

REPORT on Erasmus Students' Mobility

**Academic year
2005/2006**

Academic Programme Agency

2006

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GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Detailed study of the responses of Erasmus students allows the conclusion that the participants of the programme were highly satisfied with their participation in the programme regarding both - the programme period as well as its quality and influence on their professional development.

Study Period and Motivation

- ✓ Data prove that most students assessed the duration of Erasmus studies positively. None of them acknowledged that the duration had been too long.

Although the changes are not significant the level of satisfaction among the Erasmus students during the three years has even slightly increased.

- ✓ It must be concluded that there is not a dominance of one definite reason for choosing to participate in Erasmus programme among Erasmus students. Those, which have been mentioned most frequently, are the following:
 - Academic motives 64%;
 - Gaining experience in a European country 57%;
 - New environment 46%;
 - Motives related with culture 49%.

During the three years the motivation has slightly changed – getting acquainted with new environment has become more popular, while the number of those interested in academic environment and career plans has decreased. The same can be said about programme participants who got involved in the programme in order to gain experience in a European country – their proportion has decreased too.

- ✓ The vast majority of students have obtained the information on Erasmus studies at their home university/institution of higher education. The Internet has also been quite popular for this purpose and it was mentioned by almost 40% of students.

In comparison to prior survey data it can be observed that students' horizon regarding opportunities to acquire information in this field has expanded – more frequently the Internet has been used for acquiring the information and the opportunity to find out the information at a foreign educational institution.

- ✓ Similarly to academic year 2002/2003 also in 2005/2006 the obtained information has been assessed positively.
- ✓ Asked about the support they have received from the foreign educational institution Erasmus students' responses were overall positive, besides during the three years students' opinion on the received support from host/home educational institutions before and during Erasmus study period has not changed and can be assessed in general as positive.
- ✓ Although when assessing their level of integration in the environment of foreign students two thirds of respondents gave positive assessment yet more than 10% of students assessed their integration level quite negatively.

Due to the fact that there are no significant changes between data of academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006 it can be concluded that changes regarding formal measures (more frequent participation in the welcome event and informative lecture) do not foster the integration of students in the new environment. Thus it can be assumed that informal events organized more actively by Erasmus co-ordinators at foreign institutions would be a factor decreasing the number of students unsatisfied with their integration in host institution.

- ✓ Accessibility to libraries and study materials was overwhelmingly considered positive by Erasmus students. Besides during the three years students' opinion regarding accessibility of study materials and opportunity to use technologies during Erasmus studies has become even more approving.

Academic Assessment

- ✓ Data prove that the vast majority of programme participants had concluded Learning Agreements prior to commencement of their studies. One must conclude that students' attitude towards the settlement of legal liabilities has become more serious.
- ✓ The vast majority of students have participated in exams during Erasmus studies – 85% in total. It is important to note that the number of students having participated in exams has significantly increased.
- ✓ Overall 90% of students answered that the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) has been applied in their studies. Similarly with other aspects connected with academic assessment and its recognition including the application of ECTS, positive changes can be observed.
- ✓ The vast majority of students hold a view that they will receive academic recognition of their study period at a foreign university/institution of higher education. Although there are no significant changes in this area, it should be noted that students' perception have become more positive and proportion of those students who perceived the academic recognition of their study period abroad has increased by 3%.
- ✓ Positive changes can be observed regarding students' responses when answering the question weather they will receive credits for the completed language courses – if in the academic year 2002/2003 only 35% were positive, then regarding 2005/2006 – 46% of students responded positively.

Linguistic Preparation

- ✓ Similarly to previous data this survey shows that students most frequently consider that foreign language courses should be the responsibility of their home institution.
- ✓ Data prove that Erasmus study programme has an important role in the improvement of students' proficiency of foreign languages – if prior to the commencement of Erasmus studies only slightly more than one third of the students regarded their knowledge of the relevant foreign language as 'good', but

almost three fifths of the students claimed that they did not know the language at all or had a very poor knowledge of the language, then upon assessing their knowledge of foreign language after Erasmus studies more than two thirds of respondents gave a positive assessment of their knowledge of foreign language.

When data on self-assessment of students' knowledge of foreign languages were compared, interesting connections were discovered. In 2005/2006 compared with the previous survey the number of respondents who regarded their knowledge of foreign language as good or even very good prior to the Erasmus studies has increased. However upon assessing their knowledge of foreign language after participation in Erasmus programme the number of students regarding their knowledge of foreign language as good has increased, but unfortunately the response "very good" was rarely marked.

Costs

- ✓ When comparing data significant positive changes can be observed regarding to opinion of Erasmus students about to what extent the Erasmus grant covered the expenses. During the three years the number of students regarding that Erasmus grant covered their expenses practically in full has increased by almost one third.
- ✓ It can be observed that the most popular source of supplementary financing is so called state grant/loan. Personal funding or family support has been mentioned just a little less frequently.

Personal experience – assessment of Erasmus study period

- ✓ According to obtained data students in general have been really satisfied with their studies within the framework of Erasmus programme; personal experience and general stay abroad were assessed especially positively but the academic results – a bit more reservedly.
- ✓ Although the vast majority of students pointed out that they have not encountered any serious problems during Erasmus studies, although every sixth student responded that they did encounter some difficulties. As in 2002/2003 also in 2005/2006 the problems mentioned most frequently were connected with accommodation and study process – study materials, credit adjustment etc.
- ✓ During the three years there has been quite significant change in students' opinion about their employment prospects in any of Erasmus participating countries. If among programme participants of 2002/2003 less than a half considered such possibility, then among Erasmus students of 2005/2006 almost two thirds of respondents gave a positive answer to this question.
- ✓ Data prove that Erasmus students regard the influence of their studies abroad on their future career as positive – more than two thirds of the programme participants thought that this experience will really help them in building their future career.

- ✓ When asked how the programme could be improved, 17% of students have answered that no changes are needed since the programme operates perfectly. Similarly to the previous period it has been pointed out that a more substantial financial support as well as more precise and more detailed information and assurance that there will be no problems with the settlement of academic liabilities would be helpful. Another wish that was expressed was opportunity to participate in the programme more than once.

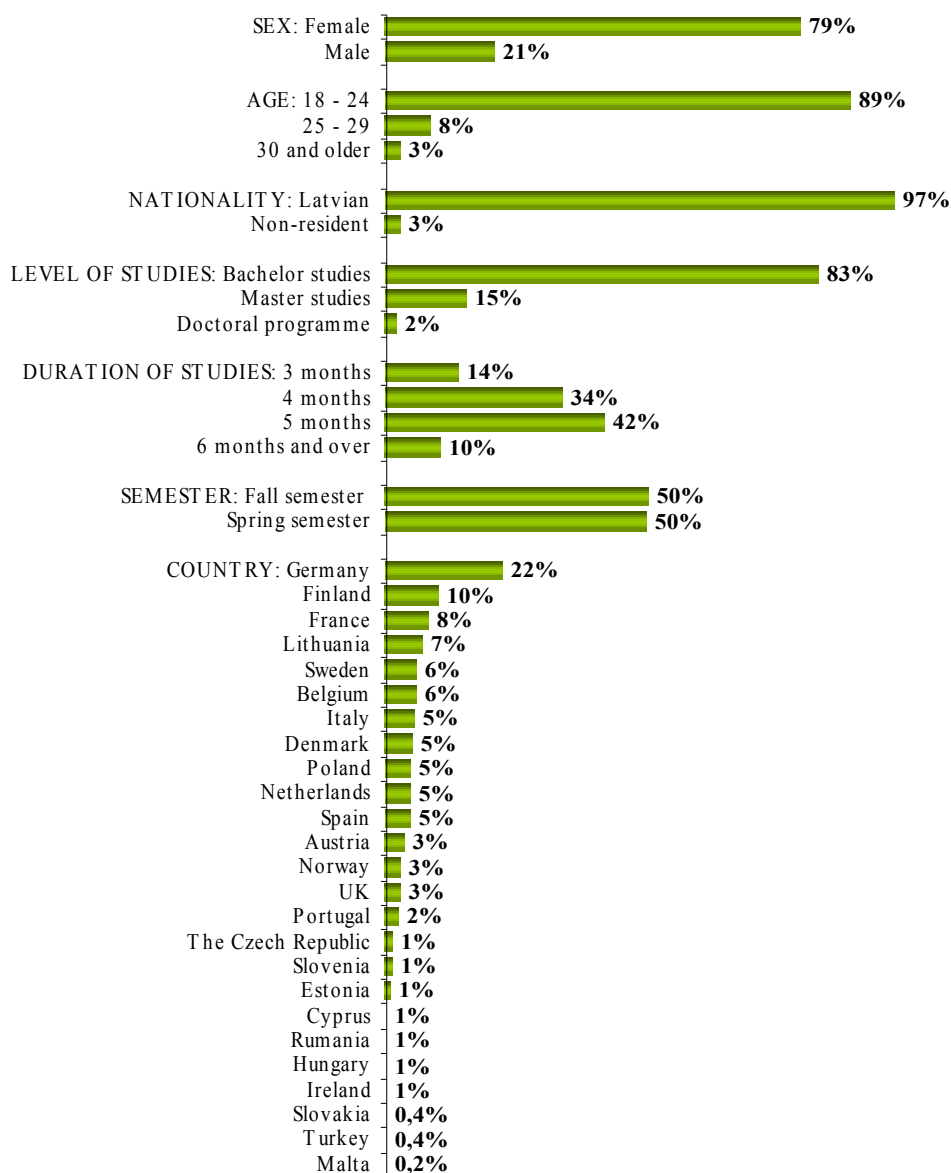
TECHNICAL INFORMATION OF SURVEY

Student reports on the period of their placement within the framework of Erasmus programme which each student must submit to the Erasmus programme co-ordinator of his home institution provide significant information on various aspects of activities of the programme. Thus it is possible to assess the efficiency of programme, to identify drawbacks and the possibilities of their improvement.

