

A large graphic of the Erasmus+ logo, consisting of a yellow 'E' and a blue '+', is positioned in the bottom-left corner of the page. The background is a dark blue with faint, large-scale geometric shapes and numbers like '12' and '88' in a lighter blue tone.

# Erasmus+

## MNE

*The impact of Erasmus+  
international credit mobility  
on the students of Montenegro*





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## Erasmus+ programme – the key to successful internationalization of the Montenegrin higher education system

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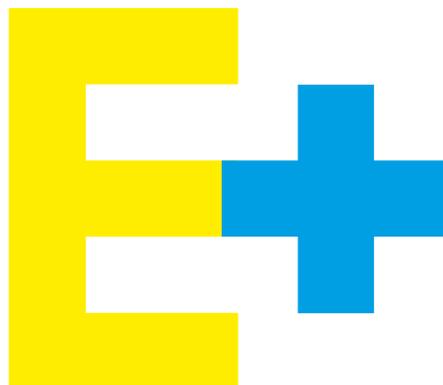
Mubera Kurpejović  
Ministry of Education

According to the Strategy of the Development of Higher Education in Montenegro (2016–2020), internationalisation of higher education has been recognised as one of the key goals in higher education.

Student and academic staff mobility, ongoing agreements between higher education institutions, joint study programmes and diplomas, international projects and other forms of cross-border cooperation are just some of the segments of internationalisation, contributing to enhancing the quality of higher education and creating more opportunities for youth employment in the global labour market\*.

Internationalization brings with it many benefits not only for students and academic staff who use mobility programmes, scholarships and other opportunities through EU programmes, but for the whole education system by ensuring, inter alia, the sharing of best practices and better positioning in the European Higher Education Area.

A particularly important component of internationalisation is mobility, which offers to our future academics and employees at institutions, through an increasing number of programmes and in particular through the ERASMUS+ programme, opportunities to develop their knowledge, get acquainted with other cultures and systems, to improve their knowledge of



other languages and therefore become more competitive in the European labour market.

The ERASMUS+ programme has also helped our higher education institutions in terms of capacity strengthening and implementing structural reforms,

aiming at ranking them among the institutions distinctive by quality of studies and good results. I would also like to point out here the importance of the studies in English language, the introducing of which is planned in the forthcoming period.

Montenegro, as a country having set as a priority the European integration and membership in the EU, through its strategic documents and line ministries, encourages institutions and students to use the EU programme and funds, aware of the fact that education and research are the most important components of the knowledge-based society for achieving better standards of living of all its citizens.

In the forthcoming period, Ministry of Education will continue with the reforms to ensure quality studies, proper practical teaching and further study opportunities abroad for our students, in order to contribute to synergy with other society's actors in strengthening human capacities and our country economy.

\* *Strategy of the Development of Higher Education in Montenegro (2016-2020)*

## Erasmus+ mobility

*prof. Nataša Kostić, Vice Rector  
University of Montenegro*

The Erasmus mobility programme exists for over thirty years, and the University of Montenegro is proud to be an integral part of the large Erasmus family for eleven years. From 2008, since the Erasmus Mundus programme exists, until 2014, the University of Montenegro was a partner in several projects - Basileus, Join EU See, Sigma, Sigma Agile, Sunbeam, GreenTech and each of the aforementioned programmes was successfully implemented.

From 2015, when Erasmus+ succeeded Erasmus Mundus, until today, the University of Montenegro has increased, year by year, its participation in the programme when it comes to the number of partner universities all over Europe with which it has signed inter-institutional agreements. Today, the number of signed inter-institutional agreements related to student mobility and teaching/administrative staff mobility opportunities amounts to 110, and these agreements cover almost all fields of study. Therefore, we want to take this opportunity to say that a number of mobilities are realized within the following fields of study: economics, languages, political science and sports.

When talking about the number of realized mobilities, from 2015 until today, 439 outgoing student mobilities were realized, while 101 is the number of incoming mobilities. When it comes to teaching and administrative staff mobilities,

401 mobilities were realized, 272 of which are incoming mobilities. Through participation in the Erasmus+ programme, the University of Montenegro has established strong and sustainable cooperation with Western Europe as a whole, and it is therefore difficult to single out a particular partner country as the best example of cooperation.

We are happy to point out that every inter-institutional agreement has been successfully implemented, thanks to good communication with partners, and we are even more proud of the fact that our students have proven to be very successful at most partner institutions, as evidenced by the fact that the University of Montenegro has a large number of students who extended their mobility periods or decided to re-apply for the mobility programme.

The experiences of students who have studied at partner institutions are almost always positive. According to students, after the end of the mobility period, they become richer in every respect and in all areas of life - they become independent, adroit and skillful, at the same time improving their English, and learning the language of the host country. They also acquire new knowledge and skills that are useful to them in the process of completing their studies in Montenegro, but also useful in terms of developing professional career and widening employment opportunities.



At the beginning of the mobility period, there may be some difficulties (due to administrative procedures and some form of culture shock that students experience), but the study period abroad almost always ends up as a life-changing experience, full of unforgettable impressions. Students often come back from the mobility period with completely different personality traits, in the best possible sense, and this experience is often a turning point in their lives. Of course, we cannot neglect the mobility of teaching and administrative staff, which enables, through the diversity of forms of cooperation, the achievement of the universal goal, common to all of us, i. e. the road to scientific truth and prosperity in all the phases of the professional careers of employees.

