

# The Erasmus Programme: A step towards a European Identity



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## 1. Abstract

Over the time the European Union changed from a purely economic project to a project of social and cultural integration. This change went hand-in-hand with the European Commission focusing increasingly on cultural integration and fostering a 'European identity'. The European Commission sees a 'European identity' as tool that can lead to more unified Europe that can compete with other international superpowers. Moreover, such an identity would presumably lead to more cooperation and solidarity making it easier to tackle cross-border crises and collective issues like international crime or environmental issues. It might also make people more inclined to be mobile, which can have a stabilising effect on the European labour market. In the light of this new interest in a European identity, it is interesting to investigate if the efforts of the European Union are not in vain. This research explored the question what aspects of a European Identity were increased by involvement in the Erasmus programme. Although fostering a European identity is not the main objective of this programme, it is highly successful in giving students the opportunity to be mobile within Europe. This mobility may in return foster students European identity. The research conducted a questionnaire with three separate group of students, which all had different degree of involvement in the Erasmus programme. By analysing the differences between the three groups a conclusion could be reached if the Erasmus programme indeed had a strengthening effect on different aspects of a European identity. Unfortunately, the results from the analyses indicated that the Erasmus programme does not foster aspects of a European identity in a significant way. However, it seems there is a significant difference between students that involve themselves in the Erasmus programme and those who do not. The programme also seems to be a perfect way to establish friendships abroad.

## 2. Introduction

Over the last fifty years the European area passed through stages of economic and legal unification, starting as European Coal and Steel community (1952) to the European Union (1993). This transformation went hand-in-hand with a change in the perception of European integration. When in the past European integration was only affiliated with economic or legal issues, the emphasis is shifting more and more to a perception of cultural integration (Delgado-Moreira , 1997; Shore, 2000). Moreover, the European Commission is also focusing increasingly on cultural integration and fostering a 'European identity'. The assumption is that this will extend integration into the psychological and 'cultural' domains of people's everyday life (Shore, 2000).

This new sense of belonging among the people of Europe aims to elevate common values such as civic, social and human rights over and above national affiliations based on ethnic homogeneity, common language, race, blood ties and history. The European Commission instituted an intricate programme of political and cultural socialisation supported by a comprehensive supranational European institutional framework designed to cover every aspect of cultural activity (Slysz, 2013).

The constitution of a European identity is desirable for several reasons. A European identity might prevent fragmentation, chaos and conflict in the form of military, social, political or economic incidents within the European Union. This will presumably lead to a more unified Europe that can act as a block against international superpowers (Malyarov & Rijen, 2003). Moreover, it might help to work towards solidarity and cooperation between member states that makes it easier to overcome cross-border crises and collective issues like international crime or environmental issues. A collective identity might also create a sense of

common faith and a willingness to work together, which might lead to more care for and involvement in European politics. This will establish a more democratic legitimacy for political decision made on the European level (Kaina & Karolewski, 2009).

However, in the present situation, despite all the EU's efforts, a 'European consciousness' is largely confined to Europe's political and economic elites that have more financial means and more opportunities through education, work and other activities to establish more international ties and connections. Moreover, in regard to European identity it is interesting to notice that there is a reappearance of politics that focus on national identity and sense of belonging that may interfere with processes of European integration. In other words, citizens of the European union have to deal with processes of European integration, pushing for 'European Identity', that are competing with their sense of belonging to their own nation state and their own socio-cultural and/or ethnic identity. Along with the European integration other, both historical and current, processes are visible in the forming of their identity. A historical process that is still visible in the forming of identity is the historical divide of Europe after the Second World War in which the parts of Europe identified themselves more with the United States of America, while others were under the wing of Soviet Union. Although the Soviet Union is disbanded, the historical division is still visible and influencing identity, especially in Eastern-European countries. In these countries there is still a lot of Russian influence and minorities of Russian living within the borders, dividing the country into people that affiliate more with the western countries and people that affiliate more with Russia. Moreover, current processes of globalisation in which there is international integration through more interconnectedness and cultural exchange. This could lead to people extending their identity over borders, resulting in people identifying themselves as European or even world citizen (Haas, 2001). Some of these

processes might counteract the efforts of the EU to construct a European identity, but do not imply that the measures of the EU are in vain. Specific programs such as the Erasmus programme are highly successful in stimulating youth mobility, giving around 200.000 students a year the opportunity to study or do an internship in another member state (Vossensteyn, Soo, Cremonini, Antonowitsch & Epping, 2008). The EU assumes that, among other goals, the Erasmus programme, through cultural exchange, helps to build a sense of being European and therefore shapes a European identity.

This research will focus on the Erasmus programme and which aspects of this programme help to constitute a European identity by comparing students that have been enrolled in the Erasmus programme with students that lack this international experience. From the results of this comparison it will try to reach a conclusion if the experience of the programme had effect on the components that constitute a European identity, namely 'feeling European' and 'acting European'.



### 3. Summary of the Theoretical Approach

As this research will focus on the Erasmus programme and the constitution of a European identity among students, there should first be some theoretical explanation on the important concepts. First will be outlined what the European Commission want to achieve with regard to student mobility and its relation with European identity. Then will be explained what the Erasmus programme entails e.g. its goals, participants and opportunities that are offered within this programme. Finally, the research will distinguish what factors constitute a European identity. These factors will form the basis of the research to determine if and how the Erasmus programme helps to bolster European identity.

#### 3.1 The EU and Youth Mobility

The European Union gives its citizens the right to free transfer of capital, labour and persons (*Treaty of Rome, 1957*) with services added overtime (finalisation in European Services Directives in 2006), which work on European integration since the beginning of the EU. Despite these rights, the EU is still often criticised for its lack of internal mobility concerning the European labour market, while increasing this internal mobility would arguable be way towards a better functioning of the European market. Encouraging mobility is therefore an important point on the European agenda, especially in the light of expansion of the EU as it adopts new member states. In increasing mobility, young people play a vital role, because they are in the most ideal position to do so. Most students do not have a permanent job or a household with children that would restrict them from being mobile. Moreover, most universities give students the opportunity to go abroad during their studies. This means that being mobile has a reduced risk for students as they have less to lose than

others. Students are therefore usually the ones that are more likely to take this risk. The current situation in Europe would benefit very much of increased mobility as job opportunities for young people in some countries are very scarce, while other countries of the European Union are in desperate need of labour forces. Increasing mobility would help to fill the void in some countries, while simultaneously alleviating harsh job competition in others. This could potentially realise a more integrated and better functioning European labour market. However, while some may gladly move or seek a job abroad, the situation of the labour market may be so bad in some countries that it forces young people to search for opportunities abroad. This forced emigration may be disruptive for families that become split, but can also have negative effects on a larger scale as it may intensify economic instability in a country (European Commission, 2013).

As the European Commission (2009) states the “mobility of young people is essential in promoting a sense of belonging to Europe, enhancing social and occupational integration, and ensuring a competitive European economy.” To enhance youth mobility within the member states, the European Commission has invited the member states to take measures to remove possible barriers to mobility. In particular, the member states are encouraged to simplify procedures, give better information about mobility programmes and provide more funding including creating necessary conditions like improve living conditions and housing opportunities to make mobility possible. Moreover, the member states are asked to increase the knowledge concerning youth mobility by doing research (European Commission, 2009).