By 1 November, **2006 the reports of 553 or 80% of all students of Latvia which had participated in the Erasmus programme in the relevant academic year** were turned in at Academic Programme Agency. Such a high indicator makes it possible to reflect precise and scientifically reliable results with a relative statistical precision.

Erasmus students' social-demographics (2005/2006)

Base: all respondents, n=553



ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS

Study Period and Motivation

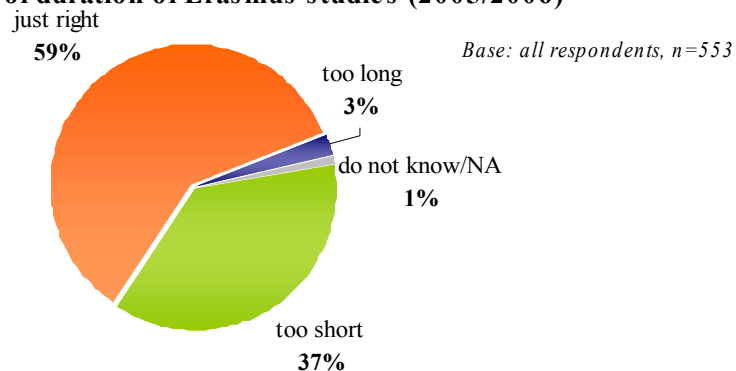
In the first of eight blocks of questions included in the questionnaire of Student mobility report the respondents were asked to indicate their study period and to express their opinion on whether that was sufficient. They were also asked to mark the main reasons for their participation in the programme.

According to the data compiled from student mobility reports similarly to the academic year 2002/2003 also in 2005/2006 the average length of Erasmus studies abroad has been 4.5 months.

Assessment of Study Period

The following graph reflects the data on assessment of study length by Erasmus students of the academic year 2005/2006.

Assesment of duration of Erasmus studies (2005/2006)



When asked to assess the length of Erasmus studies the majority of students were positive and marked the answer 'just right'. All-in-all 40% of students were more or less dissatisfied most of them saying that the length of studies was too short.

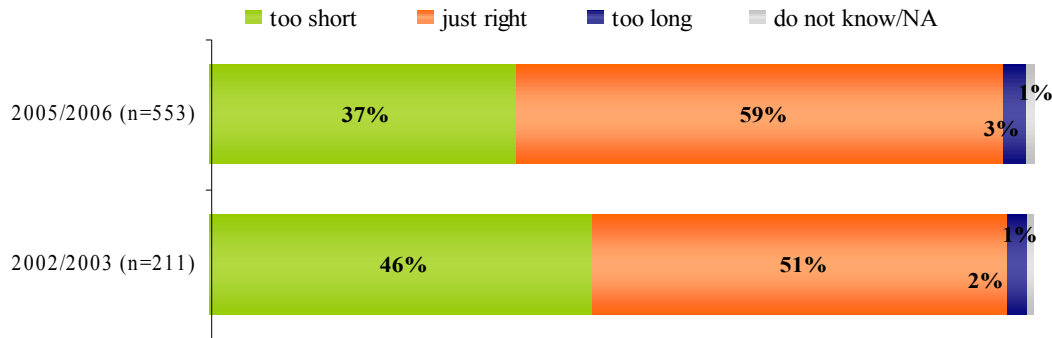
When comparing the answers of Erasmus students of 2005/2006 it can be concluded that generally the answer 'too short' regarding the length of studies was given by female students, respondents over the age of 30, doctoral students as well as students of nationalities other than Latvian.

Satisfaction with the length so studies on its turn has been demonstrated comparatively more frequently by male students as well as by those studying at a lower educational level (bachelor's programme).

There is a coherence that students who within the framework of Erasmus studies have spent a longer period abroad more often have expressed their satisfaction with the length of studies than those who within the framework of the programme have studied for 3 – 4 months.

It is interesting to compare how within the period between academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006 the students' opinion on whether the Erasmus study length has been sufficient has changed.

**Assesment of duration of Erasmus studies:
 comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006**

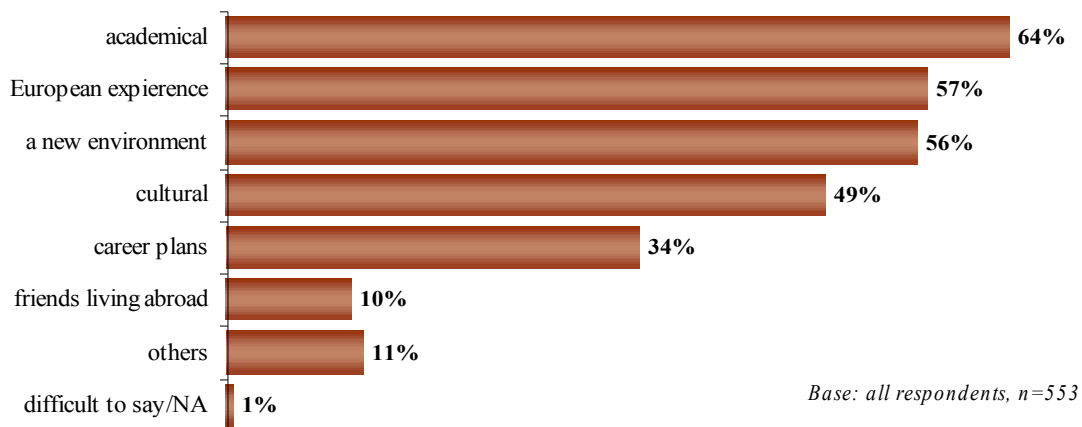


Although the changes are not significant still it can be concluded that during the three years the satisfaction level regarding the study length among Erasmus students has slightly increased – there are more of those students who have marked that the study length has been exactly as long as necessary, but less of those – regarding the Erasmus studies as too short. It is true though that similarly to the answers given three years ago also in 2005/2006 only few students have marked that according to their opinion the time spent at a foreign institution has been ‘too long’.

Motivation of going abroad

Both students of 2003/2004 and students of 2005/2006 were asked to mark the most essential factors for their participation in exchange programme. The following graph presents the data on the questioned students' answers of the academic year 2005/2006.

Factors of studies abroad (2005/2006)



Responses to the question on factors which motivated students to go abroad show that there is not one dominating factor. It is characteristic for studies to mention a set of several factors: although almost two thirds of the students have been motivated by

academic reasons about a half stated also such factors as the opportunity to live in a new environment and gaining European experience. It is important to note that in comparison to the above mentioned factors one third of the students have linked the studies abroad with their career plans.

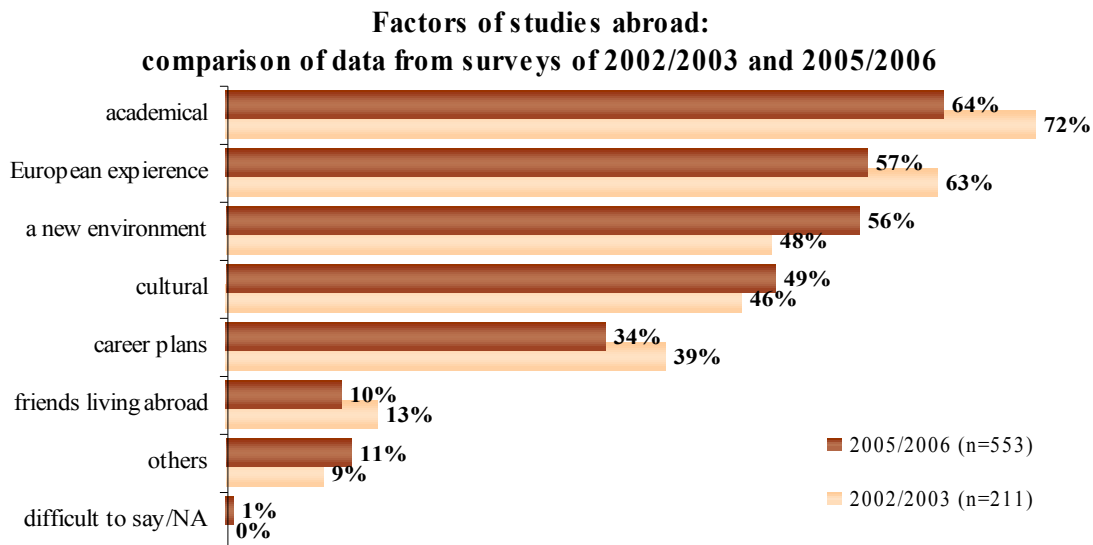
Analyzing the students responses on a socio-demographic bases, certain interesting coherences can be observed.

Thus, for example, bachelors and masters students as well as those having studied abroad for half a year or longer in comparison with the representatives from other groups have mentioned *academic factors*.

Among students of nationalities other than Latvian linking participation in Erasmus study programme with new environment and culture has been more popular than among the students representing other groups.

It can be observed that students who spent the shortest prescribed time – 3 months – studying abroad within the framework of exchange programme more often than the representatives of other socio-demographic groups mentioned career plans as reasons for going abroad.

The following graph shows the data compiled from the students mobility reports of academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006 regarding motives for going abroad.



