

OUTGOING STUDY MOBILITY OF TERTIARY STUDENTS IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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Introduction

The Erasmus programme (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) was established in 1987. According to Altbach (1988), unfavorable conditions in home countries push students to enter mobility while others are pulled by research institutions, social, economical and political environments, and grants and opportunities in host countries.

Zheng (2013) found that economic factors (29%), educational factors (27%), personal factors (15%), social factors (13%), cultural factors (9%), and political factors (7%) were the most important determinants of students' decision to study abroad.

Data collected by the European Commission (2013) state that, in 2011-2012⁷¹, 33 countries took part in the Erasmus Programme, namely the 27 EU Member States, Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, and Turkey.

Regarding the same period, 204.744 students (60,6% female) were in mobility for studies with the average age of 22,5 year benefiting of an average monthly grant of 232€. This figure represents an increase of 7.5% on the two previous years. From all students, 70% were enrolled in Bachelor level studies and 28% in the Master level. The top sending countries, in absolute values, were Spain, Germany, France, Italy, and Poland (these countries also have the largest student populations in Europe); but, as a share of the student population, Luxemburg, Liechtenstein, Spain, Lithuania, and Latvia.

The annual growth rate of outbound mobility was highest in Croatia (48%), followed by Denmark at 20% and Slovenia at 18%. An increase between -1% and -14% was verified for six countries regarding outbound mobility, namely Bulgaria, Estonia, Romania, Liechtenstein, Iceland, and Cyprus. Concerning the balance between inbound and outbound exchanges Austria, France, Hungary, and Switzerland showed a difference of below 7%. A gap or above 100% was recorded in six countries: Cyprus, Ireland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Malta.

Literature review

The main research about international student mobility is based on the push-pull framework (Altbach, 1988; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Li & Bray, 2007). Push factors are present within the home country influencing the student's decision to study abroad. Pull factors operate within the host country turning a specific country more attractive than others⁷².

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⁷¹The year under analysis for the present research study is 2011. Reports and data published by the European Commission and the Eurostat about the Erasmus Programme in 2013 concern the period 2010-2011 and 2011-2012. Newer data are available but not for all countries; therefore the authors chose the year 2011 since most data are available.

⁷²Both forces explain international student mobility. Naidoo (2007) presents an integrative model.

Migration theory has also been used by scholars to study international mobility students' flows. From the economic point of view the rational choice depends on cost-benefit models (Almeida, Gonçalves & Mirian, 2001; Sá, Florax & Rietveld, 2004; King, 2012). According to the socio-cultural dimension (social choice approach) of migration theory decisions are taken in social units, such as the family.

The application of the gravity theory revealed two variables that explain international outgoing student flows, such as per capita gross domestic product (GDP) (Warin & Svaton, 2008) and political forces (political rights, political instability) (Karemera, Iwuagwu & Davis, 2000; Warin & Svaton, 2008).

Additional empirical research identified the following explanatory push factors linked to the access to higher education in home country: unavailability of course at home, competitive entry requirements, lack of university places, inability to get a place in course one wanted to study (Naidoo, 2007; Liu & Wang, 2008; McKarthy, Sen & Garrity, 2012) and differences in quality between a foreign degree and a domestic one (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Bourke, 2000; Szelényi, 2006).

Also several demographic, geographic, economic, and political push dimensions were confirmed as playing an important role in the decision-making process. Regarding demography and geography, significant push factors are population, educational background (Findlay, King, Stam & Ruiz-Gelices, 2006; Souto & McCoshan, 2006), and social background of the student and geodesic distance (Naidoo, 2007; Liu & Wang, 2008; Bessey, 2012). Concerning economic and political variables the level of involvement of the source country in the global economy, government support (González, Mesanza & Mariel, 2011), and government policy and state-directed efforts to improve political and academic relations play an important role (Pan, 2013). According to scholars, the main general pull factors for student mobility is the destination country's size, cost of living, spoken language, climate, and cultural characteristics (Naidoo, 2007; Liu & Wang, 2008). On the specific level, university quality, number of universities in host country, grants and scholarships (Bessey, 2012), and the level of tuition fees in the host country are relevant (González et al., 2011).

