



Literature Review Summary

Our review of the literature identifies three hierarchical levels of factors influencing the international mobility of students. At the top level are global, policy-driven, and demand-driven factors. The second level encompasses institutional factors, primarily shaped by the goals of internationalisation and concerns about university rankings. Ultimately, individual-level factors play a significant role, primarily driven by career-oriented goals, such as the pursuit of better employment opportunities, and personal development motivations, including the desire to enhance language proficiency, acquire life skills, and experience a sense of adventure.

The Erasmus+ Programme, mainly aimed at the internationalisation of European higher education, adopts the perspective of education as a tool for the EU's coping strategy with the global academic competition, thus creating a competitive workforce. Beyond this, Erasmus also aims to establish a common educational space, symbolically legitimise EU institutions, promote active citizenship, and address broader societal challenges such as social inclusion.

Most scholarly work on Erasmus focuses on its achievements and challenges, particularly whether the number of participating students has increased and how students have benefitted from their Erasmus experience, both at home and abroad, in terms of further education and employability. Research shows that Erasmus mobility significantly contributes to students' personal development by enhancing their problem-solving abilities, foreign language proficiency, social skills, autonomy, flexibility, employability, and intercultural understanding.

On the other hand, key themes that have emerged in the literature on the Erasmus Programme include polarisation, disequilibrium, and discrepancy. These issues are not only internal to the Programme but also reflect external global events and trends that have shaped international student mobility across three overlapping waves between 1999 and 2020. These include the terrorist attacks of 2001, the global financial crisis, the slowdown of the Chinese economy, Brexit, and the U.S. presidential elections—all of which



fueled nationalistic sentiments that have, in turn, challenged the broader goals of educational internationalisation.

In the face of ongoing political and social instability, along with economic crises in both Europe and globally, several critical perspectives have emerged. One major concern is the growing participation disequilibrium. Economic challenges within participating countries and the increasing privatisation of higher education have led to declining student interest. Studies also reveal gender disparities, with female students participating more than male students, and extremely low participation rates among students with special needs. Moreover, scholars have called for a re-examination of the hierarchical relationships between sender and receiver institutions.

Research has identified a range of factors that influence students' motivation to participate in mobility programmes. Academic considerations, such as the prestige of the host institution and the opportunity to acquire foreign language skills, are particularly significant. At the same time, students are also driven by the belief that international mobility enhances their employability. Additionally, cultural curiosity about the host country and aspirations for personal development—especially in terms of improving intercultural competence—serve as important motivators for student participation in mobility programmes.

The literature identifies several barriers that negatively influence students' choices, particularly when considering international education or mobility. A primary concern is the lack of sufficient financial support, which limits access to opportunities and increases the burden on students from low-income backgrounds. Language problems and cultural anxieties also pose significant challenges, often leading to feelings of isolation and decreased academic performance. Additionally, inadequate communication and insufficient information or guidance hinder informed decision-making, leaving students unaware of potential opportunities or requirements. Credit transfer issues further complicate academic planning, while the scarcity of affordable accommodation adds to financial and logistical stress. Lastly, diplomatic barriers such as complex visa processes can deter students from pursuing studies abroad altogether, making these factors collectively influential in shaping—and often restricting—students' educational choices.



Finally, we would like to particularly highlight the factors affecting destination choices. Drawing more attention to the Erasmus+ Student Mobility Programme and its related endeavors, recent scholarship provides significant inputs. Students' destination choices are shaped by a variety of interrelated factors, including the perceived image of the host country, city, or university; the cost of living and availability of affordable accommodation; the language of instruction; and the perception that studying abroad will increase future opportunities for employability. Other influential factors include the host country's standing in the global academic and economic hierarchy, recommendations from past participants or family members, the quality and accessibility of information on university websites, concerns about safety, and personal motivations such as a sense of adventure and curiosity.