Therefore, the benefits of the programme are numerous. In addition to the aforementioned, individual ones, we have to mention both institutional and systemic benefits. The programme has greatly influenced the increase in mobility participation in recent years and the University of Montenegro is striving to continue the trend. It has positively influenced human resources and programme policies, at the same time aiming at the continuing improvement in this direction, due to the increase in the number of partners and complexity of the programme.

Mobility, as one of the key aspects of the internationalization of higher education institutions, will improve the positioning and recognition of the University of Montenegro in the European Higher Education Area and even beyond its borders. Generally speaking, the Erasmus+ programme, by investing in students and employees as well as providing opportunities for continuing education throughout Europe, makes an individual, an institution and even the country richer, at the same time networking Montenegro with other European countries.



# Instead of introduction

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Vanja Drljević

National Erasmus+ Coordinator

The idea behind this research emerged as an expression of the need to have a better understanding of the importance and impact that Erasmus + has on one of its major beneficiaries – the students. Whether we talk on capacity building projects, or international credit mobility projects, students are always, either directly or indirectly, its major beneficiaries. Given that students are directly and most explicitly involved in international credit mobility through spending part of their study period abroad, we came to the idea to conduct a small survey, and analyze various aspects of students' mobility, and its impact at various levels.

As all the reforms conducted are done for the sake of students, we thought their opinion should be considered. Thus, the questionnaire developed aimed at exploring the impact that students' exchange had on the personal and professional aspects of students' lives. At the personal level, we tried to find out how the mobility period affected personality development, in terms of shaping one's personality, in an international environment composed of different cultures from different parts of the world. As what concerns the professional development aspect we tried to highlight those skills that students acquire during their study periods abroad, which are not or are less prevalent in students who were not beneficiaries of mobility.

In addition to the impact on the individual level, we were trying to reach out to some wider horizon, measuring the impact at the institutional and societal or national levels. Speaking in terms of internationalization, Montenegrin students are very

important element that is contributing to further internationalization of their HEIs, as ambassadors of Montenegro abroad. On that note, we tried to measure the level at which mobility students contribute to the internationalization of their institutions, that is, how much space they are given to integrate the newly experienced education models at their home institutions. Finally, at the societal and national level, we tried to find out how student exchanges can change or strengthen the political and societal orientation of their country. In this context, we have tried to explore the impact of exchanges on the students' perception of the Montenegrin accession to EU, and the willingness and support of students to get integrated into the European community.

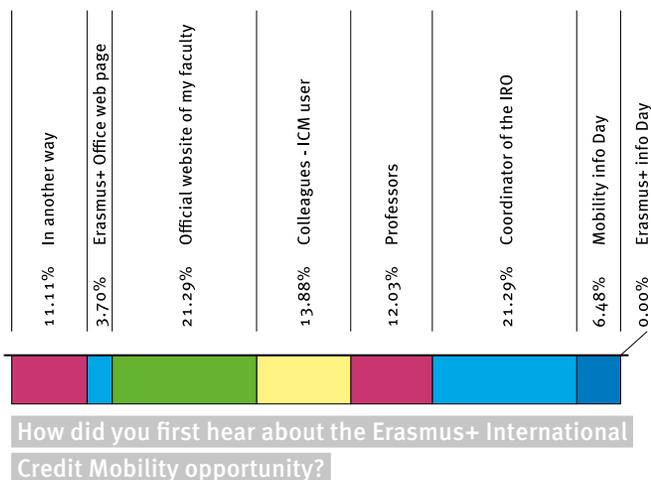
Regarding the research methodology, the questionnaire used as a research tool provides quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire combined open-ended and closed-ended questions. It was sent electronically to 364 students from University of Montenegro, University of Donja Gorica and Mediterranean University. Of the total number of students whose contacts we received from the International Relations Offices of the aforementioned universities, 108 is the number that responded to the survey. Namely, the number of respondents represents 29.67% of the number of students - beneficiaries of the Erasmus + programme, out of which 81.48% represent the students from the University of Montenegro, 12.96% from Mediterranean and 5.55% from the University of Donja Gorica.

The respondents belong to the mobility period 2015-2019.

# Discovering

## International Credit Mobility opportunities

What we first paid attention to, when doing this kind of research, is when and where, for the first time, students heard of the mobility opportunities available to them within the KA1 International Credit Mobility of the Erasmus+ programme.

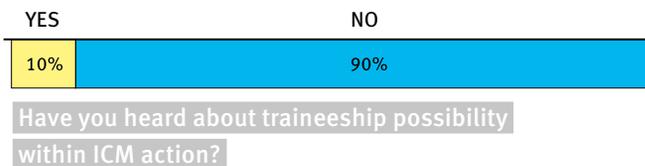


The graph above shows the channels through which Montenegrin students for the first time learned about possibilities within International Credit Mobility. We can see that the coordinator of the International Relations Office (according to answers of 21.29% of respondents), together with the official websites of the Montenegrin universities, (also 21.29% of respondents) took a leading role in the process of informing students. Professors and other students (ICM users) who have taken part in the international credit mobility projects, also had an important dissemination role when it comes to the Erasmus+ participation possibilities.

