14). One of the earliest and most commonly quoted and accepted definitions of internationalisation also comes from Knight (1993), who defines it as the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the research, teaching and services functions of higher education. The importance of including both an international and an intercultural approach highlights the fact that internationalisation is not oriented to countries and nations exclusively, but includes cultures, minorities and ethnic groups within their territories. Sheppard and Bellis (2010) argue that internationalisation is a more holistic approach to embedding international and global values into all aspects of the institutions as it also highlights other issues and agendas, such as employability, mobility, lifelong learning and curriculum development. Nevertheless, with the continuous and rapid changes in the past decades Knight felt the classification of internationalisation had to be updated in the early 21st century and she came up with the following definition: “*internationalization at the national, sector and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education*” (Knight, 2003, p. 2). She uses the three terms of *international-intercultural-global* intentionally as a triad, whereby *international* refers to the relationships between nations, *intercultural* manifests the diversity

of cultures within a country and *global* reflects to the worldwide scope of the term. Knight (2003) also claims that with the use of more general terms of the updated version the meaning of internationalization can be relevant for the sector and institution levels as well as the different providers in postsecondary education. Developing globally competitive skills and competences was also at the heart of the Lisbon strategy, which aimed to make the EU the most dynamic and knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010 (European Commission, 2008). Internationalisation and mobility are expected to lead to positive effects on academic education, cultural awareness, international understanding, and also on world peace, as specified by UNESCO (2009). One claim is that students become good citizens, not only of their own countries, but of the world, thus able to work internationally and across cultures. Many will work abroad, but all will live in increasingly multicultural societies at home. Bentling and Lennander maintain that “*internationalisation is to promote cultural competence*” (Bentling & Lennander, 2008, p. 15) and this description has several implications for the present dissertation, therefore internationalisation is interpreted within this context hereinafter.

*"Investing in education, training and research is the best investment we can make for Europe's future."*

*Androulla Vassiliou (Vassiliou, 2014)*

### **1.3. Student mobility**

Kelo et al. (2006) argue that the meaning of student mobility is often regarded as a popular concept referring to a student having crossed a national border to study or to undertake other study-related activities in another country. Rédei (2006) views student mobility as physical mobility from one country to another, with the primary goal of studying or doing research. She draws a distinction among three types of mobility forms:

- 1. degree mobility that aims at obtaining a degree in another country*
- 2. credit-mobility, to accumulate credits that are recognised by the home university*
- 3. programme-mobility, meaning a short period spent at another university abroad to study or carry out research*

All in all, a mobile student is defined as a student who moves abroad for the purpose of study or research. In this dissertation Rédei's definition of mobility is applied, however, the concept of Erasmus programme is meant to embrace both credit and short-period programme mobility.

#### **1.3.1. The history of student mobility**

Universities have always been international institutions since the first ones were established in medieval Europe. The University of Bologna (1088) followed by the University of Paris (1150) and the University of Oxford (1167) all attracted students and staff from many countries throughout centuries (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

Rüegg (1992) points out that the university in itself is a European institution, in fact, the only institution, that has preserved its fundamental pattern and basic social role and functions over the centuries. It is also the only European institution that has spread all over the world. The degrees (bachelors, licentiate, masters, doctorate) awarded have been adopted throughout the

world, the first established four medieval faculties of arts, law, medicine and theology have survived and are still at the heart of each university and last but not least, the university has been developing and transferring knowledge to form the European intellectual and academic platform. In the late 1940s several efforts were made to increase mutual understanding between the nations of Europe, to put an end to international hatred and rivalry and create the conditions for long-lasting peace, including activities to facilitate student mobility. The primary aim was that knowledge of other countries would temper prejudice and increase understanding of other cultures and nations. Gradually, the concept of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was formed.

In Teichler's view (2011) the development of the EHEA had four stages:

*In the first stage, in the early 1950s*, the Council of Europe was active in facilitating mobility through conventions signed by individual countries for the recognition of study for mobile students in Western Europe. Similar activities were undertaken by Eastern European countries and for most European countries through the cooperation between the Council of Europe and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

*In the second stage, in the 1960s and 1970s*, most Western European countries as well as economically advanced countries outside Europe collaborated in search for best ways to motivate the expansion of student enrolment in higher education. The Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) suggested expanding the enrolment capacity of higher education through relatively short study programmes.

*The third stage, the late 1980s and 1990s*, was characterized by increasing cooperation and mobility, which was initiated by the European Union. The Erasmus programme is the most prominent example of this stage.

*In the fourth stage, the late 1990s*, European countries aimed to pursue similar higher education policies and to establish a system of convergence. In the Bologna Declaration of 1999, ministers in charge of higher education of almost thirty European countries expressed the intention to establish a common stage structure of study programmes and degrees. The introduction of the European Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (ECTS), the establishment of the diploma supplement to provide information about the value of a certificate and the cooperation in quality assurance measures all contributed to structural convergence and eventually led to the establishment of the European Higher Education Area

by 2010 along with the creation of the European Research Area (ERA), as it had been agreed in the Lisbon Declaration in 2000, thus helping to make Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy of the world.

### 1.3.2. The history of student mobility in Hungary

Hungarian student mobility dates back to the middle ages, as Szögi claims (2012). Almost a hundred thousand Hungarian nationals were enrolled in various universities across Europe from the Middle Ages until 1919 as indicated by the table below.

**Table 1 The number of Hungarian students enrolled in programmes at universities across Europe**

Years	Enrolment	Percentage (%)
1100–1200	9	0.01
1201–1300	76	0.07
1301–1400	761	0.76
1401–1500	8,666	8.73
1501–1600	5,995	6.04
1601–1700	9,935	10
1701–1800	13,894	13.99
1801–1900	45,774	46.1
1901–1919	14,166	14.27
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>99,277</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Szögi, 2012

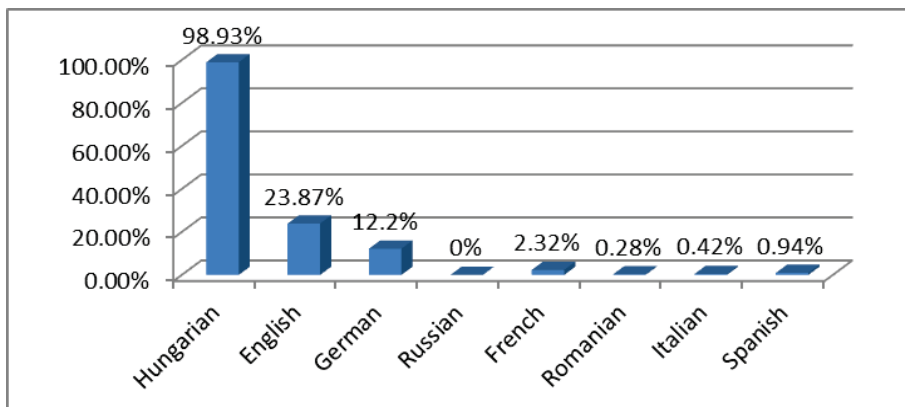
Most of the students studied at universities of German speaking countries, like Austria, Germany, their provinces and hereditary lands.

**Table 2 The number of Hungarian students enrolled in programmes at universities across Europe by regions 1851–1919**

Regions	1851–1860	1861–1870	1871–1880	1881–1890	1891–1900	1901–1910	1911–1919	Total	%
Institutes in Vienna	3,652	4,125	4,608	3,829	1,748	1,843	1,868	2,1673	46.1
Military Inst. Vienna	330	407	424	455	466	423	677	3,182	6.76
Hereditary Lands	393	482	881	1,006	832	857	848	5,299	11.27
Germany	662	1,159	1,707	1,442	2,012	3,912	2,041	12,935	27.51
Switzerland	41	260	291	198	282	487	330	1,889	4.01
Italy	33	25	22	36	39	68	22	245	0.52
France	5	21	55	97	121	233	70	602	1.28
Belgium	7	11	18	13	20	37	16	122	0.26
England	18	33	49	45	53	151	170	519	1.1
Holland	11	24	32	24	18	14	8	131	0.27
Romania	-	55	28	75	154	27	43	382	0.81
Serbia	-	-	1	-	6	20	1	28	0.06
Russia	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	0.002
Turkey	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	0.002
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,152</b>	<b>6,602</b>	<b>8,117</b>	<b>7,220</b>	<b>5,751</b>	<b>8,073</b>	<b>6,094</b>	<b>4,7009</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Szögi, 2012

In fact, that tendency has remained the same as the majority of Hungarian Erasmus students (more than 30 %) still prefer these countries to English speaking countries (Tempus, 2014). Although, statistical data suggest (Figure 3) that in the age group of 15 and 34, the percentage of Hungarians speaking English is almost the double (23.87%) of those speaking German (12.2%). The explanation for this long-term tradition may be rooted in the shared history and culture with Austria as well as the proximity of the German speaking countries.



**Figure 3 Language knowledge of Hungarians aged 15–35**

Source: Language Knowledge in the EU, 2013



*“If you keep thinking about what you want to do or what you hope will happen, you don't do it, and it won't happen.”*

*Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam* (Erasmus D. , 2013)

## **1.4. The Erasmus programme**

### **1.4.1. The history of the Erasmus programme**

Close to half a million students studied abroad in the early 1970s, nearly a million in the early 1980s, and about 1.5 million in the mid-1990s as UNESCO statistics suggest (1997, 1999). However, 1987 provided a milestone in the history of mobility within Europe. This is the year the Erasmus programme was launched. As a result, nearly three million students have taken the opportunity to study abroad during the past three decades with this programme exclusively (Erasmus statistics, 2014).

The Erasmus programme, also known as the European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students, was named after the Dutch philosopher, theologian and humanist Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469-1536), who lived and worked in several places in Europe, including Italy, France, England and Germany, to develop his knowledge and gain new insights and experience. By wandering through many places and cultures and by leaving his fortune to the University of Basel, he became a pioneer of mobility grants (Faludy, 2006).

The Erasmus programme was celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2012 with the motto of: *“Erasmus: changing lives, opening minds for 25 years”* (Erasmus, European Commission, 2013). This slogan shares a lot in common with the above quote by Desiderius Erasmus centuries before, as both are thought to imply that ideas and dreams are important, but not enough to change lives. Individual actions are needed to make a step forward, to develop, to grow, to mature, to be better persons, to make better nations. Most probably, this is the main message of Erasmus' quote above and this is still one of the main messages the Erasmus Programme is conveying ever since it was launched in 1987.

The Erasmus programme has flourished throughout its development, evolving through different phases. Originally it was an individual project for 11 member states. In its first year, in 1987, only 3,244 students went abroad, providing for many of them their first encounter

with different cultures, whereas in the academic year of 2010/2011 this number was as high as 231,408. During the 1990s, the programme became part of a much wider higher education programme called Socrates. In 2003, the Erasmus University Charter, underpinning the quality assurance of student and staff exchanges, was introduced. Between 2007 and 2013 Erasmus was part of the Lifelong Learning Programme and new activities, like students going abroad for a traineeship, were included in the programme. The new Erasmus plus programme, abbreviated as Erasmus +, aims to support actions in the fields of Education, Training, Youth and Sport for the period between 2014 and 2020 (Erasmus, European Commission, 2013). Table 3 below gives a brief summary of the major events in the history of the Erasmus programme.

**Table 3 Key dates in the history of the Erasmus programme**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
<b>17 June 1987</b>	Erasmus programme launched with first exchange of just over 3,000 students between 11 Member States (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, France, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and United Kingdom)
<b>1988</b>	Luxembourg joins Erasmus
<b>1992</b>	Six European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries join the programme (Austria, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland)
<b>1994</b>	Liechtenstein joins Erasmus
<b>1996</b>	Introduction of Erasmus Intensive Language Courses (EILC)
<b>1997</b>	Erasmus teacher exchanges introduced
<b>1998</b>	Six Central and Eastern European countries join the programme (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia)
<b>1999</b>	Six Central and Eastern European countries join the programme (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia)
<b>2000</b>	Malta joins Erasmus
<b>2002</b>	Celebration of the One Millionth Erasmus student
<b>2003</b>	Erasmus University Charter introduced
<b>2004</b>	Turkey joins Erasmus
<b>2007</b>	Start of the Lifelong Learning Programme with new actions introduced to Erasmus, such as student traineeships and staff training
<b>2009</b>	Celebration of the Two Millionth Erasmus student and Croatia joins the programme
<b>2009/2010</b>	3,000 higher education institutions send students and staff abroad
<b>2011</b>	Switzerland re-joins the programme (33 countries now take part in Erasmus)
<b>2012/2013</b>	Three Millionth Erasmus student expected
<b>2014</b>	Launch of new Erasmus + programme

Source: ESN, 2014

Very few, if any, programmes launched by the European Union have had a similar Europe-wide reach as the Erasmus, which is often referred to as the European Union's flagship education and training programme. The principal aim of the programme is to help create the European Higher Education Area and foster innovation throughout Europe. In addition, the programme funds co-operation between higher education institutions across Europe and has inspired the establishment of the Bologna Process. The programme does not only support students, but academic and administrative staff alike, who want to teach or gain experience abroad. In addition to exchange actions, Erasmus helps higher education institutions to work together through intensive programmes, networks and multilateral projects (Lifelong Learning Programme, 2012).

Briefly, the programme's success has helped to shape higher education in Europe and led to the launch of the Bologna Process, the establishment of the European Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (ECTS), the internationalisation of higher education and Higher Education Institutions (HEI); and the development of new and improved services, methods of learning, teaching and working in HEI, as well as new forms of cooperation, and a greater understanding of the opportunities available beyond their borders (Erasmus, 2012).

#### **1.4.2. The history of the Erasmus programme in Hungary**

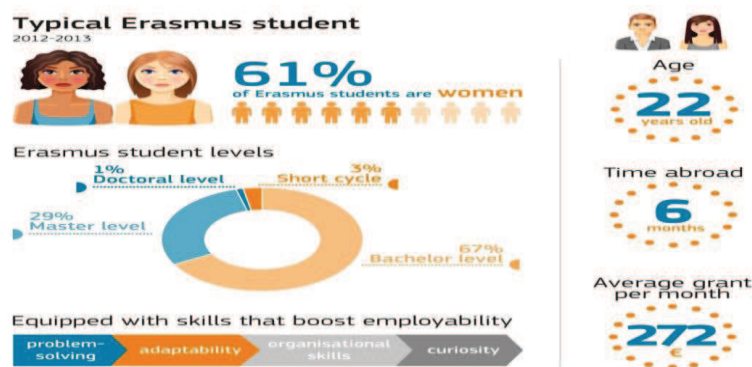
Hungary joined the Erasmus programme in the academic year of 1998/99. In the first year Hungary sent 856 students to study abroad and by 2011/12 this number increased to 5,250, which is a significant sixfold increase. Between 2007 and 2013 Erasmus was integrated into the Lifelong Learning Programme and mobility was expanded to include internships for students and offer mobility for both academic and administrative staff. Company placements abroad are very popular among students, 2,535 benefited from this mobility option until 2011, spending five months abroad on the average (Erasmus statistics, 2014)

## 1.5. Erasmus research

The Erasmus programme has been the subject of a huge amount of research analyses. The diversity of research fields studies have been published on is summarized in a table (see Appendix 1).

The first investigations were carried out at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s to provide a clear-cut *profile about the first Erasmus student groups* (Baron & Smith, 1987; Opper et al., 1990; Teichler & Steube, 1991; Maiworm et al., 1991; Monasta, 1991) followed by several studies later on (Teichler, 1996; Pineda et al., 2008; ESN Survey, 2007; Pirrie et al., 2002; Wiers-Jenssen, 2008.) Wiers-Jenssen (2008) claims that mobile students are a special group concerning personality qualities and motivation as generally they are more extroverted, outgoing and initiative compared with non-mobile students.

The figure below prepared by the European Commission (2014) describes a typical Erasmus student, who participated in this mobility programme during the academic year of 2012–2013. The majority (61%) of Erasmus students are females, most of them (67%) study at bachelor level, their average age is 22, and on average they spend 6 months abroad on a grant of 272 euros per month. As regards their characteristic features, they are curious, adaptable students with excellent organisational and problem solving skills.



**Figure 4 Typical Erasmus Student**

Source: European Commission, 2014

Several research projects focus on the *socio-economic background of Erasmus students* (European Commission, 2000; Souto Otero & McCoshan, 2006; European Commission,

2009; European Commission 2011; Orr et al., 2011). The results suggest that there are substantial differences in the socio-economic profile of Erasmus students in relation to the general population and also to higher education students.

*National education and exchange policies* have also been investigated concerning Erasmus (Barblan et al.; 2000; Enders, 2004; Kalvermark and van der Wende 1997; van der Wende, 2001, Sayer, 2006; Papatsiba, 2005; Teichler, 1991), whilst various studies have focused on *research, development, and cooperation* between universities (Bruce, 1989; Luttikhot, 1989, De Wit, 1995; Maiworm & Teichler, 1995a).

*Travelling and financial costs, obtaining visas, residence permits* have been investigated (ESN Survey, 2006, 2010; PRIME Report, 2010; Alfranseder and Czarnojan, 2013) claiming that this process is too time consuming and expensive, therefore specific measures should be taken to ease this process for students.

The impact of the Erasmus programme on *education* has also been approached from different angles, including *e-learning* (Pursula, et al., 2005) and *independent learning* (Gieve & Clark, 2005), *multicultural education* (Clarke, 2005; ESN Survey, 2007, 2008; Németh, Trócsányi & Sütő, 2009; Németh & Kajos, 2014; Malota et al., 2014), the *European Credit Transfer System* (Absalom, 1990; Maiworm, et al., 1992; Maiworm and Teichler, 1995b; Teichler, 2003; ESN Survey, 2006; PRIME, 2009; PRIME, 2010; Nagy et al, 2012) and the *recognition of full degrees* (Alfranseder, 2014).

Labour market *placements* have also been investigated. Studies have focused on the perspectives of employers, as well as the special skills students develop through this experience (Little & Harvey 2006; Alfranseder, 2012). Wilton claims that students with placement experience are better team players and have improved organisational, leadership and management skills (Wilton, 2008).

The *provision of necessary information and the quality of education* have been studied (ESN Survey, 2009; PRIME Report, 2010) and the results suggest that students are in need of reliable, high quality and easily accessible information in order to encourage their transnational mobility and to make lifelong learning accessible to all concerned.

*Future employment* options of former Erasmus students have been in the focus of a high number of studies (Opper et al., 1990; Maiworm & Teichler, 1996; Teichler, 2002; Bracht et al., 2006; Teichler & Janson, 2007; Parey & Waldinger, 2010; European Commission, 2010;

European Commission, 2010a; Oosterbeek & Webbink, 2011; ESN Survey, 2011, 2013). The Erasmus students surveyed claim that their international experience and language skills are helpful in obtaining their first job (Oppen et al., 1990; Maiworm & Teichler, 1996; Bracht et al., 2006). Nevertheless, there is a declining tendency in the above perceived advantages as the proportion of former mobile students believing that mobility is an advantage in finding the first job was as high as 71% among the 1988/89 cohort Erasmus students, 66% of those graduating in 1994/95 and only 54% among those graduating in 2000/2001 (Bracht et al., 2006). This might be due to the fact that in the 2000s the Erasmus experience was no longer considered as a unique phenomenon as it had been twenty years earlier.

Teichler (2002) *compared mobile to non-mobile students* and found that the former had better chances to find employment than the latter. Cammelli et al. (2008) had the same outcome regarding Italian students. The findings of the European Commission (2010a) identified a *correlation between Erasmus mobility and the likelihood of working internationally*.

Bracht et al. (2006) even conducted *research focusing on the employers' perspective* and it was found that international experience, foreign language proficiency as well as the reputation of the host university were all of primary importance to them. The employers also reported that they regarded mobile students to be more proactive, adaptable and problem-solvers compared with non-mobile students. The impact of the programmes on students' *international orientation* has also been investigated. Bracht et al. (2006) found that many former mobile students are more likely to work in an international environment whether locally or across the borders.

*Culture and cultural awareness* have been investigated (Maiworm et al., 1992; Chambers, 1994; Maiworm & Teichler, 1995b; ESN Survey, 2007, 2008; Németh, Trócsányi & Sütő, 2009) with the same outcome that the programme has a substantial impact on cultural awareness building as knowledge of the host country's culture, tradition and people while understanding their own culture increases significantly. 95% of students reported improvements to a large extent in understanding people from other cultural or ethnic backgrounds and 80% mentioned changes in personal values (Souto Otero and McCoshan, 2006; ESN Survey, 2008, Németh & Kajos, 2014; Malota et al., 2014).