These encouragements from the European Commission to the member states indicate that youth mobility is observed as an important feature of European integration. Most of the youth mobility will start in the period that young people are still studying. By

increasing mobility at the early stages the probability that students will find a job abroad in their future career will increase, while they probably extend their formal education, create networks and alliances that can bring career opportunities and acquire more necessary skills (Gough, 2013). Student mobility may play a vital role in developing and strengthening a highly-educated European workforce that is able to cope with arising problems and bolster the position of the EU as a knowledge-based economy (Souto-Otero, Huisman, Beerkens, De Wit & Vujić, 2013). Moreover, it may be assumed that student mobility helps students to develop the necessary skills to cope with *increasing* international dimensions of future jobs and can lead to general career enhancement due to new opportunities. These skills can for example enable students to work in more international professions. A more socio-cultural argument that can be provided to support student mobility, is that student mobility can help to establish a sense of European identity and citizenship into a new generation and through cultural exchange foster more understanding between cultures of different countries (Souto-Otero *et al*, 2013).

### 3.2 The Erasmus programme

The Erasmus programme is an educational programme that is part of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union (Vossensteyn, Soo, Cremonini, Antonowitsch & Epping, 2008). It has become the most important part of this programme starting in 1987 and enabling around 200.000 students annually to study abroad. In addition, the programme has a huge scope cooperating with around 90% of higher education institutions in 31 European countries. The Erasmus programme has as general aim to create a European Higher Education Area and foster scientific innovation throughout Europe. More specifically, it tries to encourage and support academic cooperation and mobility of higher education

students and academics within the European Union, as well as some other countries like Iceland, Norway, and Turkey.

The specific objectives for the Erasmus programme are to improve the quality and volume of student and teaching staff mobility throughout Europe, while simultaneously improve the quality of multilateral cooperation between higher education institutions in this area. Moreover, it aims to increase and improve the cooperation between these institutions and companies and stimulate innovation for e.g. new teaching practices between universities. The programme is supervised by the European Commission that is responsible for the programme's implementation, but part of the programme is delegated to national agencies in the 31 participating countries. This part mainly concerns mobility actions, while Brussels is in charge of networks and multilateral projects.

The programme offers several different services to students and Higher education institution staff to reach its goals. For student mobility, the programme offers the opportunity to study abroad (3 months up to 1 year), offers students internships or places them in training and research centres abroad. The programme provides staff members of higher education institutions the opportunity to participate in teaching assignments from foreign higher education institutions or enterprises that help to attract foreign staff or provide further training in e.g. languages. Moreover, the programme tries to support and improve the cooperation between higher education institutions mutually or between higher education institutions and enterprises (Vossensteyn, Soo, Cremonini, Antonowitsch & Epping, 2008).

### 3.3 European Identity & European Citizenship

Both the concept of citizenship and identity are present in the context of the European community and it is important to distinguish the two concepts from one another, while both concepts entail the belonging of individuals to or be a member of a political and/or socio-cultural community. The concept of citizenship can basically be divided in two separate concepts: a political and a sociological concept. The political side of citizenship can be considered to revolve around the formal status of the citizen, meaning the legal framework that outlines when someone is a citizen and what rights and duties a citizen has. For European the this legal framework was laid down in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 ("Treaty of Maastricht", 2010), which determined every citizen of all European member states are also considered to be a citizen of the European Union, entitling them to several rights that the Union provides. The sociological concept of citizenship is what can be called identity. It deals with a sense of belonging to community, the socio-cultural identity e.g. language, cultural traditions and norms and values that important in a community (Haas, 2001). Identity is based on a reciprocal relationship between the individual and society or community. The individual influences society through his or her actions thereby creating organisations, networks, institutions and groups. In return, society shapes the life the individual through shared language, norms and values. This reciprocal relation creates a community in which a socio-cultural identity is passed on through either formal institutions such as schools and the government or informal institutions such as family or religious groups, thereby creating a society or community to which people feel they belong (Stets & Burke, 2003).

Important to note is that being part of an ethnic or socio-cultural group does not imply citizenship membership, although both may overlap. However, within Europe there are groups that are formally citizens of a nation state, but are identifying themselves with a different socio-cultural group. A clear example would be Catalans in Spain that have strong feelings of independence from the Spanish nation state. Another example are migrant workers that still have strong ties with their land of birth, but are formally a citizen of the country they work and live in. One could argue that due to globalisation and migration processes have increased the 'multi-culturality' within Europe, but this may be countered by the argument that Europe has always consisted of many national, ethnic, and religious communities (Haas, 2001).

In regard to European identity it is interesting to notice that there is a reappearance of politics that focus on national identity and sense of belonging. In other words, citizens of the European union have to deal with processes of European integration, pushing for 'European citizenship', that are competing with their sense of belonging to their own nation state and their own socio-cultural and/or ethnic identity. This refocus on other identities might interfere with people identifying themselves as European and therefore with European integration.

The concept of identity is a problem in itself, whereas scholars (Jenkins, 2008; Kaina & Karolewski, 2009) have been struggling to reach a commonly accepted definition. The main reasons for the debate is that identity means different things to different people and can therefore not be reliably used as a concept in research. However, the concept is too important to scrape entirely, while there is common agreement on the notion that individuals and groups cannot live without at least a certain form of identity. Having an

identity, so the argument goes, is a 'psychological imperative' as well as a 'sociological constant.' Despite the difficulties with the defining the concept of identity, researchers try to establish general ideas that can be used to describe identities. Kaina & Karolewski (2009) identify what they believe are three common views on the concept of identity. First, identity as something collectives or individuals have; second, identity as something a group or a person is; and third, identity in the sense of personal resources that people use, as something they do.

Verkuyten (2010) also discusses the concept of identity in his book '*Identiteit en diversiteit: de tegenstellingen voorbij*'. He approaches the concept from a socio-psychological perspective and regards identity as having different dimensions that explain how an identity is formed and how it operates. The first dimension is self-categorisation. People categorise themselves as part of a group, community or society, which can differ in different social situations. A person can one moment identify himself as man and the next as being Dutch or both at the same time according to what is asked or needed for that particular situation. With every self-categorisation a person places him or herself within a social role, while almost every group the person identifies with comes with characteristic norms, values and code of conduct. Therefore, people will also often behave according to the group they identify with e.g. identifying oneself as a man leads to more masculine behaviour (Ashmore, Deaux & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2003) . Moreover, self-categorisation is a statement on how a person wants to present him or herself. An example would be identifying oneself as a Turkish Dutchman instead of just Turkish, which still implies a connection with the native country, but also a sense of integration in Dutch society (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). The second dimension is the importance that a person attaches to an identity. One can find an identity just a label that points toward origin or attribute, but

for others an identity might be an essential part of their being. This attachment can lead to collective pride, joy or sadness, but also to feelings of shame for belonging to a group when it is blamed for something or if certain members misbehave. This links to the first dimension in the sense that these feelings influence in what situation people identify with what group. For example more people will classify themselves as being Dutch and attach more value to this identity when they are cheering for the Dutch football team playing against Germany at the World Cup then when asked in the supermarket. These feelings are also the basis of the third dimension, namely a feeling of communality or 'we-feeling'. This feeling implies a genuine interest in what happens to members of the group the person identifies with and the feeling that the identity is an integral part of the person's being. These feelings will not develop over night, but are a vital part of identification.

