

Research on the impact of the Erasmus+ Programme on the education and training systems in Italy

Abstract

The study, “*Research on the impact of the Erasmus+ Programme on the education and training systems in Italy -Ricerca sull’impatto del Programma Erasmus+ sui Sistemi d’Istruzione e Formazione in Italia*”, had the following methodological qualitative-quantitative structure:

School Sector

- INDIVIDUAL TARGET – QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS:
School Staff (Head teachers, teachers and other staff, plus pupils)
- SYSTEMIC TARGET – QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS:
Schools at all levels

University/Higher Education Sector

- INDIVIDUAL TARGET – QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS:
Students, Professors, Rectors or International Relations delegates
- SYSTEMIC TARGET – QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS:
Higher Education Institutions

The **individual target** was analysed through 1810 telephone interviews with CATI methodology¹, carried out between October 2016 and February 2017, exploring two “twin samples”:

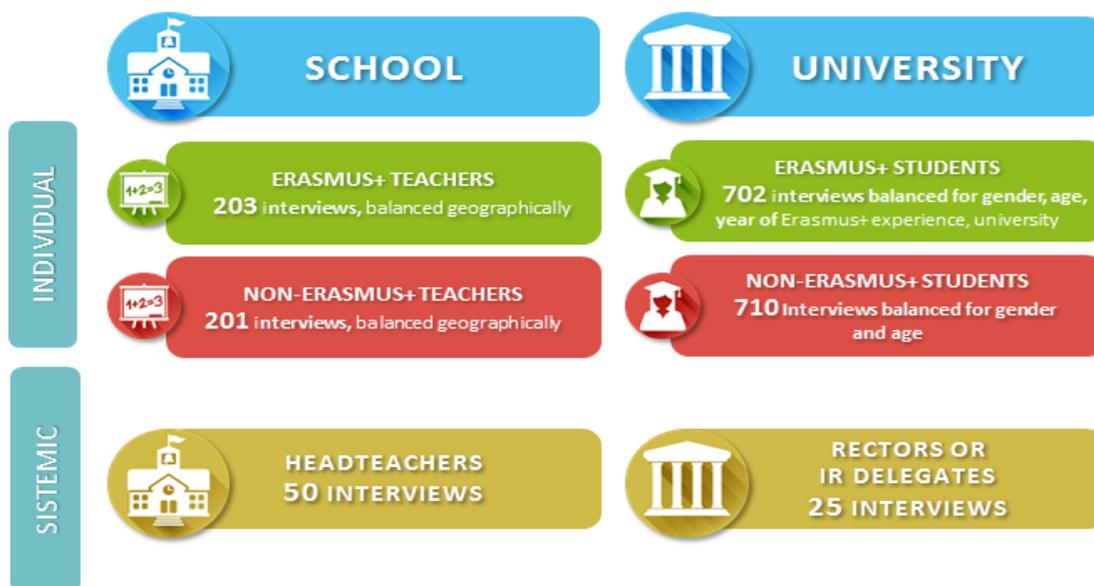
- For the main research sample, 905 telephone interviews were carried out (203 interviews for the school sector and 702 for the higher education sector), to teachers/students that benefitted in the past of at least one grant for learning mobilities in the Erasmus+ (post 2014) and/or Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013) .
- In the control group, 911 telephone interviews were carried out (201 for the school sector and 710 for the university sector), to teachers and students selected out of a sample representative of the normal Italian adult population, excluding the male and female individuals that had participated in the Erasmus+ or predecessor programmes. The twin samples were constructed adopting the same variables in parallel: age, sex, geographic area and type of employing school for the teachers group; age, sex and qualification for the university students group.

The **systemic target** was analysed through 75 interviews based on the QUALITEL methodology, which consists in in-depth colloquia lasting 30-45 minutes carried out telephonically by previous appointment, conducted by specialised psychologists to Erasmus+ referents, namely:

- SCHOOL SECTOR: 50 telephone interviews with head teachers of both primary and secondary schools that implemented one or more cooperation projects.
- UNIVERSITY SECTOR: 25 telephone interviews with Rectors or International Relations delegates of Italian Universities or other Higher Education Institutions

¹ Computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) is a telephone surveying technique in which the interviewer follows a script provided by a software application.

