

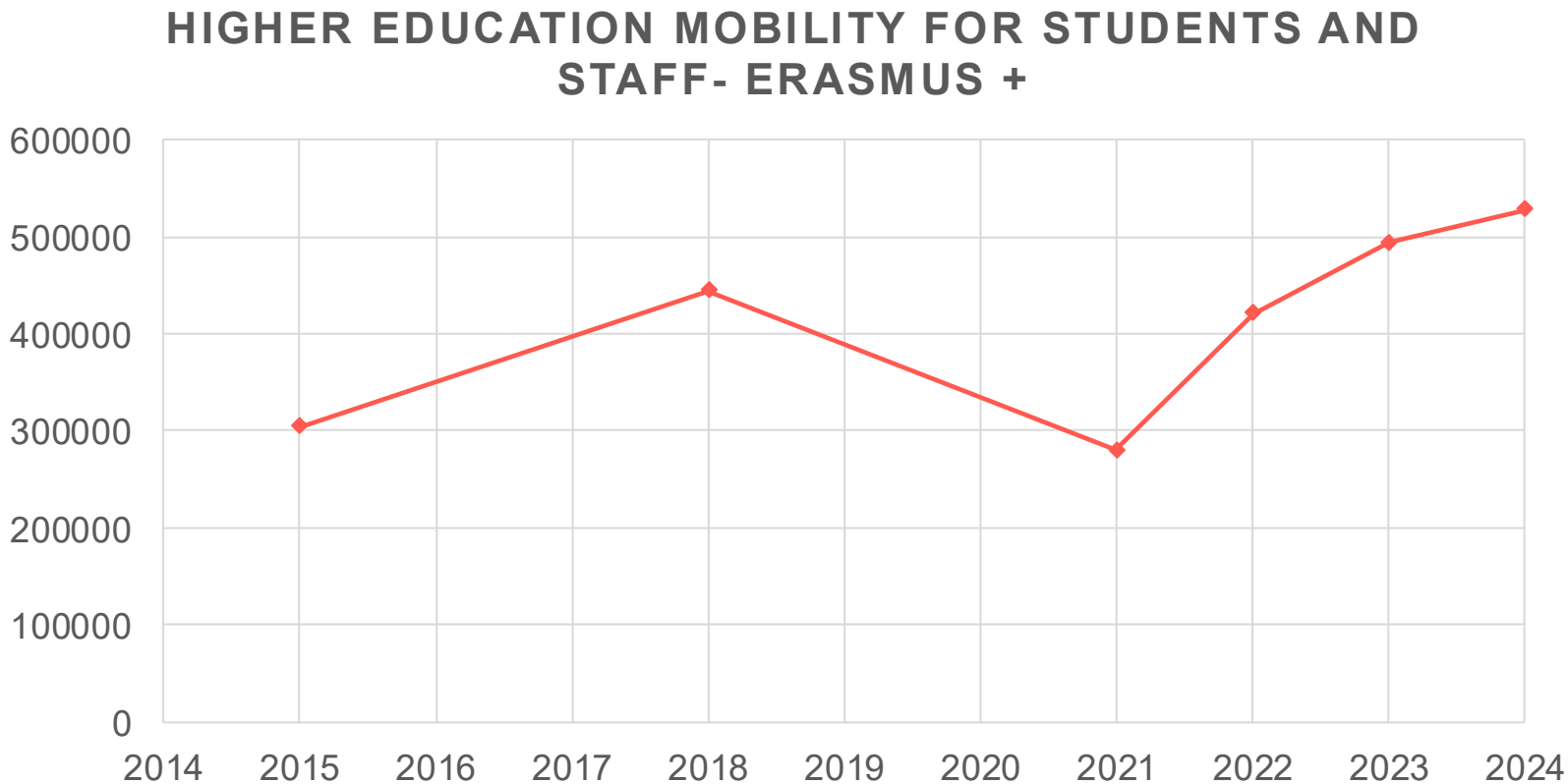
SOCIO-ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF ERASMUS+ MOBILITY AT STUDENT LEVEL



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Economic Impact of Erasmus+
Student Mobility
Tróia
23 June 2026

The annual number of students and staff going abroad through Erasmus+ has recovered and increased above pre-Covid-19 levels



Source: Erasmus+ annual reports, Statistical annexes

Rationale and objective of the presentation

Despite the popularity of international student exchange programs (and the increasing resources allocated to them), debate continues over what students actually gain from this experience.