These dimensions, however, focus on just one side of the coin that constitute the concept of identity, namely 'the self' as in self-identification. The other side of the coin that is identity is the concept of 'the other'. By identifying oneself with a particular group through outer characteristics or shared norms and values, one also automatically excludes people that do not match this profile. Although this is not immediately a recipe for discrimination, it may certainly lead to people feeling left out or to unequal treatment of people in the in- and outgroup. Although it may have very negative consequences differentiating oneself from others is psychologically crucial as failing to do so can lead to feelings of being lost and not belonging (Verkuyten, 2010). In the context of the European identity two different meanings can be attached to 'the other'. First, Europe, the European Union and/or European identity can be seen as 'the other'. People in the member states can see Europe as annoyance or even a threat that intrudes on the sovereignty of their nation and cling firmly to their national identity and pride. In this scenario people will probably not identify themselves as



European and also regard people from other European countries as out-group members. It is likely that people who think in these categories are more cynical towards the existence of a European identity and will probably not consider themselves to have one. The second option is that people regard Europe as a community that juxtapose other continents or countries like Africa or the United States. In this scenario people will regard Europeans as the in-group, while regarding Africans or Americans to the out-group. It is more likely that people with this categorisation believe in the existence of a European identity or even consider themselves having a European identity. Although this categorisation might be accurate for some people, in practice there is no clear dichotomy. People can for example believe that a European identity exists, but not consider themselves to be European. To make it even more complex, the two identities might not even be mutual exclusive in the same person. Following the reasoning of Verkuyten (2010) in that people may identify themselves with different groups in different social situations, a person may not identify himself as European when staying in his or native country, but when on holiday in the US and surrounded by non-Europeans change his identification. Moreover, the European identity might not conflict with having a national identity. A European identity would not replace a national identity, but complement it. This would mean that people would be able to combine a national and European identity just like they can combine regional (identifying with a city or region within a country) and national identity.

A notion that appears both in Kaina & Karolewski (2009) and Verkuyten (2010) and is worth more exploration, is the link between identity and behaviour. Identity will also be visible in the behaviour of people as they act in accordance to the norms and values of the group they identify with. This would make measuring identity a more concrete study instead

of a focus on inner psychological processes only. With this notion identity becomes a more concrete concept instead of psychological process.

Favell (2005) agrees with the third option presented in Kaina & Karolewski (2009), namely identity as a something people do. In regard to European identity, he argues for a different view on European identity by not only looking at 'feeling European' but also 'acting European'.

*Of course, we can ask people the 'identity' question – how do you feel about the EU;...but the blunt truth is that this extra question is quite simply redundant once you have good behavioural data that tells you what people actually do in an integrating Europe... 'being European is about shopping across borders, buying property abroad, handling a common currency, etc. ... These ways of being European are notably also enjoyed by many who overtly profess themselves to be Eurosceptic or to have no European identity at all. Thought of this way, we may indeed discover 'social identities' that are genuinely transnational, if they turn out to be rooted behaviourally in new forms of cross-national action and interaction (Favell, 2005: 1114-1115)*

As Favell (2005) states it is not only about the feelings and attitudes that people have concerning their European identity, but also about the transnational actions and interactions people have. These actions constitute 'acting as European' in itself, even if the people themselves do not believe themselves to have a European identity at all. These actions include shopping across borders, working and studying abroad and traveling to different countries. As one of the actions that is distinguished is visiting people abroad, it is also interesting to look at people's networks including friends, family and/or colleagues abroad.

### 3.4 Linking mobility and European Identity

As the creation of an European identity should lead to more European integration it is interesting to note that leading figures of integration theory Deutsch (1957) and Haas (1958) agree that creation of a collective identity is an integral part of integration. According to Deutsch, international integration is a process that is largely based on international interaction between institutions and individuals. These interactions, established through capital and trade flows, international mobility of individuals and tourism, will create multiple communication networks. These networks will possibly lead to a 'we-feeling' and what Deutsch calls a 'security community'. A 'security community' is an area in which the chance of violence is reduced to a minimum and in which people are bound by a "sense of community", mutual sympathy, trust, and common interests (Deutsch, 1957). Deutsch argued that Europe could be such a community and already acknowledges that cross-border mobility of individuals might be the most significant factor in this process. In his view mobility would lead interpersonal contact that in turn would result in the creation of a collective European identity. He states that "cross-border people mobility is particularly important because it could lead to a 'we-feeling' and make institutional integration easier (Deutsch et al., 1968)".

However, Deutsch was criticized for having a too optimistic view regarding interpersonal contact and the creation of a European 'we-feeling'. It is not disputed that interpersonal contact might have the hypothesized effect, but the effect is not necessarily present. Social psychological studies about inter-group contact agree, in addition, that the conditions of the contact are important for a positive outcome. Allport (Pettigrew, 1998)

distinguished four under which inter-group contact can lead to a reduction of prejudices and conflict between the groups. The first condition is that the groups that have this contact should have an equal status, meaning one group should not be superior over the other. The second condition is that the groups should have common goals that they can work towards. This condition is linked with the third condition, namely that the goals should be achievable by inter-group cooperation and not inter-group competition. The last condition is the support of authority that both groups acknowledge social norms and both encourage fruitful and friendly cooperation. Pettigrew (1998) agrees with the conditions that Allport set and that they create a situation in which prejudices between groups can be reduced. However, he does not agree that they are prerequisites for this outcome. He argues that one additional condition is vital, namely the opportunity for friendship between members of different groups.

In such a situation, intergroup contact can lead to *reconceptualisation of group categories*. This means that people reconfigure the groups they perceived previously and reconsider what people belong to what group. An example from during WWII was the assimilation of black soldiers into the armies of European countries. Through a process of intergroup cooperation prejudices against black people were hopefully reduced and the new soldiers would be integrated to form one coherent army (Haas, 2001). This process might also be present when it comes to the creation of a European identity e.g. if someone previously belonged to the 'out-group' French people, he or she may now be included in your 'in-group' European people through interpersonal contact.

## 4. Research question

As cultural integration becomes more and more important in a European context and the European Commission has an increased interest in creating a European identity, it will be important to test if the efforts of the European Commission have the assumed effects. Although the Erasmus programme does not have the creation of a European identity as its primary goal, it will probably help to constitute a European identity. Therefore this research will focus on the question:

*Does participation in an Erasmus programme contribute to a European identity?*

From this question a more specific question can be deduced, namely:

*What aspects of a European Identity are increased by involvement in the Erasmus programme?*

## 5. Research design

To reach a conclusion about the effect of the Erasmus programme the research had to involve people who were able to participate in this programme. As the Erasmus programme focuses mainly on mobility among students, the population for this study also consisted of students. The research will use three groups of students: a group of students that have never been involved in the Erasmus programme, a group of students that are preparing to go on exchange with the help of the Erasmus programme next year and a group of students that have been abroad with the Erasmus programme in the past. The first and last group will be the groups that are most important to reach a conclusion on the effect of the Erasmus programme on the constitution of a European identity. The second group will be used as a control group to rule out the possibility that students that participate in the Erasmus programme are inherently more 'European' than other students. The research focused only on Dutch students, because there are significant differences between people's attitudes towards the EU between different European countries in the EU. As the European Union expanded over time, some countries have had a far longer period to adapt to their position within the EU, while other countries just recently joined and are still struggling to find this position. It is to be expected that people that live in a country that had this longer adaption period have a stronger European identity than the people in other countries. Moreover, the population of foreign students that was available was also too small to get any significant results if used as separate group.

The three groups of students will be the main tool to see if there are differences between students that had different degrees of involvement in the Erasmus programme.

More details on the constitution of the groups and the sampling method will be presented further on, but first the main hypotheses will be outlined.

## 5.1 Hypotheses

The main hypotheses that will be explored concern the effectiveness of the Erasmus programme on the constitution of a European identity. In line with the theory that was explored, European identity will be divided in two separate categories: 'feeling' European and 'acting' European. These two categories are also divided in several variables that are measured independently. How these categories are constituted will be further explained in the operationalisation. The hypotheses will then be:

H1: There is a significant difference in feeling European between groups of students with various degrees of involvement in the Erasmus programme.

