

# INTENDED AND ACTUAL OUTCOMES OF ERASMUS+ MOBILITY

AN EXPLORATION OF NURSING  
STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

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## 2 THE UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

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- ❑ Origins: *Collegium Melitensis* – 12<sup>th</sup> November, 1592
- ❑ Conferred degrees in philosophy, divinity, grammar and humanities
- ❑ *Pubblica Università degli Studi Generali* – 1769
- ❑ Royal University of Malta: 1937 – 1974



### 3 THE UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

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- c. 11,500 students
- c. 1000 international students from 92 countries
- c. 600 academic staff
- Publicly funded
- Adheres to the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area
- 14 Faculties: *Arts; Built Environment; Dental Surgery; Economics, Management & Accountancy; Education; Engineering; Health Sciences; Information & Communication Technology; Laws; Media & Knowledge Science; Medicine & Surgery; Science; Social Wellbeing; Theology*
- Several institutes, centres and schools.

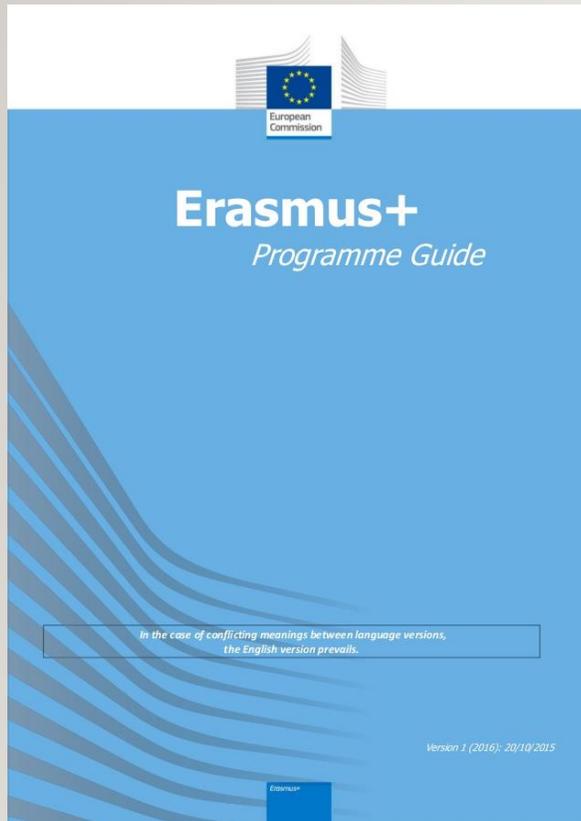
## 4 THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

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- European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students
- Cornerstone of internationalisation at European level and beyond
- Maltese students started participating in Erasmus mobility in 2000
- Limited research about nursing students' experience of studying abroad
- No previous similar study in Malta

## 5 AIMS OF THE STUDY

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1. To explore the motivations for and experiences of nursing students who participated in an Erasmus exchange.
2. To analyse the perceived outcomes of their exchange against the intended outcomes of the Erasmus+ programme as determined in the programme guide.

### Guiding Principle:

*The measurement and evaluation of internationalisation should extend beyond the study of the numbers of students pursuing exchange visits.*

# 6 AIMS OF THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

- To provide students with a (1) **Cultural**, (2) **sectoral**, (3) **pedagogical &** (4) **linguistic experience** which may enhance their educational experiences for growth and development.
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- (5) To enhance **employability** and career prospects;
  - (6) To increase sense of **initiative and entrepreneurship**;
  - (7) To increased **self- empowerment** and **self-esteem**;
  - (8) To create an impetus to participate in **future education or training**;
  - (9) To equip students with **foreign language** competences and augment **intercultural awareness**;
  - (10) To influence students' **citizenship** towards more active participation in society and improved awareness of the **European project** and its values.