Structure of the research



Coming to the results, similar trends are registered across all sectors.

SCHOOL SECTOR

The research confirms absolutely positive feelings towards the experiences in question. Learning/training mobilities carried out in the framework of the Lifelong Learning and the Erasmus+ Programme stand out for their precious value both in terms of personal and professional growth. The two Programmes are equally appreciated by both the individual and the systemic target.

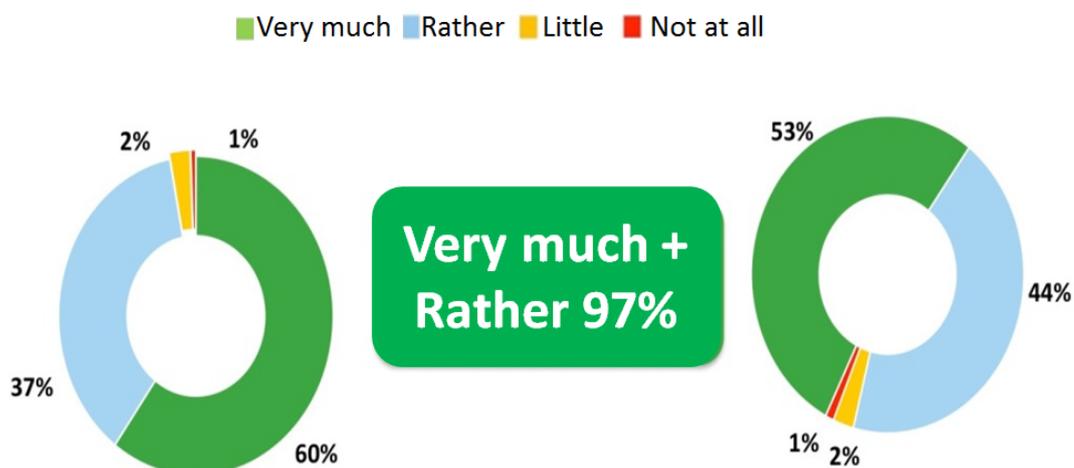
Target group: the near totality of the interviewed teachers declares that the mobility period fully met their expectations and that the envisaged didactic and cultural objectives were reached. The in-service training abroad is not only a source of methodological innovation and sharing of work experiences at an international level, but also an occasion for a cultural and personal exchange, which results in an increased professional network and an improvement of the teachers' own soft skills.

According to the school referents involved in the qualitative analysis, the most substantial changes affected the professional development of the mobile staff. On the other hand, the impact on the participating institutions appears to be less evident.



Qualitative analysis

Did the activities implemented during you in service training abroad with Comenius/ Erasmus+ match your expectations and were you able to reach your learning goals?



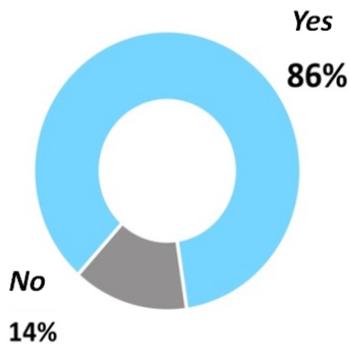
Source?: n=203 respondents

More specifically, the Istituto Piepoli/INDIRE research shows that the following skills are the most affected:

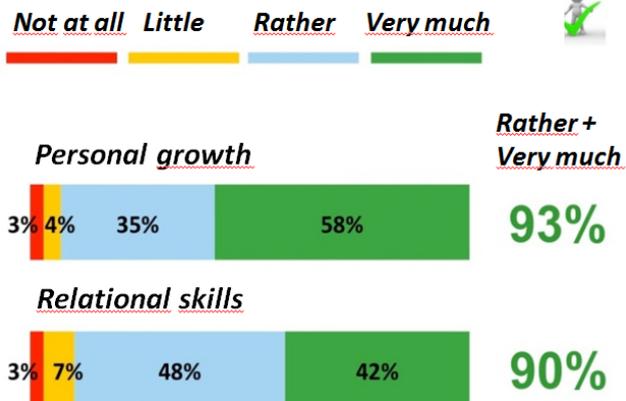
- Language skills improvement (96%)
- Acquisition of new teaching methodologies (28%)
- Exchange of experience with foreign teachers/intercultural exchange (17%)
- Transferability of the acquired competences: the large majority of mobile teachers declare that, on their return, they were able to put in practice the newly acquired teaching methodologies in their own classroom and in the school (respectively 88% and 77%).