H2: There is a significant difference in acting European between groups of students with various degrees of involvement in the Erasmus programme.

The expectation for these two hypotheses is that there is a significant difference between the groups for both categories. If the Erasmus programme indeed fosters a European identity, it is to be expected that group 3 (students that already went abroad with the Erasmus programme) will 'feel' and 'act' more European than both group 1 (students with no involvement in the Erasmus programme) and group 2 (students that are preparing to go abroad with the Erasmus programme).

Another hypothesis that will be tested is based on the argument that Favell's bases his belief on that research should look more towards 'acting' European than only focus on self-identification. According to Favell there should not be a correlation between 'feeling' European and 'acting' European as he states that even Eurosceptic people can still act very

much in a European fashion. In line with Favell's argument the expected outcome will be that there is no relation between these two categories. It could be that Favell's argument is not correct in which case it is most likely that there is a positive relation between the two as it would logic that people 'feel' more European also 'act' more European. The hypothesis will be:

H3: There is no significant correlation between the 'acting European' and 'feeling European'.

## 5.2 Research Methods

As stated before the research will be a quantitative study using a questionnaire to determine the effects of the Erasmus programme on the constitution of a European identity. The ideal type of research would be a longitudinal study that questions participants before and after their experiences with the Erasmus programme. However, because this model was not viable within the timeframe, the decisions was made to use the three groups of students that were mentioned before. The first (no involvement) and last group (involvement in the past) will be the groups that are most important to reach a conclusion on the effect of the Erasmus programme on the constitution of a European identity. The second group will be used as a control group to rule out the possibility that students that participate in the Erasmus programme are inherently more 'European' than other students.

The questionnaire will incorporate the factors deduced from the theoretical exploration to reach a conclusion concerning what aspects of a European identity are bolstered by the Erasmus programme. The questionnaire will conducted mostly as a pen-and-paper questionnaire, but will also be sent out to other students to be filled in online. This does jeopardize some validity of the research, because students that filled in the



questionnaire on paper had the opportunity to ask questions if something was unclear, while participants online did not have this opportunity. Moreover, participants might have filled in the questionnaire more seriously with the researcher present than if it was filled in at home. Despite the loss of validity, this choice was necessary to reach enough respondents.

The research will use students as its research population for several reasons. The most important reason is that the Erasmus programme focuses mainly on students and gives them the opportunity to be mobile. Reasons for this focus involves that youth becomes more mobile mostly in the period that they are studying. In this period youth will often be more independent and have more opportunity to study or do an internship abroad. A factor that certainly plays a role is age, while older youth has more independence and is less reliant on parental support or supervision that is needed for younger people. Moreover, universities and other institutions in higher education provide more opportunity to go abroad for an extended period of time. These institutions also have more connections with institutions abroad, which makes exchange programmes easier to manage.

International experience and cultural exchange may also be more beneficial for students than for younger youth, because students have a clearer vision on their career path as they are already studying in a particular field. This may result in the full benefit of the exchange in regard to future job opportunities and career enhancement that were discussed previously. Students in this context are everyone that is currently enrolled at an institution for higher education like a university and is studying to get either a bachelor or master degree.

### 5.3 Operationalisation of Concepts and Variables

Based on the theories of Deutsch (1968) and Allport (Pettigrew, 1998) and the goals of the European Commission the concept of a European identity can be deduced to measurable factors. First, there will be a focus on the more 'subjective' side of identity meaning attitudes, feelings and conceptions about European identity. The most important is a sense of belonging to the European community that transcends the sense of belonging to a national nation state. It does not mean that people have to abandon their national identity and adopt a European identity instead, but they certainly should have to have the feeling that they are European instead of or besides being only Dutch, Spanish, or German. In other words, the 'we-feeling' that Deutsch was discussing should be there to make a European identity possible. People that feel European should believe that European identity exists and consider themselves to have this identity.

Secondly, following Favell's reasoning, 'feeling European' will be complemented with 'acting European', meaning cross-national and interaction of people. This 'acting European' will focus on actions that are currently employed like visiting friends abroad, involvement in cross-national organisations, studying and working in a foreign country or even shopping across borders, but also on willingness to be more mobile in the future for e.g. occupation in companies abroad. To summarise the factors that constitute a European identity are:

*Variables included within the category of 'Feeling' European":*

- Sense of belonging to the European community ('we-feeling'): The degree to which one regards Europe as the in-group that juxtaposes other communities like an African or American community. This implies categorising people from other European countries as Europeans and not, or at least not only as, German, Italian, Spanish, etc. Moreover, a measure of positive feelings toward Europe such as recognising common interest, genuine interest in other European countries and citizens and feelings of pride towards the European community. This variable was constituted by questions 7, 9, 10.5, and 11.3. Question 7 and 9 were both scored on a scale from 1 till 4 with a lower score indicating more optimism concerning the EU for question 7 and feeling more pride of being a European citizen for question 9. A principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted on 4 items (questions 7, 9, 10.5 and 11.3) with oblique rotation (oblimin) to reach a single score for this category. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified that sampling, although it was only a mediocre score with KMO=.632. Bartlett's test of sphericity  $\chi^2(6) = 37.362$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. The analysis showed that only one component had an eigenvalue over Kaiser's criterion of 1 and explained 46.2% of the variance. Shown in table 5.1 are the factor loadings for all the questions. Rotation was not possible as only one factor was extracted. Therefore, table 5.1 shows the original factor loadings before any rotation. The factor score for this category will be used as a variable in further analysis.

	Component
	1
Please tell me how attached you feel to the European Union	,408
To what extend are you concerned with the well-being of Europeans	,322
How proud are you to be European Citizen?	,411
Would you say that you are very optimistic, fairly optimistic, fairly pessimistic or very pessimistic about the future of the EU?	,320

- Sense of being ‘European’ instead or alongside a national identity or ‘Self-Identification’: The degree to which a person categorises himself as ‘European’ or having a European identity instead of or alongside one’s national identity. People will also consider the European identity as important or even as a vital part of their being and therefore rate is higher than other identities. It can also be that the identity is only present in certain situations e.g. if encountered with non-Europeans. This variable was measured by question 12, asking students directly if they identified themselves as European, Dutch and European or Dutch only. The question was recoded to have the minimum score as 1 (if answered European only) and the maximum score 3 (if answered Dutch only).

*Variables included within the category of 'Acting' European:*

- Exploiting more cross-national action and interaction: The degree to which people 'act' more European by crossing borders for shopping, studying or work. In accordance with Favell's theory, the degree to which a person 'acts' more European does not have to be related to self-identification. This variable was constituted by questions 13 and 14 that specifically asked students about their cross-national actions. A principal component analysis was also conducted for the 5 items of question 13 (13.1-13.5) and question 14 with oblique rotation (oblimin). However, the correlation matrix indicated that item 13.5 (use of internet to buy products from other European countries) did not correlate well with all the other items with all correlations being  $<.2$ . It was decided to remove this item from the PCA. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified that sampling, although it was only a mediocre score with  $KMO = .589$ . Bartlett's test of sphericity  $\chi^2(10) = 54,835$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. The analysis showed that two components had an eigenvalue over Kaiser's criterion of 1 and in combination explained 60.30% of the variance with the component 1 explaining 36.83% and component 2 explaining 23.48%.