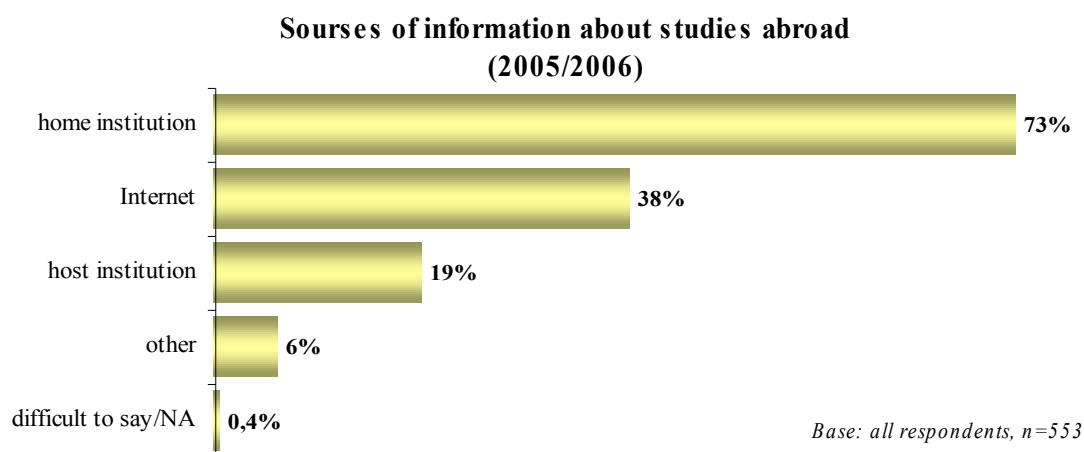
According to the survey data it must be concluded that during the three years the motives of going abroad have slightly changed – getting to know a new environment has become more popular among the students while the number of those interested in academic environment and career plans as well as European experience has decreased.

Information and Support

Reports of Erasmus student mobility included a block of questions connected with sources of information for participation in the programme as well as description and assessment of the support they had received when involved in the programme.

Main Information Sources

The following graph shows the data of academic year 2005/2006 on how Erasmus students have acquired the information about the exchange programme.



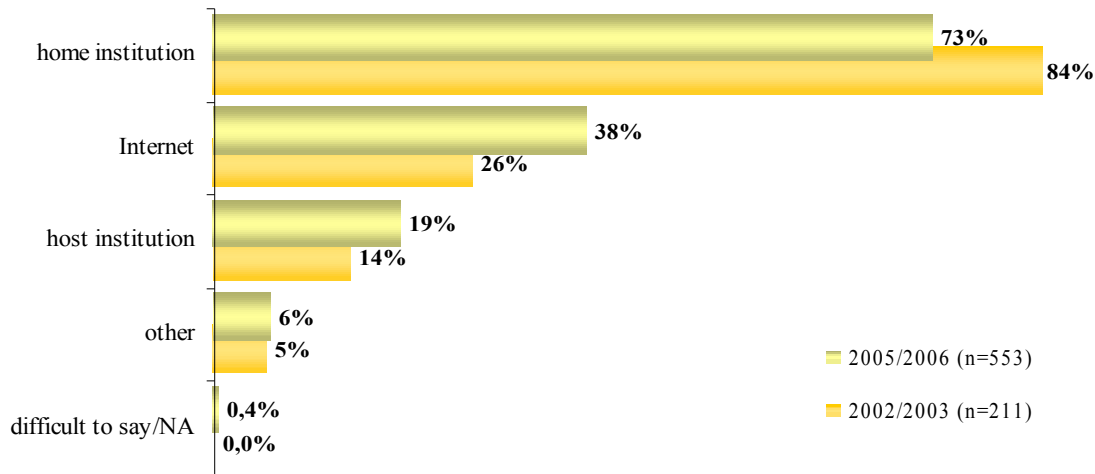
According to the obtained data the vast majority of the students acquired the information about Erasmus studies at their home institution. The internet has also been quite popular and it was used for this purpose by almost 40 % of students. In comparison only each fifth of Erasmus students acquired the information on possibility to study abroad at the foreign educational institution.

Analyzing the students' responses on socio-demographic bases it can be seen that students over the age of 25 have comparatively more often pointed out that their home institution was the source of information regarding studies abroad while the Internet and foreign institution have been more often mentioned by the younger ones.

Significant differences can be observed when comparing data of students – Latvians and students – non-Latvians. According to data of 2005/2006 students – Latvians have acquired the information regarding Erasmus studies at their home institution more often than non-Latvians. Consequently non-Latvians have more often acquired the relevant information at foreign institutions.

It was interesting to see how the data on general information and study programme information have changed during the three years between academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006. These data have been reflected in the graph on next page.

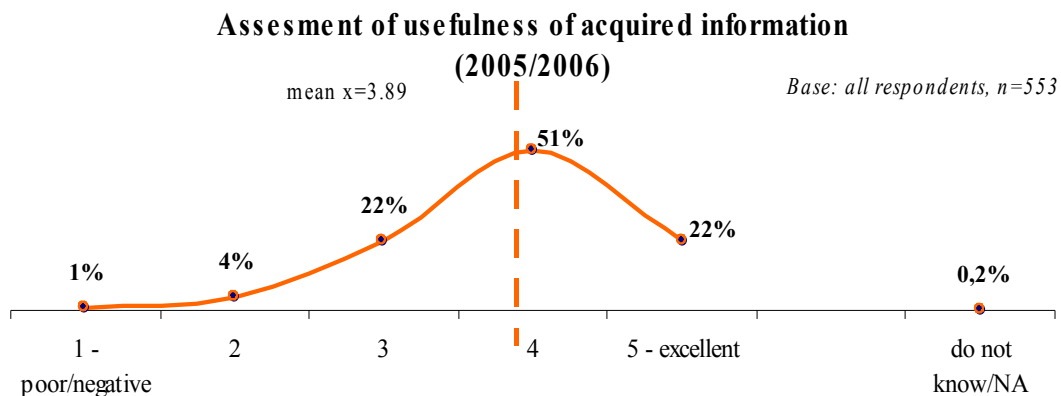
**Sources of information about studies abroad:
comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006**



Results prove that the students' horizon regarding opportunities to acquire information in this field has expanded – more frequently the Internet has been used for acquiring the information and the opportunity to find out the information at a foreign educational institution. Due to the above mentioned factors the number of students noting their home institution as information resource regarding studies abroad within the framework of Erasmus programme has decreased.

Assesment of Usefulness of the Acquired Information

Data on 2005/2006 Erasmus students' opinions regarding the usefulness of the information which they had acquired are reflected in the following graph.

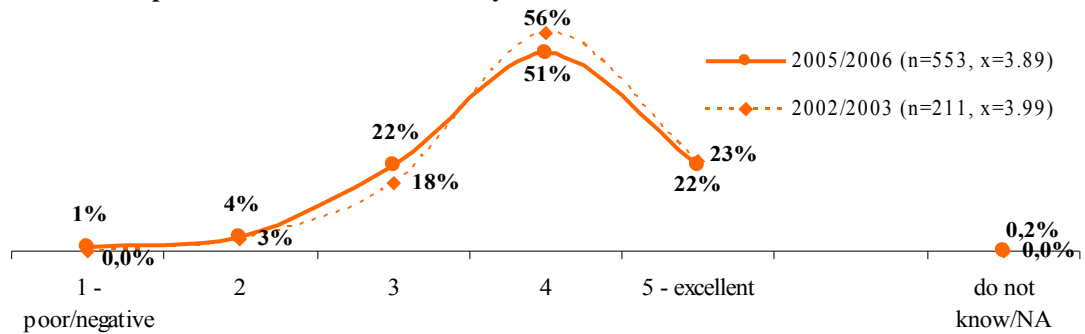


Data prove that the assessment of the acquired information has in general been quite positive. Half of the respondents marked the assessment 4 and the arithmetical mean indicator of 3.89.

When comparing the responses of representatives of different socio-demographic groups it is interesting to note that students over the age of 25 as well as those studying at a higher educational level (masters and PhD students) have assessed the usefulness of the acquired information more approvingly while those under the age of 24 and studying at any of the bachelor's programmes have been more sceptical.

There are no significant differences regarding the usefulness of the acquired information between academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006. Data on students' responses are reflected in the following graph.

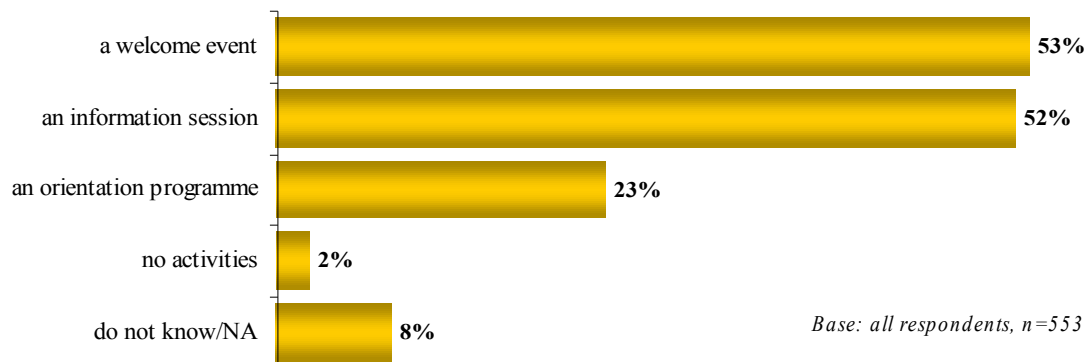
**Assesment of usefulness of acquired information:
comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006**



Description of events organized upon Erasmus students' arrival

Within the student's mobility report survey under the question block regarding information and support the students were asked if any events were organized upon their arrival at the host institution. The following graph reflects the data on Erasmus students' responses as to above mentioned question.

