

# Hidden competences? The impact of international student mobility

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Erasmus+

# Student mobility from and to Germany : Valuable potential for the labour market

## 1. Total number of mobile students 2012



## 2. Erasmus student mobility 2012/13



\* 2011/12

# Financial effects of international mobility: the German example

- DAAD/PROGNOS Study: „The financial effects of cross-boarder student mobility on the economy of the host country“ (2013)

Main results (on the basis of mobility data 2011):

- During study period: International degree students in Germany spend 1.5 billion EUR per year (tax revenues: 400 million Euro; employment effect: 22.000 jobs)
- Public expenditure p.a.: 2 billion EUR
- After graduation: significant effects on employment and tax revenues; if 30 % of international graduates stay and work in Germany, public investment (provision of study places/grants) will be amortised after a period of 5 years.

# Competences expected for employment

## The employers' view

Survey: *DAAD/DIW*, Bachelor, Master and international experience  
(Bonn 2007)

Most important general competences/factors for employment:

- Communication skills and ability to work in a team (99%);
- Problem-solving skills (97%);
- Readiness for lifelong learning (97%);
- Adaptability (95%)

**Hypothesis: Most of these elements can be developed through stays abroad.**

# Competences expected for employment

## The students' view

Survey: *Engel et al.*, The professional value of Erasmus mobility (Bonn 2009)

Most important selection criteria in the recruitment process reported by former Erasmus students:

- Personality (83%)
- Subject area (74%)
- Foreign language skills (60%)
- Specialisation/ Major subject (59%)
- International experience (53%)

# Effects of international mobility on students

## The students' view

- 1. Survey: *Maiworm/Over*, Student mobility and European identity (DAAD, Bonn 2013)

Sample: 8.500 former and future Erasmus students

Main positive effects on :

- Personal development (94%)
- Contacts to people from other countries (92%)
- Foreign language skills (90%)
- Understanding of host country (87%)

Other results: Only 39% considered the professional value to be high; only 41% changed their attitude to Europe; duration of stay and living situation are important factors for the development of a European identity.

# Effects of international mobility on students

## The students' view

- 2. Survey: *DAAD/HIS, Wissenschaft weltoffen* (Bielefeld 2013).

Main positive effects of international mobility on German students:

- ability to cope with new situations (88%)
- understanding different ways of living and working (86%)
- making friends from other countries (82%)
- improved foreign language skills (80%)
- increased independence (78%)

# Effects of international mobility on students

## The employers' view

- Study: *DAAD/DIW*, Bachelor and Master on the labour market: The view of German enterprises on international experience and competences (Köln 2011)

For companies the most important competences gained abroad are:

- Bachelor students: (1) Knowledge of other cultures and business practices, (2) New methods and professional expertise, (3) Foreign language skills;
- Master students: (1) Work independently, (2) Communication skills, (3) Problem solving;

For export-oriented companies foreign language skills are of very high importance (95%).

# Type and duration of stay abroad

## The employers' view

- Study: *DAAD/DIW*, Bachelor and Master on the labour market: The view of German enterprises on international experience and competences (Köln 2011)

Attractive types of stay abroad for export-oriented companies:

- Traineeships of 3-6 months (74.7%)
- Traineeships of more than 6 months (69.7%)
- Study abroad periods of more than one semester (64.7%);

# International experience, job search and type of job

Study: Engel et al., The professional value of Erasmus mobility, (Bonn 2009)

- Internationally experienced graduates need less time to find a job than graduates without this experience.

Study: Engel et al. (Bonn 2009)

- Graduates with international experience are significantly more often in jobs with international components. Important aspects of these jobs:
  - ❖ Communication in foreign languages (86%); Cooperation with colleagues/clients in other countries (75%);

Survey: HIS, Graduate Survey (Hannover 2012)

