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BECOMING MORE EUROPEAN OR EUROPEAN AFTER ERASMUS?

ABSTRACT   Lijphart was the first to emphasize the necessity to study the impact of student mobility upon European integration, but mobility programmes have only been studied in the last decade. The European Commission points to the ERASMUS programme as a successful example of construction of European identity; however, this assumption hasn't yet been empirically proved on a European scale. This paper has been devoted to research of the impact of the ERASMUS programme on fostering European identity in Europe. In academic literature at least two different understandings of the European identity can be distinguished: political and cultural European identity. The quantitative survey (in which 12'173 respondents from 37 European countries took part) provides justification that only every third of students feel more European after studying abroad and that there are different understandings among ERASMUS students regarding what it means to be European. Survey results showed that ERASMUS students feel more European than non-ERASMUS students and that the ERASMUS students understand European identity as being cultural and political.

Keywords: ERASMUS, European identity, political vs. cultural European identity

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, the topic of European identity has become an issue of intense debate, especially in the new EU member states. Despite the fact that support for European integration has increased over the last twenty years, only 3 per cent of EU citizens regard themselves first as Europeans. Contrary, the ERASMUS programme is described as one of the symbols of the construction of European identity. The aim of fostering European identity has been mentioned in several EC documents. It was mentioned for the first time in 1994 in the *Socrates* programme. In 2011, the aim of promoting European identity was mentioned in the *Erasmus for all* for the period 2014-2020.

Lijphart[1] was the first to emphasize the necessity to study the impact of student mobility upon European integration. Mobility programmes have only been studied in the last decade and some of these studies have certain limitations. First, these have mostly been case studies of a single country or even a single university.[2] Second, there is still a lack of longitudinal research.[3] Third, either quantitative or qualitative research has been conducted.[4] Fourth, different samples were analysed.[5] Fifth, there is still a lack of analysis of Eastern European countries.

In academic literature, at least two different understandings of the European identity can be distinguished: 1) *political* European identity;[6] and 2) *cultural* European

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[1] A. Lijphart, 'Tourist Traffic and Integration Potential', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1964), at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.1964.tb01086.x>.

[2] See, for example, O. Pehlivamer, *Perceptions of Erasmus Students about European Identity*, Master thesis,Bogazici University, 2006; E. Sigalas, 'Remaining Proud of their National Identity, Yet Uniting Ever More Closely? The Erasmus Students as the Role Model European Citizens', University of Reading (UK), 2006, at <http://web.uvic.ca/ecsac/biennial2006/pdf/Emmanuel-Sigalas.pdf>;, idem, 'Does ERASMUS Student Mobility Promote a European Identity?', *ConWEB*, No. 2 (2009), at <https://www.wiso.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/sowi/politik/governance/ConWeb_Papers/conweb2-2009.pdf>; A.M. Sandstrøm, *Becoming European on Erasmus? The Effects of the European Union's Erasmus-exchange Programme on Future Mobility, Attitudes to European Integration, and European Identity*, Master thesis, Uppsala University 2011.

[3] Exception E. Sigalas, 'Cross-border Mobility and European Identity: The Effectiveness of Intergroup Contact during the ERASMUS Year Abroad', *European Union Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 2, (2010), pp. 241--265, at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1465116510363656>

[4] Exception Ch. Van Mol, 'Intra-European Student Mobility and European Identity: A Successful Marriage?', *Population, Space and Place*, Special Issue: *International Student Migration*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2013), at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/psp.1752>.

[5] E. Sigalas, 'Remaining Proud...'; idem, 'Does ERASMUS Student Mobility...'; idem, 'Cross-border Mobility...',, pp. 241-265; Ch. Van Mol, 'Intra-European Student Mobility...'

[6] For discussion see C. Valentini, 'The Promotion of European Identity' in D. Petkova, J. Lehtonen (eds.), *Cultural Identity in an Intercultural Context*, Jyvaskyla 2005 (*Publications of the Department of Communication*, 27); M. Bruter, 'On What Citizens Mean by Feeling "European": Perceptions of News, Symbols and Borderless-ness', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2004), at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183032000170150>; idem, *Citizens of Europe? The Emergence of a Mass European Identity*. Houndmills 2005; idem, 'Legitimacy, Euroscepticism & Identity in the

identity.[7] For Bruter, political European identity means the European Union's identity, but cultural identity – e.g. Europe's civilization in general, or individuals – *are united by certain common culture, social commonalities, ethics, values and religion*.[8] According to Bruter, political European identity is when someone feels they are EU citizens and when EU's rules, laws and rights have an impact on the citizen's daily life.[9] For Bruter, cultural European identity is when someone feels they have similarities with Europeans. Bruter defines it as *individual self-evaluating that other Europeans are closer to him than non-European despite the nature of political systems*.[10] According to qualitative interviews held by Van Mol, those students who take part in the Erasmus programme understand European identity to be both a political and cultural European identity, while non-mobile students understand it to be only as a political European identity.[11] Therefore, the proposed hypotheses are:

H1: *ERASMUS students feel more European than non-ERASMUS students*.
H2: *Students after participating in the ERASMUS experience feel more European.*
H3: *ERASMUS students understand European identity as cultural and political one.*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining European Identity

The analysis of European identity implies the analysis of the concept of identity itself. Measurement of identity is a tough task when taking into account the fact that the concept is still underdeveloped despite the number of published works in this field.[12]

European Union – Problems of Measurement, Modelling & Paradoxical Patterns of Influence', *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (2008).

[7]   N. Fligstein, A. Polyakova, W. Sandholtz, 'European Integration, Nationalism, and European Identity', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 50, No. S1 (2012), at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2011.02230.x>; D.M. Green, *The Europeans. Political Identity in an Emerging Polity*, Boulder 2007 (*Studies on the European Polity*); T. Risse, *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*, Ithaca 2010 (*Cornell Paperbacks*).

[8]   M. Bruter, 'On What Citizens Mean...'; idem, *Citizens of Europe?...*; idem, 'Legitimacy, Euroscepticism...', p. 279.

[9]   Idem, 'Winning Hearts and Minds for Europe. The Impact of News and Symbols on Civic and Cultural European Identity', *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 10 (2003), p. 1155, at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0010414003257609>.

[10] Ibid., pp. 1155-1556.

[11] Ch. Van Mol, *The Influence of European Student Mobility on European Identity and Subsequent Migration Intentions*, Article for the International Bilingual Conference "Academic Mobility: New Researches and Perspectives", 2009, at <http://www.associatie-antwerpen.be/download.aspx?c=.ESM&n=87821&ct=79986&e=239067>

[12] V. Kaina, I.P. Karolewski, 'EU Governance and European Identity', *Living Reviews in Euroean Governance*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2013), p. 40.

Identity is a social and dynamic concept.[13] Similarly, European identity is in the process of evolvement, and the current younger generations will have the opportunity to see how it will emerge and experience it in the following decades.[14]

One should agree with Huyst's argumentation as to why studying European identity is a comprehensive task. It is difficult to define and measure.[15] In academic literature, one can distinguish at least ten denotations: 1) European identities; 2) European Union identity; 3) European national identity; 4) ethno-European identity; 5) cultural European identity; 6) civic or political European identity; 7) general European identity; 8) pan-European identity; 9) transnational European identity; 10) post-national identity. The author of this paper will rather use the denotation "European identity". However, she agrees with Bruter[16] in that there is a clear distinction between *civic (political)* and *cultural* components of European identity and, to Bruter's mind, in different times and periods of times these components vary. There are also scholars who use only denotation of cultural European identity.[17] Taking into consideration that there is a conceptual variety in European identity studies,[18] the author of this paper would like to reflect on the concept of European identity in her own way. In this paper, *European identity is understood as a socially constructed feeling of belonging to the European community based on shared interests and experiences.*

Measuring European Identity

In the study of European identity, quantitative as well as qualitative methods have been used. However, Moes[19] and Hyust[20] have come to the conclusion that the quantitative

[13]   M. Žagar, *Enlargement – in Search for European Identity*, 2001, p. 3; C. Valentini, 'The Promotion…', p. 9.

[14]   J. Moes, *European Identity Compared. A Mixed Methods Approach*, Prepared for the ECPR Fourth Pan-European Conference on EU-Politics, 25-27 September 2008, Riga, Latvia, p. 4, at <http://www.jhubc.it/ecpr-riga/virtualpaperroom/032.pdf>.

[15]   P. Huyst, *The Europeans of Tomorrow. Researching European Identity among Young Europeans*, Centre for EU-studies, Ghent University, 2009, p. 6, at <http://www.unc.edu/euce/eusa2009/papers/huyst_04D.pdf>; R.K. Herrmann, T. Risse, M.B. Brewer, *Transnational Identities. Becoming European in the EU*, Lanahan (MD) 2004 (*Governance in Europe*).

[16]   M. Bruter, 'Winning Hearts…'; idem, *Citizens of Europe?…*; idem,

[17]   E.g. D.M. Green, *The Europeans…*; T. Risse, *A Community of Europeans?…*; N. Fligstein, A. Polyakova, W. Sandholtz, 'European Integration…', p. 13; Mondrasse in A. Buzaianu, 'European Citizenship and Identity', *Sfera Politicii*, No. 125 (2006), p. 78.