**Organized events upon students arrival in the host institution
(2005/2006)**



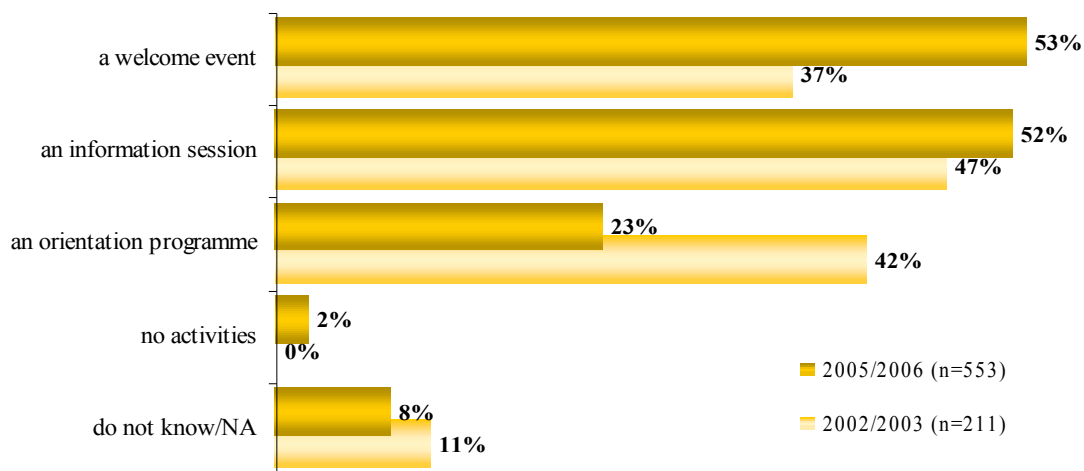
When describing the arrival at the host institution there were two events and namely a welcome event and an informative lecture that were mentioned most often. Although in total only 2% or 12 of all students claimed that there had been no activities organized upon their arrival at the host institution still this indicator should be considered as to the improvement of the programme.

Data analysis of different socio-demographic groups prove that the following coherence can be observed: welcome event and informative session have been more often mentioned by the younger students while those over 30 marked participation in an orientation programme upon their arrival at the host institution more often.

Welcome event and informative session have also been more often marked by master students and students – non-Latvians while the doctoral students have mentioned their participation in an orientation programme more often.

There are some significant changes in the students' responses between academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006. Data on responses of Erasmus students are reflected in the following graph.

**Organized events upon students arrival in the host institution:
 comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006**



According to survey results the number of students for whom a welcome event has been organized upon the arrival at the host institution. During the three years the so called introductory/orientation programme has lost its orientation to a certain extent.

Other special events for Erasmus students

In order to obtain a more detailed idea regarding Erasmus study period the survey included the questions on whether any other special events were organized for them in host institution during their stay. The answers are shown in the following graph.

**Other special events for Erasmus students in host institution
 (2005/2006)**



Base: all respondents, n=553

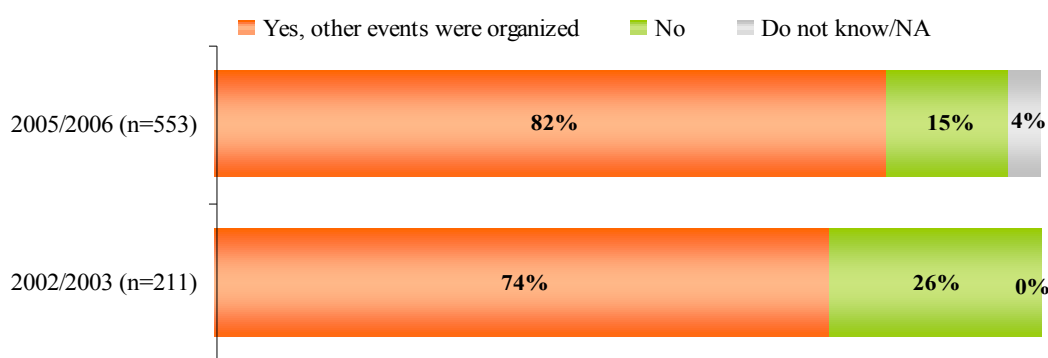
Vast majority of Erasmus students of academic year 2005/2006 gave positive answers stating that other special events had been organized for Erasmus students. It is true though that almost each sixth of the respondents gave negative answers stating that

during their stay no special events had been organized in the host institution. It could be recommended to Erasmus co-ordinators to pay attention also to this indicator too. Possibly the informal events could be the ones helping to achieve Erasmus study aims in gaining trans-national experience and integration promotion.

It must be noted that data analyses on socio0demographic bases does not discover any significant differences.

The following graph presents the comparison of students' responses between academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006.

**Other special events for Erasmus students in host institution:
comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006**



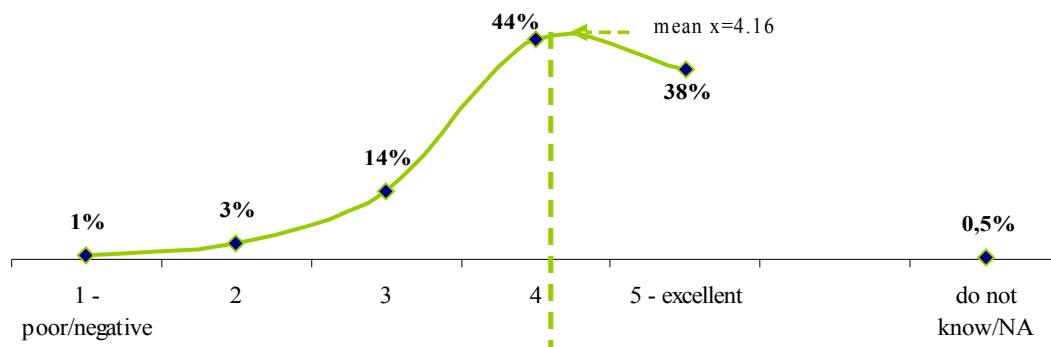
According to the research results during the period of 4 years positive changes can be observed regarding this aspect of Erasmus studies: the number of students having participated in other events not only their first welcome party and informative lecture has increased by 6%.

Support from educational institution before and during Erasmus studies

Asked about the received support from the host institution Erasmus students were in general quite positive and the vast majority (82%) have marked the highest points – ‘4’ and ‘5’ (with the arithmetical mean indicator of 4.16). The data on respondents’ responses are reflected in the following graph.

Support from host/home institution before and during Erasmus studies (2005/2006)

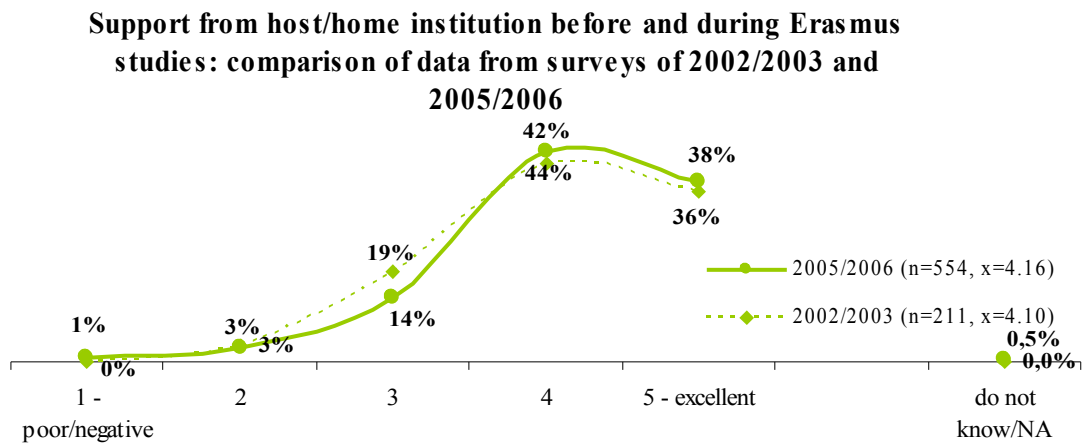
Base: all respondents, n=553



Although there are not significant changes among responses of Erasmus students of

different socio-demographic groups, still it must be noted that the received support was assumed most approvingly by students above the age of 25 and doctoral students.

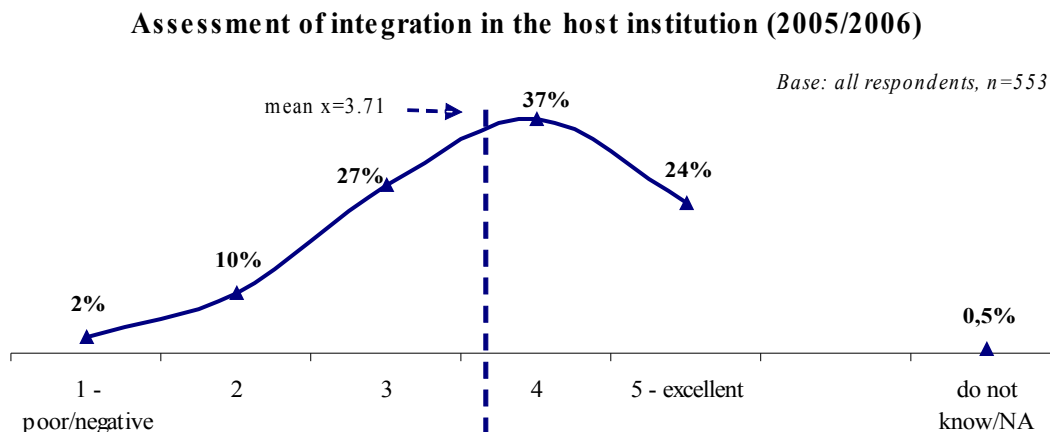
The following graph compares data between the academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006 regarding the responses of Erasmus programme participants on the support they had received.



According to the obtained information the students' opinion on the received information before and during Erasmus study period has not changed during the three years and in can be assessed as all-in-all positive.

Assessment of integration in the host institution

As in 2002/2003 also in 2005/2006 the survey of Erasmus students' mobility included the question on how the programme participants assess the level of their integration in the host institution. The data on responses of Erasmus students are shown in the following table.