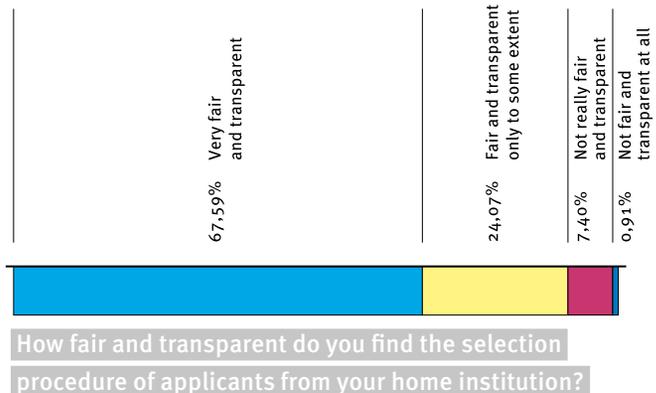
In addition to the above mentioned, students also heard of the mobility opportunities from their peers and friends who took part in the Erasmus+ mobility programmes.

It is important to mention the traineeship opportunities, which are also available to students within the same Key Acton of the Erasmus+ programme - International Credit Mobility. Traineeship is an opportunity that is almost never used at all, because majority, i.e. 90% is not informed of the participation opportunities but also a number of benefits that can be obtained by participating in this type of mobility.

We note that a few students (10%) have heard of traineeship opportunities. They got informed of the traineeship opportunities by the Erasmus+ website, at Erasmus+ Info Days, through Western Balkan Alumni Association, International Relations Coordinator, or university official website.



When it comes to the selection procedure of applicants, 67.59% consider this procedure to be conducted in a regular and transparent way, while only a small number of students find this not to be the case.



# The level of encouragement

## given by home institutions

The extent to which Montenegrin higher education institutions are encouraging students - potential applicants in the international credit mobility, from the students' point of view, is presented in the chart below. 57.40% positively evaluated the level of encouragement given by Montenegrin higher education institutions, but the students also made a number of specific recommendations for improving this process, such as information events, public info days and workshops organized by the International Relations Offices at the faculties within the universities. According to the respondents, information on the possibilities within International Credit Mobility could be disseminated among a greater number of interested students. Some of them suggested recording videos on students' experiences that can be used as sources of motivation for potential applicants. Some of them think that the role of the professors in motivating students to take part in the mobility programmes should be greater, and that events at which students, participants in this programme would be able to share their experiences and communicate to the audience all the opportunities available to students, should be more frequently organized. Some of them also believe that the role of the International Relations Coordinator should be significantly greater. Only a small number of students (6.48%) consider the level of encouragement given by Montenegrin higher education institutions not to be satisfactory at all.



What is the level of encouragement that your home institution gives to his/her students to maximise the use of the Erasmus+ ICM opportunities?

Students' recommendations aiming at improving the level of encouragement given by home institutions:

- “Professors and the staff from the International Relations Office could organize events for the interested students. Having this information only on the university website might not be visible enough, so many times students don't even know there are exchange opportunities.”
- “Public info days on faculties or lectures should be organized in a way that interested students could ask questions that would help them resolve dilemmas they might have for pursuing a mobility abroad.”
- “Faculty International Relations Coordinator should encourage students and help them with everything. Students practically go through everything on their own.”

## Dissemination activities

36.11% of respondents think that promotion of the mobility opportunities at the Montenegrin higher education institutions is at satisfactory level, but 49.07% think that Montenegrin HEIs need to intensify their efforts aiming at enhancing promotion of the opportunities within the International Credit Mobility

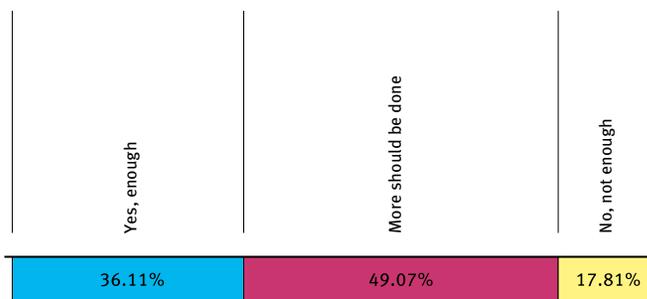
by organizing a series of various events (informal panels, round tables, gatherings of former Erasmus+ mobility students, webinars, publications and leaflets distribution...), and one of the students' proposals is the establishment of an office within a specific university that would only deal with giving

advice on application procedure and other relevant issues. The proposal was that employees (or at least some of them) could be Erasmus+ mobility students. However, it is also necessary to work intensively on promoting international credit mobility opportunities in the Montenegrin media.

International credit mobility beneficiaries disseminate information on their experiences and promote mobility opportunities in private conversations with other students and professors, by participating in numerous promotional activities such as interviews, TV programmes organized by local and national media, but also by giving presentations and through direct communication with professors and students. However, some students highlighted lack of interest of some faculties to discuss their mobility experiences.

Some of the students' recommendations aiming at improving the promotion of the Erasmus+ ICM opportunities are listed below:

- creating more promotional materials;
- organizing more open info days;
- publishing the mobility calls on student university platform;
- sharing experiences



Does your home institution organize enough dissemination activities to promote Erasmus+ ICM opportunities?