A student engaging in international mobility hopes to broaden personal experience (McCarthy et al., 2012) and enhance future employment prospects, by improving cross-cultural competences (Bracht, Engel, Janson, Over, Schomburg & Teichler, 2006; Kumpikaitė & Duoba, 2011, 2013; Kumpikaitė & Mihi-Ramirez, 2013; Vaicekauskas, Duoba & Kumpikaitė-Valiuniene, 2013). Studying abroad increases the students' probability to remain in the destination country after graduation (Gribble, 2008; Parey & Waldinger, 2011) or to work abroad later in life (Teichler, 2007).

Besides the already mentioned variables, cultural characteristics have not yet been thoroughly explored in relation to outgoing flows.

Hofstede (1997), Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) and Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkow (2010) developed a study on cultural values identifying several dimensions of culture that can be measured, namely Power Distance⁷³, Individualism⁷⁴, Masculinity⁷⁵, Uncertainty Avoidance⁷⁶, Long-term Orientation⁷⁷, and Indulgence⁷⁸.

⁷³ Extent to which the less powerful members within a country accept that power is distributed unequally.

⁷⁴ Ties between individuals are loose; in collectivist societies, as its opposite, people are integrated into strong in-groups.

⁷⁵ Extent to which the dominant values of the society are assertiveness and competitiveness; feminine societies are oriented towards quality of life

⁷⁶ Extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations and try to avoid them

⁷⁷ Importance of perseverance and ordering relationships by status within a society

⁷⁸ The extent to which members of a society allow gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun; its opposite is to restrain.

In comparison, the more recent cultural study, known as Globe Project (2014), is based on nine independent cultural dimensions⁷⁹ encompassing practices⁸⁰, in particular: Performance Orientation⁸¹, Future Orientation⁸², Gender Egalitarianism⁸³, Assertiveness⁸⁴, Institutional Collectivism⁸⁵, In-group Collectivism⁸⁶, Power Distance⁸⁷, Human Orientation⁸⁸ and Uncertainty Avoidance⁸⁹. Five clusters for 60 countries were identified by means of these 9 cultural practices. In Europe the following were found: Anglo Cultures (England, Ireland); Eastern Europe (Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Greece, Slovenia); Germanic Europe (Dutch speaking: Netherlands, Belgium; German speaking: Austria, Switzerland, Germany); Latin Europe (Italy, Portugal, Spain, France); and Nordic Europe (Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway)⁹⁰.

Objectives

The aim of the present research is to contrast cultural variables from the presented studies in relation to outgoing flows for studies of Erasmus tertiary⁹¹ students considering countries' cultural characteristics.

Method

The Erasmus Programme is directed to 34 countries, including the current EU Member States, the candidates for EU membership and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Member States. The sample for the present research is as follows: Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Switzerland (CH), Cyprus (CY), Czech Republic (CZ), Germany (DE), Denmark (DK), Estonia (EE), Spain (ES), Finland (FI), France (FR), Greece (GR), Croatia (HR), Hungary (HU), Ireland (IE), Iceland (IS), Italy (IT), Liechtenstein (LI), Lithuania (LT), Luxembourg (LU), Latvia (LV), Malta (MT), Netherlands (NL), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Sweden (SE), Slovenia (SI), Slovakia (SK), United Kingdom (UK), and Turkey (TR)⁹².

Procedures consisted in creating a database with variables from Hofstede et al.'s cultural model (2010) and from the Globe study (2014).

As a result, fifteen cultural variables were considered for the study: Performance Orientation, Future Orientation, Gender Egalitarianism, Assertiveness, Institutional Collectivism, In-group Collectivism, Power Distance (both, from Hofstede and the Globe Study), Human Orientation, Uncertainty Avoidance (both, from Hofstede and the Globe Study), Individualism, Masculinity, Long-term Orientation and Indulgence. However, the Globe study focuses only on 18 of the 33

⁷⁹ Findings built on Hofstede (1980), Schwartz (1994), Smith (1995), Inglehart (1997), among others.