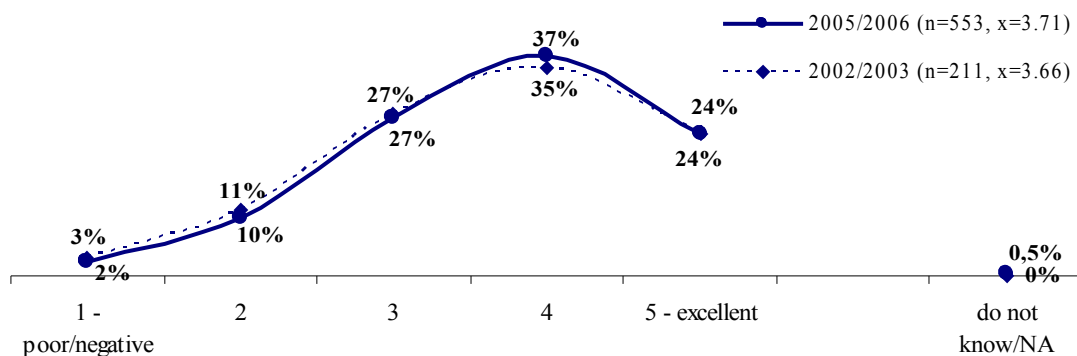
Data prove that upon assessment of level of integration with the local students in the host institution the students were more sceptical. Although two thirds of the respondents gave the positive assessment by choosing scale points '4' and '5', it must be noted that more than 10% assess their level of integration as quite negative. The

statistic calculations prove that the arithmetical mean indicator of students' responses makes 3.71.

Upon analyzing data on socio-demographic bases the following coherence must be emphasized: result analysis as to national identity reveal the fact that students – non-Latvians are more sceptical regarding the level of their integration in the host institution than students – Latvians (the arithmetic mean indicator respectively 3.07 and 3.73).

Data on students responses of the academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006 are reflected in the following graph.

Assessment of integration in the host institution: comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006



It must be noted that no significant changes can be observed between the survey data of academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006. Thus it can be concluded that changes regarding formal measures (more frequent participation in the welcome event and informative lecture) do not foster the integration of students in the new environment. Consequently it can be assumed that informal events organized more actively by Erasmus co-ordinators at foreign institutions would be a factor decreasing the number of students unsatisfied with their integration in host institution.

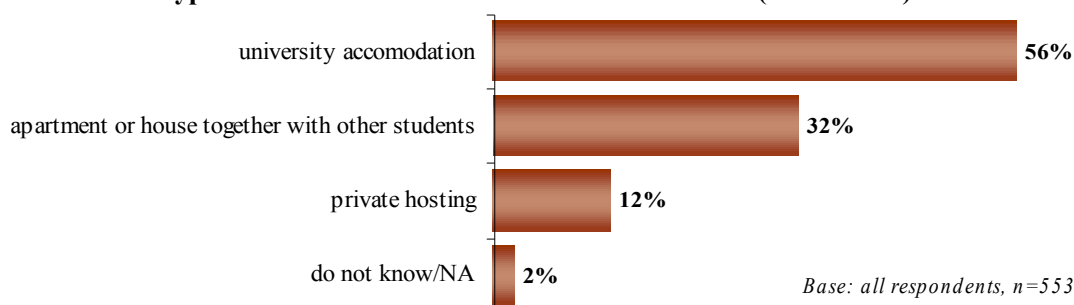
Social conditions and infrastructure

As part of the survey the participants of Erasmus programme were asked several questions related with the description of accommodation and assessment of infrastructure available during their studies.

Type of accommodation during Erasmus studies

As shown by the data on the type of housing the students had lived in university dormitories appeared to be the most popular – more than a half of respondents have lived there. Other types of accommodation were used by less than one third of the respondents. Data on academic year 2005/2006 are reflected in the following graph.

Type of accommodation in the host institution (2005/2006)

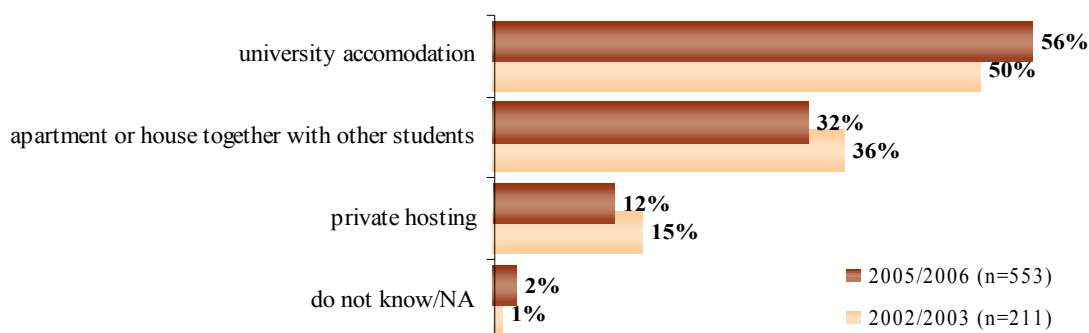


Some interesting results were revealed when analyzing the various socio-demographic groups – for example, the fact that university dormitories appeared to be more popular among respondents above the age of 30, doctoral students, females and students whose study period was longer than 5 months.

Apartment or a shared house with other students has been more often mentioned by male students and students – non-Latvians as well as those whose stay abroad were as long as 3 months.

The following graph compares the data on Erasmus students' responses regarding academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006.

Type of accommodation in the host institution: comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006



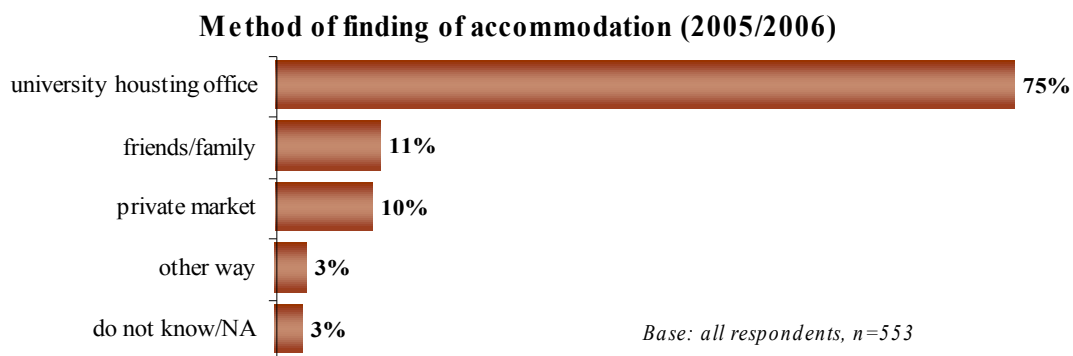
According to the research results during the three years the university dormitories have maintained their popularity as housing during Erasmus study period, besides the

popularity of this type of accommodation has even a bit increased. Other accommodation possibilities in their turn have become less popular. It can be said about sharing an apartment or a house with other students or a family.

Method of finding accommodation

According to data compiled from the Erasmus students' reports of 2005/2006 the most of Erasmus students found a place to live with the help of the university. In general only every tenth student admitted that the accommodation was found with the help of family or friends or through advertisements.

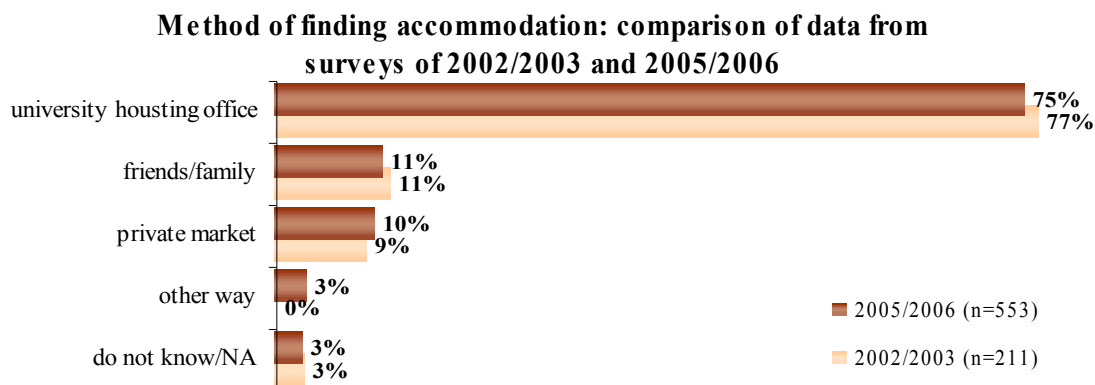
Data on the responses of Erasmus students are reflected in the following graph.



Analyzing the students' responses on socio-demographic bases it must be noted that the most popular way of finding accommodation – 'with the help of the university' – was more often mentioned by the students above the age of 30 as well as among doctoral students and students – non-Latvians.

Those Erasmus students who spent the minimal period of the programme which is 3 months more often than on average marked that they had found the accommodation with the help of family or friends while those having spent the maximal period – 6 months or more – for Erasmus studies used the advertised offers relatively more often. It must be noted that finding accommodation through advertisements has also been quite popular among master students.

It is interesting that the ways of finding accommodation within the framework of Erasmus programme have not changed. The data on academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006 are summarized in the following graph.

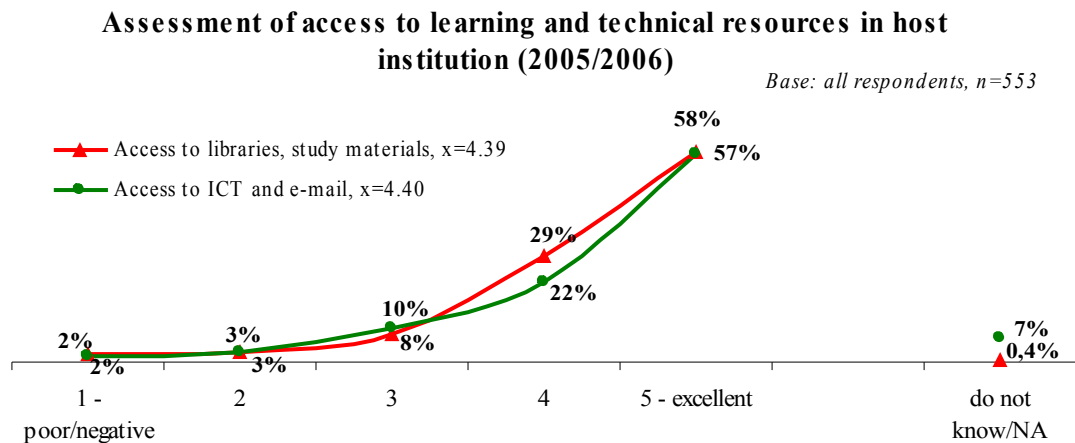


Assesment of access to study materials and technical resources

In order to find out Erasmus students' assessment of accessibility of information and communication technologies and study materials the programme participants were asked to rate the access to:

- ✓ Libraries and study materials;
- ✓ Computers (ICT) and e-mail.