Control group: the same views are shared, in parallel, also by non-mobile teachers, when asked their opinion about the Programme. Indeed, the teachers from the control group largely consider the possibility to train in another country a great opportunity of growth. 86% of them declare that such an experience has an added value both in terms of personal (93%) and professional (90%) growth.

Do you think that a training activity abroad has an added value compared to a training activity at home?



Can European cooperation programmes help improve teaching methods and cultural growth in terms of...



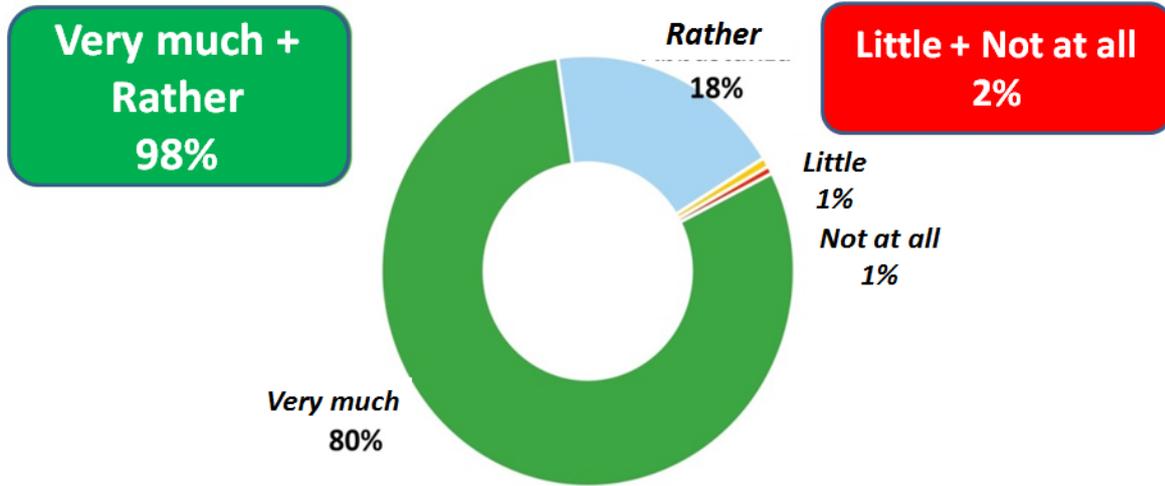
Source: ? n= 203 respondents

HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

A largely positive opinion on the Erasmus+ and the predecessor LLP is expressed also by the university sector. The mobility experience is seen as an occasion for a personal, social and professional growth.

Nearly total of the interviewed mobile students declared to be satisfied with the experience. 98% of them declares to have reached the personal learning objectives, a result even more positive than that regarding teachers. Among the most appreciated features are the possibility to experience a full immersion in a different environment and to acquire competences that could not be gained in the home institution. This view, which is shared by 93% of the interviewed students, can be exemplified with some “cornerstone competences”, such as the improvement in foreign language competences (55%), the acquisition of new study methods (31%) and the creation of relationships with different cultures (19%).

Did you reach your personal learning goal during your study/training period abroad with Erasmus+?