## Recognition of credits

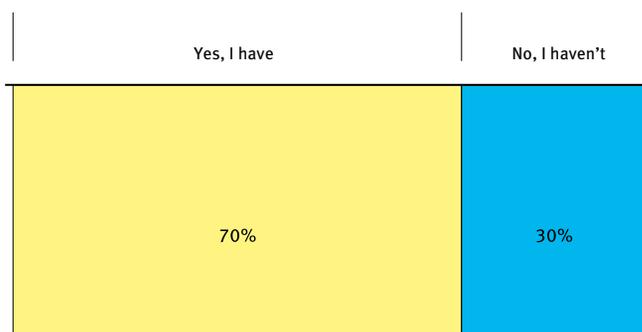
One of the obstacles that makes it difficult for students to make a decision to take part in the mobility programme is the problem of credit recognition, once the mobility period finishes and the student returns to his/her home institution.

Here is the statement of a student taking part in the mobility programme:

“My home faculty signed all the contracts and all of the credits were supposed to be recognized, but when I got back, there was a different scenario.”

Although rights and obligations of a student taking part in the mobility programme are defined by the Learning Agreement and signed by the student, the home institution and the host institution before the start of the mobility period,

the 70% majority is facing the problem of credit recognition, upon the return to the home institution.



When coming back at your home institution, have you faced the obstacle of recognizing credits?

However, students (64.48%) do not find it as a discouragement to potential applicants when submitting application for participation in the mobility programme, as they consider the experience of staying abroad, which involves a completely different lifestyle, different culture, making new friends, but also acquiring a number of practical skills and competences that are of great importance for further personal and professional development of each individual, more valuable than just studying and passing the exams.



In case you knew that the credits wouldn't be recognized once back, would you still choose to apply?

*"I would more than gladly be a part of Erasmus+ ICM, because my experience was more than beneficial in every sense."*

*"I think it's once in a lifetime experience, on both educational and social aspects."*

*"It is a unique and exceptional experience. What is a cost of non-recognition of credits? Half a year more studying, worst case. Even if that happens, it is worth going, because Erasmus + is not only about studying."*

*"Definitely, because it is such an amazing experience with lots of opportunities for travel, meeting new people, learning from and about other education systems, getting a closer look into a different culture and society. So, it is worth more than grades".*



# Reception

## of students by their host institutions

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When it comes to the reception of students by their host institution, the 70.09% majority is satisfied with it, mainly because they were given the necessary support, they gained more practical than theoretical knowledge, and many activities were organized to enable Erasmus+ students feel at home, socialize and integrate into society. The International Relations Offices within host institutions were at students' disposal for any enquiries. The students also emphasized a role of "buddy", a person whose task was to provide Erasmus+ students with practical information, to introduce them to other students and professors and help them select the electives. In spite of the fact that the ma-

majority of the respondents think that the reception by host institution was at satisfactory level, that the teaching staff was very professional, that they were welcomed by their peers, some of the Montenegrin students (29.9%) faced the unprofessional teaching staff, violation of the rules defined by the Learning Agreement, close-mindedness of their peers when it comes to getting to know mobility students, misunderstandings among the students and professors due to language barriers, even without the desire to deepen communication. In addition to the aforementioned, some students consider the level of proficiency of the professors in English at unsatisfactory level.

## Mobility period assessment

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When it comes to the majority of the respondents who took part in the Erasmus+ mobility, the Learning Agreement, signed by the student, the home institution and the host institution before the start of the mobility period, has been respected, although there are some examples that prove the opposite. Students, mobility beneficiaries, consider that, despite some obstacles, out of which the most important is credit recognition (which implies retaking some tests upon student's return to the home institution due to mismatch of subjects as well as extra pay for re-examination, despite the Learning Agreement previously being signed), still experience gained through mobility period is so great

that it surpasses such obstacles, as shown by this chart (the average students' assessment). As already mentioned, from the mobility students' point of view, mobility is more than learning and credit recognition, "it is an unforgettable experience that makes you get out of your comfort zone, getting to know new people, different cultures, to learn a new language, to become independent and learn to be independent", and to acquire a series of practical skills that will be of great use to you in your everyday life and positively influence your personal and professional development, broadening your horizons and "expanding your knowledge in many different ways".



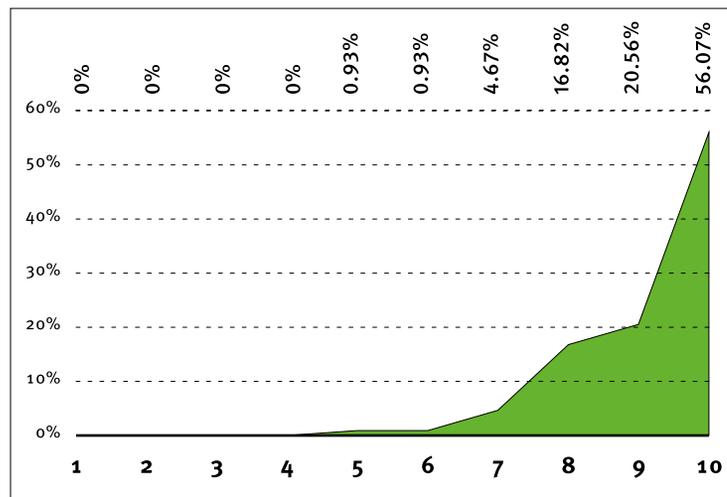
*"This experience made me profit in many ways. It helped me broaden my horizons and enabled me to build strong social network with amazing people from different continents."*

*"Erasmus+ is a really good experience for becoming independent. You have the opportunity to make friendships with people from all over the world and experience a new way of studying."*

*"It is a life-changing experience."*

# 9.23

*Average grade of students' satisfaction with their mobility period*



From 1 to 10, to what extent are you satisfied with your mobility period?