# UM ERASMUS+ PARTICIPANTS BY YEAR & NURSING PROGRAMME

<b>Year</b>	<b>Diploma</b>	<b>B.Sc.</b>	<b>M.Sc.</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Spring 2009</b>	8	6	0	14
<b>Spring 2010</b>	6	16	4	26
<b>Spring 2011</b>	12	21	0	33
<b>Autumn 2011</b>	3	6	0	9
<b>Autumn 2012</b>	4	6	1	11
<b>Autumn 2013 + Summer 2014</b>	9	10	0	19
<b>Autumn 2014 + Spring 2015</b>	5	9	0	14
<b>Autumn 2015 + Winter 2016</b>	0	19	0	19
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>145</b>

# 8 TWO COMPLEMENTARY PHASES OF DATA COLLECTION

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## (1) Online anonymous questionnaire

- Section A: close-ended questions about the participants' demographic data and the exchange pursued
- Section B: two open-ended questions about the respondents' motivations for, and the main outcomes of, their participation in an Erasmus exchange.
- Section C: 5-point Likert-type scale to assess the participants' perceived level of attainment of the intended outcomes of the programme.

# DATA COLLECTION

## **(1) Online anonymous questionnaire**

Section A: close-ended questions on demographic data and the exchange pursued

Section B: two open-ended questions on motivations for, and main outcomes of, Erasmus participation.

Section C: 5-point Likert-type scale on perceived level of attainment of the intended programme outcomes.

## Nursing students' experience of Erasmus exchanges: An exploratory study

Dear Participant,

Many thanks for your interest in this research study. The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of nursing students' participation in the Erasmus+ programme. As such, we would really value your input about your motivation taking part in an Erasmus exchange and about your perceptions about its outcomes. The findings of the study will light on whether, and in what way, Erasmus exchanges for nursing students can be enhanced. We would, therefore most grateful if you answer all questions as honestly as possible.

You are kindly asked to complete all three sections of this questionnaire. Access to a subsequent section will be possible following the completion of a section. It should take you no longer than 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. While your contribution is greatly valued, you are reminded that your participation is entirely voluntary that you can withdraw from the study at any point without the need for an explanation. Completion of the questionnaire will indicate your consent to take part in the study.

A later phase of the study will involve a focus group discussion with other nursing students who have taken part in Erasmus exchange, participation in which is again entirely voluntary. To this effect, towards the end of the questionnaire you will be asked whether you would be interested in taking part in this discussion. Completing the questionnaire and taking part in the subsequent focus group is, therefore, possible.

Thanks once again for your participation. Do not hesitate to contact us if there is anything you wish to discuss in relation to this study.

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# 10 DATA COLLECTION

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## (2) Focus Groups

- Two focus group interviews lasting 2 hours each
- Deeper exploration of the key findings of the survey
- One moderator and one note-taker (Mack et al., 2005)

# II PARTICIPANTS

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- *Study population*
  - ✓ 145 current and former Maltese nursing students who had participated in an Erasmus exchange (2009 - 2016)
- *65 completed questionnaires (RR = 44.8%; 11M, 54F)*
  - ✓ 43 B.Sc. Students (67%)
  - ✓ 20 Diploma students (30%)
  - ✓ 2 M.Sc. students (3%)
- *16 respondents took part in focus group*
  - ✓ 5 male
  - ✓ 11 female

# 12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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- Ethical approval by the University of Malta Research Ethics Committee.
- Voluntary participation based on written and verbal information
  - ✓ Questionnaires completed anonymously
  - ✓ Questionnaire completion implied consent
  - ✓ Written informed consent was obtained from focus group participants.
- FG participants were reminded that the researchers could only vouch for their own – but not other participants’ – commitment to confidentiality.