*Language development and proficiency* have been researched by several scholars (Chambers, 1994; Maiworm & Teichler, 1995a; Woodcock, 1996; Taillefer, 2005; Teichler & Janson, 2007; Jenkins, 2009; Németh, Trócsányi & Sütő, 2009). Despite the fact that considerable

foreign language proficiency had been reported before the study period abroad, students observed substantial language improvement (ESN Survey, 2008; Orr et al., 2011, Németh & Kajos, 2014; Malota et al., 2014). The surveys imply that the majority of students have high proficiency in foreign languages, mainly in the English language that works as lingua franca and therefore there is substantial awareness of its communicative effectiveness among Erasmus students. However, some studies have also identified (Maiworm & Teichler, 1995a) serious issues in the lack of sufficient language proficiency during the stay abroad. The correlation between mobility rate and language proficiency is considerable as surveys have found that in countries where students claim to speak several foreign languages higher mobility rates have been identified (Opper et al., 1990; Souto Otero & McCoshan, 2006; Orr et al., 2008). Other studies imply that many of the students had spent at least one month abroad prior to their Erasmus experience which contributes to their language proficiency (Opper et al., 1990; Maiworm & Teichler, 1996; Saarikallio-Torp & Wiers-Jenssen, 2010). The studies of Souto Otero and McCoshan (2006) highlight that more than 25% of students were fluent in their second or third language by the end of their Erasmus period.

A great many studies have focused on the *motivation of students and the benefits of going abroad* (Burn et al., 1990; Opper et al., 1990; Maiworm et al., 1991, 1993; Rosselle et al., 1999; Teichler, 1991, 1996, 2004; Maiworm & Teichler, 1996; Teichler & Maiworm, 1997; Maiworm & Teichler., 2002; ESN Survey, 2005; Krupnik & Krzaklewska, 2006; Saarikallio-Torp & Wiers-Jenssen, 2010; Németh, 2010; Orr et al., 2011, Malota et al., 2014). Living in another country and hence gaining an international experience, improving language skills as well as learning a foreign language are among the first drives of students. Personal development is also considered to be of primary importance along with the opportunity to know other cultures, which was considered more important than materialistic benefits such as career advancement (Teichler & Maiworm, 1997). Orr et al. (2011) claim that international experience also implies expanding students' cultural and social horizons. Many students considered maturity and personal development along with improved language skills to be the most beneficial factors of the programme (Maiworm & Teichler, 1996). Career and academic development come only as secondary.

The programme has also been investigated regarding *European identity* (ESN Survey, 2007). King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003) compared non-mobile and soon to be mobile students with those who had spent a year abroad and found the latter group to be more pro-European and less Eurosceptic.



Even a most thorough review of the vast amount of literature tackling various aspects of the Erasmus programme yielded no research findings on its impact on students of health care or medicine. Part of the reason may be that a relatively small size of this student cohort participates in the programme due to difficulties in the recognition of studies spent abroad. This implied a gap within Erasmus research with major importance and gave reason for conducting the present research on this subject.

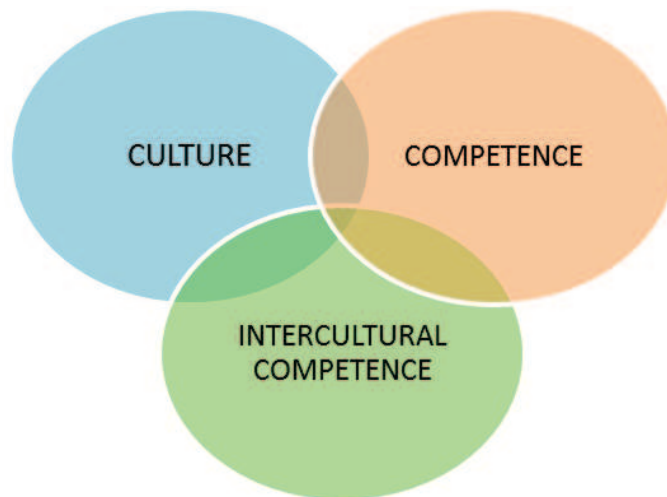


*"Culture is roughly everything we do and monkeys don't."*

*Lord Raglan (Raglan, 2013)*

## 1.6. Culture

In order to apprehend intercultural competence, culture and competence must be defined first. The figure below is intended to capture the connection among the three, which is going to be elucidated in the following subchapters.



**Figure 5 Culture, competence, intercultural competence**

Source: Author

The above definition of culture is one of the most succinct and crisp interpretations. However, defining the meaning of culture has been a challenge for several centuries. It has been approached in numerous ways by various professionals, including anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, artists, academics and more. Nevertheless, there is no agreement on a single definition of it. This chapter is meant to summarize the most widely cited and well-known definitions and to come up with a new approach as a conclusion.

The study and description of culture is massive. The word “culture” has many meanings. It derives from the Latin word “colere”, which could be translated as “to build”, “to care for”,

“to plant” or “to cultivate”. The first thing that most people associate the term with is that of sophisticated culture, as in “...she is a ‘cultured’ or ‘cultivated’ person”, or the ‘cultural’ programmes that were scheduled for the Pécs Capital of Culture 2010 events, for instance.

In fact, over 160 different definitions of culture were identified by Kroeber and Kluckhohn in 1952 (in Adekola & Sergi, 2007). One of the earliest definitions of culture widely cited comes from E.B. Tylor (in Ferraro, 1998) who defined culture as a complex whole including *knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits of man*. Herskovits (1955) spoke of culture as the *man made part of the environment*, whilst Downs (1971) defined it as a *mental map* which guides us. Ferraro (1998) approached it as *everything that people have, think or do*. In Jenks’ (1993) view culture has four interpretations: *culture as a cerebral or cognitive category* (educated, cultured person), *culture as a more embodied and collective category* (intellectual and moral development in society), *culture as a descriptive and concrete category* (arts) and finally, *culture as a social category* (life style). Hofstede (1991) claims that culture is the *collective programming of the mind* that helps the individuals to make a distinction between groups of people. Spencer-Oatey’s view on culture focuses on *shared knowledge*, when she claims that “culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour...” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p.3). There are several more classifications of the term culture including the one given by Swedish professor, Sonia Bentling (2008), who said the following during a lecture at the University of Pécs: “Culture is nothing but what you are, what you have become”.

Going through some of the most widely cited classifications of the term, there are certain concepts that culture is often associated with, such as *values* and *symbols* (Banks & McGee 1989; Brislin, & Yoshida 1994), *patterns* and *behaviour* (Damen, 1987; Bennett, 1993), *language, communication* and *programming* (Hall 1990, Hofstede, 1991), *shared knowledge* and *design* (Lederach, 1995; Spencer-Oatey, 2008). However, all the above culture definitions share something in common: *culture can be soundless* to us as we have picked up all these beliefs, patterns, values, symbols, knowledge, attitude and behaviour from everyday interactions without being aware of those. This is what Edward T. Hall (1990) describes as a “silent language,” which is not made up, but it is something that evolves gradually.

Reading through the massive amount of definitions of culture and with the intention of integrating those, author of the present dissertation realised she had a pragmatic approach to understanding most theoretical, philosophical and abstract questions. For her culture is everything that can be sensed including one’s thoughts, beliefs and associations behind the senses. All that can be hheard or, seen, smelled, touched, tasted and a complete set of ideas behind. Hence, the acronym developed is: *IH(or)SSTT* and the figure below demonstrates her understanding of culture.



**Figure 6 IH(or)SSTT culture**

Source: Author

Visualization of the acronym is that of a party where lots of international guests arrive. Other than enjoying the party, the host would want the guests to have a *taster session* into his/her culture. Foods and drinks typical of the country would be served, a band would play folk songs or music of that region, views, beliefs, ideas and thoughts would be shared through conversations and some art works by local artists would be displayed. When the host travels and s/he is the guest, whether abroad or just round the corner to meet a group of new people, s/he will be exposed to the same experience: *taster sessions* to cultures that can be hheard or seen, smelled, touched, tasted and where ideas are shared. These “cultural senses” are learned through socialisation and social interactions as one grows up. Children born in different parts of the world will develop different cultural senses. To some the taste of sweet and sour will mean family and home whilst to others it will never taste pleasant. The melodic tunes of

classical piano music will be heart-warming in certain cultural groups, whereas the loud beating of monotonous drums will sound out of the ordinary to them. Culture is subject to gradual change, hence there are no cultures that remain completely static. The same applies to cultural senses: what tastes odd, feels or sounds weird today, may not do so in the future. And that is what brings us closer to the concept of interculturalism as cultures have the specific trait of having an impact on one another.

With all the above definitions, it can be established that all human beings have culture and that culture is learned, not something one is born with. It is learned through interactions and shared by the people interacting: family, friends, colleagues and society as a whole. What we have learned becomes what we articulate. And what we say determines the success and effectiveness of our communication within and across cultures. Interestingly enough, not only do humans have culture, but as some anthropologists argue (McGrew, 2004) certain animals, like chimpanzees share basic culture, developing and then teaching each other specific tasks. These new findings may eventually contradict Lord Raglan's crisp definition of culture, as soon culture may turn out to be roughly everything both humans and monkeys do.

*“Competence, like truth, beauty, and contact lenses, is in the eye of the beholder.”*

*Laurence J. Peter (Peter, 2013)*

## **1.7. Competence**

The literature on competence is enormous and its concept is not exclusively reserved for personality development and education, but is commonly used in other areas including the business world, business administration and personnel management. Consequently, the concept of competence has been approached from several different perspectives so far.

One of the most cited concepts comes from Chomsky (1965), who distinguished between competence and performance. In his understanding linguistic competence represents the cognitive structure and rules that are necessary to produce speech, whereas linguistic performance refers to the way speech actually functions. For Gronlund (1981) competences are synonyms for operational skills, such as writing and reading. Anderson (1982) distinguishes between abilities and competences. In his definition the specific knowledge and skills acquired do not automatically contribute to successful performances within certain settings. Stephenson (1992) maintains that competences also include attitude components, to envelop self-confidence, motivation and persistence. According to Barnett (1994), competences are to be associated with unpredictable behaviours in unpredictable and unexpected situations.

The review of a substantial amount of literature on competence suggests that the majority of researchers claim that there are three groups of competences (Boyatzis, 1982; Howard & Bray, 1988; Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Goleman et al., 2002), which are the following:

1. *cognitive competence*, such as thinking and pattern recognition
2. *emotional intelligence competence*, i.e. self-awareness, self-management
3. *social intelligence competence*, including social awareness and relationship management competences, such as empathy and teamwork

Based on the literature review conducted for the purposes of the present study competences are basically special skills and knowledge that enable an individual to perform successfully in certain situations, including personal, educational or corporate settings. It seems that there are two concepts of competences that the field of intercultural education can be enveloped in. From a theoretical angle competences are cognitive structures that facilitate certain behaviours, whereas from a practical approach competences include knowledge, skills and awareness which contribute to managing specific situations. The above understanding of competences was meant to underpin the research described in the present dissertation.

*“We should never denigrate any other culture but rather help people to understand the relationship between their own culture and the dominant culture. When you understand another culture or language, it does not mean that you have to lose your own culture.”*

*Edward T. Hall (Hall, 1998)*

## 1.8. Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence (hereinafter referred to as IcC) has been in the focal point of several research projects for decades, nevertheless, its definition and meaning remain to be the source of many disputes and disagreements to date. In fact, one thing most researchers agree on is that *there is no consensus on what intercultural competence is*. A massive amount of literature has been published about it. To begin with, intercultural competence has been referred to by various labels. The present study found 32 terms including the 19 identified earlier by Fantini (2006).

**Table 4 List of designations of intercultural competence**

	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Authors</b>
1	Biculturalism	Fishman, 1980; LaFromboise & Rowe, 1983
2	Cross-cultural adaptation	Kim & Gudykunst, 1987; Anderson, 1994; Lewthwaite, 1997; Goldstein, 1999; Kelley & Meyers, 1999; Kim, 2000
3	Cross-cultural adjustment	Benson, 1978
4	Cross-cultural awareness	Christensen, 1989; Brislin & Yoshida, 1994; Banks, 2008
5	Cross-cultural communication	Putsch, 1985; Gudykunst, 2003; Rosen, 2004
6	Cross-cultural competence	Ruben, 1989; Lynch & Hanson, 1992; Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006
7	Cross-cultural sensitivity	Pruegger & Rogers, 1994
8	Cultural competence	Stanley, 1998; Sue, 2001; Campinha-Bacote, 2002; Betancourt, 2006b
9	Cultural safety	Polaschek, 1998; Williams, 1999; Mackay et al., 2011
10	Cultural sensitivity	Larke, 1990; Resnicow et al., 1999; Kumpfer et al., 2002; Majumdar et al., 2004
11	Cultural understanding	Schulz, 2007
12	Effective inter-group communication	Baldwin & Keating, 1998

	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Authors</b>
13	Ethnorelativity	Weigl, 2002; Klak, 2003
14	Global competence	Pusch, 1994; Olson, 2001; Hunter, 2004
15	Global competitive intelligence	Blenkhorn & Fleisher, 2010
16	Global leadership competence	Chin, Gu, & Tubbs, 2001
17	Intercultural adaptation	Ruben, 1976
18	Intercultural communication competence	Kramsch, 1993; Brislin & Yoshida, 1994; Fantini, 1995; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Byram, 1997; Byram & Zarate, 1997; Falkné Bánó, 2001; Borgulya, 2004; Lázár, 2005; Arasaratnam, 2005, 2006, 2007; Hidasi, 2008; Dombi, 2013
19	Intercultural communication effectiveness	Koester, 1988
20	Intercultural cooperation	Hofstede, 1998
21	Intercultural effectiveness	Hammer, 1987; Stone, 2006
22	Intercultural interaction	Detweiler, 1980; Janssens, 1995; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009
23	Intercultural sensitivity	Bhawuk, 1992; Bennett, 1993; Altshuler, Sussman, & Kachur, 2003; Paige, 1993; Paige et al., 2003; Hammer et al., 2003; Engle & Engle, 2004; Greenholz, 2005
24	Intercultural understanding	Imel, 1998
25	International competence	Kincaida, 1999
26	International excellence	Engholm & Rowland, 1996
27	Interpersonal communication competence	Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984
28	Multicultural effectiveness	Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002
29	Multicultural competences	Kitsantas & Talleyrand, 2005
30	Plurilingualism	Vorstman, 2011
31	Transcultural communication	Husband, 2000; Purnell & Paulanka, 2003; Free, 2005
32	Transnational competence	Koehn & Swick, 2006; Betancourt, 2006a

Source: Author

Researchers focus on various items that they believe the concept of intercultural competence should include. Thomas (1996) points out that IcC is the *necessary precondition* for an adequate, successful and satisfactory cooperation between people from different cultures. Wiseman claims (2002) that IcC *involves the knowledge, motivation and skills* to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures. Fantini (2006) views IcC as “a *complex of abilities* needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with



others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself”(p.12). Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2008) claim that IcC refers to the *knowledge of how to interpret and produce* a spoken or written piece of discourse within a particular sociocultural context. It involves *knowledge of cultural factors and cultural awareness of cross-cultural communication*. According to the INCA project (2009) *IcC enables individuals to interact effectively* and in a way that is acceptable to others when working in a multicultural group. To Sinicrope et al. (2007) the term implies that a student *understands a variety of significant cultural experiences and/or achievements of individuals* who are from different cultural backgrounds.

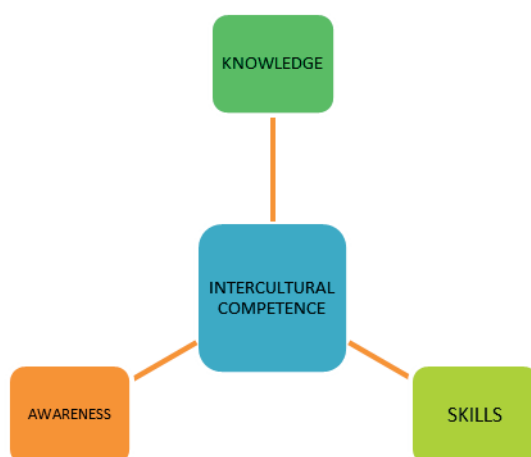
The list of definitions is endless and this led Deardorff (2006) to draw up a classification and invited a team of 23 internationally known scholars from the field of intercultural studies and 24 higher education administrators from across the United States. The most preferred definition of IcC was that of Byram: “Knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others’ values, beliefs, and behaviours; and relativizing one’s self. Linguistic competence plays a key role” (in Deardorff, 2006, p. 247). However, both administrators and intercultural scholars preferred more general conceptions of intercultural competence and it was concluded that more research was needed to further investigate the classification of intercultural competence.

Even though IcC has been approached from various aspects, there is no agreement on one single definition of the term. The reason for the lack of consensus among scholars is that IcC incorporates both the complex concepts of *culture* and *competence* resulting in more debates to specify its definition.

The question still remains what competences should be included in intercultural competence? The number of competences considered to be indispensable for demonstrating high standard IcC skills is colossal. Spitzberg (1997) compiled a 52-item list of the empirically developed IcC traits, which demonstrates the variety of competences that are potentially needed to succeed in intercultural contexts. These competences include, among others, the ability to adjust to different cultures, to establish interpersonal relationships, to understand others, to communicate, cultural empathy, cultural interaction, awareness of self and culture, awareness of implications of cultural differences, non-ethnocentrism, just to name but a few. The list is long and one has to have almost God-like and superhero-like features to possess all or as Aitken noted wittily, a global manager should have:

*“...the stamina of an Olympic runner, the mental agility of an Einstein, the conversational skill of a professor of languages, the detachment of a judge, the tact of a diplomat, and the perseverance of an Egyptian pyramid builder. [And] that’s not all. If they are going to measure up to the demands of living and working in a foreign country, they should also have a feeling for the culture; their moral judgement should not be too rigid; they should be able to merge with the local environment with chameleon-like ease; and they should show no sign of prejudice.”* (in Townsend & Cairns, 2003, p. 317)

In conclusion, it turns out that the list of competences related to IcC is incessant and each item has some empirical support to verify it. Different researchers approach competences associated with IcC diversely, the same as with the above concepts of culture and competence, there is no agreement among scholars on one list of indubitable competences, which may be necessary in all interactions and situations in an intercultural context. As a result, the researcher may decide on the list that best suits his/her research. Most researchers agree some combination of three dimensions is essential for IcC, which are as follows: knowledge, skills and awareness (Chen & Starosta, 1996; Wiseman, 2002; Kim, 2000; Byram, 1997; Fantini, 2000). In the pragmatic approach adopted for the purposes of the present study intercultural competence is a set of tools that enable individuals to be successful and efficient during interactions in different cultural settings and as demonstrated by the figure below, these are the three competences included in the present study:



**Figure 7 Intercultural competence**

Source: Author

## 1.9. Intercultural competence research

Research focusing on IcC dates back to the 1950s and 1960s, the extension of multinational companies worldwide, although there are claims (Gabel & Bruner, 2003) that the first multinationals emerged way back in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century in the form of the East India Company (1600) followed by the Dutch East India Company in 1602. Working across several countries brought along the issues of different work ethics, cross-cultural communication problems and life style differences, all of which initiated the first research studies.

Sinicrope, Norris and Watanabe (Sinicrope et al., 2007) point out that from the late 1970s and early 1980s the focus of IcC research shifted more towards study abroad programmes, international business, cross-cultural training, and the acculturation issues of immigrants. The main goals of these studies were to explain overseas failure, predict overseas success, develop personnel selection strategies, and design, implement and test sojourner training and preparation methodologies (Ruben, 1989). Along with evaluation methods and interpretation concerns, the scale of IcC research nowadays has increased significantly.

It has been investigated from several conceptual approaches, from culture shock (Adler, 1986; Gaw, 2000; Hamboyan & Bryan, 1995), intercultural training (Hannigan, 1990; Earley & Peterson, 2004), immigrant acculturation (Maisonneuve & Testé, 2007) cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates (Ali et al., 2003; Graf & Harland, 2005; Gertsen, 1990), sojourner adjustment (Guy, 1996; Pitts, 2009; Faubl, 2013, Faubl & Füzési, 2013, Faubl et al., 2014), international student counselling (Tompkins & Mehring, 1989) to transcultural health-care competences (Carrillo et al., 1999; Gibson & Zhong, 2005; Gunaratnam, 2007; Ruddock & Turner, 2007). Although Ruben (1989) called for the need for conceptual clarity, it still is a challenge today.

All this massive amount of literature aimed at converging the concept of IcC, however, no specific consensus has been reached to date. The reason for this may be the vast diversity of not only the context within which IcC has been researched, but the scientific background and discipline of scholars, as they include linguists, human resources specialists, anthropologists, educators as well as psychologists, economists, health care practitioners and many more. Overall, the vast amount of literature to date has highlighted the complexity of IcC and calls for further exploration. All the studies and investigations suggest that IcC is a

multidimensional, versatile, and context dependent research matter, which will not cease to challenge educators, researchers, human resources experts or health care practitioners in the future and will keep on calling for more investigations.