# Bringing home

## the Erasmus+ experience

What's the importance of mobility for universities? What are the benefits that universities gain by sending their students and professors abroad for mobility? Do universities benefit from the experiences of their students and professors at host universities, and if so, what can they serve for?

The answers to these questions are different, but they all lead us to a common element, and that is internationalization.

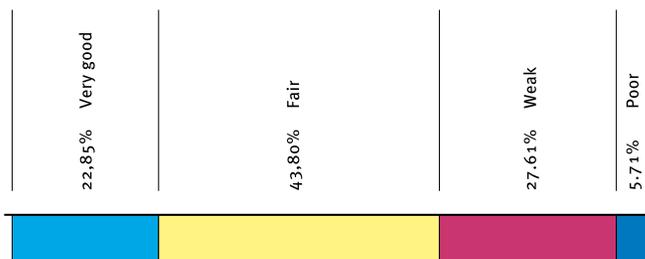
Internationalization of universities recognizes mobility as one of its key components. Mobility users returning to their home universities come back with various experiences and best practice examples that can be integrated into the Montenegrin higher education system. The ability to materialize them depends on two factors, the level of readiness of the mobility users to engage in this, and the level of readiness of the universities to accept and support their commitment.

The integration of foreign models into domestic universities is in fact synonymous with internationalization itself. And it goes hand in hand with enhancing the quality of higher education, increasing visibility, increasing competition between universities and cooperation between them. Therefore, to what extent it can be said that students from Montenegrin universities who have spent part of their studies abroad have been able to contribute to the internationalization of their universities? Namely, to what extent they have succeeded in bringing changes by integrating the methods encountered abroad in the Erasmus+ Programme Countries?

The research done has focused on one aspect of internationalization that may be more tangible for students in changing or improving teaching and learning methodology at their home universities. Thus, students are asked to measure the extent to which they think they can influence the teaching methods

at their home institutions, by taking the methodologies encountered abroad as best practice examples.

Most students rated the impact as "fair". Namely, 43.80% of them think that they have made a fair impact on teaching and learning methodology, followed by a group of those who think the opportunity is weak to have such an impact (27.61%). Then comes a group of 22.85% who think they could have influenced it very well. Meanwhile, the group that thinks that they have "poorly" managed to influence the teaching and learning methods is 5.71%.



As a mobility student, to what extent do you think you impact the teaching and learning methods at your home institution?

But what are the changes that Erasmus+ mobility students would make at their home institutions in Montenegro based on their experiences gained at EU universities? Thus, what are the advantages that students have encountered at the universities of the programme countries that they consider to be lacking in the higher education system in Montenegro?

The suggestions are numerous and they differ from one another. The most common suggestion we find in their answers is that the research and practice aspects should be more involved and proportionally combined in teaching and learning met-

# Opening minds:

## how did Erasmus+ change my way of thinking?

hodology. Some of the summarized suggestions that students have offered are listed below:

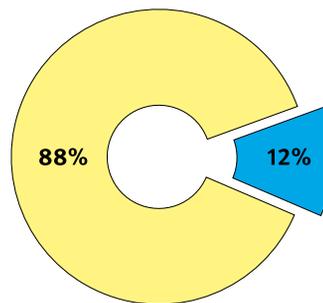
- Interactive student-professor approach discussion during lectures;
- Mandatory internships in order to gain practical knowledge;
- Building research capacities. Fostering essay and research writing and encouraging student involvement in research work;
- Changing the theoretical approach of teaching: increasing the practical aspect of studying;
- Case studies: analyzing recent developments in the relevant field during classes;
- Introduction of courses lectured in English;
- Improvement of student-professor communication;
- Organization of workshops, seminars, projects, field researches, debates, by encouraging team work;
- Offering free courses for foreign languages;
- Increasing the use of Moodle Platform and improving digitalization;
- Modernizing the literature;
- Introducing more elective and diverse courses. Allowing students take classes that are not specified in their own curriculum.

On an individual aspect, the most dominant change that mobility brings is changing the opinion and image of a particular nation, state or culture. Mobility brings together people from different cultures and thereby creates the opportunity for cultures to get to know each other, a recognition that often breaks the prejudices and stereotypes that students come up with. Mobility is, therefore, a new set of cornerstones that rebuilds new opinions and attitudes about foreign cultures, previously inexistent or diametrically opposite to the prior ones.

The survey data shows that a significant majority of Montenegrin students, 88% of them, did not have prejudices about the culture of the country they went to. A percentage of 12% of them did have. But, do they continue to have the same prejudices after the mobility period?

In some cases, on rare occasions, the impressions they have previously had, have proved to be true. For example, one of student states: “I believed Austrians were

cold and distant. They are indeed.” Unlike this seldom encountered opinion, the dominant opinion of students proves that in most cases the prejudices have been broken as the mobility period spent there proved otherwise.



Did you have prejudices about the nation and culture of the hosting country prior to mobility period?

■ No, I didn't have    ■ Yes, I had

“Due to the political situation, Turkey is described as a closed community, which is far from real situation”, one of the respondents stated. Similarly, another student tells: “I imagined Turkish people to be very introverted and not helpful to others. I realized they were actually quite the opposite, they are very happy to help others and are more open minded nation than I expected.”