The following graph reflects the data on Erasmus students' responses as to the academic year 2005/2006.



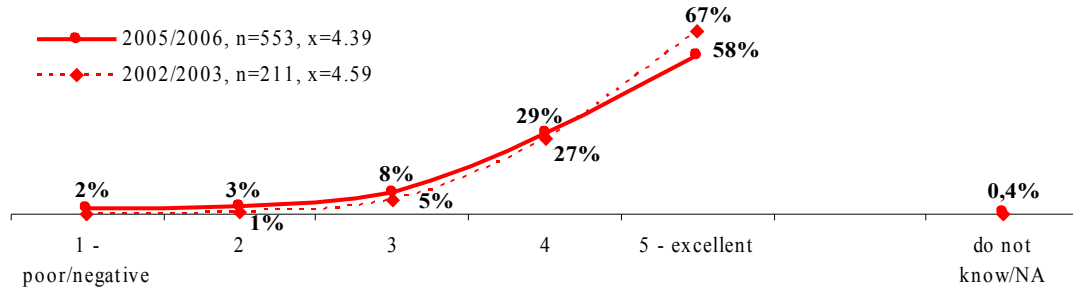
According to the research results, availability of libraries and study materials at the host institution was assessed very positively. When asked to assess this aspect of household conditions and infrastructure nearly 60% have marked the highest point of the assessment scale which is '5' (with the arithmetical mean indicator of 4.39). Similar assessment has been made as to the accessibility of information and communications technologies – arithmetical mean indicator 4.40.

Analysis of data on socio-demographic bases does not reveal any significant differences except for differences upon comparing students' responses regarding national identity. Results prove that students – non-Latvians were noticeably more critical than Latvians when assessing the availability of study materials as well as opportunities to use information and communications technologies.

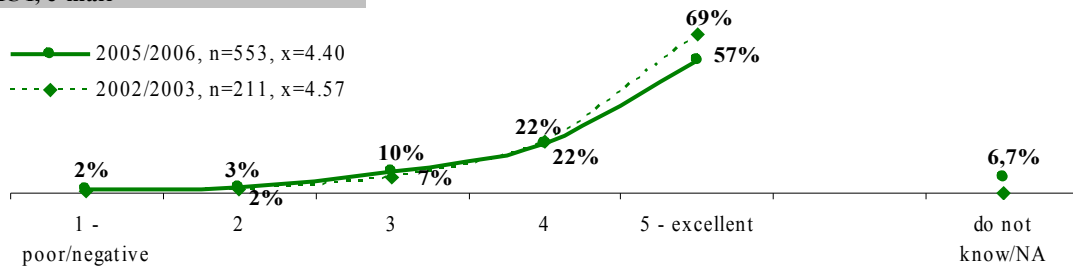
The following graph compares the data on Erasmus students' responses between academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006.

Assessment of access to learning and technical resources in host institution: comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006

Libraries, study materials



ICT, e-mail



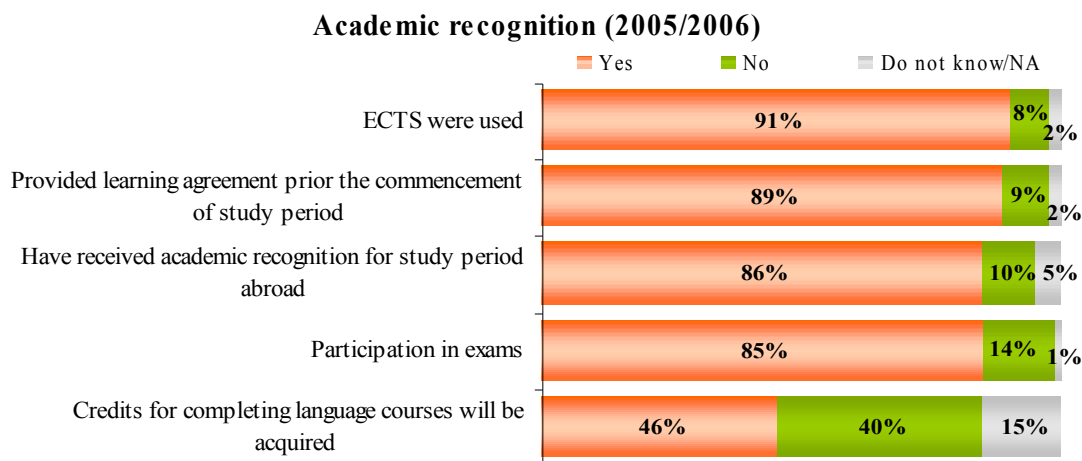
When comparing the data it must be concluded that during the three years the students' opinion on availability of study materials and opportunities to use technologies in the Erasmus study period has become even more approving.

Academic recognition

The respondents were asked to evaluate the following aspects of academic value of Erasmus studies:

- ✓ concluding Learning Agreement prior to the commencement of studies;
- ✓ participation in exams;
- ✓ appliance of ECTS (European Credit Transfer System);
- ✓ Academic recognition of study period at a foreign institution;
- ✓ Credits for completed language courses.

Data on Erasmus students' responses in academic year 2005/2006 are reflected in the following graph.



Below a more detailed review of each of the aspects connected with academic evaluation and recognition of Erasmus studies is provided.

Signing a Learning Agreement prior to the commencement of studies

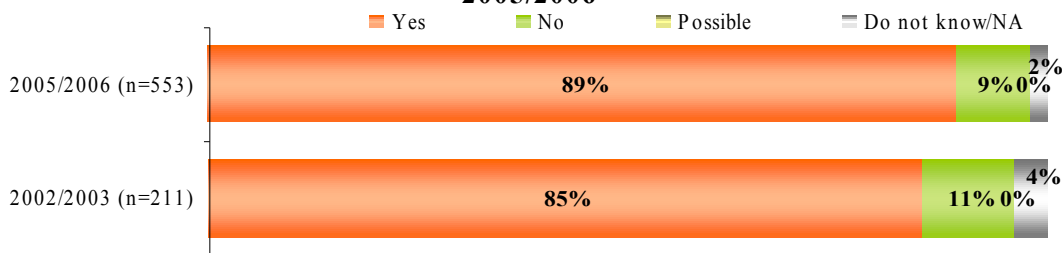
Data on students' responses show that asked if they had concluded a Learning Agreement prior to studies the vast majority of programme participants gave positive answers. However, it is true that unfortunately nearly every tenth student admitted that he/she had not signed such agreement.

Analysis on socio-demographic bases shows that respondents between the ages 25 and 29, master students and those who were involved in the programme for a period longer than six months have in general been more serious regarding settlement of legal liabilities than the others.

It is of importance to note that the students involved in the programme for the shortest period – 3 months – have demonstrated less serious attitude towards the settlement of the legal liabilities.

The following graph presents the comparison of students' responses between academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006.

Provided learning agreement prior the commencement of study period: comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006



Data prove that during the three years the students' attitude towards the settlement of legal liabilities has become more serious – number of students having concluded the Learning Agreement prior the commencement of Erasmus studies has increased by 4%.

Participation in exams

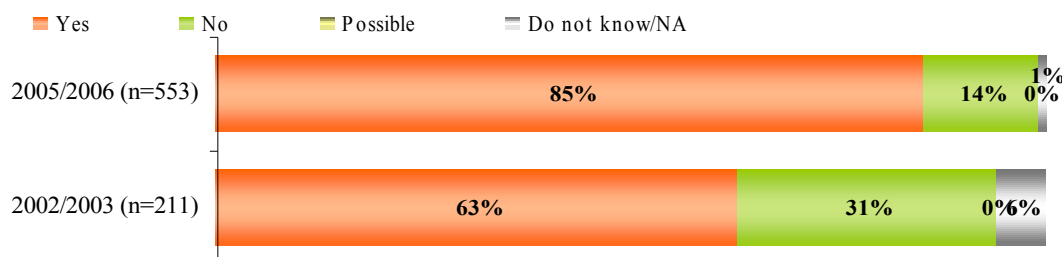
Data prove that the vast majority of students – 85% in total – have participated in examinations within their Erasmus study period. However each sixth student has admitted that he/she has not taken the examinations in the host institution while studying abroad.

It can be observed that non-Latvians and students having involved in the Erasmus programme for 5 months or longer more often than on average answered this question positively.

Students above the age of 25 on their turn as well as master and doctoral students and respondents who had involved in the programme for the minimal period – 3 months – more often than the others have marked that they did not take any examinations within the framework of Erasmus Programme.

Data on students' responses between academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006 are compared in the following graph.

Participation in exams: comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006



When comparing data of both surveys it can be concluded that during the three years there has been a significant increase in the number of students participating in examinations within the framework of Erasmus study programme.

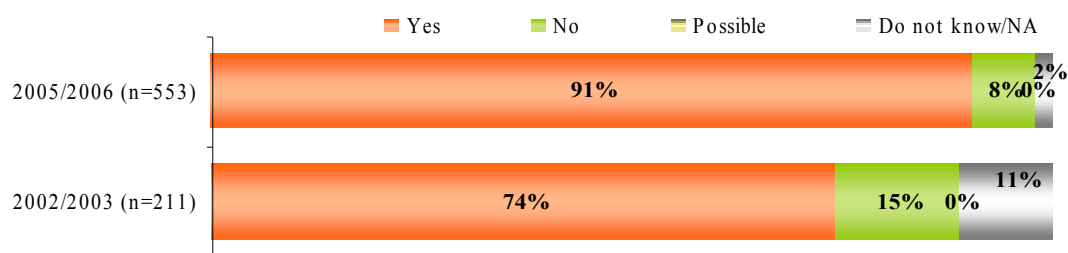
Application of European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)

All in all 90% of student have noted that ECTS has been applied within their study process. It must be regarded, though that 8% of Erasmus students marked that the ECTS has not been used within their studies.