### **1.10. Intercultural competence research related to health care**

Globalization, migration, the growing cultural diversity in many countries and the development of multicultural societies, as a consequence, have prompted the incorporation of patients' cultural and ethnic background into the communication between health care provider and patient. Every culture has its own worldview and beliefs regarding health, diseases, treatments, medical and health care. These immigrant cultures bring these beliefs and practices into the health care system of another culture, which often leads to misunderstandings and difficulties. As a result, in the early 1990s an imperative need for interculturally competent health care providers was established, resulting in several studies to explore its meaning, concepts, structure and methods.

Interculturally competent health and medical care (often referred to as *culturally competent care*) has been described by many. Meleis and Im (1999) regard it as sensitivity to the individual differences due to their cultural, social and economic background, sexual orientation and ethnicity. Betancourt, Green and Carrillo (2002) consider intercultural competence in health care as the provision of care to patients with diverse cultural backgrounds and tailoring delivery to meet their needs. Tervalon and Murray-Garcia argue (1998) that it also incorporates the institutionalization of appropriate practice and policies for the multicultural populations. Cross et al. (1989) claim that intercultural competence within health care settings is more than cultural awareness or sensitivity as it includes not only the possession of cultural knowledge, but specific skills and the ability to use them effectively in cross-cultural situations. The American Academy of Nursing argues that interculturally competent health care integrates issues related to diversity, marginalization, and vulnerability (Giger et al., 2007). Campinha-Bacote (2002) views it as a process, not an event, in which the goal of the health care provider is to achieve the ability to effectively work within the cultural context of an individual or community.

Interculturally competent health care is thought to imply that a uniform, standardized health care system cannot meet the needs of an increasingly diverse society and, as a result, it is a necessity for successful patient outcomes. As described earlier in Chapter 1, Hungary is becoming more and more multicultural, which also implies the rise in the number of patients with diverse cultural backgrounds and different concepts about health care. These often prove to be a challenge to medical and health care professionals who have been trained in the philosophy, concepts and practices of Western medicine. Accordingly, an intercultural approach to medical and health care education is inevitable today across the globe, including Hungary.

### **1.10.1. The importance of language and culture in health care**

Several studies have focused on understanding the *correlation between language and culture and health care beliefs and treatments* (Pachter, 1994; Gordon, 1995; Flores & Vega, 1998; Gropper, 1998; Torres, 1998; Betancourt, 2006a). The lack of a common language between patient and health care provider can result in misdiagnoses and may lead to improper treatment. Inability to communicate appropriately is an obstacle to proper health care and undermines trust in the quality of medical care (Woloshin et al., 1995; Brach & Fraser, 2000; Fortin, 2002; Saha & Fernandez, 2007; Wells et al., 2009).

*Cultural differences in the recognition and interpretation of health and diseases, symptoms and diagnosis* have been investigated by many (Anderson, Wood, & Sherbourne, 1997; Cook, Kosoko-Lasaki, & O'Brien, 2005; Voigt, 2003). Cultural beliefs and values have implications on how symptoms are recognized, how they are interpreted and when medical and health care services are sought. A remarkable study was conducted by Zaborowski (1952) on the effects of culture on pain and he found that sensitivity to pain varied by culture and ethnicity. His findings have led to a better understanding of patients' attitude and behaviour in health care settings decades on.

A vast amount of literature has focused on the *cultural background of patients* and recognized substantial racial and ethnic inequalities in health care with minority groups (Baquet & Commiskey 1999; Collins, Hall, & Neuhaus 1999; Ferguson et al., 1998; Sheifer, Escarce & Schulman, 2000;). Collins (2002) claims that African Americans, Asian Americans and Hispanics are more likely to experience difficulty in communication with their health care

providers and often meet obstacles to care. A substantial proportion of minorities feels they would receive better care if they were of a different race or ethnicity.

Studies have highlighted several *misunderstandings between health care providers and ethnic minority patients* (van Ryn & Fu, 2003) and lack of trust (J. Fredericks, Miller, Odiet, & M. Fredericks, 2006). Research has focused on inappropriate use of health services, incorrect diagnoses, higher workload, and less satisfaction with medical care (van Wieringen, Harmsen, & Bruijnzeels, 2002; Cooper et al., 2003).

The various *means and methods of facilitating interculturally competent health care* have been investigated. These include interpreter services (Hornberger et al., 1996; Riddick 1998), employment of minority staff, (Nickens, 1990), training programs to increase cultural awareness, knowledge and skills (Brislin & Yoshida, 1997), use of alternative medicine (Kim & Kwok 1998; Ma 1999;), use of community health workers and community members (Albritton, & Wagner, 2002; Chrisman, 2007; Fadiman, 1997) and involvement with another culture (St. Clair & McKenry, 1999). However, Campinha-Bacote (2006) claims that evidence regarding the best way to educate culturally competent health care providers does not yet exist.

Interculturally competent medical and health care appear to be a long developmental process and a combination of various means and methods including the above. Its primary aim is to master specific knowledge and skills that enable medical and health care providers to deliver proper care to multicultural populations. It benefits the learning outcome if it is viewed less as a burden and rather as an enhancing life-long learning process that makes the providers' already well-established medical and health care skills better and more effective. Mobility programmes are essential means for future health care professionals in achieving these goals.

### 1.11. Setting objectives

The review of the considerable amount of literature regarding the Erasmus programme and its impact from various angles revealed no relevant records to date concerning the intercultural impact of the programme on the Hungarian student population, let alone medical and health care students, nor regarding the factors that influence their satisfaction with their studies and cultural experience in the host country. Although the ESN Survey of 2008 focuses on the intercultural impact of the programme at European level, no relevant data have been found with relevance to Hungary. There exists a strong need for scientific research in this respect. Hence, it is conceivable to identify the related difficulties and problems, to present clarifications and solutions, and finally, to make recommendations about further research.

The primary aim of this dissertation is to *investigate whether the Erasmus mobility programme contributes to developing the intercultural competences of Hungarian students, especially medical and health care students, and to find out whether or not preliminary information concerning the culture of the host country has a positive impact on the level of satisfaction Hungarian students, especially medical and health care students perceive with regard to their studies and cultural experience in the host country.*

Enhanced intercultural competence enables future doctors and paramedical professionals to provide better care within multicultural settings in the long run. The mobility programme involving the highest number of students across Europe is the Erasmus programme, therefore, the present dissertation set the goal to measure the intercultural impact of this programme on Hungarian students, with special focus on medical and health care students, who participated in it during the academic year of 2010/2011 exclusively.

## 1.12. Hypotheses

The compulsory study period in the Erasmus mobility programme ranges between three and twelve months. Therefore, the following seven hypotheses were constructed to facilitate finding answers to the above objectives assuming a minimum stay of three and a maximum stay of twelve months:

H<sub>1</sub>: Hungarian students, with special regard to medical and health care students, who participate in the Erasmus mobility programme, *develop their proficiency in English.*

H<sub>2</sub>: Hungarian students, with special regard to medical and health care students, who participate in the Erasmus mobility programme, *develop their proficiency in the language of the host country.*

H<sub>3</sub>: *The proficiency in English develops more than the proficiency in the language of the host country* of those Hungarian students, with special regard to medical and health care students, who participate in the Erasmus mobility programme.

H<sub>4</sub>: Hungarian students, with special regard to medical and health care students, who participate in the Erasmus mobility programme, *develop their knowledge and awareness of their own and other cultures.*

H<sub>5</sub>: Hungarian students, with special regard to medical and health care students, who participate in the Erasmus mobility programme, *develop their work related skills within multicultural settings.*

H<sub>6</sub>: *Preliminary information concerning the culture of the host country has a positive impact on satisfaction with their studies in the host country* of those Hungarian students, with special regard to medical and health care students, who participate in the Erasmus mobility programme.

H<sub>7</sub>: *Preliminary information concerning the culture of the host country has a positive impact on satisfaction with their cultural experience in the host country* of those Hungarian students, with special regard to medical and health care students, who participate in the Erasmus mobility programme.



## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **2.1. Mixed method research**

This study is a blended-method research incorporating both quantitative and qualitative aspects with the aim to gather an in-depth understanding of the intercultural impact of the Erasmus programme on Hungarian medical and health care students. This enables a multidimensional approach to the same research subject matter from various aspects as qualitative data help understanding the patterns in the quantitative analysis (Neuman, 2006).

The present study is based on the following research methods:

1. analysis of secondary source data, review of literature and statistical records
2. conduct of an online survey and analysis of the outcomes
3. comparative analysis
4. structured interviews
5. multivariate analysis: model by multiple linear regression

### **2.2. Data collection**

To gather secondary source data, books, journal articles, papers, dissertations, lectures and statistical websites were reviewed between January 2009 and December 2014. The literature and statistical data review covered more than 300 items and over 280 of which have been referenced. The majority of literature, close to 90% was in English and the remaining in Hungarian. Various research database search engines, such as Science Direct and PubMed were used along with internet search tools, like Scholar Google, for professional literature. Printed materials were borrowed from diverse libraries and private collections both in Hungary and the United Kingdom.

To gather primary source data, an online survey was prepared adapting and modifying the questionnaire of the 2008 ESN Survey (ESN, 2008) by adding three qualitative questions regarding descriptions of students' experience abroad. The survey contained 46 questions (see

Appendix 2). The questions were divided into four main sections. The first section was concerning the socio-demographic background of the students, followed by study abroad data, then by the intercultural competence section on language, personality development, knowledge and skills improvement and the last section with three open questions in free-text format regarding the best/worst experiences the students had.

The language of both the original and the present questionnaire was English to enable comparative studies and to target international students as a future extension of the research. It was pretested in October 2011 by ten Hungarian and ten international students then modified based on their feedback. The questionnaire targeted all the 65 higher education institutions participating in the Erasmus programme in Hungary. The Erasmus coordinators of these institutions were requested to distribute the link to the survey amongst their 2010/2011 outgoing Erasmus students. The online questionnaire was open for two weeks from 15 until 30 November, 2011. It took approximately 20 minutes to fill in the survey. The data were analysed with the statistical programme SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Statistics 20.

Pursuant to Erasmus statistical data (Erasmus statistics, 2014), altogether 4,164 Hungarian students were involved in Erasmus outgoing mobility during 2010/2011, which is 1.09% of the total Hungarian student population of the same academic year (Oktatási-Évkönyv, 2011). Overall 657 valid responses from 37 higher education institutions were received, which is a 15% response rate, assuming that, in theory, all 2010/2011 Erasmus outgoing students received the link sent by their institutional coordinator.

There are differences in the number of respondents in each question as partially filled in questions were also analysed. This is due to the fact that the SPSS program recognizes and excludes those questions that were only partially filled in regarding a certain variable. However, this is not considered as a mistake, as a partially filled in questionnaire can also contain relevant information.

The last three questions of the survey were open-ended. In this section the students were asked to tell what they considered to be the best and the worst aspects of their stay abroad and to tell any stories they considered worth sharing. The total number of students who filled in this section was 274 for the best, 256 for the worst aspects and 163 for the story telling section. Key words in each section were searched for, then the results analysed.

For comparative analysis the findings of the present research were compared with those of the ESN Survey of 2008. The latter was a Europe-wide study online reaching over 8000 international students, out of which more than 5000 were Erasmus students.

For the structured interviews 15 administrative and academic staff were involved who work for various higher education institutions in Hungary. The interviews were pretested by an administrative and an academic member of the University of Pécs and necessary changes were made accordingly to make the questions more clear-cut. The interviews were conducted in Hungarian between January and August, 2014.

Each interview was recorded either in person or through Skype and transcribed later. Participation was voluntary and participants were told they were free not to answer any questions or withdraw at any time without any further consequences. Interviewees were assured about confidentiality. They were told that the records of the interview would be kept private and no information would be available that would make it possible to identify the participant. They were ensured that all information would be kept on a password protected laptop with access only to the researcher. The finalized interview contained nine open-ended questions (see Appendix 3) focusing on Erasmus programme related experiences of the participants. The time and the location of the interview sessions were discussed and lasted between 22 and 35 minutes both in person and via Skype. After each interview a short summary was held to reinforce confidentiality and answer any further questions of the interviewees.

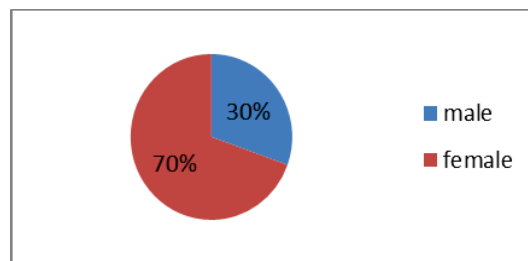
### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. Outcomes of the online survey

##### 3.1.1. Demographic profile

###### Male-female ratio and age

624 students answered the first question regarding their sex. The majority of the respondents were females, as indicated by the following figure:



**Figure 8 Male-female ratio (N=624)**

The question regarding their age was answered by 630 students. 142 respondents (22.5%) were born in 1988 followed by those born in 1989 (138/21.9%) and 1987 (130/20.6%). The mean age of the respondents is 24.41 years (standard deviation: 2.293).

###### Place of residence and family income

The majority of students, 278 (44.5%) are from towns or small cities. 167 (26.7%) come from big cities, 90 (14.4%) from the suburbs of big cities, 87 (13.9%) from villages and only 3 (0.5%) come from farms or homes in the countryside. 384 students (65.1%) consider their family income as average, 108 (18.3%) claim it to be below the country average and 98 (16.6%) consider it to be above the country average.

### 3.1.2. Academic profile

#### Home university and its location

The highest percentage of the students study at the University of Pécs (89/14.5%) followed by Eötvös Loránd University (80/13%), the University of Debrecen (50/8.1%) and the University of Szeged (49/8%). The following table summarizes the 37 higher education institutions the students study at.

**Table 5 Home university (N=614)**

	Higher Education Institution	N	%
1	Academy of Music	1	.2
2	Apor Vilmos Catholic College	2	.3
3	Budapest Business School	32	5.2
4	Budapest College of Communication and Business	12	2.0
5	Budapest College of Management	4	.7
6	Budapest University of Technology and Economics	28	4.6
7	College for Modern Business Studies	9	1.5
8	College of Dunaújváros	4	.7
9	College of Kecskemét	5	.8
10	College of Nyíregyháza	15	2.4
11	College of Szolnok	6	1.0
12	Corvinus University of Budapest	49	8
13	Eötvös Loránd University	80	13
14	Eszterházy Károly College	7	1.1
15	Film Academy of Budapest	2	.3
16	Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music	5	.8
17	Hungarian Dance Academy	3	.5
18	Hungarian University of Fine Arts	2	.3
19	International Business School	3	.5
20	Károly Róbert College	9	1.5
21	King Zsigmond Business School	7	1.1
22	Kodolanyi János University	20	3.3

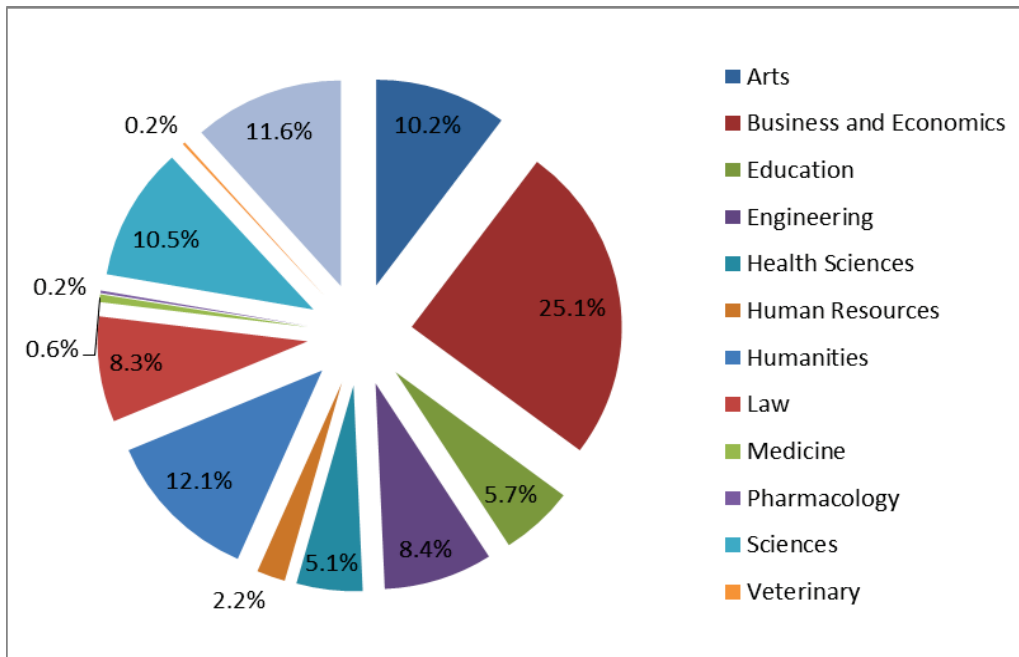
	<b>Higher Education Institution</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
23	Kölcsey Ferenc Teacher Training College	1	.2
24	Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design	16	2.6
25	Óbuda University	6	1.0
26	Pázmány Péter Catholic University	9	1.5
27	Police Academy	2	.3
28	Semmelweis University	20	3.3
29	Széchenyi István University	6	1.0
30	Szent István University	8	1.3
31	Theological University of Debrecen	3	.5
32	University of Debrecen	50	8.1
33	University of Miskolc	22	3.6
34	University of Pannonia	14	2.3
35	University of Pécs	89	14.5
36	University of Szeged	49	8.0
37	University of West Hungary	14	2.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>100.0</b>

More than half of the respondents (312/50.6%) study in Budapest, followed by those who study in Pécs (81/13.1%), Debrecen (54/8.8%) and Szeged (45/7.3%).

### **Level and field of studies, year of graduation**

The majority of the students, 57.1% (353), are studying at bachelor level, 38.7% (239) at master level, 1.8% (11) at doctoral level and the rest, 2.4% (15) at other, mostly undivided levels.

158 students (25.1%) study business and economics followed by students studying humanities (76/12.1%). Health care and medical students are represented by 5.7% (36). Those, who indicated their studies as “other” (73/11.6%) study tourism, social sciences and communication. The figure below details the various fields of studies of the respondents.



**Figure 9 Field of studies (N=630)**

A large number of students (321/52.8%) indicated that they would graduate in 2012 followed by those who graduated in 2011 (134/22%) and finally those (93/15.3%), who indicated 2013 as their year of graduation.

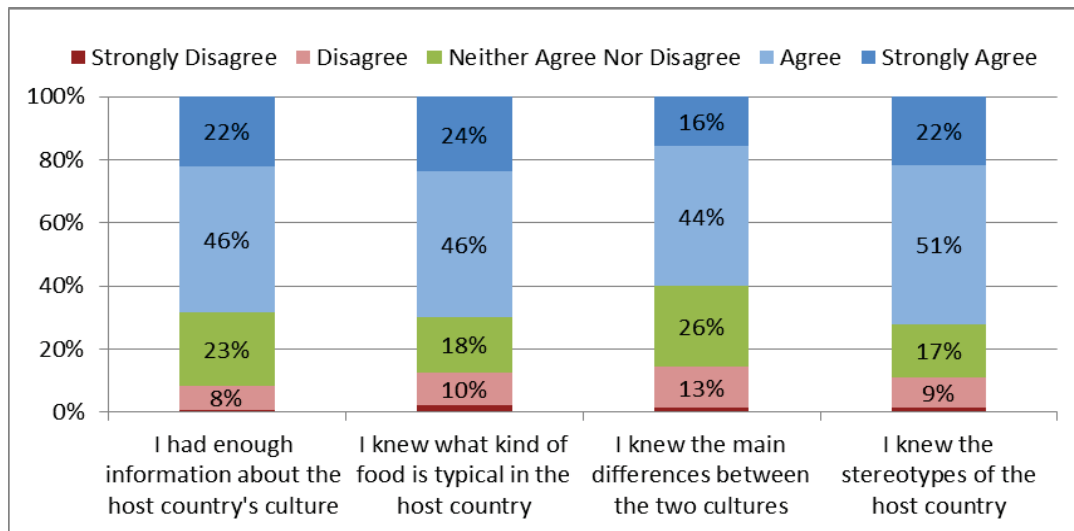
### 3.1.3. Characteristics of students

As regards the characteristic features of the student population the answers had to be given on a Likert-scale of one to five (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree). The majority of students consider themselves open to new situations (556/89.5%), who do not give up easily when learning new things (454/74.1%), like challenges (531/85.9%), are very sociable (494/79.9%) and curious (548/89.1%), have no problem being helped by others (418/67.9%), like to initiate contacts (429/71.3%), like new situations (505/81.8%) and consider themselves independent (486/79.1%).