This underscores the importance of critically reviewing and summarising the results of studies examining the impact of participation in study abroad programmes.

In my opinion, going through this literature, 6 main takeaway messages emerge.

Takeaway message #1

Correctly measuring the effects of participation in study abroad programmes on subsequent outcomes is very challenging from a methodological point of view

The majority of existing works evaluating the impact of these programmes do not use appropriate methodologies and tend to overestimate the effect of interest due to positive participation selection. Results of studies not adequately controlling for selection into study abroad programmes need to be interpreted cautiously.



E.g., statistical challenges in identifying the impact of studying abroad on labour market outcomes

Imagine one wants to study the effect of participation in study abroad programmes during university on post-graduation wages. Two participation selection issues should be considered:

*Selection on observables

Participation in study abroad programmes is likely to be associated with individual and family attributes that are related to higher wages, independent of the international education experience (e.g. socio-economic status, academic performance).

*Selection on unobservables (difficult or impossible to measure characteristics)

Unobserved individual characteristics (e.g., motivation, drive) driving the decision to participate in international student exchange schemes might be correlated with subsequent labour market outcomes.

Takeaway message #2

It is extremely challenging to carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the effects of studying abroad.

Participation in study abroad programmes may influence a wide spectrum of young people's outcomes. First, it is almost impossible to identify all these outcomes. Second, while some outcomes can be quite easily measured (e.g., foreign language proficiency, working abroad, being in employment), others are (very) difficult to assessed and measured quantitatively (e.g., global citizenship, open-mindedness).



E.g., studying abroad and environmental awareness

Living and studying abroad may broaden young people's perspectives, increasing their awareness about global issues. What is included in the concept of “global citizenship”?

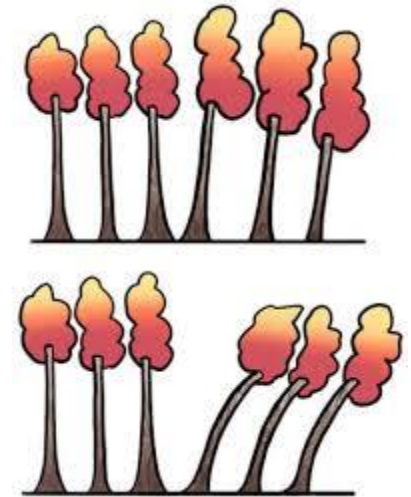
Issues like climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss and resource scarcity have a global character, and all countries and their inhabitants share a collective responsibility to tackle them. An international education experience may therefore make individuals (more) environmentally conscious.

Di Pietro (2025) finds that international education mobility has a modest but statistically significant positive effect on environmental concerns.

Takeaway message #3

The effects of participation in study abroad programmes are heterogeneous.

They vary according to various dimensions including programmes' characteristics (e.g., duration of the study abroad period), participants' individual characteristics (e.g., socio-economic background), student's country of origin, and student's country of destination.



Heterogeneous effects of studying abroad

Study abroad programs may improve labour market outcomes of especially students from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds (Di Pietro, 2015; Waibel et al. 2018; Sorrenti, 2017). They may provide them with an opportunity to develop many marketable skills (such as intercultural competence, global awareness, and foreign language skills) that their background would not otherwise have exposed them to. In the US, studying abroad is found to be particularly beneficial in community colleges.

There is a positive relationship between post-graduation earnings and duration of the study abroad experience (e.g., Di Pietro, 2022).

Liwiński (2019) finds that studying in certain countries (hence becoming fluent in these countries' languages) offers an especially large labour market premium.

Takeaway message #4

While there are many single-country studies examining the impact of participation in study abroad programmes, the number of relevant cross-country studies is low. This reflects the lack of appropriate international datasets.