**Table 5.2***Factor loadings after rotation (Pattern Matrix)*

	Component	
	1	2
In the last 12 months have you visited another European country?	,711	
In the last 12 months have you read a book, newspaper or magazine in a language other than your mother tongue?		,764
In the last 12 months have you socialised with people from another EU country?	,813	
In the last 12 months have you watched TV programmes in a language other than your mother tongue?		,904
Have you ever been involved in European cross-border projects?	,527	

**Table 5.3***Factor loadings after rotation (Structure Matrix)*

	Component	
	1	2
In the last 12 months have you visited another European country?	,759	
In the last 12 months have you read a book, newspaper or magazine in a language other than your mother tongue?		,810
In the last 12 months have you socialised with people from another EU country?	,807	
In the last 12 months have you watched TV programmes in a language other than your mother tongue?		,874
Have you ever been involved in European cross-border projects?	,543	

These components were also used in the final analysis. The table 5.2 and 5.3 show the factor loadings after rotation (both structure and pattern matrix). The first factor seems to represent cross-national action through physical interaction (visiting and socialising), while the other factor represents cross-national action through language. This factor scores of the underlying factors (physical interaction and cross-national action through language) were then added together to reach a final score for this category.

- Having and utilizing an international network: Another part of 'acting European' is having and utilizing an international network of friends, family and/or colleagues whom people visit or work and cooperate with. This variable was measured by questions 16, 17, 18 and 19. Participants could score a minimum of 1 (Yes) and a maximum of 2 (No) for question 16 and 17, but score a minimum of 1 (Often) and maximum of 3 (Never) for both question 18 and 19. For this category a principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted as well, including 4 items (questions 16, 17, 18 and 19) with oblique rotation (oblimin) to reach a single score for this category. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified that sampling, although it was only a mediocre score with KMO= .677. Bartlett's test of sphericity  $\chi^2(6) = 69,429$   $p < .001$ , indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. The analysis showed that only one component had an eigenvalue over Kaiser's criterion of 1 and explained 50.27% of the variance. Shown in table 5.4 are the factor loadings for all the questions. Because only one component was extracted, rotation was not possible as only Therefore, table 5.4 shows again the original factor loadings before

rotation. The factor score for this category will be used as a variable in further analysis.

**Table 5.4**  
*Factor loadings before rotation (Component Matrix)*

	Component
	1
Do you have friends that live in another European country	,376
Do you have family that lives in another European country	,369
Do you got to other European countries to visit friends and/or family?	,415
Did you ever visit another European country for work and/or study?	,217

- More inclined to be more mobile for occupation in the future: The degree to which people are inclined to ‘act’ more European in the future through cross-border activities. These activities would include studying, working or living abroad. This category is, just like the previous one, not necessarily related to self-identification. This factor was constituted by questions 20, 21 and 22, asking students if they would be inclined to live, study and/or work abroad in the future. For this variable the minimum score was 3 and the maximum score 9 as all three questions could be answer with ‘yes’ for a score of one, ‘maybe’ for a score of two and ‘no’ for a score of three. Also for this category a principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted to reduce the questions to a single score. In this PCA 3 items (questions 20, 21 and 22) were included with oblique rotation (oblimin). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified that sampling, although it was only a mediocre score with KMO= .653. Bartlett’s test of sphericity  $\chi^2 (3) = 132,703$   $p < .001$ , indicated that correlations



between items were sufficiently large for PCA. The analysis showed that only one component had an eigenvalue over Kaiser’s criterion of 1 and explained 73.36% of the variance. Shown in table 5.5 are the factor loadings for all the questions.

**Table 5.5**  
*Factor loadings before rotation (Component Matrix)*

	Component
	1
Would you consider to study in another European country in the future?	,774
Would you consider to work in another European country in the future?	,922
Would you consider moving to a different European country in the future?	,867

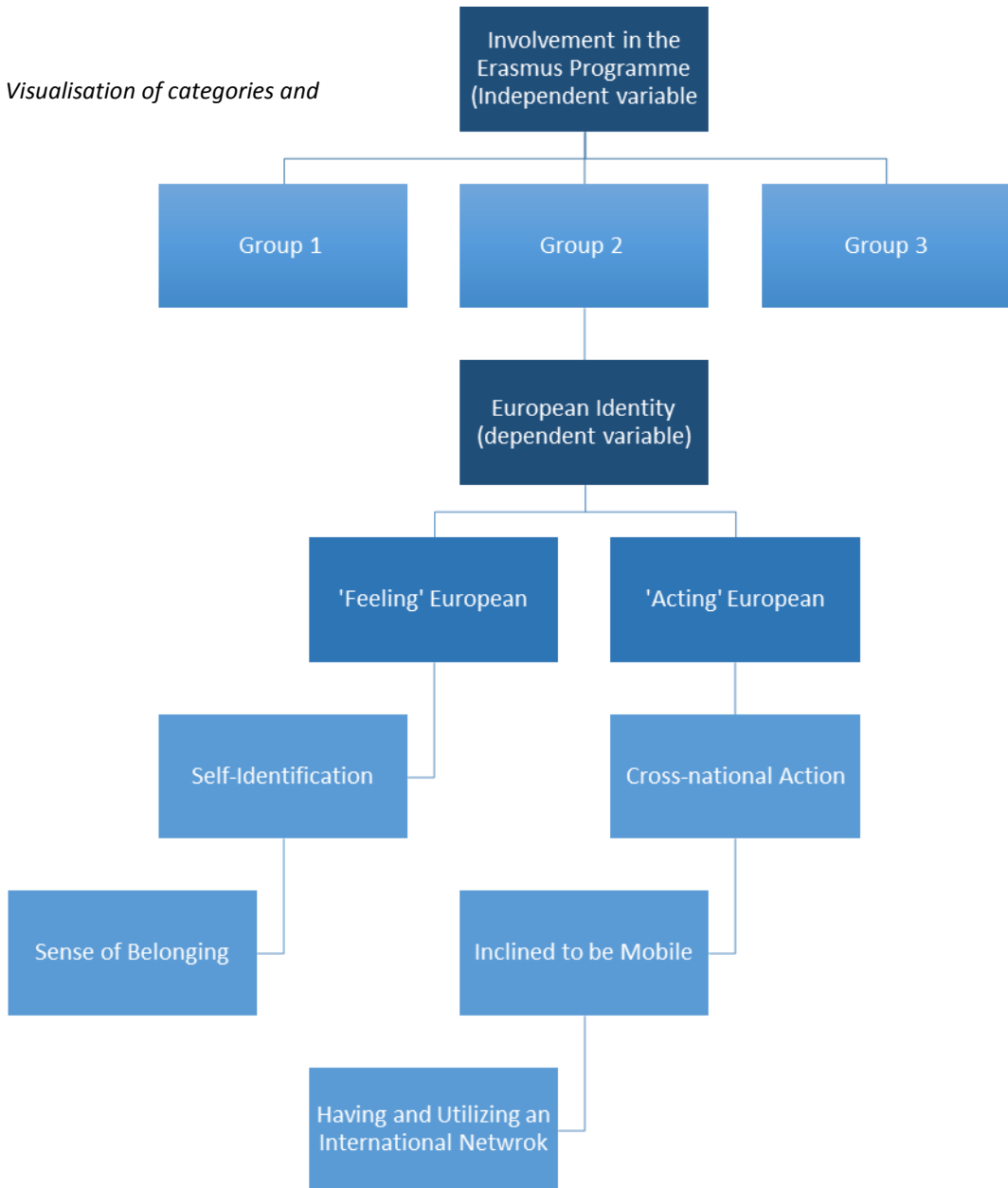
As with other categories rotation was not possible as only one factor was extracted. The factor loading before rotation are presented in table 5.5. The factor score for this category will be used as a variable in further analysis.