[18]   See for discussion S. Bergbauer, *Contesting Europe, Contesting Identity? An Empirical Study of Party Positioning on National and European Identity, 1979-2009*, European Union Studies Association, Boston 2011, p. 8, at <http://www.euce.org/eusa/2011/papers/9c_bergbauer.pdf>; C. Valentini, 'The Promotion…', p. 5.

[19]   J. Moes, *European Identity Compared…*

[20]   P. Huyst, '"We Have Made Europe, Now We Have to Make Europeans". Researching European Identity Among Flemish Youths', *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (2008)., pp. 286--302.

approach is more often used in order to analyse European identity. The most commonly used is the Eurobarometer. There are several Eurobarometer questions that help in the analysis, especially for political scientists.[21] On the other hand, the questionnaire has often been criticized.[22]

First, the Eurobarometer is a poor and inadequate tool by which to measure European identity.[23] The main Eurobarometer questions on European identity, which are mostly used by scholars, are problematic because they use "Moreno" questions.[24] For example, Checkel and Katzenstein criticize the Eurobarometer because the questions have different meanings in different contexts.[25] Second, with the Eurobarometer, one can only explore the "soft" aspect of European identity; for example, if we use Bruter's terminology, then the Eurobarometer analyses the cultural European identity.[26] Third, the Eurobarometer ignores the fact that European identity and national identity can complement rather than contradict each other.[27] One should agree with Burgess in that the Eurobarometer's self-stated political identification is a prisoner of language.[28]

Bruter[29] and Sigalas,[30] when analysing the European identity of students, have used quantitative research, while Van Mol used a qualitative study.[31] Cerruti and Lucarelli[32] recommend using not only a quantitative, but also qualitative approach, while analysing European identity. Also, Moes emphasizes that the use of mixed methods is the right choice when carrying out research on collective identities.[33] In the surveys, there is always a risk that the respondents' answers may not reflect their actions, interests, or

[21] A. Favell, 'Europe's Identity Problem', *West European Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 5 (2005), p. 1109.

[22] R. Sinnott, 'An Evaluation of the Measurement of National, Subnational and Supranational Identity in Crossnational Surveys', *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2005), pp. 211-223, at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edh116>; M. Bruter, 'Legitimacy, Euroscepticism...'

[23] M. Bruter, 'Winning Hearts...', p. 1154.

[24] "Moreno" questions what anchors European and national identities: *Do you in the near future see yourself as (nationality) only, (nationality) and European, European and (nationality) or European only?* S. Duchesne, 'Waiting for a European Identity. Reflections on the Process of Identification with Europe', *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (2008), pp. 397-410; M. Bruter, 'Winning Hearts...', p. 1154.

[25] A. Favell, 'Europe's Identity Problem', p. 1112; M. Bruter, *Citizens of Europe?...* in J.T. Checkel, P.J. Katzenstein (eds.), *European Identity*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 9-10 (*Contemporary European Politics*).

[26] J. Moes, *European Identity Compared...*, p. 7.

[27] L. Licata, *National and European identities: complementary or antagonistic?*, Paper prepared for the Conference on "Europeanisation and Multiple Identities", 9-10 June 2000, EUI/RSC, Florence, Italy; M. Bruter, 'Winning Hearts...', p. 1154.

[28] M. Bruter, 'Winning Hearts...', p. 1154.

[29] Idem, *Citizens of Europe?...*

[30] E. Sigalas, 'Does ERASMUS Student Mobility...'

[31] Ch. Van Mol, 'Intra-European Student Mobility...'

[32] F. Cerutti, S. Lucarelli, *The Search for a European Identity. Values, Policies and Legitimacy of the European Union*, New York 2008 (*Europe in the World*, 2)

[33] J. Moes, *European Identity Compared...*, p. 1.

feelings. Van Mol emphasizes that the researcher needs to carry out interviews in order to explore whether exchange is an impact factor, and to compare the results with non--mobile students.[34]

Mobility and European Identity

In the context of the Erasmus programme, it is relevant to explore how other scholars have empirically dealt with European identity construction against the background of Erasmus mobility.

The impact of the Erasmus programme has been analysed in several studies held in Austria, Belgium, Italy, Great Britain, Norway, Poland, Turkey and Sweden, etc. The first study was held in 1990 by Opper, Teichler and Carlson, who showed that the ERASMUS exchange programme does not necessarily affect the level of empathy towards other cultures.[35] Boomans, Krupnik, Krzalewska and Lanzilotta[36] conclude that identity can be understood differently in different countries and that the country of origin has a crucial impact on the case of European identity. Boehnke and Fuss[37] reveal that *geo-political entities' importance is low to at most medium high, with friends, partners, family, job and educational attainment of a much higher importance*. Van Mol[38] proves that students do already have a European identity, but the difference is that their understanding of European identity widens – from a political European identity to a more broader understanding – which includes a political and cultural European identity.[39] Moreover, mobile students after exchange do not associate themselves with political unions, but feel closer ties with Europeans.[40] While carrying out research in five different countries, Van Mol concludes that regional differences exist.[41] Non-mobile students are EU-sceptics, but students who participate in exchanges feel more European.[42]

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[34] Ch. Van Mol, 'The Influence of Student Mobility on Future Migration Aspirations. Empirical Evidence From Europe and Recommendations to Study the Impact of International Exchange Programmes', *Canadian Diversity*, Vol. 8, No. 5 (2011), pp. 106, 108.