### 3.1.4. Erasmus mobility studies profile

#### Before going abroad

Students were asked about preliminary information and knowledge of the host country and the majority of the students agreed or strongly agreed that they had enough information about the host country's culture, food, stereotypes and how the host culture differed from their own as indicated by the figure below.



**Figure 10 Preliminary information and knowledge of the host country (N=578)**

While preparing for their stay in the host country, 68% of students claimed that they had talked to people who had already studied/lived/worked in the host city, and 48% said they had already visited the country they were going to study in. However, only 33% claimed that they had taken foreign language classes at the home university to learn the language of the host country and merely 24% stated that they had participated in orientation programmes to prepare themselves for their studies in the host country.

#### Host country

Most of the students studied in Germany (105/16%), followed by Finland (56/8.5%), Italy (53/8.1%) and Spain (50/7.6%). They spent 5.5 months abroad on average (standard deviation: 2.185). The figure below demonstrates the host countries in percentage of students.



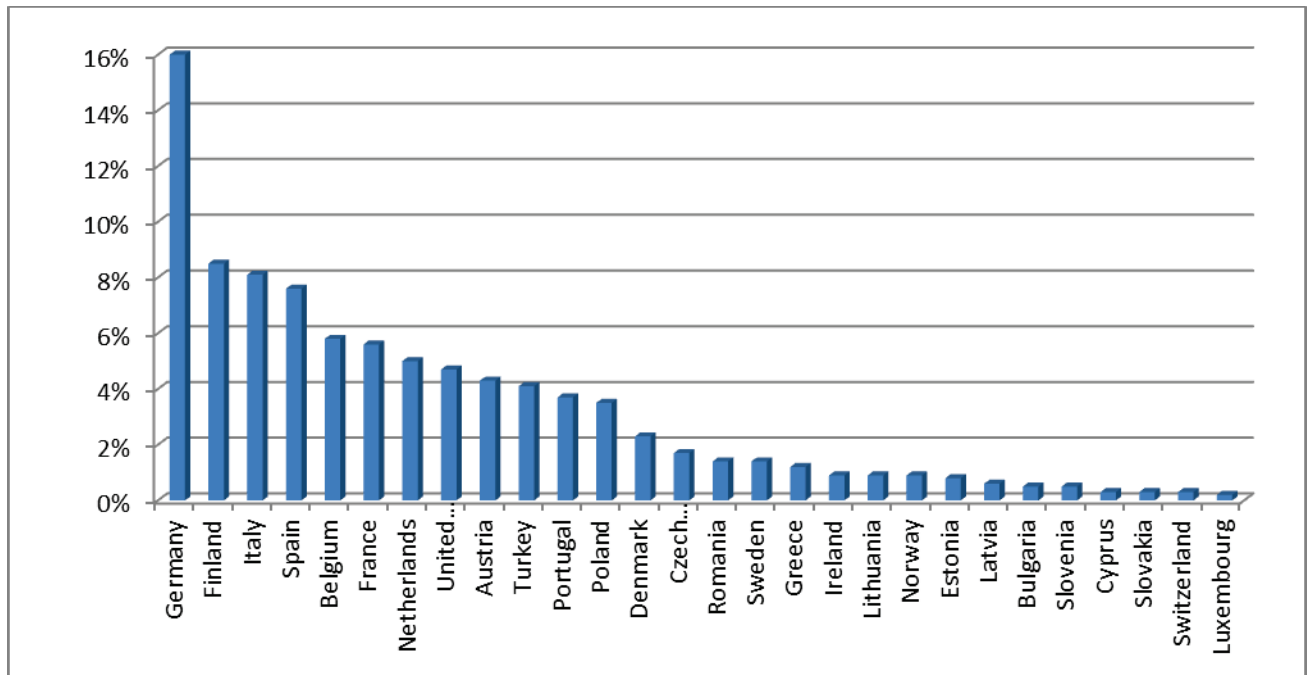


Figure 11 Host country (N=598)

### Social life

The majority of students 50.1 % (272) had six to twenty friends among local students and other young people, 44.2% (238) had 21 to 50 friends among international students and other foreign people, 53.2 % (282) had a close relationship with someone who had the nationality of the host country, whilst 76.7% (409) had a close relationship with another international person. 44.3 % (291) shared his/her flat or house with somebody of different nationality, 67% (358) had classes or worked with international people and 88% (482) travelled around the host country to gain new experiences. The following figure indicates who the students spent most of their time with.

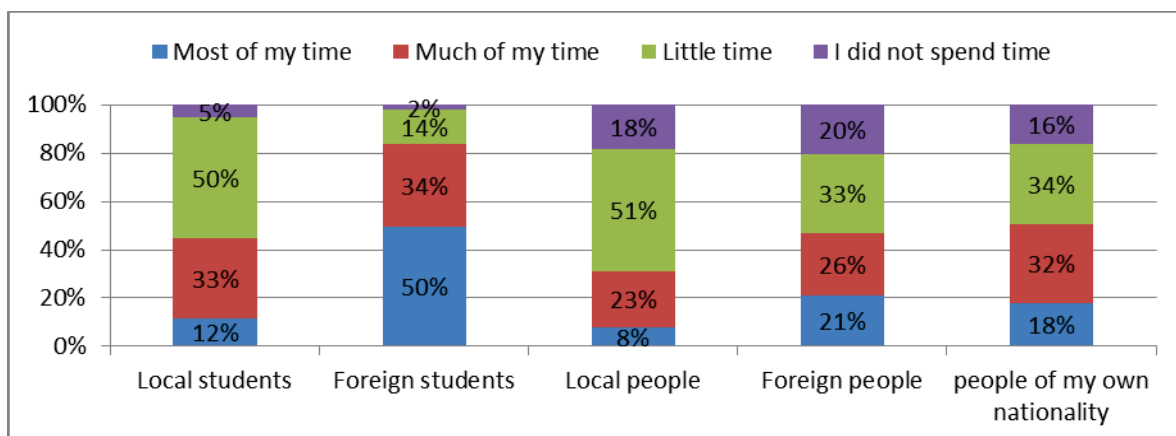
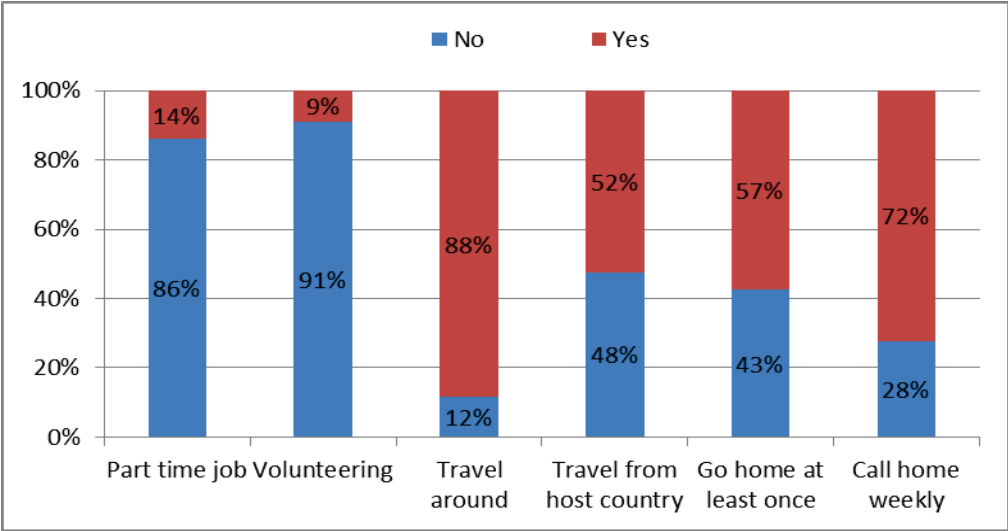


Figure 12 Time spent with different nationalities (N=543)

Students were asked whether they did any part-time or voluntary jobs and how much and where they travelled. The figure below demonstrates that only a low percentage of students (14%-part-time and 9%-volunteer) had jobs during their stay, but the majority travelled a lot and contacted family by telephone weekly.



**Figure 13 Job and travelling (N=544)**

**3.1.5. Language development**

294 students (54.2%) used English for communication, 104 (19.2%) used the host country’s language, whilst 144 (26.6%) communicated in different languages depending on the situation.

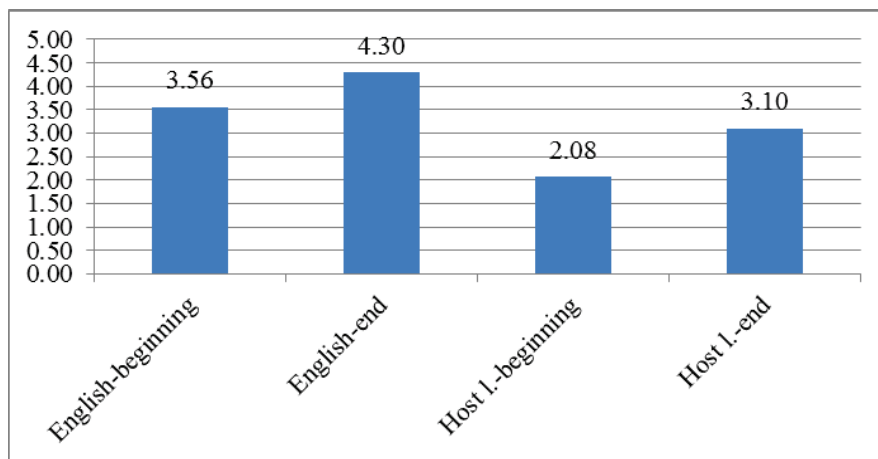
*At the beginning* of their stay 170 students (31.3%) claimed that their *English* was average, 140 (25.8%) said that it was very good, 136 (25%) that it was good, 83 (15.3%) that it was not so good and only 14 (2.6%) said that it was not good at all, which is probably in the case of those countries where the language of education was not English.

*At the end* of their stay 66 students (12.2%) claimed that their *English* was average, 266 (49.3%) said it was very good, 193 (35.7%) stated it was good, 10 (1.9%) that it was not so good and only 5 (.9%) said that it was not good at all, which is a major improvement.

*At the beginning* of their stay 88 students (16%) claimed that their *host language* skills were average, 31 (5.8%) said it was very good, 59 (11%) stated it was good, 105 (19.6%) argued that it was not so good and 253 (47.2%) said that it was not good at all.

At the end of their stay 82 students (15.4%) claimed that their *host language* skills were average, 124 (23.3%) said that it was very good, 100 (18.8%) stated that it was good, 179 (33.6%) argued that it was not so good and 48 (9%) said that it was not good at all.

The following figure represents the progress students made both in English and the host language.



**Figure 14 Language progress in English and the language of the host country (N=536)**

### 3.1.6. Skills improvement

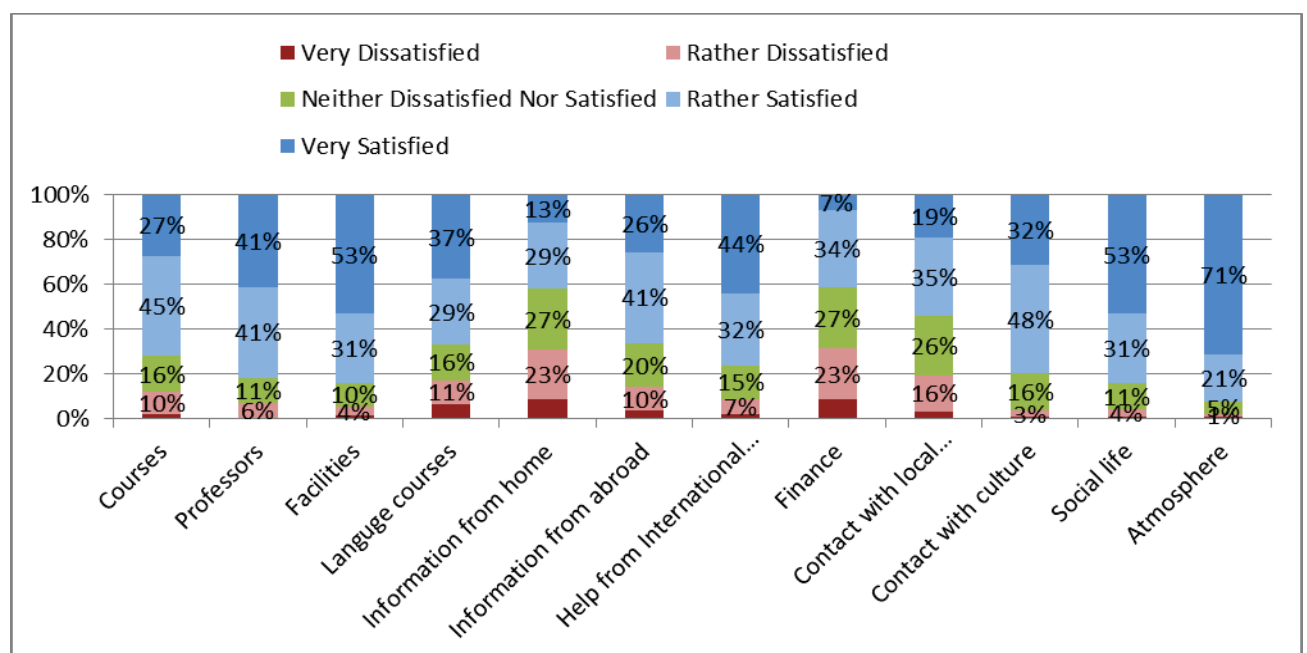
436 respondents (84.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that the stay abroad helped them improving their skills related to working in a team with people of different cultural backgrounds. 464 (90.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that their problem solving skills improved in unexpected situations, whereas 332 (64.4%) claimed that their time and project management skills developed and 382 (74.3%) indicated that taking responsibility of their tasks and duties increased. 477 (92.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that their skills related to adapting to new situations developed. 467 (91.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that their communication skills with people from different cultural backgrounds improved whereas 408 (80.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that their negotiating skills with people from different cultural backgrounds also developed. 367 (71.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that their conflict management skills with people from different cultural backgrounds improved. However, only 147 (28.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that their computer and internet skills developed.

### 3.1.7. Knowledge improvement

392 students (77.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that their stay abroad helped them improve their knowledge about different teaching methods at universities, 269 (53.5%) learned more about youth organisations that are helping and supporting students, 473 (91.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that their foreign language knowledge improved and helped them in communicating with people from different countries. 308 (59.6%) developed his/her knowledge regarding future life prospects. 328 (64.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that their knowledge regarding different work attitude at work places developed. 278 (54.4%) claimed that their knowledge regarding future job prospects developed. 388 (75.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that their knowledge of the characteristics of their own culture improved, whilst 423 (82.2%) claimed that their knowledge of the characteristics of other cultures also developed.

### 3.1.8. Satisfaction with studies and cultural experience

The figure below demonstrates the 12 aspects of students' satisfaction level regarding their studies and cultural experience in the host country. It is the atmosphere of the host country that the majority of students (71%) were the most satisfied with, followed by social life and facilities (53%).



## Figure 15 Satisfaction with studies and cultural experience in the host country (N=530)

### 3.1.9. Best aspects of study abroad

In this section of the questionnaire students were asked to tell what they considered to be the best aspects of their stay abroad. The total number of students who filled in this section was 274. Out of the 274, 90 students (32.8%) considered the *cultural aspect* of the stay best, claiming that multiculturalism and knowing new, different cultures, people and even cuisines as well as learning to adapt to those was the best experience. Being exposed to other cultures and learning about them has also contributed to awareness building regarding their own culture, "through this [experience], you learn a lot more about your own culture", "my own nationality has lived here in this country [Romania] for centuries, and it was a very special situation for me to get to know the Hungarian people and their culture in Romania", "...I started to appreciate my own country more and after my return I could approve my life in Hungary through the experiences that I had abroad."

They also considered understanding and thus becoming more open to people of culturally diverse backgrounds an outstanding eye-opener:

"Get to know (culturally) different people - and realize that they are surprisingly similar thanks to the globalized world."

"I got to know a lot of new people from different countries and I made close relationships with people from very different cultures and that means that cultural differences are not limits between people who are open to others, to the world."

"I think I also broke plenty of stereotypes about people I had in mind before, maybe this is the best thing that changed."

"Understanding and accepting the cultural differences can be really hard sometimes. But this is the best part at the same time."

Out of the 274 students 27 (9.8%) considered the *language aspect* of the stay best, claiming that they could improve their English and other language skills (Danish, Dutch, Estonian, Finnish, German, Italian, Polish and Spanish were mentioned by most) and this made them more self-confident in their communication skills: "I had opportunity to practise my English", "I use English very well now", "my English and German were getting better", "I could improve my Spanish knowledge", "the Erasmus experience helped me to communicate easier, made me self-confident in speaking English". Some even made extra efforts to learn the local language: "It was difficult to understand the local people because they didn't speak other languages, but after a time I could solve this problem easily as I forced myself to use Italian".

*Knowledge* was regarded an important aspect by 14 students (5.1%) claiming that improving language knowledge, skills as well as learning about other cultures and their characteristics have helped them in various aspects:

“I know more options to study or work”,

“I know how much my knowledge is worth in other countries”,

“...the knowledge of the culture of other countries and by this knowledge [we know] our future place of life”.

*Openness, open-mindedness* were considered an essential aspect by 19 students (6.9%) claiming that it opened their eyes to the world, to new ways of life and “I became more open to other people from different cultures and countries”, “it helped to understand myself better, getting more independent and opened my eyes to the world.”

*Self-confidence* was considered an important aspect by 11 students (4%):

“I learned how to manage unexpected situations, how to be self-confident in any life situations.”

“I met a lot of different people and the conversations with them made me more open minded and self-confident and made my curiosity to grow even bigger than before.”

*Tolerance and flexibility* were considered best aspects by 7 students (2.5%) claiming that they became more tolerant and flexible, able to react to unexpected situations and solving any problems: “Like I am more "adult" now...”

*Future life and work* was considered an important aspect by 26 students (9.4%) stating that through the Erasmus experience they could get ideas for their future, regarding life and work:

“I enjoyed working there so much that I realised I would love to move back and work there for at least 3 years.”

“It helped me to be more independent, outgoing and at the same time more hard working.”

The fact that they could also write it in their CV for future job applications was also regarded as important.

Certainly, there were some students to whom other aspects of stay were regarded as best, such as losing weight and finding love: “I met a nice Polish girl, who has changed my life”.

All in all students had outstanding experiences and learning opportunities which all contributed to both increasing their intercultural skills and an important aspect of it, personality development or as one put it:

“I would make it compulsory for everyone to stay at least half a year abroad before getting a degree.”

### **3.1.10. Worst aspects of study abroad**

In this section of the questionnaire students were asked to tell what they considered to be the worst aspects of their stay abroad. The total number of students who filled in this section was 256. Out of the 256 students, 16 students (6.2%) considered the *financial aspect* of the stay worst claiming that they had serious financial difficulties, did not get sufficient financial help and some regarded the Erasmus grant they had received not meeting the costs they had to face:

“My Erasmus grant was exactly €5 more per month than the price of the room in the university's dorm, so actually there was no funding at all for survival. There were days when I had to skip eating as my fridge was empty, just as my purse...”

*The local people* were regarded an essential aspect by 14 students (5.4%) claiming that the locals (both students and residents) were very cold and unfriendly, it was difficult to build friendships with them:

“local people were a little closed and it was difficult to know them”

*Homesickness* was considered an important aspect by 6 students (2.3%) claiming that far away from home, family and friends was not easy. *Finding accommodation* was regarded as essential aspect only by 5 students (1.9%) who had trouble searching for accommodation and did not get enough support by the host university. Various worst experiences were made regarding the realization of the bad characteristics of oneself as well as the home country, living together with people from different cultures, feeling lonely, the weather (-30 degrees was mentioned) and gaining weight, but it is worth highlighting that out of the 256 students 13 (5%) claimed not to have had any bad experiences at all or that the only bad experience they had was that their stay ended, it was too short and they had to return home:

“Getting attached to places and people surrounding me for such a long time and then having to say goodbye....”

“There were a lot of bad aspects at the beginning, but later I felt that everything had turned to my profit. So, there are no bad aspects.”

### **3.1.11. Story to share regarding study abroad**

In this section the students were asked to tell any stories worth sharing. The total number of students who filled in this section was 163. Many repeated their best experiences, while others made some personal comments:

“I really enjoyed the company of the local people and they made me fall in love with that country and culture. ... I have found real friends among the local people, with whom I am still in a daily contact.”

Most of the stories students shared were rather messages to other students by encouraging them to go and study abroad, not to miss this opportunity:

“If you would like to be open-minded and you like new situations and get to know new people, don't hesitate! Go and try to live/study in another country!”

“I think it is impossible to describe Erasmus; it's a feeling you can only know if you experience it. A life-changing, wonderful experience.”