Source: ? n=203 respondents

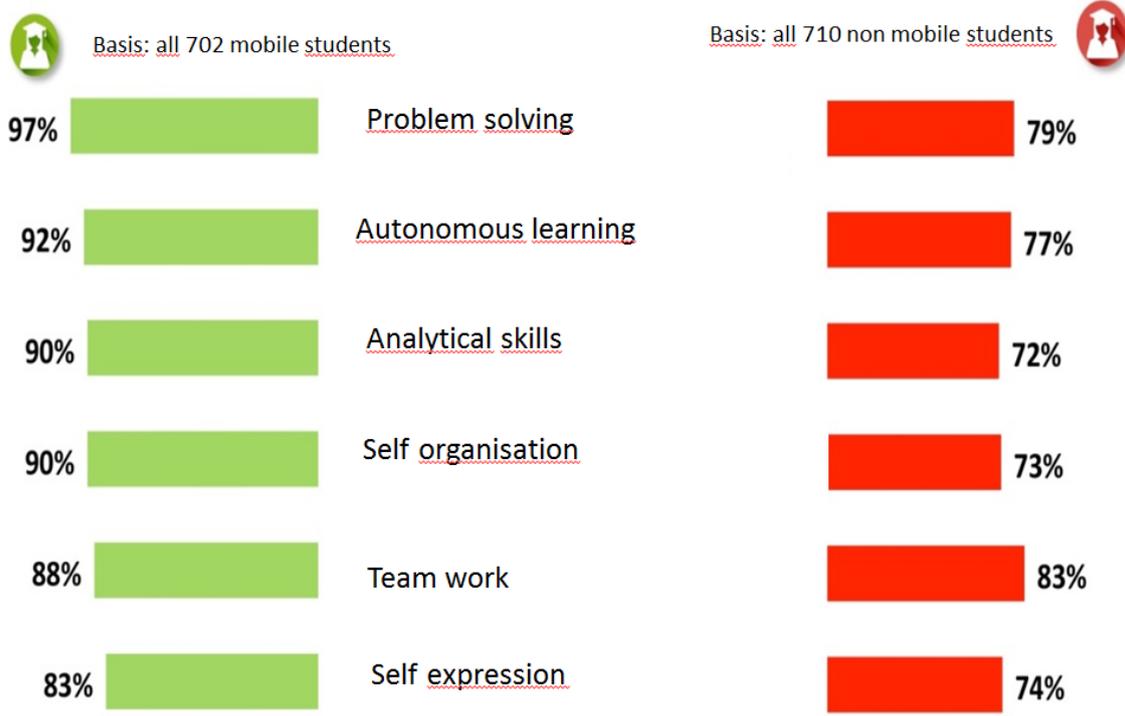
Control group: In this regard, the non-mobile students interviewed expressed the same opinions as their mobile counterpart: both groups think that the Erasmus+ experience is very useful in terms of personal and relational growth.

The research paid particular attention to identifying the competences developed thanks to the learning/training mobility. What emerges quite clearly is that mobile students develop their problem solving abilities, meaning with that the ability to find solutions to difficult or complex issues/situations, along with the capacity to plan their learning autonomously and the improvement of their analytical skills.

In generale, quanto ritiene che i programmi europei contribuiscano/abbiano contribuito a migliorare le attività professionali e culturali in termini di...



To what extent do you think Erasmus mobilities improved participants' professional and cultural activities in terms of...