[35] S. Opper, U. Teichler, J. Carlson, *Impact of Study Abroad Programmes on Students and Graduates*, London 1990, pp. 14-15 (*Higher Education Policy Series*, 11, 2).

[36] V. Boomans et al., *ESNSurvey 2007: Generation Mobility*, Brussels 2007

[37] Survey of 18 to 24-year-olds from 10 cities in Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Slovakia, Spain, and UK. K. Boehnke, D. Fuss, 'What Part Does Europe Play in the Identity Building of Young European Adults?', *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (2008), at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15705850802416887>.

[38] Quantitative and qualitative research: online survey was sent to 23 universities in 19 countries (in total 2,391 respondents), and there were 40 in-depth interviews and 5 focus group interviews at 5 universities in Austria, Belgium, Italy, Norway and Poland. Ch. Van Mol, *From EU-identification towards a wider European Identity. The Influence of European Student Mobility on European Identity*, First draft version for the ISA Conference 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden, pp. 1, 4.

[39] Ibid., p. 1.

[40] Ibid., p. 15.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., p. 12.

Norwegian students did not become more European, but more Scandinavian, and the level of European identity decreased after exchange.[43] Van Mol concludes that students have an understanding of being European in terms of common traditions and common culture.[44]

Sigalas[45] carried out pre– and post-tests after Erasmus participation on UK's outgoing,[46] and incoming[47] students and control samples.[48] Sigalas concluded that European identity among mobile students statistically does not change[49] and that previous experience and travelling does not have impact on European identity.[50] Nevertheless, one needs to take into account the fact that the UK is one of the most Eurosceptic countries in the EU. Sandstrom[51] carried out research on the impact of the ERASMUS programme on promoting European identity in Sweden and proved that the programme has an impact on European identity.[52] Moreover, she emphasises that the host country where a student is studying as an ERASMUS student has a crucial impact, because the student's European identity could, in fact, decrease.[53] The researcher emphasizes the fact that how European a person feels depends on where in the world they are now, and the countries of origin of the people who are around them.[54] However, there are several limitations in Sandstrom's research. First, she carried out her research in Sweden, which is one of the most Eurosceptic countries within EU member states.[55] Second, the researcher did a survey at only one university (Uppsala University), therefore it is difficult to generalize the results to all Swedish students, and especially to other European countries.[56] Third, the researcher did not carry out longitudinal research, but only surveyed those students during exchange.[57] In the recent research, Ewert[58] concludes that *European identity is formatting because of inter-communication between ERASMUS students but not because of experience in*

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[43] Ibid., p. 14.

[44] Ibid., p. 10.

[45] E. Sigalas, 'Cross-border Mobility…', pp. 241-265

[46] Ibid., pp. 161, 242, 249.

[47] Ibid., pp. 241, 250.

[48] Ibid., p. 250.

[49] Ibid., p. 256.

[50] Ibid., p. 259.

[51] A.M. Sandstrøm, *Becoming European on Erasmus?...*

[52] Ibid., p. 2.

[53] Ibid., pp. 36, 38.

[54] Ibid., p. 42.

[55] Ibid., p. 7.

[56] Ibid., p. 8.

[57] Ibid., p. 19.

[58] S. Ewert, *Academic Mobility within University Exchange in the Baltic Sea Region*, Paper presented at the 23th bi-annual conference of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies "The Global Baltics: The Next Twenty Years", Chicago, April 2012.

host country or because of communication with students of that country or because of communication with local people.[59]

METHODOLOGY

The data for this research was collected between 1 May 2012 and 1 November 2012. Approximately 12'173 students from 37 European countries took part in the research. Online questionnaire consisted of 50 questions. The survey was conducted by Erasmus Student Network Survey team: Julia Fellinger, Karina Oborune, Jesús Escrivá Muñoz, Eleni Kalantzi, Jurgita Stasiukaityte and Emanuel Alfranseder. The questionnaire was disseminated by National LLP Agencies and higher education institutions, ESN, AEGEE, ACA, British Council, CIMO, Coimbra Group, Compostela Group, EMA, ESU, UNICA and EAIE. These students comprised those who have applied (future mobile – applied for the fall of academic year 2012/2013, or were already or going to participate in Erasmus from September/October 2012), have participated (mobile), and who have not participated (non-mobile) in the programme. A *special* sample method was used: an invitation to participate in the research with a link to the survey questionnaire (see Attachment 1) was distributed with the help of the administrators of the ERASMUS programme throughout all European universities. Data was analysed in SPSS. In some of the questions, the answers were made up of a 4-point Likert scale. This response scale had three limitations: 1) tendency to evaluate too high or too low (evaluating at extremes); 2) central tendency: non-willingness to provide high evaluations; 3) marking similar responses on questions which are similar in their content.

