



How Erasmus+ student mobility can affect personality traits of students

Georg Krammer, Heiko Vogl & Susanne Linhofer



what are other
words for
broaden your horizons?

diversify, branch out, expand,
spread, vary, differ, etc.,
transform, alter



 Thesaurus.plus

https://thesaurus.plus/synonyms/broaden_your_horizons



Erasmus+ mobility ↔ personality traits

Compared to non-Erasmus students, students who participated in Erasmus have significantly higher values in:

– conscientiousness

(European Union, 2014)

– openness to new experiences

(Vogl, Krammer, Linhofer & Weitlaner, 2016; Zimmermann & Neyer, 2013)

– agreeableness

(Petersdotter, Niehoff, & Freund, 2017; Zimmermann & Neyer, 2013)

– extraversion

(Petersdotter, Niehoff, & Freund, 2017)

– emotional stability

(Vogl, Krammer, Linhofer & Weitlaner, 2016; Petersdotter, Niehoff, & Freund, 2017; Zimmermann & Neyer, 2013)



So does Erasmus+ mobility make me a better student...?

Limitations of prior findings

- 1) Personality already effects wheter one goes on mobility or not.
→ Inherently confounded
- 2) Carefully selected control groups are rare
→ Do the control groups distort the findings?
- 3) Samples include diverse study majors.
→ Same effects for diverse students/experiences?
- 4) Causes for effects are hypothesized a posteriori.
→ Why is there an effect on personality?



Our study: overview

Initial teacher education

- Quantitative data (n=74)
 - Personality: Big five
 - Carefully matched control group
- Qualitative data: qualitative content analysis (n=21)
 - Deductive: personality?
 - Inductive: What drives the Erasmus-experience?