Figure 5.1 shows a visualisation and summary of all the categories and variables that were mentioned above. All item scales that constitute the variables were tested if they were statistically reliable using Cronbach’s alpha as the measure of reliability. The variables ‘exploiting more cross-national action and interaction’, ‘sense of belonging’ and ‘having and utilizing an international network’ all had a moderate reliability with an  $\alpha = .537$ ,  $\alpha = .606$  and  $\alpha = .641$  respectively. The variable ‘inclined to be mobile in the future’ had a high reliability with  $\alpha = .831$ . Removing items from the item scales resulted for most items in a decline in reliability. Removing others gave only slight increases in reliability. Because all items scales consist of very few items, it was decided that a very small increase did not weigh up against removing an item. Therefore, all items were retained.

All five separate variables in the categories 'feeling' European and 'acting' European will be used to test the two main hypotheses (H1 & H2). These hypotheses will be tested by using the statistical method of one-way MANOVA. This method is chosen, because it accurately analyses differences between groups with also taking into consideration interaction between the dependent variables. It will therefore have more statistical power than just doing separate ANOVA's for all variables. However, separated ANOVA's will be used if the MANOVA is significant to analyse the effect of each separate variable. It will also be followed up with post-hoc tests or contrasts, depending on what is needed, to get a better understanding of the differences between groups as the ANOVA's do not provide this information.

After this analysis the third hypothesis (H3) will be investigated. This hypothesis will be tested by looking if there is a correlation between the group of variables that constitute 'feeling' European and the group that constitute 'acting' European. By taking a closer look at the data from the variables, it will be determined which correlation statistic is appropriate to use.

Figure 5.1 Visualisation of categories and variables



## 5.4 Sampling Method

The questionnaire was conducted among the three groups of students of Utrecht University with various degree of involvement in the Erasmus programme. Students were not selected randomly, because specific groups of students (especially group 2 and 3) were needed. Instead students were selected via the Erasmus programme of Utrecht university and asked if they wanted to participate in this research. Although the selection was not completely random, it could be argued that participants were still quite a good representation of students that were involved in the Erasmus programme.

For the first group students were asked to fill in the questionnaire during the last 15 minutes of their lecture. This was done in consent with their professor. From this group all 41 students filled in the questionnaire. 47 of the students filled in the questionnaire during the pre-departure meetings of the Erasmus programme. There were in total four pre-departure meetings to which 69 students were invited, although not all students were present. Most of these students were preparing to go on exchange next year and were therefore selected for group 2. However, there also some students present that already did the Erasmus programme who were also asked to fill in the questionnaire. These students were put in group 3. Students that could not make it to these meetings were sent an email with a link to the online version of the questionnaire. These were both the students that were preparing to go abroad (group 2) and students that already went abroad last semester (group 3). The email was sent to a total of 56 students. The questionnaire was also posted on the facebook page of the Erasmus programme of Utrecht University, which reached both students from group 2 and group 3. This facebook post reached another 82 students. This means that in total the online version of the questionnaire was sent out to 138 students.

From this 138 students, 21 replied in a correct fashion. The total of participants was 109 at the start of the analysis. From this 109 participants 41 belonged to the group 1, 33 belonged to group 2 and 35 belonged to group 3. Unfortunately, due to participants abstaining from giving a valid answer (or answer 'I don't know') the total amount of useable data entries was reduced to 79 with 28 participants belonging to group 1, 24 students to group 2 and 27 students to group 3.

## 6. Analysis and Results

The questionnaire was conducted among the three groups of students of Utrecht University with various degree of involvement in the Erasmus programme. Students were not selected randomly, because specific groups of students (especially group 2 and 3) were needed. Instead students were selected via the Erasmus programme of Utrecht university and asked if they wanted to participate in this research. Although the selection was not completely random, it could be argued that participants were still quite a good representation of students that were involved in the Erasmus programme.

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When looking at the descriptive statistics, there are a few interesting outcomes that should be mentioned. The first remarkable finding concerns the two questions on how proud the students felt to be Dutch and European. Although a small amount of students answered that they were very proud, high percentages of students responded that they were actually quite proud to be both Dutch (58.7%) and European (48.6%). Most students also answered that they were fairly optimistic about the future of the European Union (73,4%). Furthermore, only 1.8% of students identified themselves as only Dutch, while 59.6% identified themselves as Dutch and European and 33% as European only. These results were all equally divided among the groups.

Also interesting is that almost all (34 of the 35 participants) respondents that already participated in the Erasmus programme answered that they have friends abroad. This might be a major indicator that the Erasmus programme is good opportunity to establish friendships.

## 6.1 Hypotheses 1 & 2: One-way MANOVA

Before running the MANOVA assumptions were checked. The assumption of multivariate normality was checked by running Shapiro-Wilks test for each dependent variable as the study included only 109 items. Although this test measure the univariate normality and not the multivariate normality, it gives a good idea if the assumption is violated. The score on the Shapiro-Wilks test indicated that the assumption was violated for all the dependent variables ( $p < .0001$ ) except 'Sense of belonging'  $p (.213) > .05$ . This violation has a significantly effect on the power of the research.

The assumption of homogeneity of covariance was checked by running Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices using  $p < .001$  as a criterion. As Box's M (56,257) was not significant,  $p (.010) > .001$  – it indicates that there are no significant differences between the covariance matrices. Therefore, the assumption is not violated.

The Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was also used to test the assumption of MANOVA and subsequent ANOVA's that the variances of each variable are equal across the groups. If the Levene's test was significant, this would have meant that the assumption had been violated – and data should be viewed with caution – or the data could be transformed so as to equalize the variances. The test was non-significant for all variables (Self-identification,  $p (.349)$ , Sense of belonging  $p (.735)$ , Having an utilizing an international network,  $p (.253)$ ), except for exploiting cross-national action an interaction,  $p (.002)$  and Inclined to be mobile in the future,  $p (.029)$ . The assumption is violated for these two variables and homogeneity of variance cannot be assumed.

After checking the assumption the one-way MANOVA was conducted. Because the assumption of homogeneity of covariance was not violated it was appropriate to use Wilk's



Lambda as a test. The MANOVA showed that there was a statistically significant difference in European Identity based on students involvement in the Erasmus programme ,  $F(10, 150) = 3.16, p < .0005$ ; Wilk's  $\Lambda = .682$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .98$ . The results of the MANOVA are presented in table 6.1.

**Table 6.1**

*Outcome of MANOVA including all independent variables*

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Nonc ent. Para meter	$\eta^2$
Group	Pillai's Trace	,332	3,0 28	10,000	152,0 00	,002	30,28 4	,978
	<b>Wilks' Lambda</b>	<b>,682</b>	<b>3,1 60</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>150, 000</b>	<b>,001</b>	<b>31,5 97</b>	<b>,983</b>
	Hotelling's Trace	,444	3,2 88	10,000	148,0 00	,001	32,88 0	,986
	Roy's Largest Root	,390	5,9 21	5,000	76,00 0	,000	29,60 7	,992

**Table 6.2***Outcome separate ANOVA's including all independent variables*

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Noncent. Paramet er	$\eta^2$
Group	Exploiting cross-national action and interaction	12,957	2	6,479	3,465	,036	6,930	,633
	Self-identification	,381	2	,191	,544	,583	1,087	,137
	Sense of belonging	1,231	2	,615	,591	,556	1,181	,145
	Having an utilizing an international network	9,535	2	4,768	5,562	,005	11,125	,842
	Inclined to be mobile in the future	16,987	2	8,494	12,03	,000	24,062	,994
Error	Exploiting cross-national action and interaction	147,704	79	1,870				
	Do you see yourself as...?	27,680	79	,350				
	Sense of belonging	82,309	79	1,042				
	Having an utilizing an international network	67,715	79	,857				
	Inclined to be mobile in the future	55,773	79	,706				

Follow-up univariate ANOVAs for all variables indicated that the variables that constituted 'feeling European' are not significantly different between the different groups with for a 'Sense of belonging',  $F(2, 79) = .519, p(.556) > .05, \eta^2 = .145$  and 'Self-identification',  $F(2, 79) = .544, p(.583) > .05, \eta^2 = .145$ . The variables that constitute 'acting European' were significantly different between students with different degrees of involvement in the Erasmus programme with 'exploiting more cross-national action and interaction,  $F(2, 79) = 3.456, p < .05, \eta^2 = .633$ , 'having and utilizing an international network'  $F(2, 79) = 5.562, p < .001, \eta^2 = .842$  and 'inclined to be mobile in the future'  $F(2, 79) = 12.03, p < .001, \eta^2 = .994$ . These results are presented in table 6.2.