⁸⁰ Cultural practices ("what is") were considered in our research, and not projective cultural values ("what should be"), also incorporated in the GLOBE's study

⁸¹ Degree to which people encourage and reward people for performance

⁸² Degree to which people are willing to defer immediate gratification for future benefits

⁸³ Degree to which people support gender equality

⁸⁴ Degree to which a culture's people are assertive and aggressive

⁸⁵ Degree to which individuals are encouraged to be integrated into broader entities with harmony and cooperation at the expense of autonomy and individual freedom

⁸⁶ Degree to which people take pride in and feel loyalty towards family and institutions

⁸⁷ Degree to which a culture's people are separated by power, authority, and prestige

⁸⁸ Degree to which people are generous and caring, towards others

⁸⁹ Degree to which people seek orderliness and structure

⁹⁰ For a comparison between both models see Shi & Wang (2011)

⁹¹ The world's education systems vary widely in terms of structure and curricular content. In order to compare education systems of countries, UNESCO developed the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). ISCED 2011, a revision to ISCED (1997), was formally adopted by UNESCO Member States (UNESCO General Conference, 36th session, September 2011).

According to ISCED (2011), tertiary education is defined at level 5 (short-cycle tertiary programs), level 6 (bachelor or equivalent first and long degree programs, and level 7 (master or equivalent long first degree programs).

⁹² The Republic of Macedonia did not have students in mobility in 2011.

countries analyzed in this paper. In addition, data on student mobility from the European Commission (2012) were included, such as the number of outgoing and incoming students from the tertiary education (level 5, 6 and 7) per country and the number of incoming students from the tertiary education per country. The Eurostat database provided the number of students in tertiary education (2011 data⁹³).

Firstly, visual analyses based on scatterplots were performed for the fifteen cultural variables.

For that purpose, the ratio between the number of outgoing students and the number of students at tertiary education was calculated for each country, as this new variable was considered more adequate for analyses than the number of outgoing students. The cultural variables were depicted on Y axis and the ratio variable on X axis. Charts were examined taking into account the clusters from the Globe study, not only for the cultural variables included in that work but also for the variables from the Hofstede's model, as this one does not suggest any cluster or typology for grouping countries.

Afterwards, non-parametric analyses were applied, using Kruskal-Wallis H Test. For that reason, a new variable was calculated for each country in order to allow comparisons among them: the difference between the outgoing and the incoming students (DIFFER). Later, the values of the difference were divided into three groups: A) more incoming than outgoing students (near or more than 1000); B) a little difference between the numbers of outgoing and incoming students (± 500); C) more outgoing than incoming students (near or more than 1000). Countries organized according to this difference were divided into these groups: A) Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and United Kingdom constituted the group with more entries; B) Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia, and Switzerland, constituted the group with a little difference; C) Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, and Turkey constituted the group with more outgoing students. This new variable was named DIFFER3G.

These analyses were not performed for Globe's cultural variables, since available data were insufficient for a significance analysis (the study provided data for 18 of the 33 countries included in the present research).

The IBM SPSS Statistics 21.0 software was used.

Results

Descriptive statistics were applied for the ratio between the number of outgoing students and the number of students at tertiary education. Table 1 shows the mean, the standard deviation, the minimum value and the maximum value for this variable.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for outgoing ratio

Outgoing ratio			
<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
0,009	0,004	0,002	0,016

The same procedure was used to study the DIFFER variable. Table 2 shows the mean, the standard deviation, the minimum value and the maximum value for this variable.

⁹³ Just as a reminder, the year under analysis for the present research study is 2011, since newer data are not available for all countries.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for DIFFER

DIFFER variable			
<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
30,85	2929,99	-8927	6059

For variables obtained from the Hofstede's model, two types of analyses were performed. Visual analyses were carried out based on scatterplots and using the typologies established by the Globe study for Europe, which includes Turkey as a country from Middle East. According to that criterion, countries included into the analyses were organized into the following typologies: Anglo Cultures (United Kingdom, Ireland); Eastern Europe (Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Greece, Slovenia); Germanic Europe (Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Germany); Latin Europe (Italy, Portugal, Spain, France) and Nordic Europe (Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway).