Analyses on socio-demographic bases do not reveal any differences regarding this issue.

The following graph reflects the comparison of data on Erasmus students' responses between academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006.

ECTS were used: comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006



Similarly to other aspects connected with academic evaluation and recognition positive changes can be observed regarding the application of ECTS too. Number of students who had experienced the application of ECTS within their study process during the period between academic years 2002.2003 and 2005/2006 has increased by more than 15%.

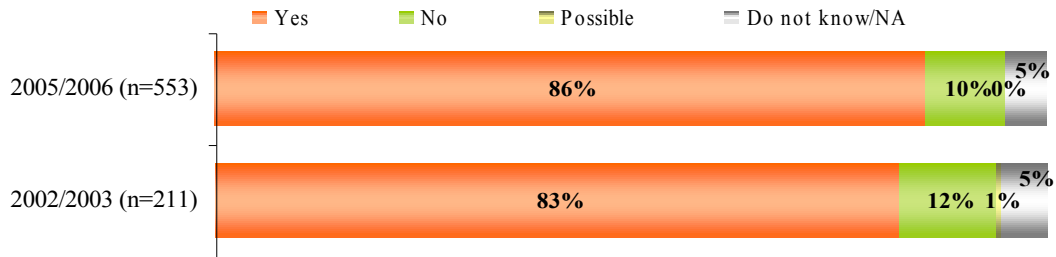
Academic recognition for the study period

The vast majority of the students hold a view that they would receive academic recognition for their study period at the host institution. However each tenth student has expressed the opposite opinion pointing out that his/her studies would not be recognized academically.

Data analysis on socio-demographic bases prove that positive opinion has been more often expressed by non-Latvians and students who were involved in Erasmus programme for 4 months while respondents above the age of 25 as well as master and doctoral students and those having studied abroad for a period of just 3 months were more often negative regarding this issue.

The graph on next page reflects data on Erasmus students' responses of academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006.

**Have received academic recognition for study period abroad:
comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006**



Although there are no significant changes it must be noted that also regarding this expect the students prognoses have become more optimistic and the number of students holding a view that they would receive the academic recognition for their study period at the foreign university has increased by 3%.

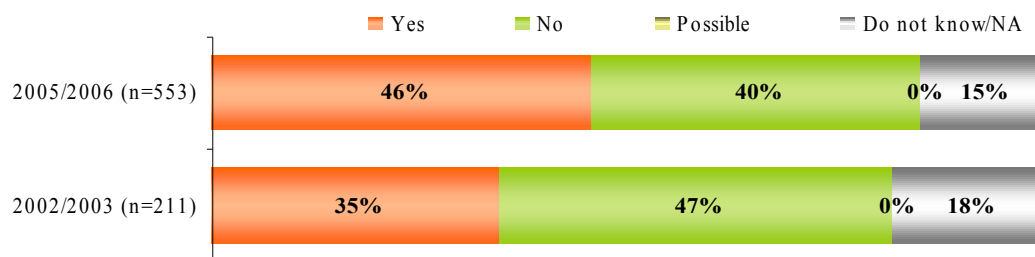
Receiving academic credit for completed language courses

Survey data prove that almost a half of respondents have marked that they would receive credit also for completed language courses. It must be noted that the level of students' awareness as to this study aspect is the lowest in comparison with other study aspects – each sixth student has not demonstrated his/her opinion regarding the above mentioned question (answering: I don't know).

Result analysis on socio-demographic bases show that in general positive answers regarding this question were given by non-Latvians, bachelor students and respondents who had involved in the Erasmus programme for a period longer than 5 months.

Negative answers on their turn have been more often given by respondents above the age of 25, master and doctoral students as well as those who were involved in the programme for period up to 4 months who perceived that no credits would be received for completed language courses.

**Credits for completing language courses will be acquired:
comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006**



Receiving academic credit for completed language courses is another issue due to which positive changes can be observed: the number of respondents being positive about this question has increased by 10%.

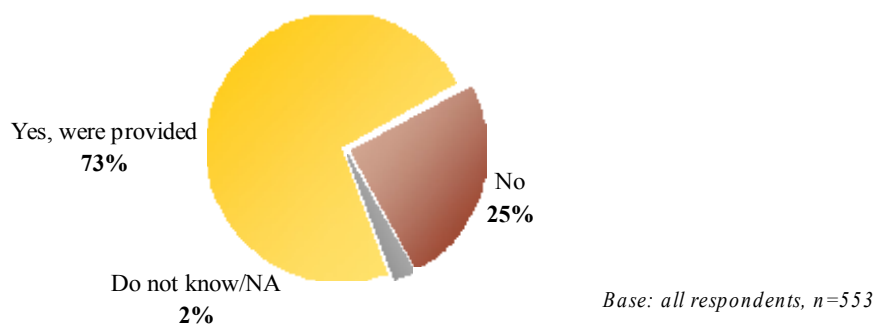
Linguistic preparation

Mobility report survey includes several questions describing the linguistic preparation of Erasmus students. Thus for example the students were asked if language courses were provided and who was responsible for that. The participants of Erasmus programme were also asked to rate their competency in the foreign language prior to and after the participation in the programme.

Language courses prior to and/or during the stay at the host institution

According to survey results, it must be concluded that although the vast majority of students have marked that they were provided language courses prior to and/or during their stay at the host institution, still quite a large percentage and namely 25% of students admitted that they had not been provided such opportunity. The following graph reflects the answers of programme participants as to academic year 2005/2006.

Language courses preparation prior and/or during placement in host institution (2005/2006)

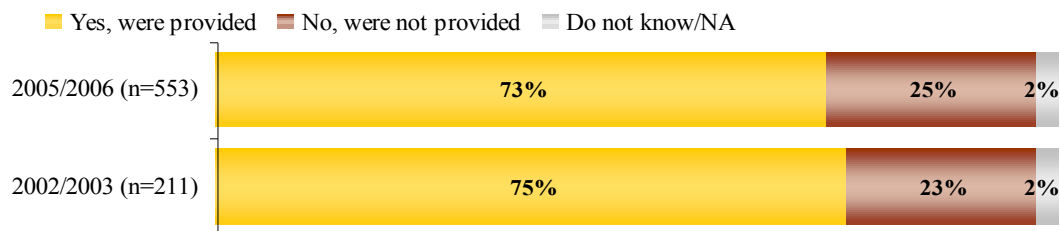


All-in-all 90% of students who were provided language courses prior to/ during their stay at the host institution said that their host institution had been responsible for the courses while about each tenth of the students named their home university as responsible for language courses.

Analysis on socio-demographic bases show that male students, doctoral students and students whose study period abroad was as long as 4 months have mostly answered positively to the above mentioned question while the students above the age of 25, master students and those who had involved in the Erasmus programme for the period up to 3 months more often than representatives of other groups have marked that they were not provided such courses.

The graph on next page compares the data on answers of programme participants between academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006.

Language courses preparation prior and/or during placement in host institution: comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006



Upon comparing the results it can be concluded that during the three years the intensity of providing language courses has not significantly changed.

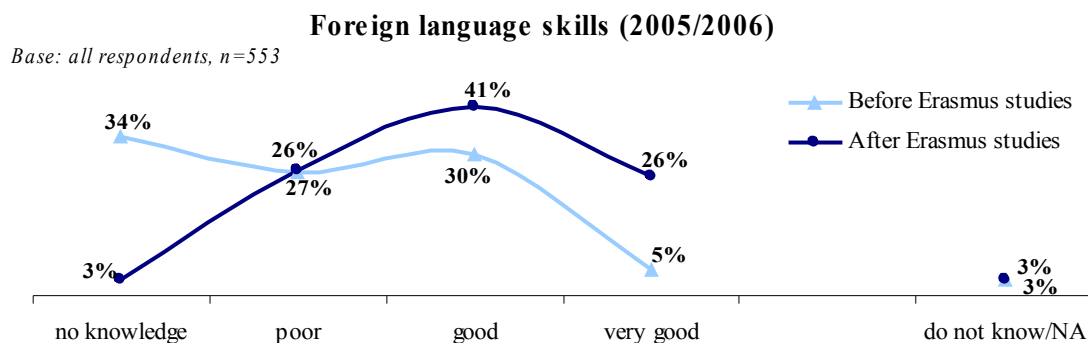
Proportions of responsibility for organization of language courses

According to survey data as to the question on who was responsible for language courses it can be seen that the vast majority of students – almost 60% of respondents – have pointed out that it was their host institution. The idea of home institution as the responsible institution was expressed by only short 10% of the students. In general nearly each fifth of the students said that they were not sure which educational institution (home or host) is responsible for organizing the language courses.

When comparing survey data between academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006 it can be seen that during the three years the number of students regarding that host institution should be the one to take responsibility for organizing foreign language courses has increased. Comparatively it has been less often that responsibility was passed to the competence of home institution. A positive change is that in comparison with the previous period, in academic year 2005/2006 the lack of information regarding the above mentioned question was marked less often

Self-assessment of proficiency of foreign language

Interesting results have been revealed upon data analysis regarding the questions on how students rate their proficiency of foreign language before and after their Erasmus period abroad. The following graph reflects the data on students' answers of academic year 2005/2006.