While for the Turks the most common prejudice portrayed them as closed-minded people, for some of the peoples of Central Europe, such as the Germans or the Poles, the most common thought represented them as cold, distanced

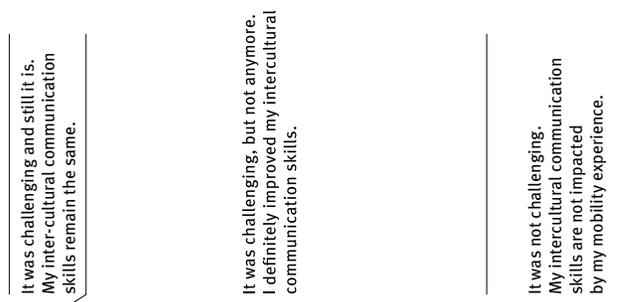
and unsociable peoples. Based on this, one of the students pointed out: "I have perceived the Poles as cold and distant before going to Warsaw on mobility, but during that period I was proven otherwise." As for the Poles, there was a similar common opinion about Germans. "I thought German people were cold and unfriendly, but I realized that was not true when I was living there", one of the students says.

*"My general opinion of German people before the exchange was that they are cold rational machines that aren't that social. While this was confirmed to some degree, I also found some of the most open minded and friendly people among them. Granted, I did not know much about Germany as a whole before the exchange, but now I feel like I know quite a lot."*

*"I made friends that completely changed my perception of Germans and the Western Europe generally. I thought they were cold people but it is not true."*

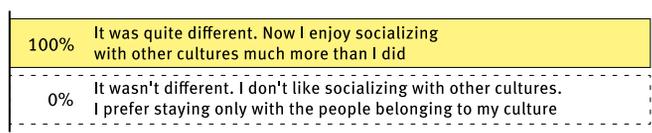
*"I imagined Turkish people to be very introverted and not helpful to others. I made sure that actually quite the opposite, they are very happy to help others and are a more open minded nation that I expected."*

In addition to breaking down prejudices about foreign cultures, students also learned to improve intercultural communication skills. For the majority of students (68.36%), intercultural communication was a challenge in itself, but thanks to mobility, it is no longer. Only 6.12% of students failed to cope with the difficulties of intercultural communication, whose communication skills remained at the same level as before mobility. Whereas for 25.51% intercultural communication was not considered a difficulty. They believe that intercultural communication skills have not been affected by the mobility period.



How challenging was for you intercultural communication at the beginning of the mobility period? Do you think mobility period has improved your intercultural communication skills?

Intercultural tolerance is an indisputable element of the mobility period that makes a positive impact on students, by raising it significantly. Getting to know new cultures makes students more open to accepting foreigners and being an integral part of that culturally diverse environment. Different intercultural contacts open their minds and raise the level of tolerance and affection towards culturally diverse members. The research data show that all the surveyed Erasmus+ students have absolutely become more open to socializing with other cultures.



During your mobility, how culturally diverse was the learning environment? After the mobility period, do you feel more open and willing to socialize with other cultures?

Based on this statement, one of the students said: "Living in an international environment made me more aware and tolerant towards others. I have learned to accept differences and be more receptive to new and different ideas or the opinions of others."

Erasmus+ mobility offers a multicultural environment, initially perceived as a challenge and then as an unstoppable

desire to be part of it. The desire to explore as many such environments with new cultures is encountered by most students. Herewith, one of them confesses: "The mobility period enhanced my desire to meet new people and discover new cultures and values". In this way, as one student says, they become "[...] much more open-minded, talkative and friendly and [...] cannot wait for new international experiences."

*"I enjoyed being an Erasmus+ student in Turkey, because I had a chance to meet so many cultures that I would probably have never met if I had not been part of Erasmus+. Now I have friends from Asia, entire Europe and even Africa."*



*"I expanded my horizons, I became a global citizen passionate about discovering different cultures and ready to adapt to any environment."*

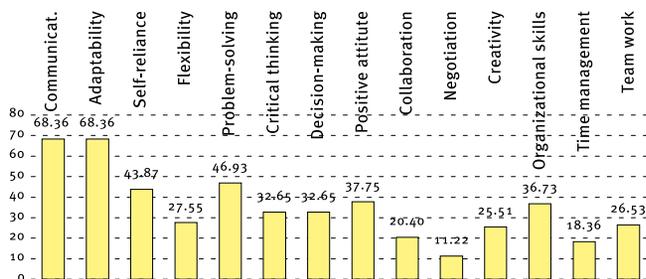
## Developing skills: personal and professional development

"Before the mobility I was very shy and introvert. During the mobility I have learned to be more open-minded and communicative", admits one of the surveyed students.

For Erasmus + students, the mobility period is regarded as one of the most important phases of their personal development. At first glance, the limited mobility period, from 3 to 12 months, may sound short to play such an influential role, but no matter how short-term it might be, at the personal aspect, it makes a drastic difference to its users, equipping them with skills that will then have long-term and life importance. Mobility period helped students building their personalities. Namely, the period of mobility helps you "grow" significantly. Going into an unknown world enriches the mobility students' personality. Rarely are those students who returned with the same personality traits as before going on mobility. Mobility is a challenging period, helping an individual to create or reinforce the personal qualities of young people by making

them more courageous in fighting fears, raising the courage to advance further, relying on their own strengths, becoming independent or even creating the missing confidence.

In this way, the importance of mobility at the personal level lies in the soft skills gained during mobility. In the research conducted, out of the 15 soft skills offered, the top 5 soft skills that students from Montenegro have acquired during mobility are: communication, adaptability, problem solving, confidence, positive attitude.