Regarding these visual analyses, the points on the scatterplots exhibit no apparent pattern in relation to any variable. In general, the graphs show large variability within the typologies. As a consequence, no chart is displayed. On the other hand, for non-parametric analyses, the values of the difference between the outgoing and the incoming students (DIFFER) were divided into three groups, already mentioned: A) more incoming than outgoing students (near or more than 1000); B) a little difference between the numbers of outgoing and incoming students (± 500); C) more outgoing than incoming students (near or more than 1000). After grouping the values according to the criterion referred, the new variable was named DIFFER3G. A total of six non-parametric analyses were carried out with DIFFER3G as the grouping variable and Power Distance (PDI), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), Long-term Orientation (LTO) and Indulgence (IVR), from Hofstede's model, as the dependent variables. For this procedure Kruskal-Wallis H test was applied.

The analyses revealed statistically significant differences for three of those variables, to be exact, for Power Distance ($\chi^2(2) = 8,95$, $p = .011$), Uncertainty Avoidance ($\chi^2(2) = 7,64$, $p = .022$) and Indulgence ($\chi^2(2) = 8,11$, $p = .017$). No significant differences were found for Individualism ($\chi^2(2) = 1,6$, $p = .450$), Masculinity ($\chi^2(2) = 4,61$, $p = .100$), and Long-term Orientation ($\chi^2(2) = 2,93$, $p = .232$). Table 3 shows the mean rank scores for these variables.

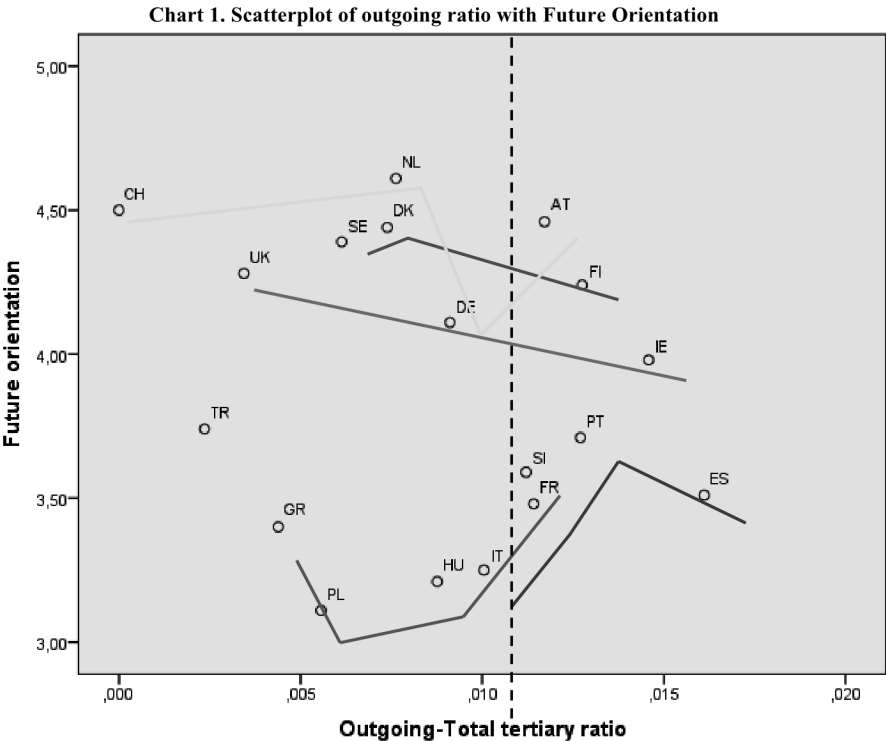
Table 3. Mean rank scores for Hofstede's variables