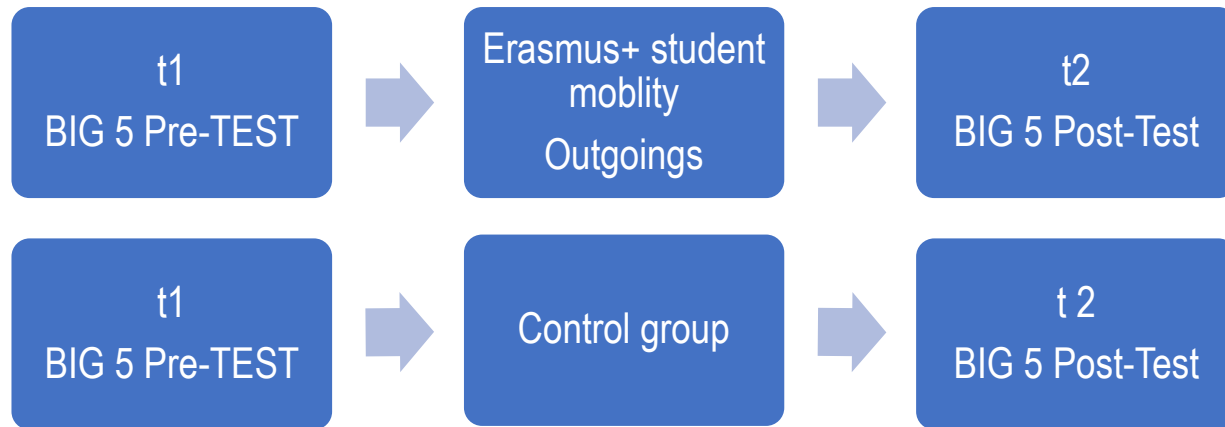


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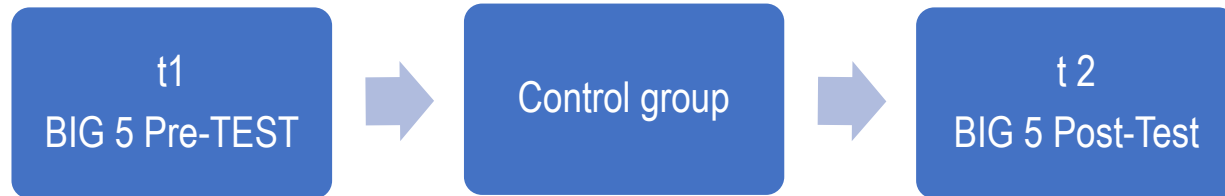
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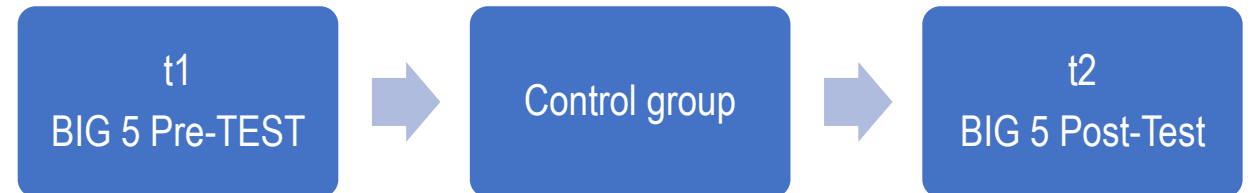
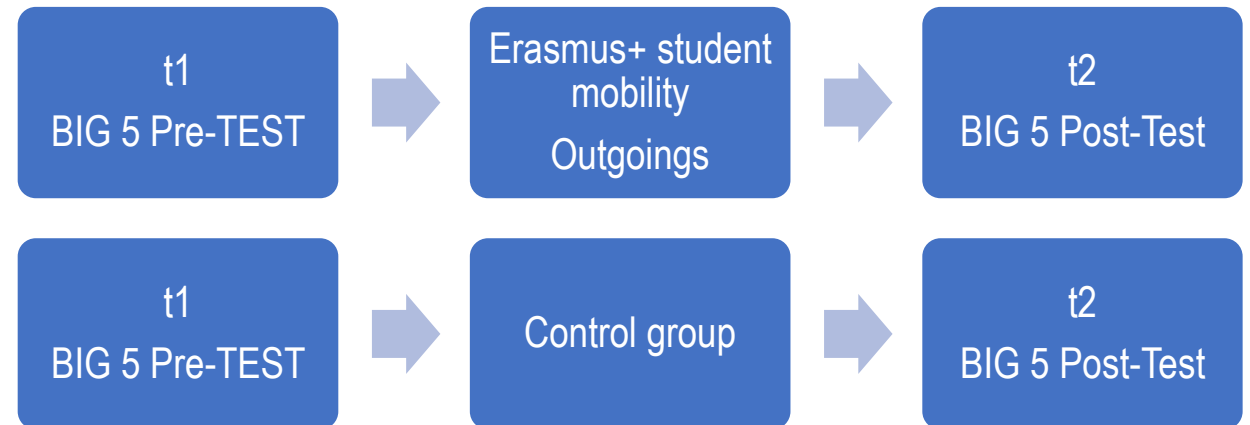
Intervention group:

- Teacher education students
- Erasmus+ student mobility
- 1 semester abroad

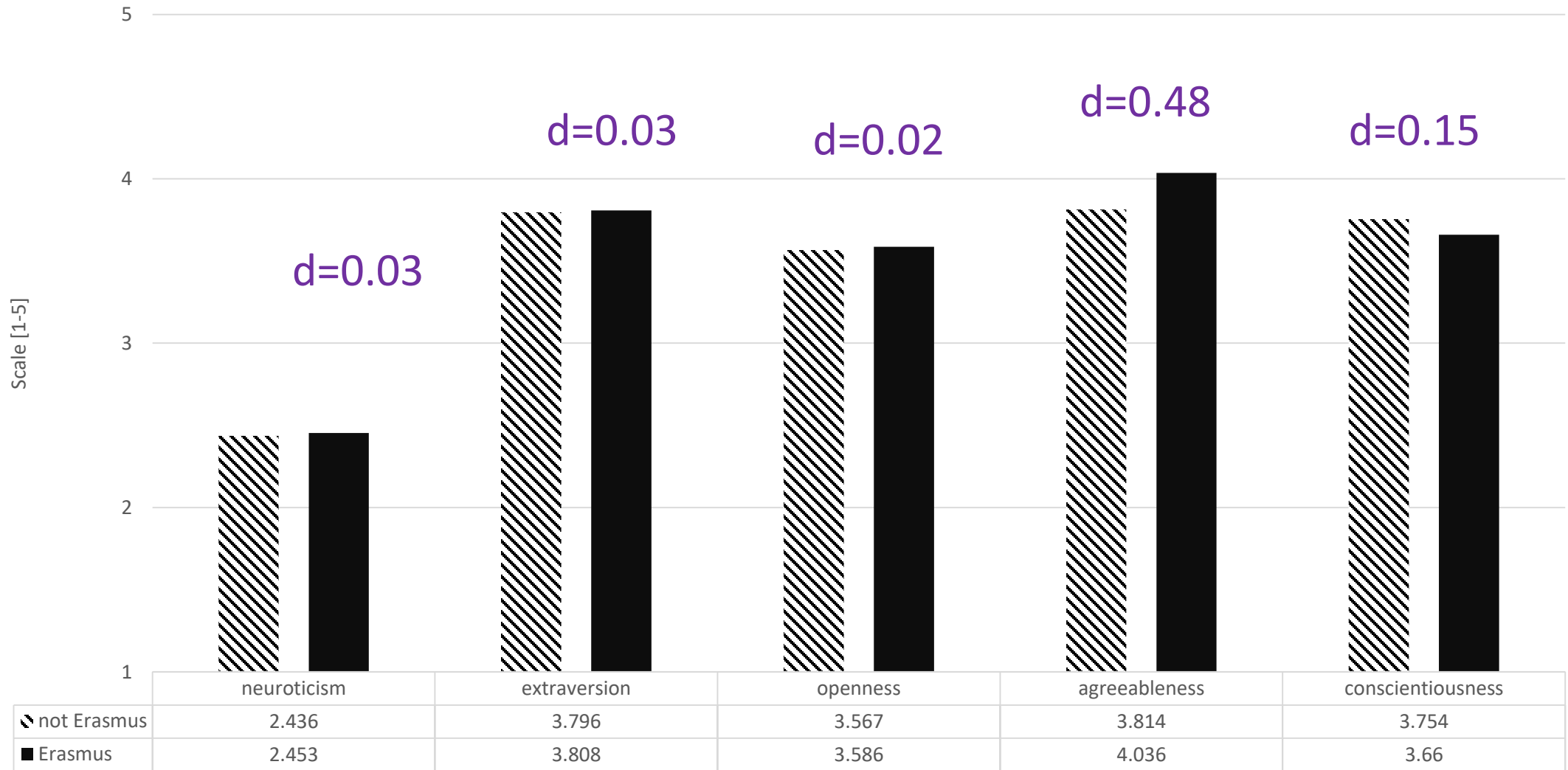


Control group matched by:

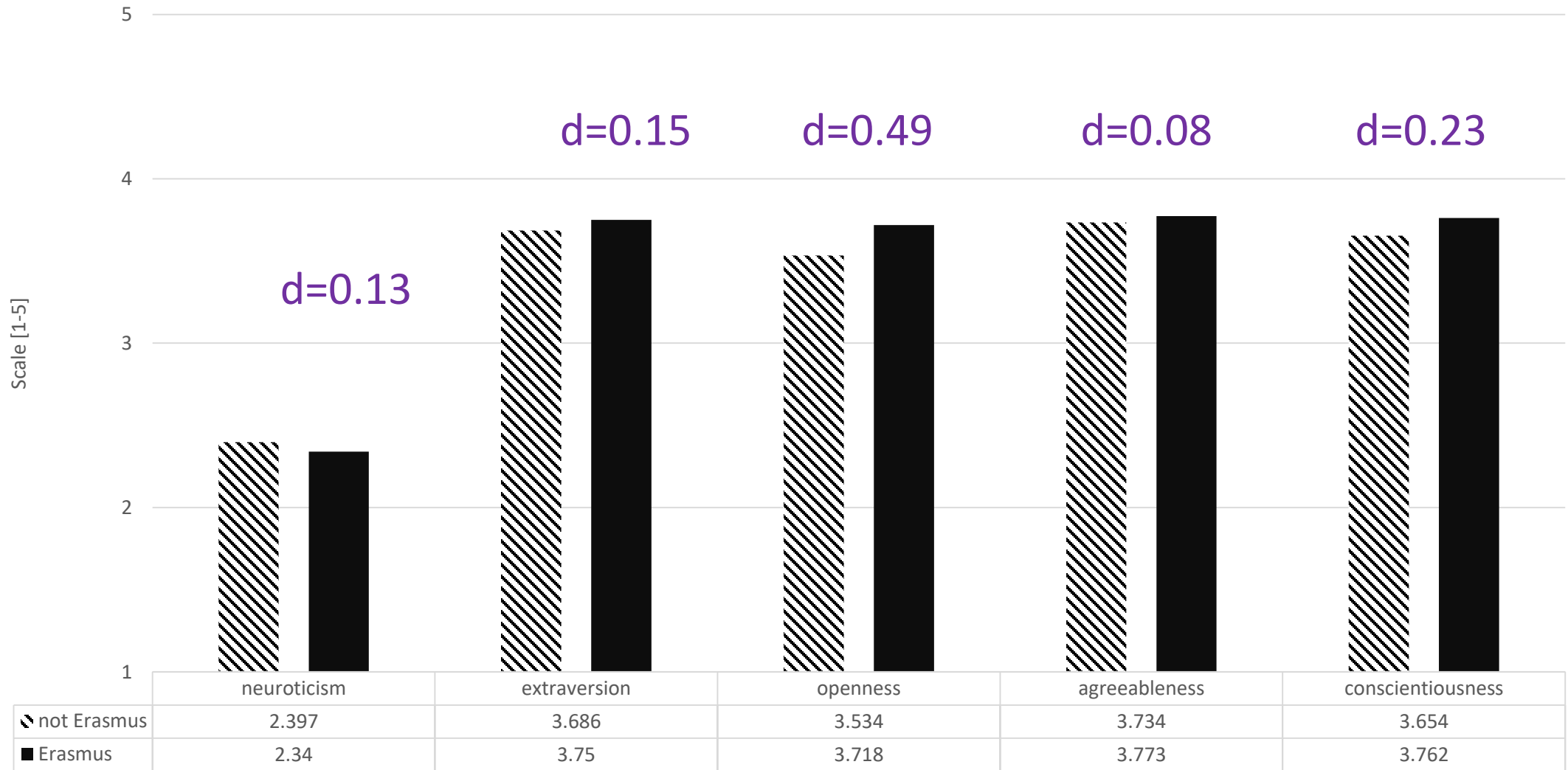
- Age
- Gender
- Semester
- Subject and study programme