“When you get know other cultures you might start to think how important it is where you come from, what you have there (culture, habits, friends, places...) even if you have never thought that before. And how big is our WORLD, how many things we MUST see!!!”



### **3.2. Outcomes of the comparative analysis**

In this chapter the results of the ESN Survey of 2008, entitled “Exchanging cultures” will be compared with the outcomes of the present research. The former study targeted international students in three groups: exchange students, interns and regular students. The questionnaire was filled in by 8,283 students out of which 5,939 (71.7%) were exchange students. For the purposes of this comparative analysis the data referring to exchange students exclusively will be used for comparison as those include all the students who studied through the Erasmus programme.

Two sample test for proportions was carried out in each item where ratios were compared. The p value is indicated only in those items where the difference between the two research studies is significant.

#### **3.2.1. Demographic and educational profile**

##### **Male-female ratio and age**

In the ESN 2008 survey 70% of respondents were between 21 and 24 years old. The average age was 23 years, and there were more female (68%) than male (32%) respondents.

In the present doctoral research of 2011 the majority of the respondents, 69.6% were also females and 30.1% were males. The majority of the respondents, 65%, were between 22 and 24 years of age, their average age was 24.41 years.

Erasmus student mobility targets students who have completed at least one year of their studies as well as senior students both in masters and doctoral programmes. This explains the average age being higher. As Erasmus statistics suggest (Erasmus statistics, 2014) more female than male students have participated in the programme since its beginning and this clarifies the over represented female student population in both surveys.

## **Place of residence and family income**

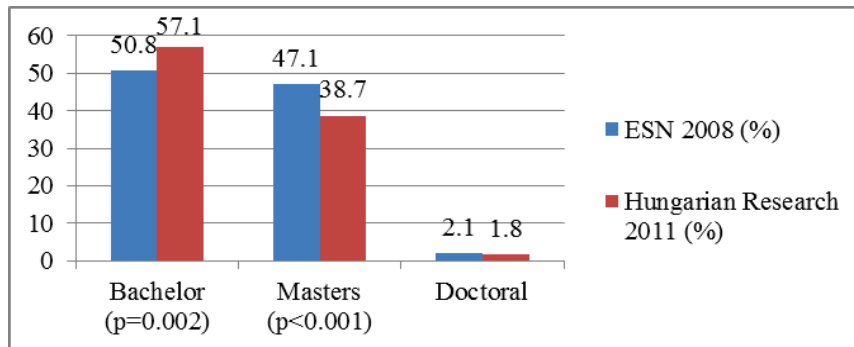
Most of the respondents, 40%, come from towns or small cities, 25% from big cities and 3.2% from farms or homes in the countryside in the ESN survey. The majority of students of the present research, 44.5% were from towns or small cities, 26.7% came from big cities, and only 0.5% came from farms or homes in the countryside. The significant difference between the two samples was related to towns or small cities ( $p=0.03$ ) and farms or homes in the countryside ( $p<0.001$ ).

In terms of financial income only 9% described their family income as below the country's average, 33% as above and 58% as average. The majority of the students, 65.1%, in the present research, considered their family income as average, 18.3% claimed it to be below the country average and 16.6% considered it to be above the country average.

Regarding the place of residence and income, the Hungarian Erasmus student data are consistent with those of the European Erasmus student population. However, there are some significant differences between the datasets in the percentage of students having below average ( $p < 0.001$ ) and above average ( $p < 0.001$ ) income. A possible explanation for this might be that the 2008 survey was filled in by many international students from more developed European countries, where the average GDP is considerably higher than in Hungary. According to the GDP per capita ranking (CIA, 2014) Hungary is the 71<sup>st</sup> behind many other European countries including Austria, Germany, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, just to name but a few, where many Erasmus students originate from who were the respondents of the ESN Survey of 2008.

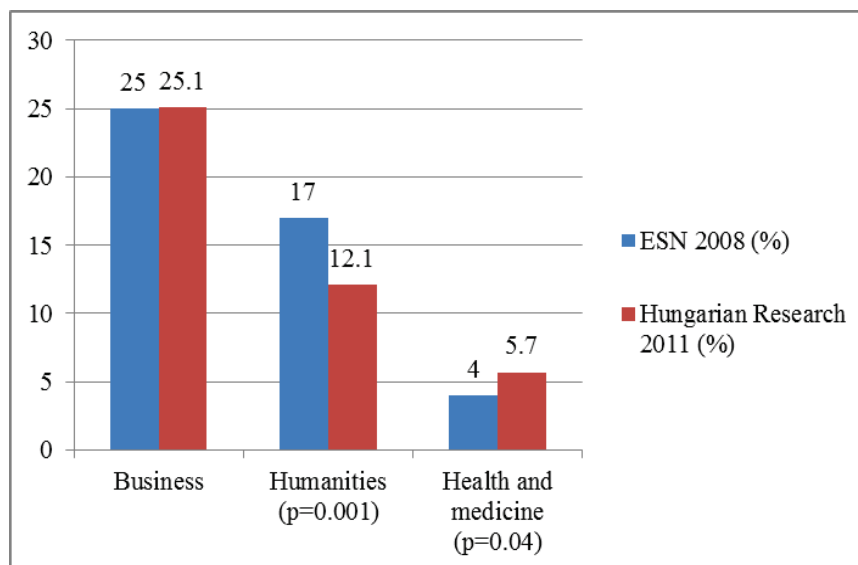
### **3.2.2. Academic profile**

Concerning the level of studies, 50.8% of students were bachelor students, 47.1% masters and 2.1% doctoral in the 2008 survey, whereas in the present research the majority of the students, 57.1%, were studying at bachelor level, 38.7% at masters and 1.8% at doctoral level.



**Figure 16 Level of studies compared**

The most popular area of studies of the 2008 survey was business studies (25%). Languages and philology were the second most popular (17%) and health and medicine were represented by only 4%. The majority of the students of the present survey (25.1%) study business and economics, followed by the students studying humanities (12.1%). Health care and medical students were represented by 5.7%.



**Figure 17 Area of studies compared**

Both the level and the area of studies of the Hungarian Erasmus students are in line with that of the European Erasmus students, although humanities are represented by lower percentage of Hungarian students, whereas health and medicine by 1.7% more.

### 3.2.3. Characteristics of students

As regards the characteristic features of the student population, the majority of respondents in the ESN survey (no specific data available) described themselves as independent, curious and social people, who are open to and like new situations and challenges.

In the present research the majority of students considered themselves open to new situations (556/89.5%), who do not give up easily when learning new things (454/74.1%), like challenges (531/85.9%), are very sociable (494/79.9%) and curious (548/89.1%), have no problem being helped by others (418/67.9%), like to initiate contacts (429/71.3%), like new situations (505/81.8%) and consider themselves independent (486/79.1%).

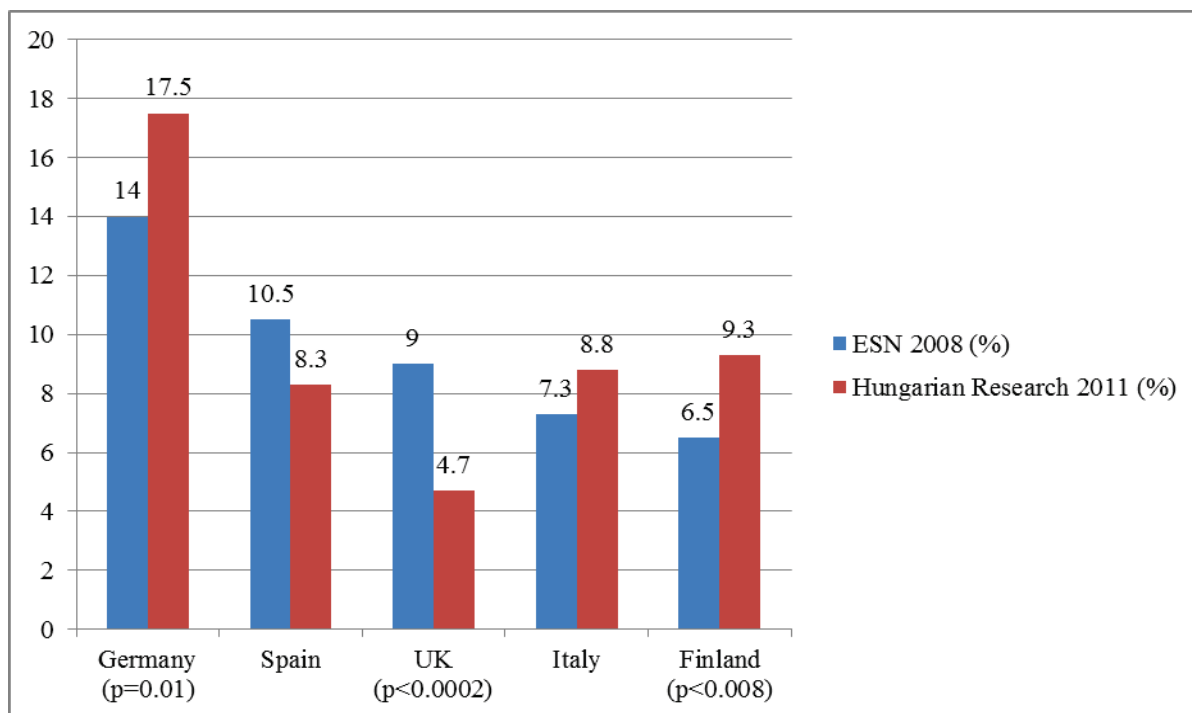
Hungarian students' characteristics are therefore consistent with that of the European student population.

#### **3.2.4. Erasmus mobility studies profile**

##### **Host country**

Most of the exchange students (55%) stayed abroad for 4 to 6 months and the countries that they studied in were Germany (14%), Spain (10.5%) and the UK (9%).

In this doctoral survey they spent 5.5 months in the host country on average. Most of the students studied in Germany (17.5%), followed by Finland (9.3%), Italy (8.8%) and Spain (8.3%).



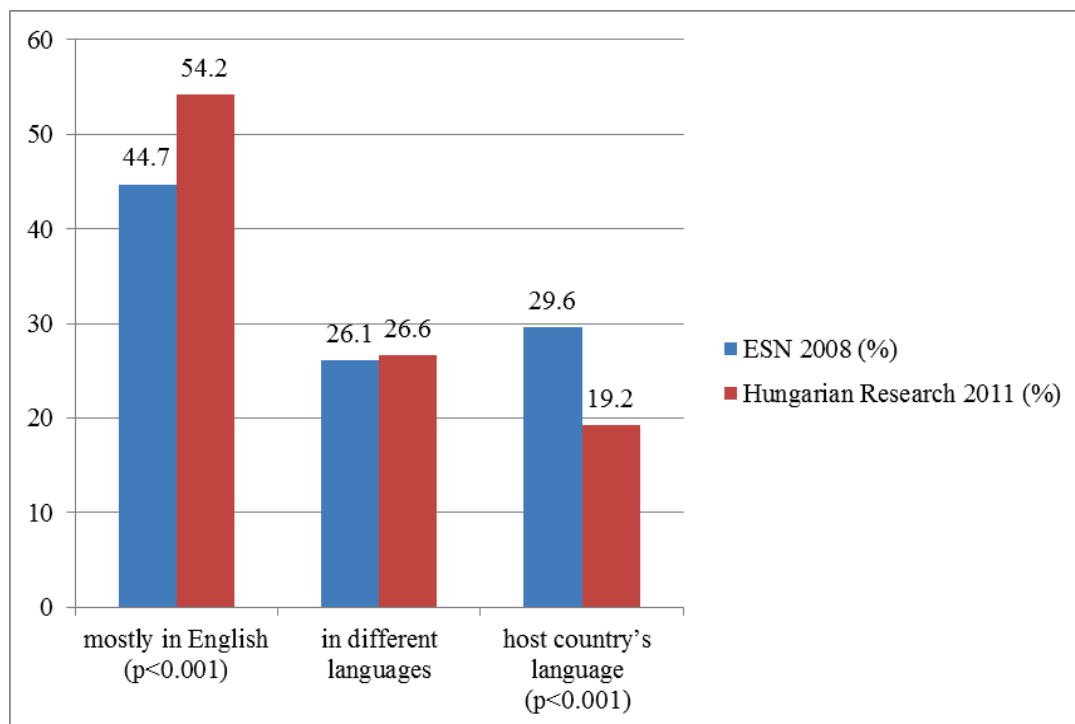
**Figure 18 Host country compared**

The first five most popular destinations of the Hungarian Erasmus students are consistent with that of the European Erasmus student population with the exception of the United Kingdom. It seems possible that these results are due to the fact that the United Kingdom is considered too expensive by the average Hungarian student even if culturally and language-wise it would typically be a popular destination.

### 3.2.5. Language development

The students communicated in different languages during their time abroad. They talked mostly in English (44.7%), nevertheless, they also talked in different languages (26.1%), and 29.6% used the language of the host country depending on the situation.

The majority of the students of this research, 54.2%, used English for communication, 26.6% communicated in different languages depending on the situation, whilst 19.2% used the language of the host country.



**Figure 19 Language usage compared**

In the ESN survey the knowledge of the host country's language was rather low at the beginning of the stay graded only as 2.2 (1= not at all, 5= very well). The knowledge of English at the beginning of the stay was on average higher, 3.5. However, the average progress made in the knowledge of the host country's language was greater (1.3) than the progress made in English (0.6).

In the 2011 research a similar tendency can be observed: at the beginning of their stay their English was regarded to be at 3.56 on average, whereas their average knowledge of the language of the host country was only graded as 2.08. By the end of their stay their English proficiency increased to 4.3 (rise of 0.8), and that of the host country's language grew to 3.1 (increase of 1.1).

Language use and the development made both in English and the language of the host country represent the same tendency: the progress both European and Hungarian Erasmus students made is faster in the language of the host country than in English. Nevertheless, there is a greater difference in the use of the language of the host country (29.6% vs 19.2%), which is probably due to the higher number of European Erasmus students selecting the UK as host country.

### **3.2.6. Skills improvement**

In the 2008 survey students agreed or strongly agreed that their stay abroad helped them improve the most in the ability of adapting to new situations (92%), working with people from different cultural backgrounds (85%), as well as solving problems in unexpected situations (82%). 71% felt that they were taking more responsibilities of their tasks and duties after the period abroad and 61% said that they developed in planning their time and projects.

In this doctoral research 84.8% agreed or strongly agreed that the stay abroad helped them improving their skills related to working in a team with people from different cultural backgrounds, 90.1% agreed or strongly agreed that their problem solving skills improved in unexpected situations, whereas 64.4% claimed that their time and project management skills developed and 74.3% indicated that taking responsibility of their tasks and duties increased. 92.9% agreed or strongly agreed that their skills related to adapting to new situations developed. However, only 28.8% agreed or strongly agreed that their computer and internet skills developed.

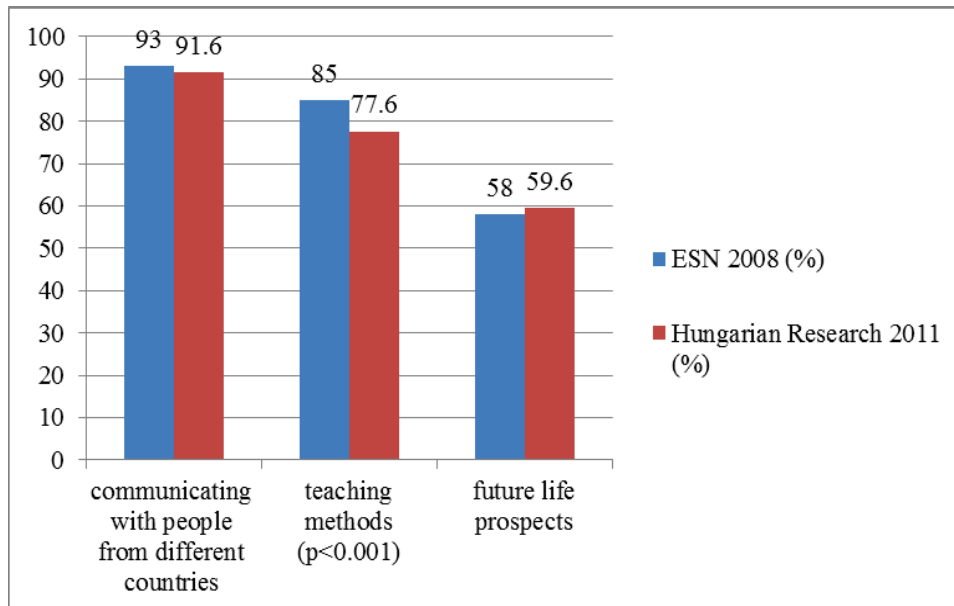
During the exchange period students do not only improve in academic aspects, but they also improve in some specific skills and gain new knowledge outside the academic world. Both Hungarian and European Erasmus students demonstrate the same skills improvement tendencies. They both rank their adaption skills to new situations as highest and computer and internet skills as lowest, which is probably due to the fact that this cohort of students are the Millennials, or as often referred to, Generation Y, or digital natives, who are digital age children and exposure to another country does not necessarily add to their already high level of computer literacy.

### **3.2.7. Knowledge improvement**

In the ESN survey 93% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they improved their knowledge of communicating with people from different countries, whereas 85% of students learned about the existing teaching methods in universities. 58% developed his/her knowledge regarding future life prospects.

In the present study 77.6% agreed or strongly agreed that their stay abroad helped them improve their knowledge about different teaching methods at universities, 91.6% agreed or

strongly agreed that their foreign language knowledge improved and helped them in communicating with people from different countries. 59.6% developed his/her knowledge regarding future life prospects.



**Figure 20 Knowledge improvement compared**

Both European and Hungarian Erasmus students demonstrate the same knowledge improvement, nevertheless there is a significant difference ( $p < 0.001$ ) between the two samples regarding new university teaching methods, as Hungarian students considered that they had learnt less from this method.

### **3.2.8. Satisfaction with studies and cultural experience**

In the 2008 survey for the overall satisfaction with their studies, 76% of the students gave a positive answer (“very satisfied” and “rather satisfied”) and for the overall satisfaction with their stay, 92% of the students gave a positive answer. In the 2011 survey it is the atmosphere of the host country that the majority of students (71%) were the most satisfied with, followed by social life (53%).

In summary, the findings of the present research confirm similar tendencies among Hungarian and European Erasmus students. The particular items referring to the intercultural impact of the Erasmus programme on Hungarian students, including medical and health care students



and their satisfaction with their studies and cultural experience are in line with that of the European Erasmus cohort.

### **3.3. Outcomes of the structured interviews**

Structured interviews were conducted with the purpose of approaching the research topic from various angles and foster the understanding of the patterns in the quantitative analysis. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods corroborate the findings and enhance the validity of data (Neuman, 2006). Interviews also facilitate asking more complex questions due to their interpersonal nature. The interviews contained a structured set of questions to gather identical data to be analysed.

#### **3.3.1. The sample**

The structured interviews were targeted at groups of stakeholders of universities in Hungary both at administrative and academic levels who work in an international, multicultural setting. This included administrative staff of international offices as well as Erasmus coordinators of faculties, academic staff and doctoral students. Altogether 15 stakeholders were interviewed by using the method of convenience sampling: 11 females and 4 males. Their age ranged between 28 and 49. The majority, nine interviewees work at universities in the Southern Transdanubian region, two in the Southern Great Plain region, in Central Hungary and the Northern Great Plain region respectively.

#### **3.3.2. The outcomes**

Eight of the interviewees reported that they had benefited from an Erasmus mobility grant and visited countries like Belgium, Finland, Germany and the UK. The time they spent there ranged between one week and five months. All of the interviewees claimed to speak English at intermediate and advanced levels as well as other languages, mostly German at intermediate level.

Regarding the *advantages* of the Erasmus mobility program, the language learning and cultural aspect of the programme was highlighted by the majority (12 respondents):

“The best way of learning a foreign language is within the target language environment...and the Erasmus mobility programme makes it feasible.”

Nine interviewees also emphasized that the programme gives students a chance to learn about other cultures, which contributes to developing their personality, tolerance and openness towards others even within their own culture. Five interviewees commented that students learn about new ways of studying, communicating, problem solving and independence.

Regarding the *disadvantages* of the Erasmus mobility program the majority highlighted financial problems and lack of motivation. Two interviewees also emphasized the poor support from some of the host institutions, whilst five mentioned the burden of administrative tasks as a disadvantage. Three mentioned the recognition of certain subjects and credit transferability as still a major drawback.

Concerning the *language knowledge development* of the former Hungarian Erasmus students all interviewees agreed that their language skills developed, mostly in English. Only one interviewee claimed that their language skills and knowledge in the language of the host country did not improve.