Mean Rank		
Power Distance (PDI)	A	10,13
	B	14,45
	C	22,15
Individualism (IDV)	A	20,00
	B	16,00
	C	14,77
Masculinity (MAS)	A	10,44
	B	19,32
	C	17,85
Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)	A	8,88
	B	17,45
	C	20,38
Long-term Orientation (LTO)	A	12,00
	B	17,96
	C	19,19
Indulgence (IND)	A	22,88
	B	19,25
	C	11,31

Post hoc paired comparisons after Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated that there were significant differences between groups A and C ($p=.008$) in Power Distance, with higher mean rank for the group of countries with more outgoing than incoming students. Also, when Uncertainty Avoidance was analyzed, groups A and C differed significantly ($p=.006$). Again the mean rank for the group C was higher. Finally, significant differences were found between groups A and C on Indulgence ($p=.01$), showing the first group the highest mean rank score, in this case.

For the analysis of Globe's cultural variables, visual analyses were performed using the typologies established by the Globe study for Europe, including Turkey as a country from Middle East. Considering available data, the countries included into the analyses were the following: Nordic Europe (Denmark, Finland, Sweden); Germanic Europe (Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Netherlands); Anglo Cultures (United Kingdom, Ireland); Eastern Europe (Greece, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia); Latin Europe (Spain, France, Italy, Portugal) and TR in Middle East.

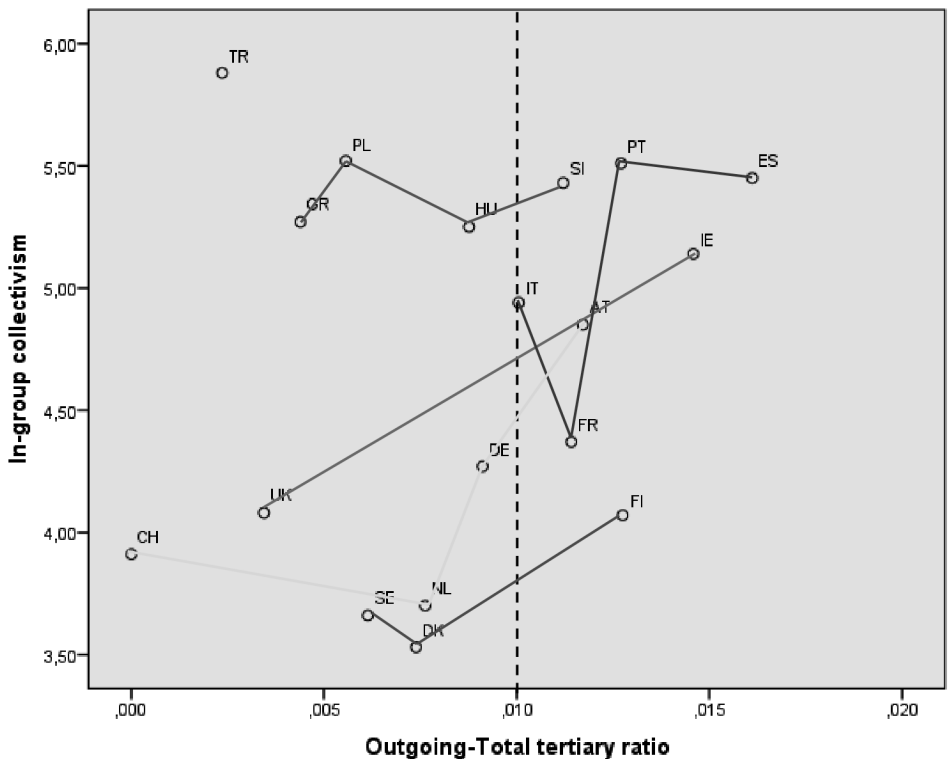
Results revealed apparently no clear pattern in relation to Gender Egalitarianism. However, Germanic Europe and Anglo Cultures seem to be more oriented to performance than the other typologies which reveal lower and more diverse scores in that variable. When an imaginary axis is depicted on the graphic dividing values from X axis into two groups (until 1% and more than 1% to 2% ratio), it is possible to note that the ratio of outgoing students in Latin Europe as a whole are higher than in the other typologies. Looking at the other typologies, only one country from each typology shows a higher ratio (more than 1% to 2% ratio), particularly: Austria, Finland, Ireland and Slovenia. Also, visual data seems to show some pattern regarding to Future Orientation, with Nordic Europe, Germanic Europe and Anglo Cultures with higher scores and Eastern and Latin Europe with lower scores.