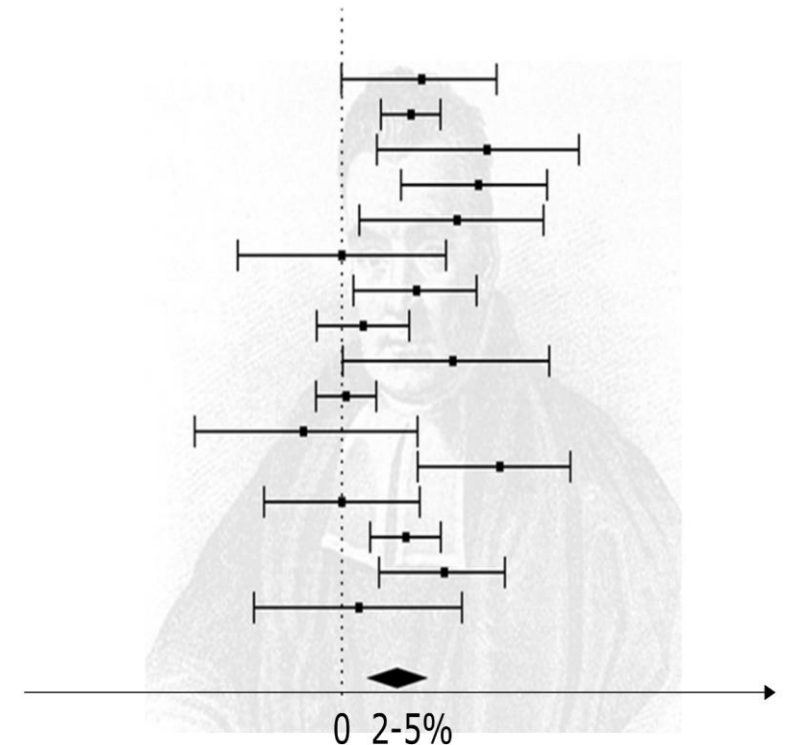
However, it may be important to calculate an 'average' effect across countries. Meta-analysis studies can help address this issue.



Meta-analysis on the effect of studying abroad on post-graduation wages

Di Pietro (2022) carries out a meta-analysis considering results from 17 studies covering 19 different countries (including 14 from the EU). He finds that overall wage premium associated with studying abroad varies between 2 and 5 percent.

Average effect of studying abroad on wages



Meta-analysis on the effect of studying abroad on academic outcomes (e.g., course performance, course completion, time to course completion)

Di Pietro (2026) performs a meta-analysis summarizing the results of 29 studies from 10 countries (including 6 EU Member States). 312 estimates of the academic effects of studying abroad are collected. The majority of these estimates are positive and statistically significant.

Interestingly, more recent studies are more likely to find positive academic outcomes.

Positive	Stat sign*	53.2%
Negative	Stat sign*	8.7%
Positive or negative	Not stat sign*	38.1%

5% level

Takeaway message #5

Although it is difficult make a comparison between different labour market outcomes, available evidence would seem to suggest that studying abroad has a stronger effect on employment prospects than on earnings potential.



Evidence on the effect of studying abroad on wages/employment

Wages	Employment
Rodrigues (2013) finds that international mobile graduates have <u>3 percent</u> higher earnings than their non-mobile counterparts	Di Pietro (2015) finds that Italian graduates who have studied abroad are approximately <u>23 percentage points</u> more likely to be in employment relative to their non-internationally mobile peers
Asankulova and Thomsen (2023) show that in Germany the wage gains associated with studying abroad for females are between <u>3 and 4 percent</u> .	Iriondo (2019) shows that in Spain former Erasmus+ participants are observed to have a <u>10.6 percent</u> higher probability of having a job compared to their non-mobile counterparts
	De Benedetto et al. (2025) look at graduates from a Southern Italian university and conclude that participation in Erasmus+ increases the probability of finding a job by <u>16.1 percent</u>

Takeaway message #6

Participation in study abroad programmes promotes international labour mobility, facilitates employment in companies with an international reach, and enhances the acquisition of skills and competencies that are key to support Europe's competitiveness, economic resilience and prosperity.

Many students are determined to pursue a globally oriented career before they go overseas. Others decide to do so only following their participation in study abroad programmes.



Studying abroad and international skills

Several studies (e.g., Di Pietro, 2012; Parey and Waldinger, 2011) show that studying abroad increases the probability of working abroad. Geographical mobility, including intra-EU mobility, may help mitigate labour shortages and balance economic disparities across countries. Di Pietro (2025) finds that an international education experience abroad increases temporary international labour mobility.

Graduates who study abroad through the Erasmus program are found to be more likely to work in internationally oriented organizations and carry out work tasks with an international component. Jobs involving intercultural interaction are on the rise and are expected to rise further (World Economic Forum, 2022).

A recent study commissioned by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and carried out by the Institute of German Economics finds that the skills developed by students during their learning periods abroad (e.g., flexibility, resilience, intercultural competences) are especially valued by 'digital', 'innovative' and 'international companies'.

Thank you!