Before Erasmus



After Erasmus



d	neuroticism	extraversion	openness	agreeableness	conscientiousness
before Erasmus	-0.03	-0.03	0.02	-0.48	0.15
after Erasmus	-0.13	-0.15	-0.45	0.08	-0.23



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largest effects



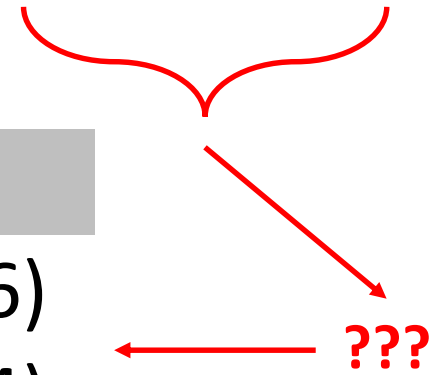
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small effects



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M (SD)		before	after
Erasmus+	No	3.81 (0.48)	3.73 (0.56)
	Yes	4.04 (0.45)	3.78 (0.74)



Conclusion - preliminary 1

- Small effects:
 - neuroticism
 - extraversion
 - conscientiousness
- Large effect:
 - openness
- Weird effect:
 - agreeableness



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Qualitative data

28 written reflected from students about their stay abroad in academic, cultural, and social terms with three additional questions:

1. Did you gain any learning experiences you wouldn't have gained without studying abroad?
2. Did you think studying abroad provided benefits for your future job (as a teacher)?
3. Did this stay abroad affect or change your personality?



Qualitative data

28 written reflected from students about their stay abroad in academic, cultural, and social terms with three additional questions:

1. Did you gain any learning experiences you wouldn't have gained without studying abroad? → inductive categories
2. Did you think studying abroad provided benefits for your future job (as a teacher)?
3. Did this stay abroad affect or change your personality?
→ deductive categories



Category	Category Title	Absolute Frequency	Category occurs in N documents	Category occurs in % of all documents
D1	Openness	30	16	0,762
D2	Conscientiousness	3	3	0,143
D3	Extraversion	0	0	0,000
D4	Agreeableness	5	4	0,190
D5	Emotional Stability	9	8	0,381
D6	Misc./div.	12	10	0,476
D7	Yes	13	13	0,619

outWds05(D1); “I learned to live together with many people from other cultures. We shared a kitchen and the living room, so it was important to talk about, what everyone expects from the others.”

outMlk09(D5): “I think I grew more confident in taking responsibilities.”

outWsi07(D4): “learning how to trust someone you don't know at all and living with this person”



Category	Category Title	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency	Category occurs in N documents	Category occurs in % of all documents
C1	yes	10	0,172	10	0,476
C6	experiene another school/education system	9	0,155	8	0,381
C8	language	9	0,155	9	0,429
C4	experience another country/culture	7	0,121	6	0,286
C5	Friendships/Social issues	5	0,086	5	0,238
C12	Independence	5	0,086	5	0,238

outWdm24(C8): “I improved myself in two different languages”

outWvc20(C6): “I learned a lot about a different school system and the university is quite different in the Netherlands, there each semester is parted into two quarters.”

outWah04(C4): “knowledge about other cultures, understanding of other cultures”



Conclusion - preliminary 2

Personality

- Qualitative data supports largest effect for openness.
- Qualitative data stresses effect for emotional stability!

Learning opportunities

- new language
- different educational system
- social learning opportunities
- different cultures



Three final thoughts

- 1) Effects of mobility on personality cannot be fully disentangled.
→ personality is a reason for choosing mobility
- 2) If students (dare to) go, they can profit from their mobility well beyond the academic and job-market scopes.
- 3) Mobility creates unique learning opportunities that in turn foster favourable personality traits.



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