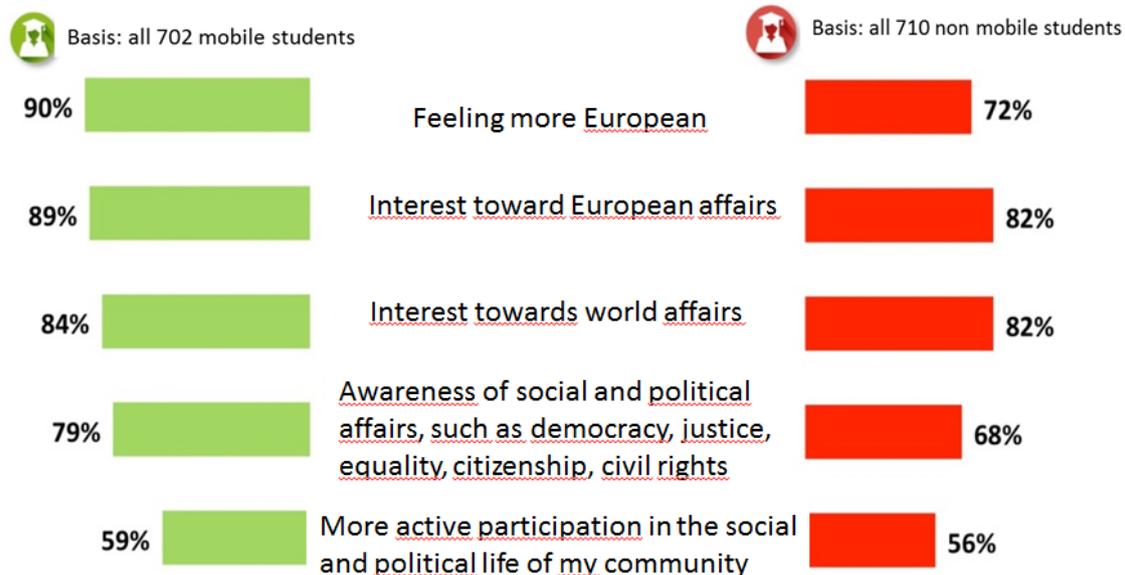
Source: ? n= 702 mobile students and 710 non mobile students

As far as citizenship is concerned, the mobility period greatly enhances the feeling of being European, together with an increased interest and awareness towards European affairs and in general towards the events happening in the world.

In generale, quanto ritiene che i programmi europei contribuiscano/hanno contribuito a migliorare le attività professionali e culturali in termini di ...



To what extent do you think Erasmus mobilities improved participants' professional and cultural activities in terms of...