# 13 DATA ANALYSIS

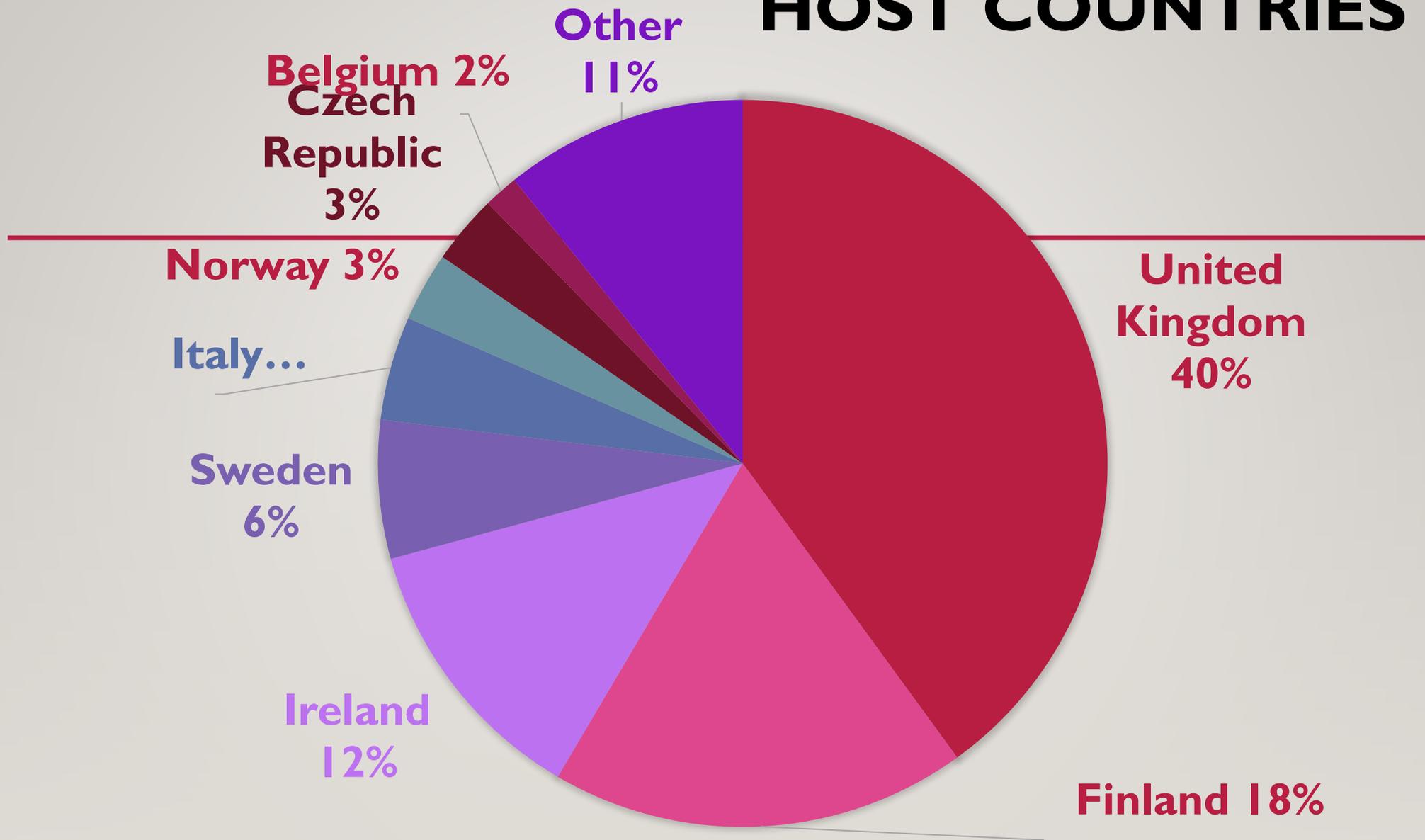
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- Quantitative data from Sections A and C of the questionnaire
  - Descriptive statistics
  - Frequencies and percentages
- Thematic analysis of qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006)
  - Section B of questionnaire
  - Focus group data

# HOST COUNTRIES

Host Country	Number of Participants
United Kingdom	26
Finland	12
Ireland	8
Sweden	4
Italy	3
Norway	2
Czech Republic	2
Belgium	1
Other	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65</b>