First, to analyse the level of cosmopolitan, European, national, local, and individual identity, students were asked to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with statements regarding their identification as a world citizen, as part of the European community, as a part of their nation, as a part of their local community, or as an autonomous individual. Second, in order to analyse whether the Erasmus programme has an impact on the European identity, mobile students were asked whether they feel more European after their experience abroad. Third, European identity is a complex issue. In order to analyse it, respondents are asked to indicate what they understand by the term European identity. They have to clarify what "feeling more European" means to them (open question such as "What does it mean to you to feel more European?"). Fourth, students were asked how well-informed they feel about the European Union. Fifth, students were asked how interested they are in local, national, European and international politics. Last but not least, students were asked whether they think a single person can exert influence on the European development.

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59   See E. Sigalas, 'Cross-border Mobility...', p. 253

SURVEY RESULTS

Mobility and identity

Students defined their identity as: global (86%), national (84%), European (82%), local (74%) and individual (71%) (see Figure 1). This is similar to the results of the ESN Survey 2007, where students defined their identity as: global (89%), European (84%), national (82%), individual (73%) and local (70%). The strongest identities for students are cosmopolitan, national and European. Local and individual identities are weaker.

European identity

There are somewhat more students in the group of mobile and future mobile students who strongly agree that they have a European identity (see Figure 2).

National identity

There are more students in the group of mobile and future mobile students who strongly agree that they have a national identity") (see Figure 3). There is no difference between mobile, future mobile and non-mobile students in their perceptions on local and individual identity.

Feeling more European after Erasmus

A large number of mobile students stated that nothing had changed (they do not feel more European) after they had lived abroad (39%). 36% of mobile students stated that they feel more European and 23% stated that they feel a bit more European. A small number of students stated that they feel less European (2%) (see Figure 4).

Figure 1. Students' perceptions on cosmopolitan, European, national, local, and individual identity

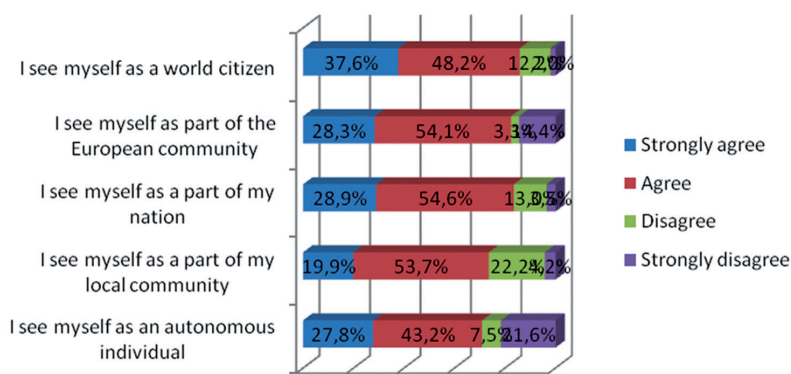**Figure 2.** Mobile, future mobile and non-mobile students' perceptions on European identity
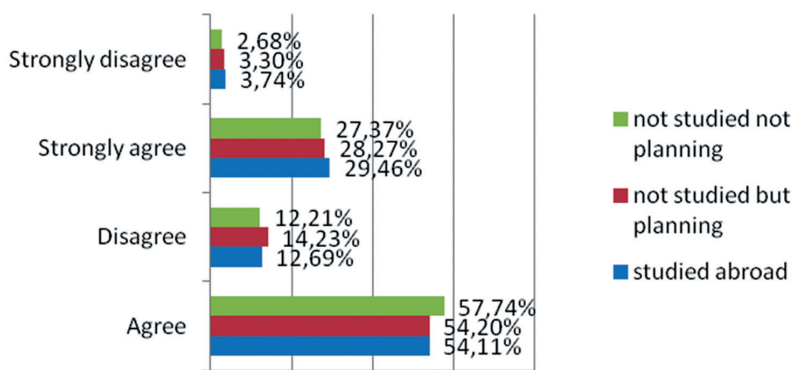