Regarding *changes and development in the attitude, behaviour, skills and knowledge* of former Erasmus students eleven interviewee mentioned openness and tolerance level increase and therefore implying that these enable them to be *better team players and problem solvers* in their future life and job. One mentioned development in *time management skills*: “There are so many applications and forms to be filled in by due date before, during and after their programme that they will definitely become better at time management skills.... even better than me....”

On the subject of *alternative methods to develop the intercultural skills/knowledge/awareness of non-mobile students*, involvement with international students and projects and the importance of learning foreign languages was highlighted by the majority. One interviewee mentioned sharing intercultural stories, case studies within classroom settings, whereas another mentioned training programmes and lectures.

In conclusion it can be claimed that the majority of stakeholders considered the Erasmus programme as a positive attribute to developing students’ intercultural knowledge and skills, however there are some specific downsides of the programme that deter students from participating. As there are still a high number of non-mobile students within the country, specific training programmes, case studies, international involvement, projects and the importance of learning foreign languages have been mentioned as alternative methods to this cohort.

### 3.4. Hypotheses testing

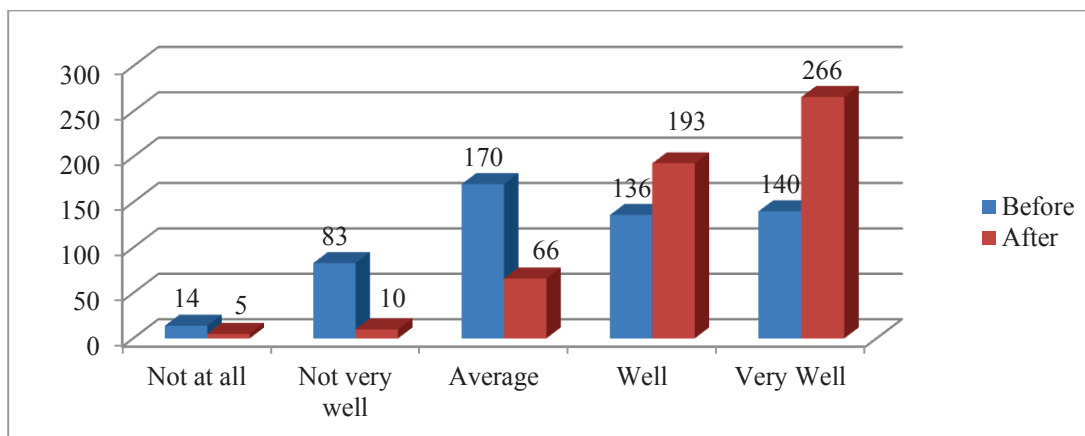
The table below summarizes the methods applied to each hypothesis for verification purposes.

**Table 6 Methods applied for hypotheses testing**

Hypothesis	Method
H <sub>1</sub>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quantitative method: online survey</li> <li>• quantitative and qualitative method: comparative analysis</li> <li>• qualitative method: structured interviews</li> <li>• analysing secondary source data: literature and statistical data review</li> </ul>
H <sub>2</sub>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quantitative method: online survey</li> <li>• quantitative and qualitative method: comparative analysis</li> <li>• qualitative method: structured interviews</li> <li>• analysing secondary source data: literature and statistical data review</li> </ul>
H <sub>3</sub>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quantitative method: online survey</li> <li>• quantitative and qualitative method : comparative analysis</li> <li>• qualitative method: structured interviews</li> </ul>
H <sub>4</sub>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quantitative method: online survey</li> <li>• qualitative method: structured interviews</li> <li>• analysing secondary source data: literature and statistical data review</li> </ul>
H <sub>5</sub>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quantitative method: online survey</li> <li>• quantitative and qualitative method : comparative analysis</li> <li>• qualitative method: structured in-depth interviews</li> <li>• analysing secondary source data: literature and statistical data review</li> </ul>
H <sub>6</sub>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quantitative method: online survey</li> <li>• multivariate analysis: model by multiple linear regression</li> <li>• analysing secondary source data: literature and statistical data review</li> </ul>
H <sub>7</sub>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quantitative method: online survey</li> <li>• multivariate analysis: model by multiple linear regression</li> <li>• analysing secondary source data: literature and statistical data review</li> </ul>

H<sub>1</sub>: Hungarian students, with special regard to medical and health care students, who participate in the Erasmus mobility programme, *develop their proficiency in English*.

To analyse the difference between two average values paired sample t-test was applied as the same question was asked regarding two different periods of time (*before* and *after* stay). This enables the comparison of the two mean values.



**Figure 21 How well did you speak English before/after (N=540)**

14 respondents (2.6%) did not speak English at all before their mobility programme, but after returning their number reduced to 5 only (0.9%). The number of those claiming not to speak English very well before their mobility programme decreased from 83 (15.3%) to 10 (1.9%). The number of those who considered their proficiency as average decreased from 170 (31.3%) to 66 (12.2%), while those who considered they spoke English well increased from 136 (25%) to 193 (35.7%) and that of those who speak English very well increased from 140 (25.8%) to 266.

After applying paired t-test to compare the two mean values, the following results were obtained:

**Table 7 Paired T-test Statistics-H<sub>1</sub>**

Paired Samples Statistics				
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
English before	3.56	540	1.107	.048
English after	4.31	540	.825	.035

**Table 8 Paired T-test-H<sub>1</sub>**

Paired Samples Test								
	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
English before - English after	<b>-.746</b>	.820	.035	-.816	-.677	<b>-21.155</b>	539	.000

Data indicate that the mean value of the two mean values is -0.746. The second table indicates that the mean values before and after the mobility programme differ significantly:  $t = -21.155$  ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Validity testing was also carried out with the help of the Wilcoxon test. The advantage of the Wilcoxon test is that normal distribution is not a precondition as it examines the median of the differences. The null hypothesis of the Wilcoxon test is that there is no significant difference between the two results.

The following tables summarize the results:

**Table 9 Wilcoxon Test-H<sub>1</sub>**

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test				
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
English after - English before	Negative Ranks	11 <sup>a</sup>	120.55	1326.00
	Positive Ranks	305 <sup>b</sup>	159.87	48760.00
	Ties	224 <sup>c</sup>		
	Total	540		

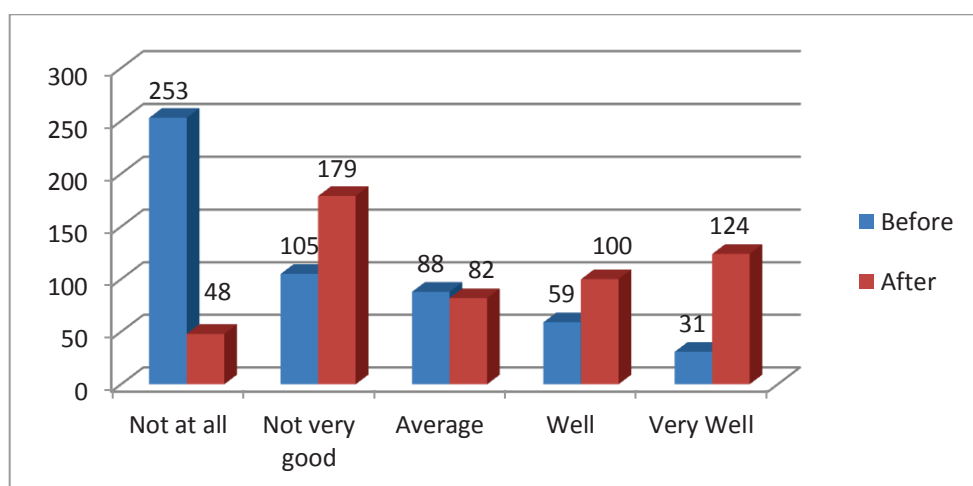
**Table 10 Wilcoxon Test Statistics-H<sub>1</sub>**

Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>	
	English after - English before
Z	-15.232 <sup>b</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	
b. Based on negative ranks.	

It is indicated by the data above to reject the null hypothesis, i.e. there is a significant difference between the two results. In conclusion it can be said that *the time spent abroad via the Erasmus mobility programme significantly improves Hungarian students' proficiency in English. The findings were also supported by the outcomes of the comparative analysis and the structured interviews.*

H<sub>2</sub>: Hungarian students, with special regard to medical and health care students, who participate in the Erasmus mobility programme, *develop their proficiency in the language of the host country.*

To analyse the difference between two average values paired sample t-test was applied.



**Figure 22 How well did you speak the language of the host country (N=533)**

Out of the 533 respondents 253 (47.2%) respondents did not speak the language of the host country at all before their mobility programme, but after returning their number reduced to 48 (9%). The number of those claiming not to speak the language of the host country very well before their mobility programme increased from 105 (19.6%) to 179 (33.6%). The number of those who consider their proficiency as average decreased from 88 (16.4%) to 82 (15.4%), while those who consider they speak the language of the host country well increased from 59 (11%) to 100 (18.8%) and that of those who speak it very well increased from 31 (5.8%) to 124 (23.3%).

**Table 11 Paired T-test Statistics-H<sub>2</sub>**

Paired Samples Statistics				
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Host country language before	2.08	533	1.261	.055
Host country language after	3.14	533	1.341	.058

**Table 12 Paired T-test-H<sub>2</sub>**

Paired Samples Test								
	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Host country language before - Host country language after	<b>-1.054</b>	.753	.033	-1.118	-.990	<b>-32.340</b>	532	.000

Data indicate that the mean value of the two mean values is -1.054. The second table indicates that the mean values before and after the mobility programme differ significantly:  $t=-32.34$  ( $p<0.001$ ).

**Table 13 Wilcoxon Test-H<sub>2</sub>**

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test				
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Host country language after - Host country language before	Negative Ranks	1 <sup>a</sup>	151.00	151.00
	Positive Ranks	421 <sup>b</sup>	211.64	89102.00
	Ties	111 <sup>c</sup>		
	Total	533		

**Table 14 Wilcoxon Test Statistics-H<sub>2</sub>**

Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>	
	Host country language after - Host country language before
Z	-18.638 <sup>b</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	
b. Based on negative ranks.	

It is indicated by the data above to reject the null hypothesis, i.e. there is a significant difference between the two results. In conclusion it can be said that *the time spent abroad via*



*the Erasmus mobility programme significantly improves Hungarian students' proficiency in the language of the host country. The findings were also supported by the outcomes of the comparative analysis and the structured interviews.*

Both H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub> are also confirmed by the findings of the Likert scale questions, as 473 students (91.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that their foreign language knowledge improved and helped them in being able to communicate with people from different countries. The results of the open question regarding best aspects of stay abroad also corroborate the above conclusions of both H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub> as out of the 274 students 27 (9.8%) considered the language aspect of the stay best claiming that they could improve their English and other language proficiency and this made them more self-confident in their communication skills.

H<sub>3</sub>: *The proficiency in English develops more than the proficiency in the language of the host country* of those Hungarian students, with special regard to medical and health care students, who participate in the Erasmus mobility programme.

H<sub>3</sub> was tested by the application of the method of paired t-test. The language development of the students was calculated by subtracting the perceived language development value (both in the cases of English and the host country) of *before* participating in the Erasmus programme from the perceived language development value of *after* participation. Then these variants were compared by paired t-test, which tests the mean values of the paired differences. The result was -0.316, indicating that host language development is greater.

The null hypothesis of the test suggests that the mean value of the paired difference is 0, however, the paired t-test method rejected this hypothesis, ( $p < 0.001$ ), implying that students' proficiency development in the language of the host country is significantly greater than in English.

**Table 15 Paired T-test Statistics-H<sub>3</sub>**

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Eng_difference	.7401	531	.81742	.03547
	Host_1_difference	1.0565	531	.75274	.03267

**Table 16 Paired T-test -H<sub>3</sub>**

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Eng_difference - Host_1_difference	<b>-.31638</b>	1.14829	.04983	-.41428	-.21849	<b>-6.349</b>	530	.000

The null hypothesis, which infers that there is no difference between the language development of English and the host language was also tested with the Wilcoxon rank test. The results indicate that there is a significant difference in the development levels of the two languages ( $p < 0.001$ ): students' proficiency development in the language of the host country is significantly greater than in English as the sum of the positive ranks is higher than the sum of the negative ranks.

**Table 17 Wilcoxon Ranks-H<sub>3</sub>**

Ranks				
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Host_1_difference - Eng_difference	Negative Ranks	120 <sup>a</sup>	153.03	18364.00
	Positive Ranks	218 <sup>b</sup>	178.56	38927.00
	Ties	193 <sup>c</sup>		
	Total	531		
a. Host_1_difference < Eng_difference				
b. Host_1_difference > Eng_difference				
c. Host_1_difference = Eng_difference				

**Table 18 Wilcoxon Test Statistics- $H_3$**

Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>	
	Host_1_difference - Eng_difference
Z	-5.996 <sup>b</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	
b. Based on negative ranks.	

In conclusion it can be said that  $H_3$  has to be rejected as during the time spent abroad via the Erasmus mobility programme students' proficiency development in the language of the host country is significantly greater than in English, as the sum of the positive ranks is higher than the sum of the negative ranks. The findings were also supported by the outcomes of the comparative analysis.

H<sub>4</sub>: Hungarian students, with special regard to medical and health care students, who participate in the Erasmus mobility programme, *develop their knowledge and awareness of their own and other cultures.*

388 (75.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that their knowledge of the characteristics of their own culture improved, whilst 423 (82.2%) claimed that their knowledge of the characteristics of other cultures also developed. These findings were also confirmed by the open question regarding best aspects of stay. A large percentage of students (32.8%) considered the cultural aspect of the stay best, claiming that multiculturalism and knowing new, different cultures and people as well as learning to adapt to those was the best experience. Being exposed to other cultures and learning about them has also contributed to awareness building regarding their own culture, "through this [experience], you learn a lot more about your own culture", "...I started to appreciate my own country more and after my return I could approve my life in Hungary through the experiences that I had abroad." Knowledge was regarded an important aspect by 14 students (5.1%) pointing out that learning about other cultures and their characteristics have helped them in various aspects including their future life. The findings were also supported by the outcomes of the structured interviews. Nine interviewees

emphasized that the programme gives students a chance to learn about other cultures and the results are also in line with the findings of previous research studies.

In conclusion it can be said that *the time spent abroad via the Erasmus mobility programme develops students' knowledge and awareness of their own and other cultures.*

H<sub>5</sub>: Hungarian students, with special regard to medical and health care students, who participate in the Erasmus mobility programme, *develop their work related skills within multicultural settings.*

436 (84.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that the stay abroad helped them improving their skills related to working in a team with people of different cultural backgrounds. 464 (90.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that their problem solving skills improved in unexpected situations, whereas 332 (64.4%) claimed that their time and project management skills developed and 382 (74.3%) indicated that taking responsibility of their tasks and duties increased. 477 (92.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that their skills related to adapting to new situations developed. 467 (91.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that their communication skills with people from different cultural backgrounds improved whereas 408 (80.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that their negotiating skills with people from different cultural backgrounds also developed. 367 (71.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that their conflict management skills with people from different cultural backgrounds improved. However, only 147 (28.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that their computer and internet skills developed, which is probably due to the fact that this cohort of students are the Millennials, or as often referred to, Generation Y, who are digital age children and exposure to another country does not necessarily add to their high level computer literacy.

In conclusion it can be said that the time spent abroad via the Erasmus mobility programme *develops student' skills regarding work and the findings were also supported by the outcomes of the comparative analysis.*

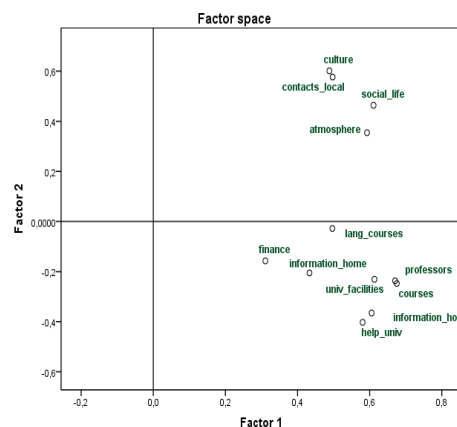
H<sub>6</sub>: *Preliminary information concerning the culture of the host country has a positive influence on satisfaction with their studies in the host country* of those Hungarian students,

with special regard to medical and health care students, who participate in the Erasmus mobility programme.

H<sub>7</sub>: *Preliminary information concerning the culture of the host country has a positive influence on satisfaction with their cultural experience in the host country* of those Hungarian students, with special regard to medical and health care students, who participate in the Erasmus mobility programme.

In order to identify the factors contributing to students' satisfaction with their studies and cultural experience in the host country, three different indices were defined first. The questionnaire included 12 questions on a Likert scale of 5 items designed to measure satisfaction with the programme.

The first index was named as “general satisfaction”. All the variables were included here summing up the points of all the answers to the 12 questions. The problem with this was that it combined students' satisfaction from different aspects of the programme. The first eight questions all relate to the university and their studies (courses, professors, facilities, language courses, sufficiency of information, financial support), whereas the last four questions focus on the cultural and social aspects of their stay (contact with culture, local students, social life, atmosphere). Consequently, a specific variable was formed from the first eight items, named as “satisfaction with the studies” and another one formed from the last four items, named as “satisfaction with the cultural experience”. This classification was verified by the outcome of the factor analysis, as demonstrated by the figure below:



**Figure 23** Factor analysis of the observed data

The first main component is a general one that has a moderate correlation with all variables, however, the second one differentiates between the variables related to the university and cultural experiences (total variance explained: 44.1%).

Afterwards, the factors that influence the satisfaction of the students with the Erasmus programme had to be identified. Multiple regression analysis was performed in order to identify those variables which have a significant influence on the satisfaction level of the students.

Stepwise and forward selection methods were carried out to construct a model that best explains the satisfaction level of the students with the fewest possible variables. The forward selection method involves starting with no variables in the model, testing the addition of each variable using a chosen model comparison criterion, adding the variable (if any) that improves the model the most (the p value of the F test is the smallest), and repeating this process until none improves the model. The stepwise method includes regression models in which the choice of predictive variables is carried out by an automatic procedure, usually, in the form of a sequence of F-tests or t-tests.

According to H<sub>6</sub>, *preliminary information concerning the culture of the host country has a positive influence on satisfaction with their studies in the host country*, therefore, an index was constructed from the related questions of the survey. This included four 5-item Likert scale questions summing up the points of all the answers. The variables included demographic variables (gender, age, place of residence, family income) and other variables (index of preliminary information, close relationship with someone in the host country, or other foreign people, number of foreign friends, number of months spent abroad, spending at least three months in the host country prior to travel, had visited the host country earlier, had visited the host university earlier, having friends in the host country prior to travel, having relatives in the host country, had talked to people who had already studied/lived/worked in the host city, had studied the culture of the host country, had taken foreign language classes at home university to learn the language of the host country, had participated in orientation programmes to prepare for the studies in the host country, time spent with people from home, host and other countries, took part-time or volunteer jobs, travelled in the host country and to other countries, visited home at least once, called home at least once a week)

First, the factors influencing general satisfaction were analysed (Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.152) and the results are demonstrated by the table below:

**Table 19 Analysis of the factors influencing general satisfaction**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	36.050	1.769		20.379	.000		
number of foreign friends	.769	.193	.196	3.992	.000	.889	1.125
had already visited the host country	-3.059	.665	-.239	-4.603	.000	.792	1.263
information index	.352	.103	.177	3.422	.001	.799	1.251
income: average	1.559	.621	.117	2.512	.012	.977	1.024
close relationship with someone from the host country	1.558	.616	.121	2.527	.012	.925	1.081
visited other countries	1.358	.606	.106	2.240	.026	.952	1.051

There are six variables which have a significant impact on general satisfaction with the programme. The number of foreign friends, the information index, average income, having a close relationship with someone from the host country and visiting other countries have a positive influence on satisfaction. However, if a student had already visited the host country, that results in less satisfaction as it has a negative coefficient. As a conclusion it can be said that *preliminary information increases satisfaction and it is supported by the model.*

As a next step, all the factors influencing satisfaction with the studies were analysed (Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.093) as shown in the table that follows:

**Table 20 Analysis of the factors influencing satisfaction with the studies**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	24.104	1.436		16.784	.000		
had visited the host country	-2.295	.542	-.229	-4.234	.000	.792	1.263
number of foreign friends	.357	.151	.116	2.362	.019	.954	1.048
information index	.246	.083	.158	2.949	.003	.803	1.245
income: average	1.336	.506	.128	2.638	.009	.975	1.026
visited other countries	1.095	.494	.109	2.216	.027	.952	1.050

There are five variables which have a significant impact on satisfaction with their studies. The number of foreign friends, the information index, average income, and visiting other countries have a positive influence on satisfaction. However, if a student had already visited the host country, that results in less satisfaction as it has a negative coefficient.