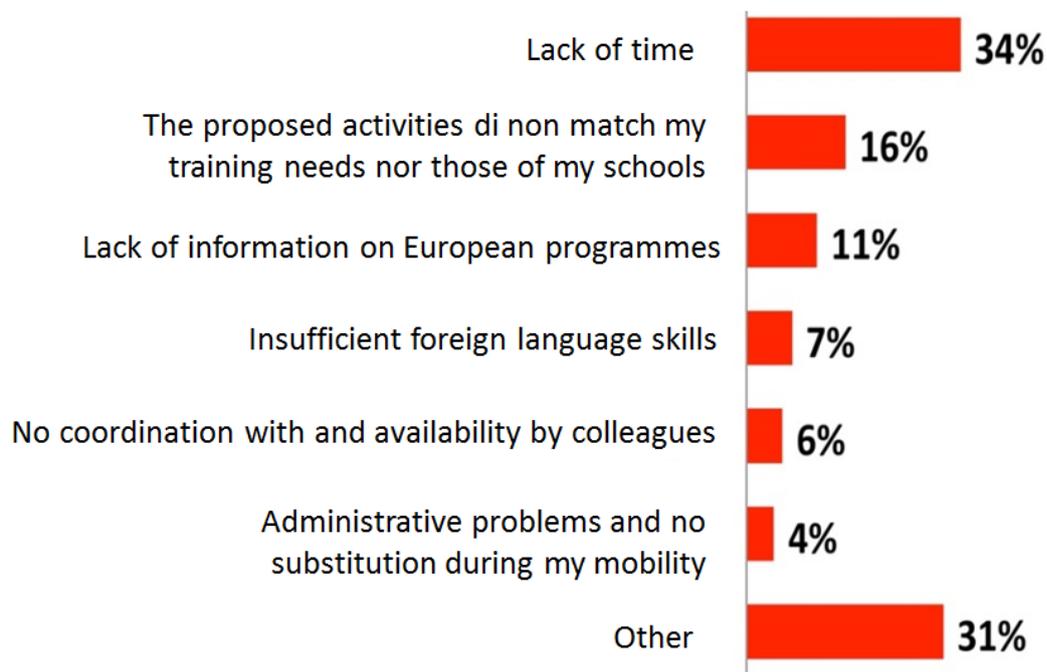


Source?: n= 702 mobile students and 710 non mobile students

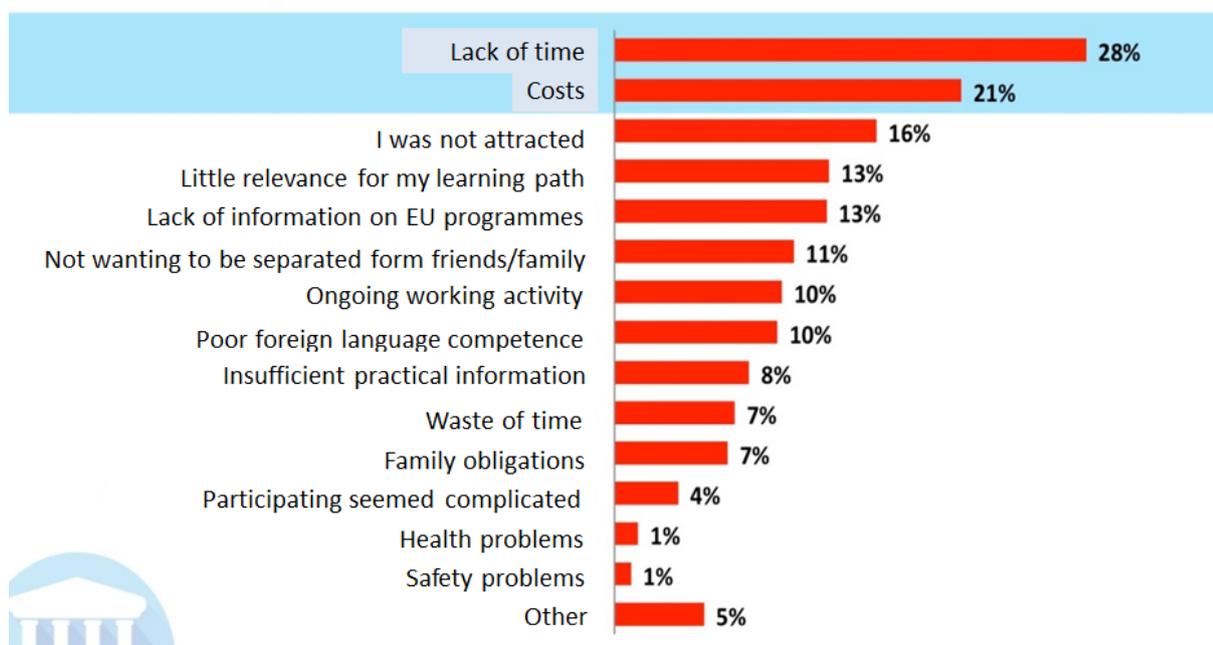
Last but not least, mobile and non-mobile students show a different performance as far as employability is concerned. If we compare students with the same age and qualification, the non-mobile group show a higher percentage of unemployment as opposed to the mobile group (18% vs. 6%).

Despite the fact that the benefits of participation in the Erasmus+ programme are generally perceived and acknowledged in a transversal way by all groups, a significant share of the potential beneficiaries still do not take part in it. The reasons for this have mainly to be sought in logistic (especially lack of time) and economic difficulties (costs, inadequate grant), that still represent the main obstacle to mobility.

For which reasons you did not apply for an in-service training mobility abroad with Erasmus+?



Given the possibilities offered by the Erasmus+ Programme to HE students, why did you never apply for a study or training mobility?



Source: n= 710 non mobile students

The complete study is published on Indire's website (in Italian, soon also in English)
<http://www.erasmusplus.it/studio-erasmus-scuola-e-universita/>

Conclusions

The article has reviewed the main evidence-based analysis exercises conducted by the INDIRE National Agency since the start of the Erasmus+ Programme.

The main findings are similar across all the sectors taken into consideration – school, higher and adult education – with the near totality of the interviewed participants declaring that they are satisfied or even very satisfied, with the learning/training mobility. Moreover, they claim to have experienced a personal, social, cultural and (if applicable) professional growth. At individual level, a sensible improvement in key competences is also to be noted, namely: language skills, new teaching/studying methods, and other soft skills, particularly problem solving. On the other hand, the systemic impact on the participating institutions is also demonstrated, although somewhat less evident.