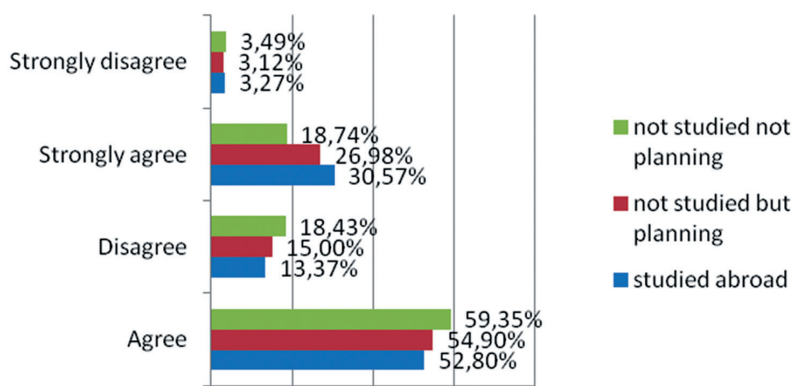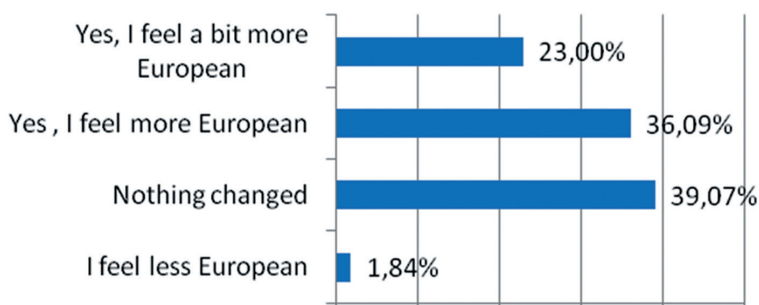**Figure 3.** Mobile, future mobile and non-mobile students' perceptions on national identity

**Figure 4.** Mobile students' feeling of being more European after they have lived abroad

What does "feeling European" mean?

As regards having an understanding of European identity, three groups of answers can be distinguished (see Figure 5):
- – General understanding of feeling European;
- – Political understanding of feeling European;
- – Cultural understanding of feeling European.

Figure 5. Mobile, future mobile and non-mobile students' information on the EU
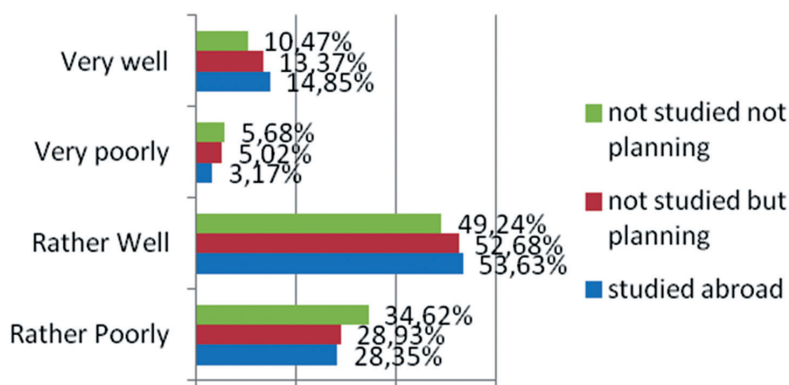
The **general** understanding of feeling European implies having a strong group feeling, by answering the question "Where are you from?" with "I am from Europe, I am European."

I was born to live in Europe.

I am a big fan of the European idea and I now understand what it is about.

Being European is something more than a useless fictional name. Though it still has a long journey ahead.

I understood that Europe really exists, is not just something you hear on the news.

I see myself as part of European culture and identity promoting and establishing partnerships through my previous experiences in Comenius Program (Norway), Erasmus studies (Italy), Erasmus placements (Poland) and during my medical Training (Spain). I have been selected by the EU as the 2 millionth Erasmus Student, which has reinforced my European feeling of promoting both national and European identity.

The **political** understanding of feeling European concerns an identification with the European Union, being a citizen of the EU, as well as being more interested in European and understanding inner-European problems.

I am a great supporter of EU.

It helped me understand how the EU works.

I feel that European Union is the last great political dream. As an Erasmus student, I felt that I was putting my brick in this new building.

I feel more part of the European community, I am more interested in EU issues and I have a stronger sense of my responsibilities as a European citizen.

I now feel the EU institutions represent every EU citizen, just like national institutions represent citizens of a country.

I am more interested in the European Parliament, changes and other countries that are part of the EU.

Feeling proud of being part of such a big economic zone, proud of the culture you see around you.

It means having a thorough knowledge of European institutions and their functions, constantly remaining up-to-date with international events, getting involved in EU procedures.

The **cultural** understanding of feeling European means feeling similar to other people from Europe, especially as regards culture and lifestyle, sharing common values, traditions, customs, habits, seeing differences between people from European and non--European countries.