# HOST COUNTRIES



<i>The Erasmus exchange has:</i>	<b>To a very large extent</b>	<b>To a considerable extent</b>	<b>To a moderate extent</b>	<b>To a minimal extent</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
<b><i>Enhanced my employability and improved my career prospects</i></b>	<b>18</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>
<b><i>Increased my sense of initiative and entrepreneurship</i></b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b><i>Increased my self-empowerment and self-esteem</i></b>	<b>40</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>
<b><i>Improved my foreign language competences</i></b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

<i>The Erasmus exchange has:</i>	<b>To a very large extent</b>	<b>To a considerable extent</b>	<b>To a moderate extent</b>	<b>To a minimal extent</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
<b><i>Enhanced my intercultural awareness</i></b>	38	20	5	1	1
<b><i>Made my participation in society more active</i></b>	18	28	14	2	3
<b><i>Improved my awareness of the European project and the EU values</i></b>	16	28	11	6	4
<b><i>Increased my motivation to take part in future education or training</i></b>	40	18	6	1	0

## 18 MAIN QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

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What drove students towards pursuing an Erasmus+ exchange paralleled that which students perceived as the most prominent outcomes of their exchange.

*Themes:*

1. Enhanced Employability
2. Exposure beyond the national shores
3. Personal growth
4. Relationships
5. Context-sensitivity of care delivery
6. Language and Citizenship

## ENHANCED EMPLOYABILITY

- *“Having had an experience abroad looks well on a CV and helps when applying for posts” (P1)*
- *I am sure Erasmus would be of great help to be offered more job opportunities away from Malta.” (P4)*

## EXPOSURE BEYOND THE NATIONAL SHORES

- *“Getting to know different way of life and traditions you'll open your mind to new lifestyles. Culture diversity helps you grow, to be open minded and to appreciate the diversity within this world.” (P14)*
- *“We were much more hands-on compared to students in the British health care system” (P11)*
- *“We were so less hands-on compared to the Finnish students!” (P19).*

## CONTEXT-SENSITIVITY OF CARE DELIVERY

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- *“I was surprised to see the staff pouring tea down a nasogastric tube!” (P6)*
- *“Anonymous deposit of babies in a box outside the hospital was shocking” (P12)*

## LANGUAGE AND CITIZENSHIP

- *“I did not manage to learn the Finnish language at all, so I did not learn nor gain anything in that regard” (P6)*
- *“I could practise a foreign language I had studied at school. I went from being barely able to speak the language to filling in as an interpreter between English and Italian” (P10)*
- *“Through the Erasmus experience I became aware of our rights as EU citizens” (P11)*
- *“I became more aware of the environment. I kind of took it for granted before I went on Erasmus, but living with foreigners there helped me become more aware” (P2)*
- *“I joined the Red Cross after Erasmus. I became aware that I wanted to give something, to do something good out of my own free will” (P13)*

## PERSONAL GROWTH

- *“I became a better person...accepting new challenges and being more confident in decision making, besides coping with cleaning, cooking, shopping and travelling...I became independent, and self confident to a whole new level” (P8)*
- *I realised that once I successfully completed an Erasmus exchange I can do anything” (P17)*

## RELATIONSHIPS

- *“I met many amazing people from all around the world” (P7)*
- *“Establishing friendships with people coming from different countries was great” (P3)*
- *“My boyfriend said ‘You have changed so much! You are not the person I knew anymore’ And we broke up...amicably, but we broke up!” (P4)*
- *One has to really prepare and support one’s partner who remains in Malta, because it is very hard on the relationship!” (P6)*

# CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

- These positive experiences reported confirm that nurse educators should continue investing time and energy in promoting and facilitating study-abroad experiences for nursing students.
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- The potential of study mobility to enhance personal, academic and professional growth is to be highlighted.
  - Challenges, including language barriers and homesickness, need to be acknowledged and addressed.
  - More research is indicated, including:
    - Longitudinal studies and across different contexts,
    - Focus on negative outcomes of study mobility.
  - Relevance of qualitative research to policy makers, programme developers and co-ordinators.
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