

## **International Study Exchange Programmes as a Form of Student Mobility**

### **Abstract**

Czech students have been only little surveyed as a mobile population so far, despite the increasing importance of student mobility in the contemporary globalised world. This thesis examines student mobility on the example of Czech students from geographical departments of Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Science, who joined the Erasmus exchange programme as a part of their studies in the past five years (2005–2010). This study aims to analyze the directions and intensity of Erasmus student flows and motivation of students to take part in the student exchange programme. One of the main goals is also to measure the influence of the Erasmus study exchange on the potential international mobility of students. A multi-method approach is used in this case study, including questionnaire surveys among mobile students, interviews with Erasmus coordinators and a statistical analysis of existing data sources (especially the statistics of the geographical departments and the database of Czech National Agency for European Educational Programmes).

The results show that the motivation to student mobility is influenced by many factors. The questionnaire data reveal a major importance of language and life experience as motivational factors. The geography students choosing to study in Germany, Spain and France do so mainly for the reasons of improving their language skills. But the countries such as Norway, Finland, the Netherlands or the United Kingdom seem to attract students not only by the language motivation but in a large extent also by the possibility of further growth within their field of study. The opportunity to travel and a change of the study environment were other motivational factors mentioned especially by the students who selected destinations that are more distant from the Czech Republic. It is common for students of geography to use their study period abroad as an opportunity for travelling and this supports the view of student mobility as a specific part of tourism. The motivation of students is strongly related to their choice of study destination, which is in the case of geographers made mainly according to these criteria: language, the specialization of the foreign university as well as the geographical conditions of the study internship locality. These mainly reflect the specific interests of the investigated students.

The participation in an Erasmus exchange programme has proved to have a relatively strong influence on the increase of international mobility of respondents. The surveyed students show an increased level of mobility for further studies; however, most of them are likely to be internationally mobile for work rather than for studies in the future. The positive international study experience motivates students to search for other types of mobility, often in a broader time-space dimension. The thesis also brings a more general conceptualization of international student mobility.

### **Key words:**

Erasmus, student mobility, globalization, internationalization, study tourism