Pick top 5 soft skills gained during mobility

*“I think mobility gives many important skills, but that the most important is the ability to see the world more clearly and be more adaptable in it, to always keep your mind open and think critically.”*

In addition to personal development, there is no doubt that the mobility period at prestigious European universities has a lot to give within the professional context. The vast majority of students are satisfied with what the mobility period offers when it comes to professional development. Namely, 70.52% believe that their professional skills are useful for their future career development. Whereas 27.37% of them consider the obtained professional skills at the host universities fairly useful, and only 2.10% do not find them useful.



How satisfied are you with the professional skills you gained during your mobility?

Do you find them useful for your future carrier development?

## Erasmus+ mobility opportunities impacting employability opportunities: why do the skills gained matter?

It is often believed that studying abroad opens up more doors for employability opportunities. Here is the response of one of the surveyed students: “In this way you have more arguments on popular interview question ‘Why should we choose you?’”. Meanwhile, another surveyed student comments that “[...] all the time on interviews my mobility experience was something my interviewers would find interesting, would like to talk about and make me different from other candidates.”

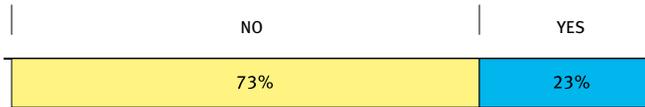
In the survey, students were asked if the mobility period helped them find a job. In fact, data show that for most students (73%), mobility has not been an advantage to be hired. But of course, it should be taken into account that there are stu-

dents who have not yet completed their studies and are not considering employment opportunities. A composition of 27% of students should not be neglected. Here are the ones that see mobility as an important factor of employment. “Every employer appreciates international experience” one of the surveyed students stated. This group of 27% fully recognizes the importance of mobility and consider that building of professional development in an international environment is of particular importance for your future career. According to them, employers appreciate exactly the skills that mobility provides. As one of the students highlights: “All of my employers especially appreciated my international mobility, as it demonstrated a unique skill set that I gained [...]”

*“International organizations or companies are more than often looking to employ people who have had an international experience abroad and that can work in a multicultural environment.”*

*“People love employees who have seen the world and have the world within themselves.”*

*“I was hired by an international non-governmental organization thanks to my Erasmus+ experience.”*

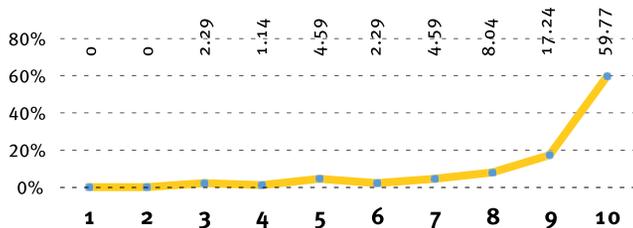


Did mobility period help you find a job?

## Another societal impact: studying in EU – getting closer to EU

An indirect impact, or often aim of the mobility program is bridging the students of the mobility and the country where the mobility takes place. Exchange programmes are popular “public diplomacy means” through which countries manage to build the desired image in the eyes of the incoming young generations, to strengthen the connections with them, and thus build their supportive approach aiming at deepening cooperation with the target countries from which students come.

So, how well has this European Union program succeeded in attracting young students from Montenegro to it? From 1 to 10, more than half of the students rated their wish to become a member of the European family with ten. And the average grade given by students is 8.97%.



From 1 to 10, how willing are you for Montenegro to join EU?

**8.97**  
Erasmus+ mobility students' average grade on willingness to join EU

*“After experiencing life in the EU and seeing and feeling the benefits that people that live in EU have, I really want Montenegro to become part of EU family so that our people, especially youth can have the same benefits [...].”*

*“I was the Eurosceptic once, but now I think it would have good impact by increasing chances.”*

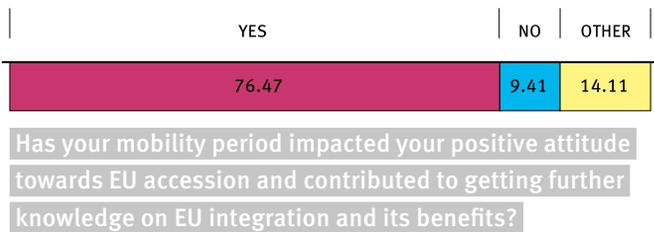


For most students (76.47%) the mobility period reinforced their willingness when it comes to integrating the country into this community, since their stay in the EU only testified the importance and benefits of being part of this community. “I saw numerous benefits that the EU offers to its member countries, so I would like my country to become part of it”, mentions one of the students. Many students say they supported the process of the Montenegrin accession to the European Union before the mobility period but still admit that the mobility period has only increased willingness to be a part of it. As one of the students says: “Even before I had a positive attitude about Montenegrin integration into the EU, but this exchange has only strengthened it.” Reinforcing this attitude stems from the fact that the Erasmus+ period of mobility has enabled, in the words of one student, “ [to see] firsthand all the advantages of being the EU citizen.”

Mobility period, apart from making this positive attitude more sustainable than it used to be, in some cases it has also managed to change the negative attitude. “I was the Eurosceptic once, but now I think it will have a good impact by increasing chances,” one student confessed.

For a smaller group of students (9.41%), mobility did not influence their attitude towards the EU accession. “I don’t feel like my mobility had anything to do with Montenegro joining EU. My university subjects were not directly linked or related to the process of EU accession and neither did I feel being in an international community brought me closer to the EU”, one of the student lets us know.