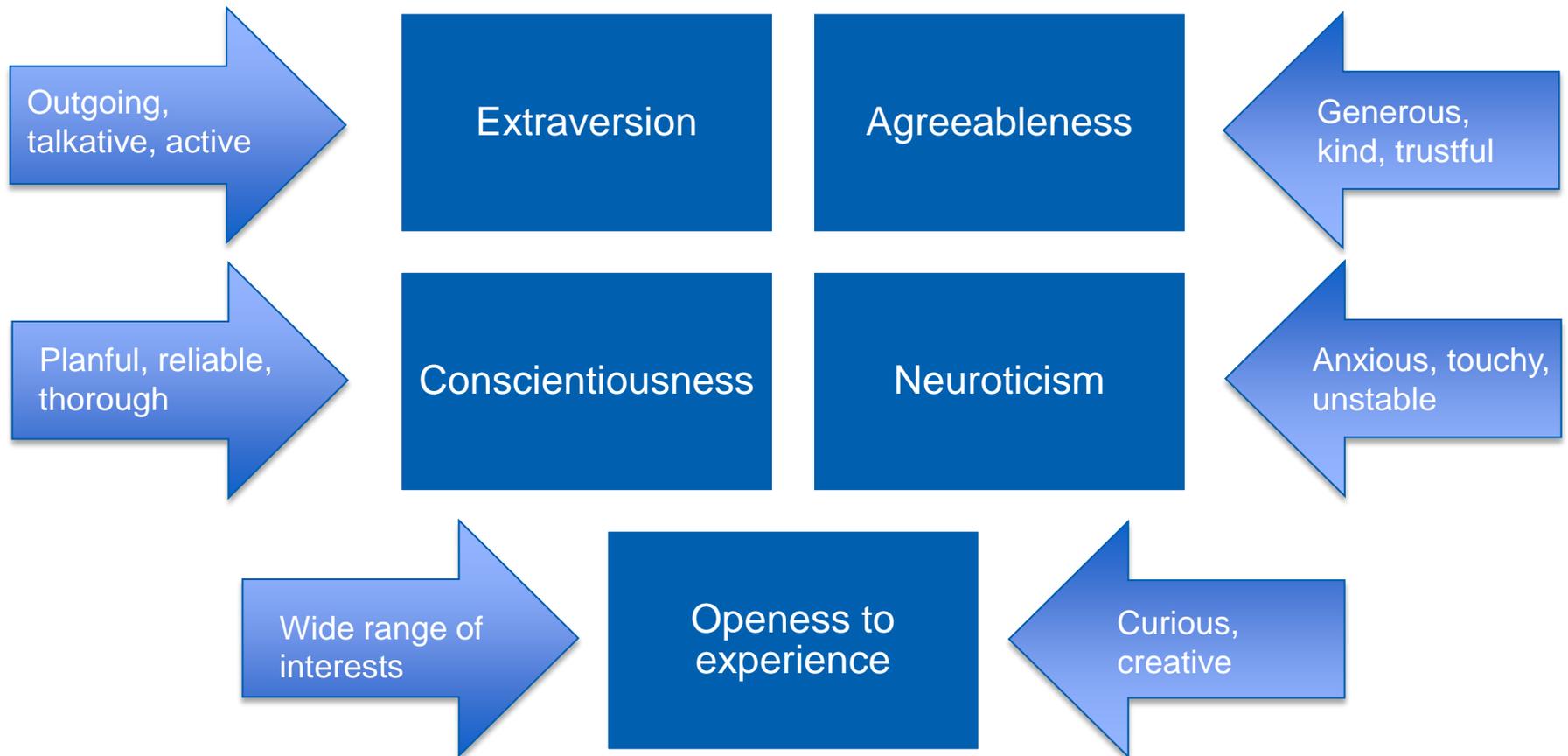
- 5 years after graduation, about three times more graduates with international experience (9-10%) were employed abroad than graduates without such experience (3%).

# Personality, international experience and employment

**Personality** and **individual competences** are influenced by international experience and seem to be important recruitment or employment factors

- Students' view: personality and recruitment (83%; *Engel et al. 2009*)
- Students' view: international experience and personal development (94%; *Maiworm/Over 2013*)
- Employers' view: elements required for employment: communication skills and ability to work in a team (99%); problem-solving skills (97%); readiness for lifelong learning (97%); adaptability (95%; *DAAD/DIW 2007*)
- Employers' view: international experience and competences/skills of Master students: (1) Work independently, (2) Communication skills, (3) Problem solving (*DAAD/DIW 2011*)

# Big five factors of personality



*Reference: e.g. Costa/McCrae (1992)*

# Factors of international assignee selection

## 1. Personality characteristics

- Extraversion (e.g. learn social culture in the host country)
- Agreeableness (e.g. strive for mutual understanding)
- Conscientiousness (e.g. high international work performance)
- Emotional stability (e.g. cope with stress in unfamiliar environment)
- Openness (e.g. accept new culture, curious)

## 2. Language skills

## 3. Prior international experience

Level of personality characteristics, language skills and prior international experience is contingent upon the type of international assignment.

Reference: Caligiuri/Tarique 2005

# Comments on the Finnish survey on hidden competences

1. „Traditional“ competences of internationally mobile students (e.g. language skills, intercultural knowledge; tolerance) are similar to those described in German studies; but in some German studies (the broader concept of) personality is mentioned as an important recruitment/selection factor;
2. Similar results in some German studies: even if employers do not mention international experience as important recruitment criteria, they value competences/personal qualities developed by international mobility;
3. Same underlying hypothesis on the effect of international mobility: mobility „produces the kind of competences“ and helps develop personality characteristics that employers are seeking; but more data and research results are needed to prove this hypothesis;
4. Necessary but not sufficient: Better description of (hidden) competences leads to improved understanding and appreciation of international experience on the labour market; yes, but for employment other factors are also crucial (size and international orientation of a company, type of job; personal performance in assessment procedure);
5. The Finnish research project is an important step forward; next step could be to ask how job descriptions and assessment procedures can be adapted to ensure a better matching of internationally experienced applicants with specific job requirements.

# Conclusions

1. Internationally mobile students show personality characteristics and competences required by employers, especially by export-oriented companies with more than 250 employees;
2. The personality characteristics and competences described by internationally experienced students and employers are in many cases of a general nature; for recruitment and international assignee selection more detailed and individualised descriptions of the applicants' profiles are needed; this would make the (hidden) competences more explicit and usable for the labour market; but better descriptions alone are not enough to recruit the right staff for a given job (need for improving methods of job specific assessment);
3. It seems that international experience contributes to the development of job-relevant competences and personal qualities; type and duration of international experience matter for further developing competences and personal characteristics in the eyes of employers; however, we need more research to prove this hypothesis;
4. International experience has a positive effect on job search and type of employment: Graduates with mobility experience find a job more quickly and work more often in international environments than graduates without this experience.

# Thank you for listening!

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