To feel connection and similarity with people from other European countries, no matter if they have different language, culture, cuisine, etc.

I feel European because I think that Europe is a mosaic of very different and sometimes conflicting cultures, however each of them should learn something from the other. This was what I felt when I was with other Erasmus students and I think can be applied to relations between European nations as well.

I feel like we are just a nation, not a Union.

I feel I have a new European family abroad.

European citizens are all my brothers and sisters, we stand together or fall together, European borders are my home's borders.

I think, people who are European by nationality (Spanish, German and etc.) are not truly European, unless they experience different European cultures and social lives.

Many students also mentioned tolerance and open-mindedness.

It means being more open-minded, tolerant of others, interacting with other traditions and cultures, having a multicultural environment and feeling more encouraged to live abroad.

I truly believe that barriers between European people are not that visual anymore.

Information on the EU

By comparing mobile and non-mobile students, the conclusion can be drawn that mobile students are better informed about the EU (68.48% mobile compared with 59.71% non-mobile students). Mobile and future mobile students are better informed about the EU than non-mobile students (see Figure 5).

Interest in European politics

When comparing mobile, future mobile and non-mobile students, it turns out that mobile and future mobile students are more interested in European politics than non-

-mobile students (see Figure 6). There are no differences between mobile, future mobile and non-mobile students regarding their interest in national and local politics. Therefore, students are more interested in national, international and European politics than in local politics. This also justifies the previous conclusion that local identity is weaker than cosmopolitan, national and European.
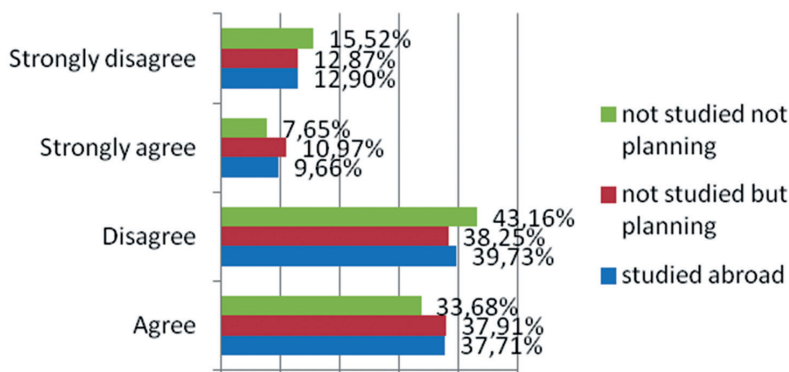
Figure 6. Students' interest in European politics
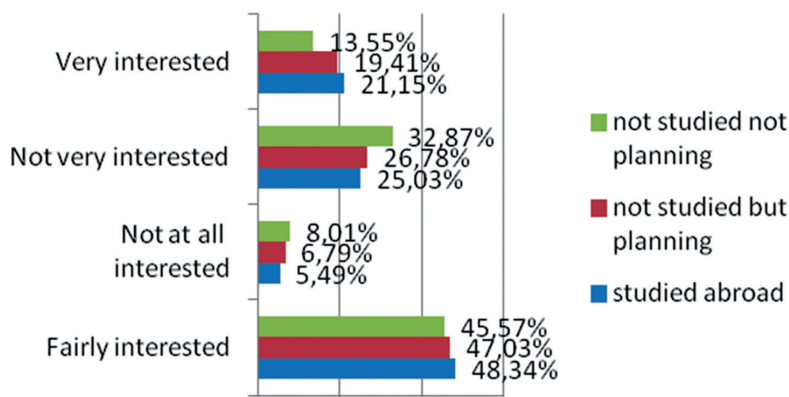
Influence on the European development

Mobile and future mobile are slightly more positive in their views on whether a single person can exert influence on the European development (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Students' views on whether a single person can exert influence on the European development

CONCLUSIONS

Basing on the results, the first hypothesis (*ERASMUS students feel more European than non-ERASMUS students*) has not been proved, because Figure 2 shows that the total number of non-ERASMUS students with European identity (who strongly agree or agree that they have a European identity) is bigger (85.11%) than the total number of ERASMUS students (83.57%).

Every third of mobile students stated that they do not feel more European after they have lived abroad. Mobile and future mobile students are better informed about the EU than non-mobile students. Mobile and future mobile students are more interested in European politics compared with non-mobile students. The EC should take into account, and find the causes of, the fact that almost every third of mobile students stated that they did not feel more European after they had lived abroad. Awareness about the EU among non-mobile students should be raised. Students who feel more attached to their local community and who are less interested in international and European politics should be more involved in the Erasmus programme. Therefore, the second proposed hypothesis – *students after participating in the ERASMUS experience feel more European* – was disproved (however, the statistical majority is not always a good criterion).