Because the ANOVA's did not indicate between which groups the differences were, post hoc tests were conducted using the Games-Howell as a test of choice. This test was

chosen, because homogeneity of variance could not be assumed. The post-hoc indicated for both 'exploiting more cross-national action' and 'having and utilizing an international network' there was significant difference between group 1 and 3, but not between the first and second group. There was also no significant difference for these variables between the 2 and 3 group. For the variable 'inclined to be mobile in the future' there was significant difference between group 1 and both other groups, but not between group 2 and 3. The results of the post-hoc test are presented in table 6.3.

**Table 6.3**  
*Post-Hoc test (Games-Howell) for variable constituting 'acting European'*

Dependent Variable	Group	Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Exploiting cross-national action and interaction	1,00	2,00	,4309	,41333	,554
		3,00	,9528	,37158	,037
	2,00	1,00	-,4309	,41333	,554
		3,00	,5219	,30219	,207
	3,00	1,00	-,9528	,37158	,037
		2,00	-,5219	,30219	,207
Having an utilizing an international network	1,00	2,00	,4233509	,26607750	,259
		3,00	,8177961	,23602867	,003
	2,00	1,00	-,4233509	,26607750	,259
		3,00	,3944452	,25387052	,276
	3,00	1,00	-,8177961	,23602867	,003
		2,00	-,3944452	,25387052	,276
Inclined to be mobile in the future	1,00	2,00	,9953430	,21347174	,000
		3,00	,9079275	,24711462	,002
	2,00	1,00	-,9953430	,21347174	,000
		3,00	-,0874155	,20355941	,904
	3,00	1,00	-,9079275	,24711462	,002
		2,00	,0874155	,20355941	,904

## 6.2 Hypothesis 3: Correlation between ‘feeling’ European and ‘acting’ European

Checking the third hypothesis required to do simple correlation analysis between the two clusters of variables, namely ‘feeling’ European and ‘acting’ European. However, the standard test for correlation Person’s  $r$  could not be used, because both variables have no interval data. Therefore the non-parametric test Spearman’s rho was used as it only requires ordinal data for both variables. This test was chosen over Kendall’s tau, because the study has a reasonable sample size. The results of the correlation analysis is presented in table 6.4.

**Table 6.4**  
*Correlations (Spearman’s rho) between all independent variables*

		Sense of belonging	Exploiting cross-national action and interaction	Having an utilizing an international network	Inclined to be mobile in the future	Self-identification
Sense of belonging	$R_s$	1,000	,228	,167	,017	,440
	Sig.	.	,038	,130	,876	,000
Exploiting cross-national action and interaction	$R_s$	,228	1,000	,410	,306	,060
	Sig.	,038	.	,000	,002	,542
Having an utilizing an international network	$R_s$	,167	,410	1,000	,291	,123
	Sig.	,130	,000	.	,002	,206
Inclined to be mobile in the future	$R_s$	,017	,306	,291	1,000	,025
	Sig.	,876	,002	,002	.	,801
Self-identification	$R_s$	,440	,060	,123	,025	1,000
	Sig.	,000	,542	,206	,801	.

The non-parametric correlation indicated that there was no significant relation between the variables that constitute 'feeling European' and the variables that constitute 'acting European' as all significant levels were  $p > .01$  (level of significance used with 2-tailed test) with  $R_s = .228$ ,  $R_s = .167$  and  $R_s = .017$  for 'sense of belonging' and  $R_s = .060$ ,  $R_s = .123$  and  $R_s = .025$  for 'self-identification'. There is, however, a significant correlation between the variables within the two categories. This would be in line with the third hypothesis that there would not be a significant relation between these two categories of variables.

## 7. Conclusion

The transformation of the European Union from an economic project to a collective unity leads to focus and importance of socio-cultural projects such as a 'European Identity'. The believe of the European Commission that it will have a beneficial effect for future cooperation and integration has led to more focus on projects to make such an identity happen. However, the project for a European identity proves to have some difficulties. First, there is discussion on if it already exists, if it is a future project or a project already in progress. Secondly, there is the question if a European identity can co-exist with a national identity or will replace it. Especially with the resurgence of national identities and sense of belonging with one's own nation state, this question becomes prevalent. Although this discussion is not completely resolved in this thesis, the theoretical exploration gave a solid basis to explore the concept of a European identity by not only focusing on self-identification, but also other aspects of the concept. The programme that was under inquiry in this study was the Erasmus programme. This programme was of interest because it is a highly successful programme when looking at student mobility. Theories of Allport and Deutsch focusing on cross-national contact and creation of a 'we-feeling' show that there is a link between cross-national mobility within Europe and the possible fostering of a European identity. This makes the Erasmus programme a huge opportunity to not only achieve student mobility, but also foster a European identity.

The study conducted focused on students from Utrecht university and researched three different groups of students with various degrees of involvement in the Erasmus programme. The first group was never involved in the Erasmus programme, the second group was preparing to go abroad next year and the last group had been involved in the

programme in the past and had already returned from their exchange programme. The main hypothesis that was tested concerned if there was significant difference between these three groups in terms of the two main variables, namely 'feeling' European and 'acting' European. The expectation was that the third group would feel and act more European than both other groups, showing that the Erasmus programme made a contribution to fostering their European identity. A sub-hypothesis was tested concerning the relation between 'feeling' European and 'acting' European. Following Favell's reasoning the expectation was that there would be no correlation between these two variables.

Concerning the main hypotheses the analysis did not show the expected results. While the one-way MANOVA was significant indicating significant differences between the three groups, follow-up ANOVA's showed only a significant result for 'acting' European and not for 'feeling' European. From this result it can be concluded that the Erasmus programme had no effect or very little effect on students' identification as European and students that were enrolled in this programme are in general not more positive about Europe and the European Union as other students. This means that the first hypothesis is rejected. When looking at the descriptive statistics it is very noticeable that students are quite positive about the European Union in general and that a lot of them also identify themselves at least as Dutch and European and some even as only European, while only 1.8% feels only Dutch. The Erasmus programme might not even be needed to strengthen students' 'feeling' more European as they apparently already do. The results at least show that the programme has no negative effect on the feelings these students have towards Europe.

The one-way ANOVA for 'acting' European, however, was significant, confirming the second hypothesis that there is a significant difference between the three groups. To even get a better understanding of which factors were causing the variation within these groups,

the main variable of 'acting' European was split up in three separate variables, utilizing the previously deduced factors. The three variables were: the inclination to be mobile in the future, having an international network and exploiting cross-national action. The analysis of these variables indicated that having an international network and the inclination to be mobile in the future were significantly different between the three groups. To do draw conclusion from these results, it is necessary to first have a look at the post-hoc test.