Meanwhile, the attitude of 14.11% of Erasmus+ surveyed students remained the same as before the mobility period. “I already had a positive attitude towards EU integration” or “I was thinking the same before my exchange program”, are some of the answers of the group of students who consider their attitude towards EU accession has not been impacted by their Erasmus+ mobility period.



**T**he European Educational Space is not an imaginary space. It is rather like Euclidean space with the coordinates called science, education and mutual understanding. In addition to the learned, educational and intercultural progress made by the students taking part in mobility, there is also an interesting shift when it comes to employers. When hiring, employers prefer students who took part in some form of academic mobility during their studies to students with foreign language skills highlighted on their CV. Therefore, not only the evidence of foreign language knowledge is appreciated, but also the proof that you have actively used it during your study period.

Every person outside their own country's borders is its informal ambassador. With the Faculty of Economics index card, our students have been given the opportunity to be such ambassadors in more than 30 countries. They get to know others as well as themselves. It may happen that, by staying in the host country, students get to know not only the host country, but even the home country. They may be surprised by some simple question and they will realize that they are shocked. Most foreign colleagues know the number of inhabitants in your country or its capital city, but they may ask you to tell them the number of rivers in your country or the number of sunny days during the year. Nowadays, when cars and mobile phones have become synonymous with mobility, involvement in international academic mobility shows that it is a real prestige to be a mobile student. It is good to move away from our country, our family and our local friends, not to forget them more easily, but to realize how much they mean to us. As soon as students return from exchange, they realize that they were not right when we call other universities foreign universities. Their stay at a foreign university will be calculated as the sum of their steps and thoughts and will become an inseparable part of their identity. These countries, their inhabitants and their universities will only remain foreign if we never approach them and get to know them.

*Prof. Saša Popović, Faculty of Economics,  
University of Montenegro*

**M**obility is a source of strong professional motivation, many students discover their true aspirations during the mobility period, and researchers often take decisive steps in their projects, partly due to productive isolation, away from everyday obligations. We should not forget the fact that high grant amount allows our students to travel and visit several EU countries during the mobility period, broadening their horizons, at least not having financial difficulties that many students in their home countries face.

Mobility also implies new friendships, new conversations, new insights, discovering new ways to acquire knowledge, but it also means permanent exchange and sharing of one's own culture values with others. I received lots of emails in which professors from foreign universities praise our students for language proficiency, for their agility, willingness and readiness to take part in discussions as well as student activities. This is what motivated some of the foreign professors to visit Montenegro for the first time. Our best students take part in the student exchange, and I can say that they are real ambassadors of our country.

*Prof. Jelena Knežević, Faculty of  
Philology, University of Montenegro*

# *Erasmus+ students from Montenegro recommendations*

**Less think, just do it!**

**Do the exchange  
because it's a life  
changing experience  
that you can learn a  
lot from.**

**Let that be your biggest  
adventure.**

**Don't be afraid  
of a change!**

**Don't waste this  
unique opportunity  
and apply for  
Erasmus+!**

**Take the  
chance and  
enjoy life as  
an Erasmus+  
student.**

***If you want to expand your personal and professional skills, this is a great opportunity.***

***If you are thinking to apply for this kind of exchange, do it immediately because this experience can only improve you in many ways.***

***Be an explorer and not a conformist.***

***Take a chance and make yourself happy. Make a change in your life. You won't regret!***

***Don't be afraid and seek for opportunities. Go for new experiences!***

***Be brave!***

***Go out of your comfort zone and rise wiser and stronger!***

## *Useful links:*

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### **National Erasmus+ Office**

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*[www.erasmusplus.ac.me](http://www.erasmusplus.ac.me)*

### **University of Montenegro**

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*[www.ucg.ac.me](http://www.ucg.ac.me)*

### **University of Donja Gorica**

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*[www.udg.edu.me](http://www.udg.edu.me)*

### **University Mediterranean**

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*[unimediterran.net](http://unimediterran.net)*

### **Western Balkans Alumni Association**

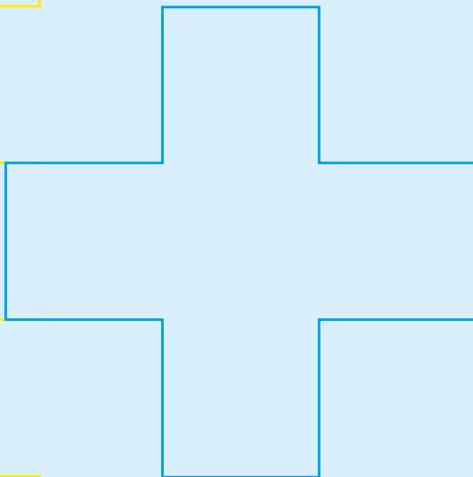
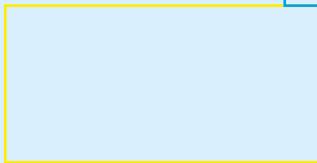
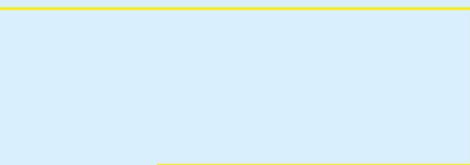
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*[www.western-balkans-alumni.eu](http://www.western-balkans-alumni.eu)*

### **Ministry of Education**

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*[www.mpin.gov.me](http://www.mpin.gov.me)*





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