

to learn about Slovenia, museums, culture that they do not have any knowledge of. To put it differently: it is because they have little or no knowledge about the country and/or culture and find it so different to theirs, they are curious about it. Openness to the unfamiliar or unknown, identified in this study, is a new research finding.

Conclusions

One of the greatest benefits of studying abroad is a greater understanding of other cultures. “Discovery”, “change” and “curiosity” are not cultural concepts per se, but are involved in the cultural dimension of Erasmus experience.

Erasmus students are motivated to learn about new, different, unknown or not experienced cultures (discovery); they want to change the environment or culture in order to live in a different one (change); they know nothing or very little about the host country and are open to the unfamiliar (curiosity). The research, done from the perspective of cultural heritage, additionally indicated how geography shapes the cultural experience of Erasmus students and what role museums and heritage site visiting play in it.

Some critical consideration of the findings needs to be made. Firstly, as already pointed by Krzaklewska (2008), students’ statements of motivation sometimes fit into more than one of the main categories. Secondly, also pointed by the same researcher, the respondents can manipulate their answers and redefine the value of the experience every time depending on the research context, personal situation or even interviewer.

There are further limitations to the claims this study can make. The qualitative research does not allow for identifying how many or what proportion of students would fit into each of the categories in this study. Repetition of this study in a different context, like Erasmus students of other programmes, may provide other perspectives of their motivation. Further comparative studies in different countries may create a more comprehensive platform concerning what directs Erasmus students’ choice of destinations and particular courses.

The value of this research is that it involved students from 8 European countries (Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Spain, Turkey), that the categories are based on the respondents’ experience, and that the data was gathered also at the beginning of their stay and with the use of different techniques. The findings of this research can be used in two ways. They are informative for the realisation of culture-related policy objectives, introduced at the beginning

of the paper. The findings can also be used strategically for the “capacity-building” of Central European countries.

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