The follow-up post-hoc tests that were conducted failed to show the expected result. The expected result was that there was significant difference between all groups. However, the post-hoc tests showed that there was only significant difference between group 1 and 2 and between group 1 and 3, while not showing a significant result between group 2 and 3. This result means that it can also not be concluded that the Erasmus programme had an effect on 'acting' European as there is no significant difference between group 2 and 3. However, the post-hoc tests seem to suggest that there is a difference between students that choose to enrol in the Erasmus programme (group 1 & 2) and students that choose not to (group 3). These results combined with the results from previous analyses indicate that students that make this decision are already more internationally orientated with wider international networks and more willingness to not let national borders limit them when it comes to living, studying and working. It can be assumed that this influences the decision to enrol in the Erasmus programme, but this study does not allow to draw conclusions on this subject.

In conclusion, the analysis does not confirm the prior expectations of the Erasmus programme having a bolstering effect for neither aspect of a European identity that was measured in both dependent variables. It seems that a European identity has more influence



on the decision of enrolling in the programme than the other way around. However, the programme has no negative effect either and it still might have a positive effect on some students. The programme at least provides an opportunity for cross-national interaction and making friends abroad for those students that were enrolled in the programme. At least the most important criterion for improving inter-group contact according to Pettigrew is present.

The sub-hypothesis that was analysed was if there was a significant correlation between 'feeling' and 'acting' European. The expectations were in line with a statement of Favell that there is not necessarily a correlation between these two variables. This expectation might not be the most obvious, because it could be expected that students that 'feel' more European would also display this in their behaviour and would therefore also 'act' more European. The result of the correlation analysis, however, showed no significant correlation between the variables that constitute 'feeling' and the variables that constitute 'acting' European indicating that Favell's statement that people who are Eurosceptic can at the same time 'act' very European is certainly a possibility. The more logical explanation of a positive correlation between these categories of variables is certainly not confirmed by these results.

## 8. Discussion and Suggestions for Future Research

Although this study showed some insight in the relation between the Erasmus programme and a European identity, it has some issues that impact either the validity or reliability of the research.

As mentioned before, the method that was chosen of investigating three separate groups of students was not the most reliable method to research this topic. The ideal method would be to do a longitudinal study with a pre- and post-test using the same students before they went abroad and after. This would give a more reliable result as the repeated observations for the same individuals would give a better insight in the impact that the Erasmus programme has. Unfortunately, this form of research was not achievable within the timeframe of the research as students would be away for months and the research fell in between periods in which students were already abroad or preparing to go next year. The method that was chosen was the second best option and still gives decent levels of reliability, especially with inclusion of the group that was preparing to go abroad to rule out an inherit European identity.

With this method it was important to have a large enough population to get valid results. Although the total population size of a 109 participants was valid size, it was unfortunate that only 79 participants had valid data that could be analysed for the main hypotheses. For future research it will be important to reach a larger group of students and get them involved in the research. With a larger population the results there will be more statistically valid. It may also resolve the issue of type 2 error that was encountered in the post-hoc test results. Preferably the questionnaire would only be conducted in one fashion, so pen-and paper or online. This would further increase the validity of the research.

Concerning the reliability of the variables it would have been better to have a higher Cronbach's alpha as most variables had a Cronbach's alpha between .5 and .7. Ideal would be reliability level of above .8 for all variables. Unfortunately, the Cronbach's alpha did not increase or increased very little if items were removed, which might indicate a defect in what the questions measure. For future research it is recommended to have another critical look at how the questions are phrased and maybe insert other questions to get the reliability to a better level of acceptability.

The last issue is the assumption of multivariate normality that was violated in the main analysis. This significantly reduces the power of the research, results should be interpreted with care and no definite conclusions can be reached. This assumption might be fixed by using a larger population in future research.

In conclusion, a longitudinal study would be preferred over the comparison between groups of students, but if this is not possible future research should at least focus on getting more participants to solve some issues of this study. There should also be a critical review of the questions in the questionnaire for this might greatly improve the reliability of the research. Future studies could also expand the research to different population e.g. students from different universities or differentiate between Dutch students and students from other countries. This would give a more complete overview of the effect of the Erasmus programme.

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## 10. Appendix 1: Questionnaire Erasmus Programme and European Identity

### Basic questions

**Respondent Nummer:** \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) Age: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Parents' place of residence: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Gender: Male / Female
  
- 5) What level of education are you currently enrolled in?
  - Bachelor
  - Master
  - Other

The Erasmus programme is an initiative of the European Union to stimulate student mobility within the European area. The programme provides students with a scholarship that helps them to study abroad at universities that are connected to the programme.

- 6) Have you ever been enrolled in the Erasmus programme?
  - No
  - No, but I have been enrolled in similar programme
  - No, but I am planning to do so in the future
  - Yes

### **(Sense of belonging to the European community ('we-feeling'))**

- 7) Would you say that you are very optimistic, fairly optimistic, fairly pessimistic or very pessimistic about the future of the EU?
  - Very optimistic
  - Fairly optimistic
  - Fairly pessimistic
  - Very pessimistic
  - I don't know

**8) How proud are you to be a citizen of the Netherlands?**

- Very proud
- Quite proud
- Not very proud
- Not at all proud
- I don't know

**9) How proud are you to be a European citizen?**

- Very proud
- Quite proud
- Not very proud
- Not at all proud
- I don't know

**10) To what extent are you concerned with the well-being of:**

	Very much	Much	To a certain extent	Not so much	Not at all	Don't know
Your immediate family	1	2	3	4	5	6
People in your neighbourhood	1	2	3	4	5	6
People living in your region	1	2	3	4	5	6
Your fellow countrymen	1	2	3	4	5	6
Europeans	1	2	3	4	5	6
All humans of the world	1	2	3	4	5	6

**(Sense of being 'European' instead or alongside a national identity)**

**11) Please tell me how attached you feel to...**

	Very Attached	Fairly attached	Not very Attached	Not attached at all	Don't know
Your city/town/village	1	2	3	4	5



The Netherlands	1	2	3	4	5
The European Union	1	2	3	4	5

**12) Do you see yourself as...?**

- Dutch only
- Dutch and European
- European only
- None
- I Don't know

**(Exploiting more cross-national action and interaction)**

**13) In the last 12 months have you...?**

	Yes on several occasions	Yes, once or twice	No	I don't know
Visited another European Country	1	2	3	4
Read a book, newspaper or magazine in a language other than your mother tongue	1	2	3	4
Socialised with people from another EU country	1	2	3	4
Watched TV programmes in a language other than your mother tongue	1	2	3	4
Used the Internet in order to purchase a product or a service from another EU country	1	2	3	4

**14) Have you ever been involved in European cross-border projects (i.e. volunteer work abroad)?**

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

**15) Do you go to other European countries to shop (e.g. to buy products that are not available in the Netherlands)?**

- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

**16) Do you have friends that live in another European country?**

- Yes
- No

**17) Do you have family that lives in another European country?**

- Yes
- No

**18) Do you go to other European countries to visit friends and/or family?**

- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

**19) Did you ever visit another European country for work and/or study?**

- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

**(More inclined to be more mobile for occupation in the future)**

**20) Would you consider to study in another European country in the future?**

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

**21) Would you consider to work in another European country in the future?**

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

**22) Would you consider moving to a different European country in the future?**

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

**(Trust in European institutions)**

**23) Please tell me if you tend to trust or tend not to trust the following European institutions.**

	Tend to trust	Tend to not trust	I don't know
The European Parliament	1	2	3
The European Commission	1	2	3
The European Central Bank	1	2	3