With respect to Assertiveness, results seem to show Germanic and Eastern Europe as being more assertive than the other, with the exception of Spain which scores high in assertiveness and at the same time is the country with the higher rate in outgoing students of those depicted in these graphs.

Concerning Institutional Collectivism, Nordic Europe makes the difference, getting away from the other typologies and appearing with higher practice score in this variable. Nevertheless, when In-group Collectivism is assessed, that is, the degree in taking pride in and feeling loyalty towards family and institutions, Nordic and Germanic Europe show lower scores as groups (with the exception of Austria) than Latin and Eastern Europe do.

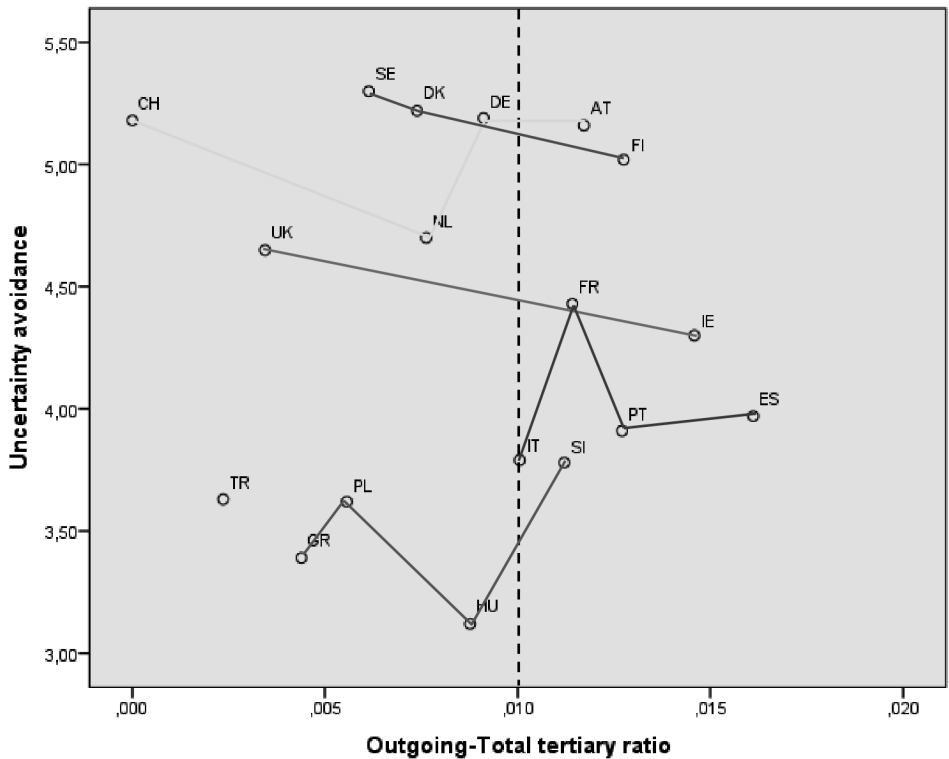
Chart 2. Scatterplot of outgoing ratio with In-group Collectivism



Related to Power Distance, all the countries score high, although Netherlands and Denmark show the lowest values. Taking into account the typologies, it is possible to say that results are more diverse for Nordic and Germanic Europe than for Latin Europe, Eastern Europe and Anglo Cultures. The countries included in these typologies show closer and higher scores than the countries in the former ones. On the other hand, Ireland stands out respecting Human Orientation, with the highest score in this variable. Looking at the typologies, Nordic Europe show higher scores, though no clear pattern seems to appear for typologies, in general.