Finally, all the factors influencing satisfaction with the cultural experience were analysed (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.225$ ) as demonstrated by the table that follows:



**Table 21 Analysis of the factors influencing satisfaction with the cultural experience**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	11.747	.620		18.939	.000		
number of foreign friends	.470	.065	.298	7.178	.000	.956	1.046
close relationship with someone from the host country	1.402	.216	.269	6.490	.000	.960	1.041
took language classes to learn the language of the host country	.548	.234	.099	2.343	.020	.932	1.073
had visited the host country	-.694	.235	-.134	-2.950	.003	.806	1.240
information index	.105	.038	.127	2.785	.006	.796	1.256

There are five variables which have a significant impact on satisfaction with their cultural experience. The number of foreign friends, the information index, having a close relationship with someone from the host country and taking language classes earlier to learn the language of the host country have a positive influence on satisfaction. However, if a student had already visited the host country, that results in less satisfaction as it has a negative coefficient.

As both models include the information index which has a positive coefficient in both cases, in conclusion it can be said that *preliminary information concerning the culture of the host country has a positive influence on satisfaction with their studies and cultural experience in the host country of those Hungarian students, with special regard to medical and health care students, who participate in the Erasmus mobility programme.*

### 3.5 Hypotheses testing for medical and health care students

To ensure that H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>3</sub> apply equally to the small sample (medical and health care students, N=36) as to the total sample (N=657), paired samples t-test was applied.

**Table 22 Paired T-test Statistics-H<sub>1</sub>-H<sub>2</sub>-H<sub>3</sub>**

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	36_1_well_eng_bef	3.38	32	.907	.160
	36_2_well_eng aft	4.25	32	.672	.119
Pair 2	37_1_host_la_bef	1.58	31	.886	.159
	37_2_host_la_aft	2.58	31	1.057	.190
Pair 3	Eng_difference	.9032	31	.70023	.12577
	Host_1_difference	1.0000	31	.44721	.08032

**Table 23 Paired T-test -H<sub>1</sub>-H<sub>2</sub>-H<sub>3</sub>**

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	36_1_well_eng_bef - 36_2_well_eng aft	-.875	.707	.125	-1.130	-.620	-7.000	31	.000
Pair 2	37_1_host_la_bef - 37_2_host_la_aft	-1.000	.447	.080	-1.164	-.836	-12.450	30	.000
Pair 3	Eng_difference - Host_1_difference	-.09677	.87005	.15627	-.41591	.22236	-.619	30	.540

The results indicate that H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub> are valid for the small sample (p<0.001). The results of the t-test regarding H<sub>3</sub> is not significant (p=0.54), however, the mean value of the paired difference of the two languages (English and host language) is negative (-0.09), indicating the

same as in the total sample: proficiency in the language of the host country developed more than English. Wilcoxon rank test was also used and it gave the same outcomes:

**Table 24 Wilcoxon Rank Test-H<sub>1</sub>-H<sub>2</sub>-H<sub>3</sub>**

Ranks				
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
36_2_well_eng_aft - 36_1_well_eng_bef	Negative Ranks	0 <sup>a</sup>	0.00	0.00
	Positive Ranks	22 <sup>b</sup>	11.50	253.00
	Ties	10 <sup>c</sup>		
	Total	32		
37_2_host_la_aft - 37_1_host_la_bef	Negative Ranks	0 <sup>d</sup>	0.00	0.00
	Positive Ranks	28 <sup>e</sup>	14.50	406.00
	Ties	3 <sup>f</sup>		
	Total	31		
Host_1_difference - Eng_difference	Negative Ranks	7 <sup>g</sup>	9.21	64.50
	Positive Ranks	10 <sup>h</sup>	8.85	88.50
	Ties	14 <sup>i</sup>		
	Total	31		
a. 36_2_well_eng_aft < 36_1_well_eng_bef				
b. 36_2_well_eng_aft > 36_1_well_eng_bef				
c. 36_2_well_eng_aft = 36_1_well_eng_bef				
d. 37_2_host_la_aft < 37_1_host_la_bef				
e. 37_2_host_la_aft > 37_1_host_la_bef				
f. 37_2_host_la_aft = 37_1_host_la_bef				
g. Host_1_difference < Eng_difference				
h. Host_1_difference > Eng_difference				
i. Host_1_difference = Eng_difference				

**Table 25 Wilcoxon Test Statistics-H<sub>1</sub>-H<sub>2</sub>-H<sub>3</sub>**

Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>			
	36_2_well_eng aft - 36_1_well_eng bef	37_2_host_la aft - 37_1_host_la bef	Host_1_difference - Eng_difference
Z	-4.315 <sup>b</sup>	-5.070 <sup>b</sup>	-.619 <sup>b</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	.000	.536
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test			
b. Based on negative ranks.			

All the above results indicate that the findings of the small sample are in line with that of the total sample, therefore *we can say that H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, and H<sub>3</sub> were verified for medical and health care students.*

H<sub>4</sub> and H<sub>5</sub> were also tested to determine whether frequency counts are distributed identically across medical and health care students and the total student population. The percentage of those students who agreed or strongly agreed was compared in the two samples and the results were as follows:

**Table 26 Percentage of Agree or Strongly Agree-H<sub>4</sub>**

Hypothesis 4	
My stay abroad made me more aware of the characteristics of my own culture	
Total sample (N=657): 75.7%	Medical and health care students (N=36): 67.8%
My stay abroad made me more aware of the characteristics of other cultures	
Total sample(N=657): 82.2%	Medical and health care students (N=36): 74.2%

**Table 27 Percentage of Agree or Strongly Agree-H<sub>5</sub>**

<b>Hypothesis 5</b>	
The stay abroad helped improving my skills related to working in a team with people of different cultural backgrounds	
Total sample (N=657): 84.8%	Medical and health care students (N=36): 90.3%
my problem solving skills improved in unexpected situations	
Total sample (N=657): 90.1%	Medical and health care students (N=36): 96.8%
my time and project management skills developed	
Total sample (N=657): 64.4%	Medical and health care students (N=36): 64.5 %
taking responsibility of my tasks and duties increased	
Total sample (N=657): 74.3%	Medical and health care students (N=36): 74.2%
my skills related to adapting to new situations developed	
Total sample (N=657): 92.9%	Medical and health care students (N=36): 96.7%
my communication skills with people from different cultural backgrounds improved	
Total sample (N=657): 91.1%	Medical and health care students (N=36): 100%
my negotiating skills with people from different cultural backgrounds also developed	
Total sample (N=657): 80.6%	Medical and health care students (N=36): 80%
my conflict management skills with people from different cultural backgrounds improved	
Total sample (N=657): 71.9%	Medical and health care students (N=36): 76.7%
my computer and internet skills developed	
Total sample (N=657): 28.8%	Medical and health care students (N=36): 29%

The statistical method of homogeneity testing was used for H<sub>4</sub> and H<sub>5</sub> to examine whether the distribution of the answers in the small and the rest of the sample were the same. Fisher's exact test was used to test this excluding those whose answers were "neither agree nor disagree". The test examines whether there is a significant difference between the ratio of those agreeing and those disagreeing. The percentage share indicates that the ratios are very similar. As  $p > 0.05$ , it shows that the null hypothesis – signifying that the ratio of those agreeing and disagreeing is the same – is not rejected here.

**Table 28 Homogeneity Testing 1-H<sub>4</sub>**

		H <sub>4</sub> _charact._own culture		Total
		Disagree	Agree	
medical and health care students	Count	3	21	24
	%	13%	88%	100%
other students	Count	37	367	404
	%	9%	91%	100%
Total	Count	40	388	428
	%	9%	91%	100%

p=0.482

**Table 29 Homogeneity Testing 2-H<sub>4</sub>**

		H <sub>4</sub> _charact._other culture		Total
		Disagree	Agree	
medical and health care students	Count	1	23	24
	%	4%	96%	100%
other students	Count	22	400	422
	%	5%	95%	100%
Total	Count	23	423	446
	%	5%	95%	100%

p=1

Regarding H<sub>5</sub>, each of the nine items was tested with the result of  $p > 0.05$  (see Appendix 4). All the above outcomes indicate that the findings of the small sample are in line with that of the total sample, therefore *we can say that H<sub>4</sub> and H<sub>5</sub> were verified for medical and health care students.*

The small sample size of medical and health care students is too little for multiple variable methods, therefore did not allow for H<sub>6</sub> and H<sub>7</sub> to be tested.

## 4. DISCUSSION

In reviewing a significant amount of literature regarding the Erasmus programme and its impact from various angles, no relevant records have been found to date concerning the intercultural impact of the programme on the Hungarian student population, let alone medical and health care students. Although one of the ESN surveys (ESN Survey, 2008) focuses on the intercultural impact of the programme at European level, it provides no data referring to Hungarian students, nor to Hungarian students of medicine and health care. The study of Malota et al. (2014) focuses on mobility programmes and their educational, multicultural, motivational impact on Hungarian students, but again, no emphasis is given to medical and health care students.

Therefore, the present research set the aim to investigate whether the Erasmus mobility programme contributes to developing the intercultural competences of Hungarian students, with special regard to medical and health care students. Another goal was to find out whether preliminary information on the culture of the host country has a positive impact on the level of satisfaction Hungarian students, especially medical and health care students participating in Erasmus mobility programmes perceive with regard to their cultural experience in the host country. Higher satisfaction levels contribute to enhanced improvement of intercultural skills.

For the purposes and perception of the present research the concept of intercultural competence was approached from the three angles of knowledge, awareness and skills, as they are necessary in facilitating future professionals, including doctors and health care staff, to provide better care in multicultural settings. The number of competences considered to be indispensable for demonstrating high standard intercultural skills is enormous. Spitzberg (1997) compiled a 52-item list, which includes the ability to adjust to different cultures, to establish interpersonal relationships, to understand others, to communicate effectively, awareness of self and culture, non-ethnocentrism, just to name but a few. The list is long and from the researcher's point of view it is difficult to grasp the essence and core concept of intercultural competence. However, most researchers agree that the combination of three dimensions is essential for intercultural competence, which are knowledge, skills and awareness (Chen & Starosta, 1996; Byram, 1997; Kim, 2000; Fantini, 2000; Wiseman, 2002).

The first two hypotheses of the study were related to *progress in second and third language knowledge*, i.e. English and the language of the host country. The findings of both quantitative and qualitative analyses (online survey, comparative analysis and structured interviews) suggest that the foreign language knowledge improves significantly both in English and the language of the host country of those Hungarian students, especially medical and health care students, who participate in Erasmus mobility programmes. These outcomes are in agreement with earlier research findings (Chambers, 1994; Maiworm & Teichler, 1995a; Woodcock, 1996; Taillefer, 2005; Teichler & Janson, 2007; ESN Survey, 2008; Jenkins, 2009; Orr et al., 2011). The studies of Souto Otero and McCoshan (2006) point out that by the end of their Erasmus period more than a quarter of students were fluent in their second or third language. The majority of students have high proficiency in foreign languages, mainly in the English language that works as lingua franca, and therefore, there is considerable awareness of its communicative effectiveness. Even though substantial foreign language proficiency had been reported before the study period abroad, students and academic staff who participated in the interviews observed significant language improvement. Byram (1997) highlights the significance of linguistic knowledge, which he claims plays a key role in intercultural competence.

One novel and unanticipated finding to emerge from this study was concerning hypothesis 3, i.e. *the proficiency in English improves more than the proficiency in the language of the host country of those Hungarian students, especially medical and health care students, who participate in Erasmus mobility programmes*. The findings in the present study do not justify this hypothesis, as their proficiency development in the language of the host country is significantly greater than in English.

To the best of the author's knowledge no research had been conducted earlier to investigate this phenomenon and therefore these results may serve as novel data for those intending to carry out further studies within this field. The correlation between mobility rate and language proficiency is considerable as surveys have found that in countries where students claim to speak several foreign languages, higher mobility rates have been identified (Opper et al., 1990; Souto Otero & McCoshan, 2006; Orr et al., 2008). Other studies imply that many of the students had spent at least one month abroad prior to their Erasmus experience which contributes to their language proficiency (Opper et al., 1990; Maiworm & Teichler, 1996; Saarikallio-Torp & Wiers-Jenssen, 2010).



Although, some studies (Maiworm & Teichler, 1995a) have identified serious issues in the lack of sufficient language proficiency during the stay abroad, the findings of the present research do not corroborate this regarding Hungarian students. Moreover, the outcomes of the present study have implied that Hungarian students, with special regard to students of medicine and health care improve their language skills both in English and the language of the host country significantly.

Abundant research has highlighted (McCabe, 2006; Flakerud, 2007; Callen and Lee, 2009) that mere international knowledge is not enough and encounters with diverse cultures are vital in providing a learning environment for the development of intercultural competences. Several international studies have proved (Nilsson, 1999; Wächter, 2000; BIHUNE, 2003; Callen and Lee, 2009) that a period spent abroad enriches students' lives not only in the academic field but also in the acquisition of intercultural skills, including language skills.

Returning to the first three hypotheses posed at the beginning of this study, related to foreign language improvement, it is now possible to state that Hungarian students, with special regard to medical and health care students, who participate in the Erasmus mobility programme, *develop their proficiency in English and the language of the host country and their proficiency in the language of the host country develops more than their proficiency in English.*

Hypothesis 4, claiming that the *knowledge and awareness of their own and other cultures develop* after participating in the programme, was found to be justified both by quantitative and qualitative methods. Similar international studies had been conducted earlier (Maiworm et al., 1992; Chambers, 1994; Maiworm & Teichler, 1995b; ESN Survey, 2007, 2008) with the same outcome implying that the programme has a substantial impact on cultural awareness building as knowledge of the host country's culture, tradition and people as well as understanding of their own culture increases. Souto Otero and McCoshan (2006) claim that 95% of students reported improvements to a large extent in understanding people from other cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Teichler and Maiworm (1997) point out that personal development and knowing other cultures are considered more essential by students than materialistic benefits such as career options. Similar conclusions were made by Orr et al. (2011) suggesting that international experience implies expanding students' cultural and social horizons. The findings of the present study regarding students' best experience further

support the outcomes of Maiworm and Teichler (1996), who claim that students considered maturity and personal development along with improved language skills to be the most beneficial factors of the programme.

Wiseman points out (2002) that intercultural competences should also include skills to interact effectively in multicultural settings. Nowadays having an international education and experience are requirements for talented young people as employers seek for mobile, flexible and multilingual staff with a global mindset and skills. Therefore, those who participate in the Erasmus programme are considered more employable than those who do not (Bennhold, 2005).

Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2008) claim that the knowledge of cultural factors and cultural awareness of cross-cultural communication are important elements of intercultural competence. From a student perspective Sinicrope et al. (2007) point out that intercultural competence implies that a student understands significant cultural experiences and/or achievements of individuals who are from different cultural backgrounds.

Another important finding of the present study was that participation in *the Erasmus programme increases the work related skills within multicultural settings of those Hungarian students, especially medical and health care students, who participate in Erasmus mobility programmes* (hypothesis 5), as the majority of students claimed that their communication, conflict management and negotiating skills with people from different cultural backgrounds improved along with problem solving and time and project management skills. These findings are consistent with previous research outcomes (Little & Harvey 2006; Alfranseder, 2012) and Wilton (2008) even comes to the conclusion that students with international experience are better team players and have improved organisational, leadership and management skills, therefore mobility programmes have to be encouraged.

All the worldwide migration tendencies have had an impact on the student environment across the globe; consequently, it is undergoing radical changes. More and more students go to study abroad through several bilateral agreements or European Union-level mobility programmes, such as the Erasmus, thus enabling increased contact of diverse cultures. As a result, the internationalisation of higher education worldwide is inevitable (Knight, 1993; Barakonyi, 2002; Betlehem et al., 2003).

International organisations, such as the UNESCO (2009) and economic and political partnerships, such as the European Union (Erasmus statistics, 2014), therefore consider it an imperative to encourage world-wide mobility and exchanges of students and staff.

Several studies have also revealed that improved intercultural competence enables future doctors and paramedical professionals to provide better care within multicultural settings in the long run (Wells et al., 2009; Saha & Fernandez, 2007).

A major and novel finding to emerge from this study was related to the last two hypotheses of the research, hypothesising that *preliminary information concerning the culture of the host country has a positive impact on students' satisfaction with their studies and cultural experience in the host country*. The relevance of preliminary cultural information regarding the host country is clearly supported by the findings of the present research. To the best of author's knowledge no research has been carried out to date to measure Hungarian students', let alone medical and health care students' satisfaction with their studies and cultural experience abroad through any kind of mobility programmes, nor have tried to identify those factors that have a positive influence on the satisfaction level of students. The ESN surveys performed (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010) focus on student satisfaction, but more from the perspective of student organisations, stay and studies and they lack in identifying those factors that increase satisfaction. The provision of necessary information and the quality of education have also been studied (ESN Survey, 2009; PRIME Report, 2010) and the results suggest that students are in need of reliable, high quality and easily accessible information in order to encourage their transnational mobility and to make lifelong learning accessible to all concerned.

Taken together, these findings suggest a role for *preliminary information concerning the culture of the host country* in promoting *satisfaction with their studies and cultural experience in the host country*. Higher satisfaction levels result in the acquisition of enhanced intercultural competence, which is a necessary tool for providing better work, services and care in a multicultural environment.

This doctoral research produced results which corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work in this field regarding the intercultural impact of the Erasmus programme on European students, which is the ESN Survey of 2008. Another interesting finding to emerge

from this study is that students' satisfaction with their studies and cultural experience is greatly influenced by the preliminary cultural information they are provided by before the start of their programme. The following six variables that have a significant impact on satisfaction with their studies and cultural experience were identified, which are as follows: the number of foreign friends, the information index, average income, having a close relationship with someone from the host country, taking language classes prior to their travel to learn the language of the host country and visiting other countries. All these have been proved to have a positive influence on students' satisfaction. However, it was also interesting to find out that if a student had already visited the host country prior to the beginning of his/her programme, that resulted in less satisfaction.

Another captivating finding to emerge from this study was that the profile of the 2010/2011 Hungarian Erasmus students' cohort is in line with that of the 2012/2013 European Erasmus population. Based on the figure prepared by the European Commission (2014) the majority (61%) of Erasmus students are females (Hungarian cohort: 69.6%), most of them (67%) study at bachelor level (Hungarian cohort: 57.1%), their average age is 22 years (Hungarian cohort: 24.41 years), spend on average 6 months abroad (Hungarian cohort: 5.5 months ) via Erasmus mobility on a grant of 272 euros per month and are curious, adaptable students with excellent organisational and problem solving skills. The present study did not focus on the financial aspects of stay and therefore has no data available on the average grant Hungarian students received.

## **Limitations**

A number of important limitations need to be considered regarding this study. One source of weakness, which could have affected the outcomes, was that students filled in the questionnaire belatedly, between three and ten months after returning home and their answers might have been influenced by this time gap.

The study was also limited by the fact that the questionnaire had to be filled out in English to allow for comparative analysis. Although the English language proficiency of the majority of the students was high, filling in the questionnaire in Hungarian might have provided different results.

Students' intercultural competences could have been assessed prior to their Erasmus mobility programme to compare those with the post programme outcomes. This method could have facilitated the analysis of their improvement in the specific variables.

Furthermore, the quantitative research study was cross-sectional as it involved data collection from the student population at one specific point in time and thereby, it was impossible to analyse the variables in development. A longitudinal research design that involves repeated observations of the same variables over longer periods of time would have made it conceivable to follow changes.

A considerable limitation of this study lies in the fact that, although international studies have also involved a similarly low number of participants among medical and health care students, the outcomes might have been different with a larger cohort. However, due to the difficulties having their studies in another country recognised by their home university, it is not likely to reach a significantly larger sample from this cohort of students.

The structured interview was limited in several ways. First, the investigation was limited to the experience and perspectives of the academic and administrative sample. These participants do not represent the general population. Moreover, with a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be transferable to the whole higher education spectrum. Additionally, given the author's familiarity with the majority of staff, the flow of the interview might have been influenced by personal biases, although all precautions had been taken.

Furthermore, care must be taken to avoid overgeneralizing the findings, as this research is subject to the self-perceived results of a particular group of mobile students at a specific point

in time. For that reason, the results are limited to the experience of the 2010–2011 outgoing Hungarian Erasmus cohort alone and will be difficult to generalize.

To sum up, further studies of both qualitative and quantitative design are necessary to get a more distinct picture of the intercultural impact of the Erasmus programme on Hungarian students, including medical and health care students.

## **Conclusion**

One of the major challenges for the medical and health care systems around the globe is that culturally diverse groups comprise a significant segment of the patient population. Since the last decade Hungary has become increasingly multicultural. One of the consequences of these changes in the population is the challenge medical and health care providers face when integrating immigrant groups into well-established medical and health care services. Health care options and outcomes must be clear and understandable to all patients regardless of their own culture and experience, thereby cultural and language obstacles are the primary challenges for meeting the health care needs of this diverse immigrant population. Thus, medical and health care professionals are faced with the need to develop intercultural competences that facilitate the understanding of their own and the patients' cultural norms and accordingly adjust their behaviours to get the best out of medical and health care in the interest of the patients.