Mobile students understand European identity in its general, political and cultural terms. The **general** understanding of feeling European implies having a strong group feeling, answering the question "Where are you from?" with "I am from Europe, I am European". The **political** understanding of feeling European concerns the identification with the European Union, being a citizen of the EU, as well as being more interested in European politics and understanding inner-European problems. The **cultural** understanding of feeling European means to feel similar to other people from Europe, especially in regards culture and life style, to share common values, traditions, customs, habits, to see differences between people from European and non-European countries. Therefore, the third proposed hypothesis – *ERASMUS students understand European identity as cultural and political one* – was proved.

LIMITATIONS

This research has several limitations. First, a longitudinal study should be carried out in order to research whether the Erasmus programme has an impact on European identity. Second, there were different numbers of respondents in the mobile, non-mobile and future mobile groups (64.5% of respondents have already studied abroad, and 60% of non-mobile students would like to study abroad). Third, those students who participated in the survey were from non-EU countries such as Russia, Turkey, Norway, Switzerland (besides, the composition does not fully reflect the true student population, as students from Spain, Germany, Italy, Poland and Turkey were overrepresented). Fourth, the research did not take into account the distinction between *cognitive*

and *affective* questions when measuring European identity. Cognitive questions[60] ask respondents if they see themselves as Europeans. Affective questions ask respondents how important it is for them to feel European and how attached they feel to the EU (also in some Eurobarometer surveys). Therefore, respondents should have been asked the following questions: "How important is it for you to feel European?" and "How attached do you feel to the EU?" Last, but not least, the questionnaire lacks the most crucial key questions such as "What does Europe mean to you?" and "What does the European Union mean to you?"

FURTHER RESEARCH

This survey has drawn a new question: Why do some Erasmus students understand European identity as a cultural, while others see it as a political one? What factors have an impact on our political vs. cultural understanding of European identity, *geographic*, *demographic* or *socio-economic*? With which variables does political European identity correlate and with which variables does cultural European identity correlate? Are there differences between Western and Eastern European countries, old vs. new member states? Further research will deal with these questions by providing an in-depth analysis of students of Europe.

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ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1. ESNSurvey 2012 Questionnaire

Full questionnaire: J. Fellinger (ed.), J. Escrivá Muñoz et al., *Creating Ideas, Opportunities and Identity. Research Report of the ESNSurvey 2013*, Brussels 2013, at <https://esn.org/ESNSurvey/2013>.

Part 5. European Citizenship

1. How well do you feel informed about the European Union?
a) Very well
b) Rather well
d) Rather poorly
e) Very poorly

2. People's interest sometimes varies across different areas of politics. Are you personally very interested, fairly interested, not very interested or not at all interested in?

	Not at all interested	Not very interested	Fairly interested	Very interested
Local politics	1	2	3	4
National politics	1	2	3	4
European politics	1	2	3	4
International politics	1	2	3	4

3. People have different views about themselves and how they relate to the world. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about how you see yourself?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I see myself as a world citizen	1	2	3	4
I see myself as a part of my local community	1	2	3	4
I see myself as a part of my nation	1	2	3	4
I see myself as part of the European community	1	2	3	4
I see myself as an autonomous individual	1	2	3	4
A single person can exert influence on the European development	1	2	3	4

4. Did you vote in the elections for the European Parliament in 2009?
   – Yes
   – No, because I was too young (not legally able to vote)
   – No, because my country was not part of the European Union at that time
   – No, because of other reasons

5. [If, 1a or 8a or 11a] Do you feel more European now that you have lived abroad?
   – Yes, I feel more European
   – Yes, I feel a bit more European
   – Nothing changed
   – I fee l less European

6. [If, 35 a or b] What does it mean to you to feel more European?

Open field

Karina OBORUNE has studied as ERASMUS at Sciences Po in France, received Bachelor's degree in Political Science at University of Latvia, Master's degree in European Integration at Europainstitut of University of Basel, Master's degree in Political Science at Central European University. Since 2011 Karina Oborune has been a PhD student in Political Science at University of Latvia researching impact of ERASMUS Programme on European identity. She was part of the ERASMUS Student Network Survey team based in Brussels. Karina Oborune has been granted Government Scholarship, Dr. Bilmanis Scholarship, Gebert Rüf Scholarship, Soros Scholarship, ESF Scholarship and has written 15 academic publications in the peer-reviewed journals and books. Karina Oborune has taken part in 20 international conferences, including conference at University of Cambridge and supervised 7 international projects, including project at University of Oxford. She has prepared analytical reports and represented Latvia at European Parliament Model in Strasbourg and at United Nations Model in New York, taken part in the visit programmes to Council of Europe, European Court of Justice, Council of the EU, NATO and WTO.