Lastly, scores in Uncertainty Avoidance divide more clearly the typologies of countries, in a similar way that Future Orientation do, since Nordic and Germanic Europe show higher scores than Eastern and Latin Europe. As countries with higher rates of outgoing students belong to Latin Europe in particular, but also to Anglo Cultures (Ireland), Nordic Europe (Finland), Germanic Europe (Austria) and Eastern Europe (Slovenia), the ratio of outgoing students seem to be independent of those cultural variables.

Chart 3. Scatterplot of outgoing ratio with Uncertainty Avoidance



Discussion and conclusion

The aim of the present research was to analyze the outgoing flows of Erasmus students' in relation to several cultural variables obtained from Hofstede's model (2010) and the Globe study (2014).

The group with more outgoing students is constituted by Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, and Turkey, while the group with more incoming students is composed by Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and United Kingdom.

According to Liu and Wang's (2008) study, three variables were analyzed as determinants behind social and cultural reasons to study abroad: size of the young generation population, level of global involvement of source country, and geographic distance /cultural proximity of host country. More similar cultures make it easier for students in mobility to adapt to the host countries' culture. On the other hand, large cultural differences may attract students who wish to gain experience of living in a different country and culture.

Cultural differences, together with high travel costs, have been identified as the main impediments for international student mobility (Naidoo, 2007). In the mentioned study the variable "cultural proximity" was measured by "geographic proximity" (Three-category Model).

McCarthy et al. (2012) define student mobility as a way to broaden personal experience, not specifying its link to cultural experiences. Several authors, for instance, Kumpikaitė and

Duoban (2011, 2013), Kumpikaitė and Mihi-Ramirez (2013), and Vaicekauskas et al., (2013) refer that future employment prospects are better by improving cross-cultural competences, but nothing is mentioned about cultural differences as a determinant factor in the decision process to study abroad.

Regarding the present study, the visual analyses based on the Hofstede's model does not allow inferences, at least taking into account the typologies from the Globe study. Therefore, attention was focused on the significant analyses. According to the results, significant differences were found between some countries in the understanding about Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Indulgence. In particular, countries with more outgoing students than incoming ones show a higher score in Power Distance and in Uncertainty Avoidance than countries with more incoming students. By contrast, countries with a high inflow rate of students have a higher score in Indulgence. So, countries in which people think that inequality in the distribution of power is better accepted by less powerful citizens and in which people think that citizens feel more threatened by uncertain or unknown situations and try to avoid them, have more outgoing students than incoming ones. Also, countries in which people think that their society tend more to allow gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun have more incoming than outgoing students.

Further research is needed in order to understand the importance of cultural variables in the decision making process to study abroad and the meaning behind the relations found. Although cultural variables tend to be stable over a long time period, a longitudinal dataset for mobility flows would be interesting to analyze. Data from other cultural models could also be integrated in future studies, specifically the Welzel and Inglehart's Cultural Map (2010) integrated in the World Values Survey wave 6 (2010-2012).

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Abstract

The Erasmus Student Exchange Program offers undergraduates the possibility to study abroad. Established in 1987, the project was integrated in The Lifelong Learning Program in 2007. In 2013, according to the Facts and Figures Report (2014) of the European Union, 268.143 students were in mobility during an average of 5,8 months, involving 3.267 Higher Education institutions. The top sending countries were Spain, France, Germany, Italy, and Poland while the most chosen host countries were Spain, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and Italy. Several studies have been conducted on the subject: one of the most important issues generating debates amongst scholars regards the mobility flows. According to Rodríguez, Bustillo and Mariel (2011), the country size, the cost of living, the language and climate, the educational background, the distance, the host university's quality were found to be relevant determinants. Two factors have been added by Bessey (2012), namely, the gross domestic product per capita and the existence of grants. More recently, Pan (2013) confirmed that the state could play also a vital role in shaping international academic mobility, like in China. The aim of the present research is to contrast cultural variables from the presented studies in relation to outgoing flows for studies of Erasmus tertiary students considering countries' cultural characteristics.

Keywords: Student mobility, Erasmus, outgoing students, Europe