The present study was designed to investigate whether the Erasmus mobility programme contributes to developing the intercultural competences of Hungarian students, especially medical and health care students, and to identify whether preliminary information concerning the culture of the host country has a positive impact on the level of satisfaction Hungarian students, especially medical and health care students perceive with regard to their studies and cultural experience in the host country. Returning to the hypotheses posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that the Erasmus programme contributes to developing the intercultural competences of Hungarian students regarding the development in their language and cultural knowledge, awareness and work related skills. These outcomes also corroborate the findings of previous work in this field and contribute additional evidence that

suggests the vital importance of intercultural competence. An interesting result this study revealed is that students' satisfaction with their studies and cultural experience is greatly influenced by the preliminary cultural information they are provided by before the start of their programme.

However, as not all students are mobile, alternative methods should be implemented in the education system, including medical and health care education to increase the intercultural competence of non-mobile students locally, as the lack of a common language between patient and health care provider can result in misdiagnoses and may lead to improper treatment. Cultural beliefs and values have implications on how symptoms are recognized, how they are interpreted and when medical and health care services are sought. Inability to communicate appropriately can be an obstacle to proper medical and health care and undermines trust in the quality of the system.

Therefore, the implementation of an international dimension in the medical and health care curriculum is recommended. The importance of foreign language classes for medical and health care purposes has to be highlighted and maintained in Hungarian higher education.

Furthermore, classes developing students' intercultural competence need to be developed along with training programs to increase cultural awareness, knowledge and skills. Involvement in international projects and studies, involving international guest lecturers are essential means of an internationalised curriculum. Hungarian medical and health care education involves hundreds of international students nowadays, therefore the introduction of tandem classes, where Hungarian students can study together with their international peers could well serve the purposes of enhancing intercultural competence and would be beneficial for both target groups.

### **Innovation of the study**

To the best of the author's knowledge no research has been carried out to date on the intercultural impact of any mobility programmes, let alone the Erasmus programme on Hungarian students, including medical and health care students, nor on identifying the factors that influence their satisfaction with their studies and cultural experience during the

programme. Therefore, the study presents new findings in this field. This research has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of the importance of intercultural competence and an innovation of the present study is that the outcomes add substantially to highlight the relevance of intercultural competence within the scope of the Hungarian medical and health care education.

## **Implications**

The issue of intercultural competences within medical and health care settings is an intriguing one which could be usefully explored by further research. The results of this study support the idea that developing students' intercultural competence is an essential topic in higher education. However, more research on this field needs to be undertaken before the association between mobility programmes and their intercultural impact is clearly understood. What is now needed is a cross-European study involving medical and health care students. The methods used for measuring the intercultural impact of the Erasmus programme on health and medical care students in Hungary and the factors influencing their satisfaction with the programme related to their studies and cultural experience could be applied to other students elsewhere both across Europe and other parts of the world to get a better understanding of this issue, thus providing further results for comparative analyses.

This research has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation. Much of the intercultural competence literature discusses the importance of cultural awareness, knowledge and skills, but does not describe how a medical and health care system is supposed to become interculturally competent. Although mobility programmes contribute to developing these competences, alternative methods should also be sought and investigated. The findings of the present study suggest several courses of action for the implementation of new programmes in the Hungarian medical and health care curricula to enhance the intercultural competence of non-mobile students. The acquisition of these competences are essential not only for communicative skills and individual growth, but also for providing future medical and health care providers with the capabilities necessary for promoting successful work and collaboration across cultures. This is an important subject for future research. Another vital practical implication is how to develop the intercultural competence of doctors and



paramedical personnel who are already working with patients of diverse cultural backgrounds. Future studies on these subjects are therefore recommended, which may yield interesting results.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 Diversity of research regarding the Erasmus programme

RESEARCH FOCUS	AUTHORS
academic fields	Monasta, 1991 Blacksell, 1992 Holmes, 1997 Ruffio, 1996
autonomous learning	Gieve & Clark, 2005
culture	Maiworm, Steube & Teichler, 1992 Chambers, 1994 Maiworm & Teichler, 1995b ESN Survey, 2008 Németh, Trócsányi & Sütő, 2009 Németh & Kajos, 2014 Malota et al., 2014
earnings	Opper et al, 1990 Maiworm & Teichler, 1996 Bracht et al., 2006 Teichler & Janson, 2007 Cammelli et al., 2008
e-learning	Pursula, Warsta, & Laaksonen, 2005
employment	Opper et al., 1990 Maiworm & Teichler, 1996 Teichler, 2002 Bracht et al., 2006 Teichler & Janson, 2007 Oosterbeek & Webbink, 2009 Parey & Waldinger, 2010 European Commission, 2010a ESN Survey, 2013
European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)	Absalom, 1990 Maiworm, Steube & Teichler, 1992 Maiworm & Teichler, 1995b Teichler, 2003 ESN Survey, 2006 PRIME Report, 2010 Nagy et al, 2012
European identity	King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003 ESN Survey, 2007 Sigalas, 2010
exchange policy	Teichler, 1991 Papatsiba, 2005 Sayer, 2006
factors that may affect the program	Teichler & Steube, 1991 Enders, 1998 Otero, 2008
financial implications	ESN Survey, 2006 ESN Survey, 2010 PRIME Report, 2010
functioning and impact of student mobility	Baron & Smith, 1987 Opper, Teichler & Carlson, 1990 Teichler & Steube, 1991

RESEARCH FOCUS	AUTHORS
host country selection	Gonzalez, Mesanza & Mariel, 2011
impact of the programme on national education policies	Kalvermark & van der Wende, 1997 Barblan et al., 2000 van der Wende, 2001 Enders, 2004
individual characteristics of students	Teichler, 1996 Pirrie et al., 2002 ESN Survey, 2007 Pineda, Moreno, & Belvis, 2008
information and quality	ESN Survey, 2009, PRIME Report, 2010
language	Opper et al., 1990 Chambers, 1994 Maiworm & Teichler, 1995a Maiworm & Teichler, 1996 Woodcock, 1996 Taillefer, 2005 Souto Otero & McCoshan, 2006 Teichler & Janson, 2007 Orr et al., 2008 ESN Survey, 2008 Németh, Trócsányi & Sütő, 2009 Jenkins, 2009 Németh & Kajos, 2014 Malota et al., 2014
mobile vs non-mobile students	Teichler, 2002 ESN Survey, 2007 Cammelli et al., 2008 European Commission, 2009 European Commission, 2011 Orr et al., 2011 Saarikallio-Torp & Wiers-Jenssen, 2010
motivation, benefit	Opper et al., 1990 ESN Survey, 2005 Krupnik & Krzaklewska, 2006, ESN Survey, 2007 Saarikallio-Torp & Wiers-Jenssen, 2010 Németh, 2010 Orr et al., 2011 Malota et al., 2014
multicultural education	Clarke, 2005 ESN Survey, 2007 ESN Survey, 2008 Németh, Trócsányi & Sütő, 2009 Németh & Kajos, 2014 Malota et al., 2014
personal development	Maiworm & Teichler, 1996 Teichler & Maiworm, 1997 Souto Otero & McCoshan, 2006 ESN Survey, 2007 Orr et al., 2011
placements, internships	Alfranseder, 2012
recognition of credits, full degrees	Alfranseder, 2014 PRIME, 2009

RESEARCH FOCUS	AUTHORS
research, development and cooperation between universities	Bruce, 1989 Luttikhot, 1989 De Wit, 1995 Maiworm & Teichler, 1995a
socio-economic background	European Commission, 2000 Souto Otero & McCoshan, 2006 European Commission, 2009 European Commission 2011 Orr et al., 2011
satisfaction with studies, organisations, stay	ESN Survey, 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009; 2010
visas, residence permit	ESN Survey, 2006 Alfranseder & Czarnojan, 2013

Source: Author

## Appendix 2 Online survey-Hungarian Erasmus students (2010-2011)

Dear former Erasmus student,

This questionnaire was prepared to measure the intercultural impact of the Erasmus programme in Hungary. There are 47 questions in this questionnaire, and completing it will take about 20 minutes.

Thank you very much for your kind assistance.

### Demographic Data

1. Gender:
2. Birth Year:
3. Home University:
4. Country where your home university is located:
5. City where your home university is located:
6. Level/type of studies:
  - BA/BSC (3-4 years)
  - MA/MSC (5-6 years)
  - PhD, doctoral studies
  - Other
7. Major area of studies:
  - Arts
  - Business and Economics
  - Education
  - Engineering
  - Health Sciences
  - Human Resources
  - Humanities
  - Law
  - Medicine
  - Pharmacology
  - Sciences
  - Veterinary
  - Other
8. Year of graduation:
9. Do you have any disabilities?
  - Yes
  - No

10. Which phrase below describes best the area where your family lives?

- a big city
- the suburbs of a big city
- a town or a small city
- a country village
- a farm or home in the countryside

11. How would you describe your family's income?

- Above my country average
- Average
- Below my country average

12. Please indicate how strong you agree or disagree with the following statements about your character?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I am an open person to new situations					
2. I give up easy when learning new things					
3. I like challenges					
4. I am a social person					
5. I have no problems with being helped by others					
6. I am a curious person					
7. I am a person who almost never initiates contacts					
8. I like new situations					
9. I am an independent person					

## Study Abroad

Concerning your last Erasmus experience, please answer the following questions:

13. City where you studied as an Erasmus student:
14. Country where you studied as an Erasmus student?
15. What is the name of the university where you studied as an Erasmus student?
16. When did you start your stay abroad?

- January
- February
- March
- April
- May
- June
- July
- August
- September
- October
- November
- December

Year

17. How many months did you stay there?

18. Please indicate how strong you agree or disagree with the following statements describing your situation BEFORE going abroad for your studies:

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
1.I had enough information about the host country's culture					
2.I knew what kind of food is typical in the host country					
3.I knew about the main differences between my and the host culture regarding contacts with other people					
4.I knew the stereotypes of the host country					

19. Where did you get information from?

20. Before I went to my host country:

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
1.I had already spent more than 3 months in the country I was going to study in		
2.I had already visited the country I was going to study in		
3.I had already visited the hosting university or company/institution		
4.I had friends in the city I was going to study in		

	Yes	No
5.I had family in the city I was going to study in		
6.I had talked to people who had already studied/lived/worked in the host city		
7.I took special classes at home university to learn more about the host country and its culture		
8.I took foreign language classes at home university to learn the language of the host country		
9.I participated in orientation programmes to prepare myself for my studies in the host country		

21. At the beginning of my stay abroad:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I had positive expectation about my stay abroad					
2. I felt I had everything under control					
3. I felt often tired even though I slept enough					
4. I sometimes criticized the host culture					
5. I was always confident in myself					
6. I could not solve simple problems					
7. I often cried without any reasons					
8. I started to realize how great my home culture is					
9. I missed home a lot					
10. I was not worried at all about my new environment					
11. I was looking for contacts with local students/young people					
12. I was looking for contacts with other exchange students/foreigners					
13. I was looking for contacts with people of my own nationality					

22. After some time abroad:

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
1. I had fun learning about the host culture					
2. I did not appreciate the host culture					
3. I did not learn yet the local habits because I stayed with people from my home country					
4. I discovered most habits of the host country					

23. During my stay abroad:

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
1. there was a period that I felt isolated					
2. I often preferred to be alone					
3. I had someone to turn to with my personal problems					

24. Please indicate how much time you spent with the following groups:

	<b>Most of my time</b>	<b>Much of my time</b>	<b>Little time</b>	<b>I did not spend time</b>
1. Local students/colleagues				
2. Foreign students/colleagues				
3. Local people				
4. Foreign people				
5. People of my own nationality				

25. How many friends did you have among local students or other young people?



26. How many friends did you have among foreign students or other foreign people?
27. Did you have a close relationship with someone who had the nationality of the host country?
28. Did you have a close relationship with another foreigner (not the same nationality as you)?
29. During your stay abroad, you shared your flat/house with:
- people of the host country
  - people of my nationality
  - people of different nationality than mine, but not local
  - I lived alone
30. Did you have classes with/work with:
- local students/people
  - Foreign students/people
  - Both
31. During your stay did you...

	Yes	No
1. Have a part-time job?		
2. Do volunteer work?		
3. Travel around the host country?		
4. Travel to other foreign countries?		
5. Go back home at least once?		
6. Call the home country at least once a week?		

## Language Development

32. Which language did you communicate in during your exchange?
- Mostly in English.
  - Mostly in host country's language.
  - In different languages depending on situation.

33. How well did you speak English...

	Not at all	Not very well	Average level	Well	Very well
1 at the beginning of your stay?					
2 at the end of your stay?					

34. How well did you speak the language of the host country...

	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Not very well</b>	<b>Average level</b>	<b>Well</b>	<b>Very well</b>
1 At the beginning of your stay					
2 At the end of your stay					

35. Do you think the culture of your host country and your own culture are very similar or different?

- 1 - Very Similar
- 2- A bit similar
- 3- Neither similar, nor different
- 4- A bit different
- 5- Very Different

36. Did you interrupt your stay abroad because you did not like the host country or its culture?

- Yes
- No

37. As an exchange student, what is your overall level of satisfaction with...

	<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Rather Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Rather Satisfied</b>	<b>Very Satisfied</b>
...your studies?				
...your stay abroad?				

38. What is your overall level of satisfaction with your studies regarding the following items?

	<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Rather Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Neither Dissatisfied Nor Satisfied</b>	<b>Rather Satisfied</b>	<b>Very Satisfied</b>
1. Courses at the host university					
2. Professors					
3. University facilities					
4. Local language courses at the university					
5. Sufficiency of information from home university before your studies abroad					
6. Sufficiency of information from host university while studying abroad					
7. Help from International Office at the host university					
8. Financial situation					
9. Contacts with local students					
10. Contacts with the host country's culture					
11. Social life					
12. The atmosphere of the city and country where you did your Erasmus programme					

39. To what extent do you consider the following items of your studies as an exchange student important?

	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Little important</b>	<b>Rather important</b>	<b>Very important</b>
1. Courses at the host university				
2. Professors				
3. University facilities				
4. Local language courses at the university				
5. Sufficiency of information from home university before your studies abroad				
6. Sufficiency of information from host university while studying abroad				
7. Help from International Office at the host university				
8. Financial situation				
9. Contacts with local students				
10. Contacts with the host country's culture				

	Not important	Little important	Rather important	Very important
11. Social life				
12. The atmosphere of the city and country where you did your Erasmus programme				

40. Returning home

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I felt my personality had changed during my stay abroad					
2. At the end of my stay abroad I felt I am more similar to the people of the host country					
3. Before ending my stay abroad I felt like the host country is my second home.					
4. My friends did not understand me after I came back home					
5. When I turned back home I had problems getting used to my old culture					
6. I would consider having a serious relationship with a person from another country					
7. I would consider having a serious relationship with a person from the country I spent my time abroad					
8. I would consider moving to live in the host country					
9. I would consider moving to live somewhere in Europe					
10. I would consider moving to live somewhere in the world					
11. I would consider working somewhere in the world					

## Skills, knowledge and personality development

41. My stay abroad helped me improving the following skills:

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
1. Working in a team with people of different cultural backgrounds					
2. Problem solving in unexpected situations					
3. Planning my time and projects					
4. Taking responsibility of my tasks and duties					
5. Adapting to new situations					
6. Using computers and internet					
7. Communicating easily with people from different cultural backgrounds					
8. Negotiating easily with people from different cultural backgrounds					
9. Managing conflicts easily with people from different cultural backgrounds					

42. My stay abroad helped me improving my knowledge about:

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
1. Different teaching methods in universities					
2. Youth organizations that are helping and supporting students					
3. A foreign language, being able to communicate with people from different countries					
4. What to do in my future life					
5. Different working attitude at work places					
6. What kind of job to look for after graduation (local, internat)					

43. My stay abroad made me more:

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
Tolerant					
Open to dialogue					
Self-confident					
Flexible					
Aware of the characteristics of my own culture					
Aware of the characteristics of other cultures					

44. Please tell us what you consider to be the best aspects of your stay abroad!

45. Please tell us what you consider to be the worst aspects of your stay abroad!

46. Please tell us a short story regarding your Erasmus experience that is worth sharing with others!

Thank you for filling in the questionnaire, you have been a great help to us!

Submit your survey.

## Appendix 3 Structured interview

### Tájékoztatás az interjú menetéről, idejéről, anonimitás biztosításáról:

Ezt az interjút azért szeretném elkészíteni Önnel, hogy a PhD disszertációmhoz minél több információt kapjak az egyetemi hallgatók Erasmus mobilitási tapasztalatairól. Az interjú körülbelül 30 percet vesz igénybe. Amennyiben nem kíván válaszolni egy kérdésre, kérem jelezze, illetve lehetősége van bármikor leállítani az interjút. A válaszait diktafonra rögzítem és anonimitását biztosítom. A feldolgozott adatok is jelszóval levédett laptopon lesznek tárolva. Előre is köszönöm a segítségét! Van-e kérdése? Amennyiben nincs, elkezdhetjük!

### Interjú kérdések:

1. Mi a munkaköre?
2. Hány éves?
3. Volt Ön valaha Erasmus mobilitási ösztöndíjjal (hallgatói/személyzeti/oktatói) külföldön? Ha igen, hol? hányszor? és mennyi ideig?
4. Milyen idegen nyelveken beszél? Milyen szinten? (kezdő, középhaladó, haladó).
5. Ön miben látja az Erasmus hallgatói mobilitási program jelentőségét?
6. Ön miben látja az Erasmus hallgatói mobilitási program hátrányát?
7. Az Ön véleménye szerint az Erasmus programból visszatért hallgatóknak hogyan változik a nyelvtudásuk az angolt, ill. az adott ország nyelvét illetően? Melyik fejlődik jobban?
8. Ön milyen területeken tapasztalt változást az Erasmus programból visszatért hallgatóknál? Tudásuk, készségeik változtak-e?
9. Ön szerint hogy lehetne a nem mobilis hallgatók interkulturális készségeit, tudását, ismereteit fejleszteni hazai környezetben?

Köszönöm, hogy válaszolt a kérdéseimre!

### Appendix 4 Homogeneity testing: H5

		H <sub>5</sub> work in multicult		Total
		Disagree	Agree	
medical and health care students	Count	0	28	28
	%	0%	100%	100%
other students	Count	20	408	428
	%	5%	95%	100%
Total	Count	20	436	456
	%	4%	96%	100%

p=0.625

		H <sub>5</sub> problem solving		Total
		Disagree	Agree	
medical and health care students	Count	0	30	30
	%	0%	100%	100%
other students	Count	13	434	447
	%	3%	97%	100%
Total	Count	13	464	477
	%	3%	97%	100%

p=1

		H <sub>5</sub> time mngmnt		Total
		Disagree	Agree	
medical and health care students	Count	5	20	25
	%	20%	80%	100%
other students	Count	48	312	360
	%	13%	87%	100%
Total	Count	53	332	385
	%	14%	86%	100%

p=0.365

		H <sub>5</sub> respons		Total
		Disagree	Agree	
medical and health care students	Count	2	23	25
	%	8%	92%	100%
other students	Count	24	359	383
	%	6%	94%	100%
Total	Count	26	382	408
	%	6%	94%	100%

p=0.668



		H <sub>5</sub> adapt		Total
		Disagree	Agree	
	Count	0	30	30
	%	0%	100%	100%
other students	Count	3	447	450
	%	1%	99%	100%
Total	Count	3	477	480
	%	1%	99%	100%

p=1

		H <sub>5</sub> computer		Total
		Disagree	Agree	
	Count	11	9	20
	%	55%	45%	100%
other students	Count	180	138	318
	%	57%	43%	100%
Total	Count	191	147	338
	%	57%	43%	100%

p=1

		H <sub>5</sub> comm		Total
		Disagree	Agree	
	Count	0	31	31
	%	0%	100%	100%
other students	Count	7	436	443
	%	2%	98%	100%
Total	Count	7	467	474
	%	1%	99%	100%

p=1

		H <sub>5</sub> negot		Total
		Disagree	Agree	
	Count	1	24	25
	%	4%	96%	100%
other students	Count	18	384	402
	%	4%	96%	100%
Total	Count	19	408	427
	%	4%	96%	100%

p=1

		H <sub>5</sub> conflict		Total
		Disagree	Agree	
	Count	0	23	23
	%	0%	100%	100%
other students	Count	27	344	371
	%	7%	93%	100%
Total	Count	27	367	394
	%	7%	93%	100%

p=0.388

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