According to the research data significant positive changes can be observed regarding

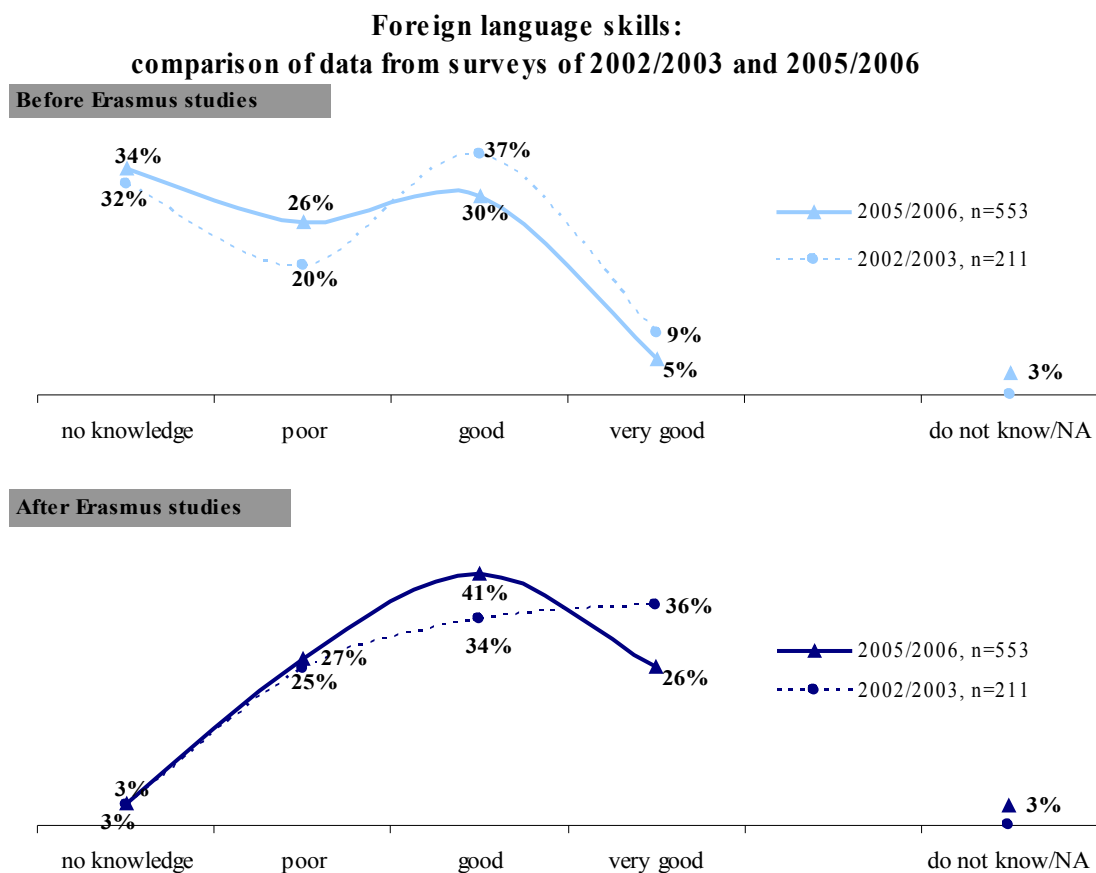
the proficiency of foreign language. When rating their knowledge prior to Erasmus studies only a bit more than one third of students described their knowledge of the relevant foreign language as ‘good’ (5% of which – as ‘very good’). At the same time nearly two thirds of the students admitted that they did not know the foreign language at all or described it as ‘very poor’. However, when assessing their proficiency of foreign language after Erasmus studies more than two thirds of the respondents provided positive assessment.

Analysis of students’ answers among various socio-demographic groups show that male students, respondents above the age of 30 as well as master students and students whose study period was as long as 5 months more often than on average admitted not knowing the relevant foreign language at all.

Respondents between the ages 25 and 29 on their turn assessed their proficiency of foreign language prior to Erasmus studies as ‘good’ or ‘very good’.

It must be noted that also after completing the Erasmus programme the assessment of proficiency of foreign language among male students, master students and students above the age of 30 has been rated as poor or non-existent (they do not know the foreign language at all).

The comparison of data on students’ answers as to their proficiency of foreign language between academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006 is shown in the following graphs.



When data on self-assessment of students’ proficiency of foreign languages were

compared, interesting coherences were discovered. In 2005/2006 compared with the previous survey the number of respondents who regarded their knowledge of foreign language as 'good' or even 'very good' prior to the Erasmus studies has increased. However upon assessing their knowledge of foreign language after participation in Erasmus programme the number of students regarding their knowledge of foreign language as good has increased but unfortunately less often than three years ago the assessment 'very good' was marked.

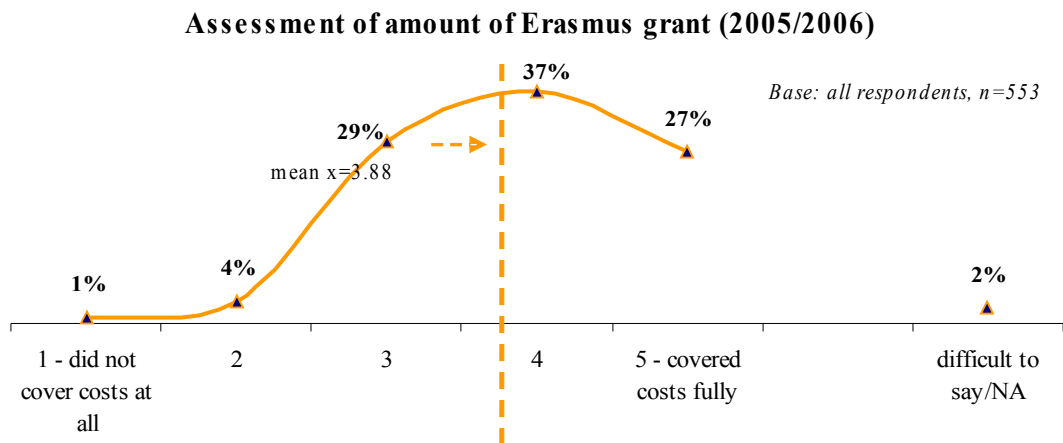
It can be presumed that such results have been caused by the increasing personal requirements regarding the proficiency of foreign language in the age of globalization and not because of the fact that programme quality would have become worse.

Costs

Report survey of Erasmus students' mobility included several questions regarding the financial aspect of the programme. Students were asked to indicate the total costs of Erasmus study period as well as the sources of funding and the sum of money spent abroad. They were also asked to indicate whether they had to pay the tuition fee.

Assessment of amount of Erasmus grant

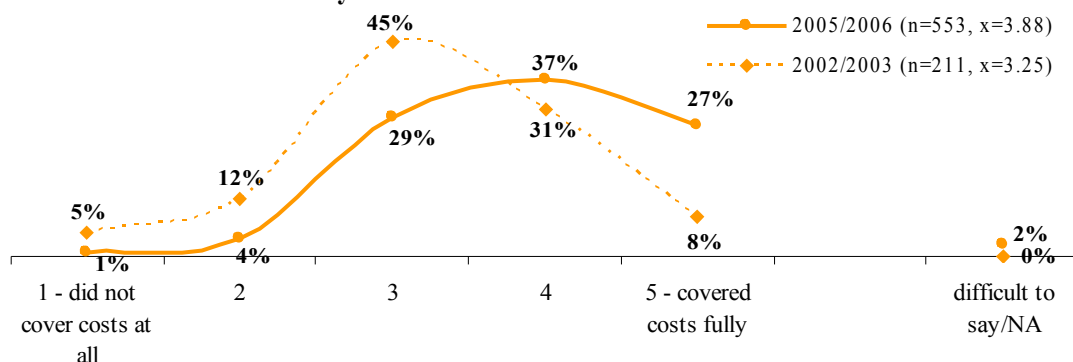
Asked to what extent the Erasmus grants covered their costs most of the students expressed their content by marking the highest points of the scale (arithmetical mean indicator 3.88). All-in-all less than 5% of respondents were very critical regarding this issue and marked that Erasmus grant practically had not covered their expenses at all. Data on students' responses are reflected in the following graph.



Analysis on exchange programme participants' opinions regarding the above mentioned issue as to academic year 2005/2006 show that relatively more positive opinions were those of master students (with arithmetical mean indicator of 4.05), but respondents above the age of 30, non-Latvians and doctoral students have been more sceptical.

Data on Erasmus participants' answers as to academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006 are reflected in the following graph.

Assessment of amount of Erasmus grant: comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006



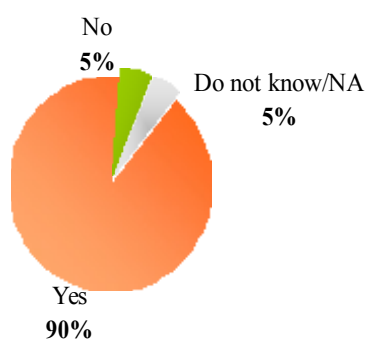
Comparison of data shows quite significant positive changes in Erasmus students' opinions on to what extent the Erasmus grants covered their expenses. During the three years the number of students holding a view that the Erasmus grant has covered their expenses almost in full has increased by one third.

Data proves that the vast majority of the questioned students admitted that besides the Erasmus grants other sources of funding were used too.

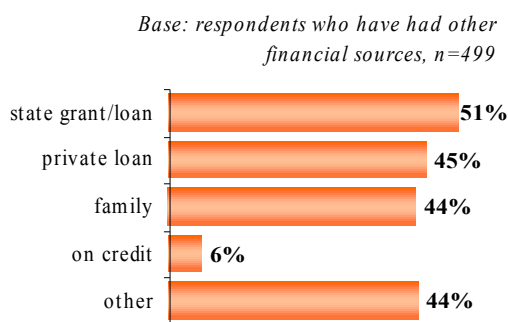
It must be noted that in general more often than on average the additional sources of funding were used by non-Latvians and doctoral students. These were also the most unsatisfied groups regarding the amount of Erasmus grant.

Data on students' responses on this question as to academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006 are shown in the following graphs.

Other sources of funding (2005/2006)



Base: all respondents, n=553



Base: respondents who have had other financial sources, n=499

It can be seen that the most popular additional source of funding was so called state stipend/loan, slightly less often personal finances or family support was mentioned.

Tuition fee in host institution

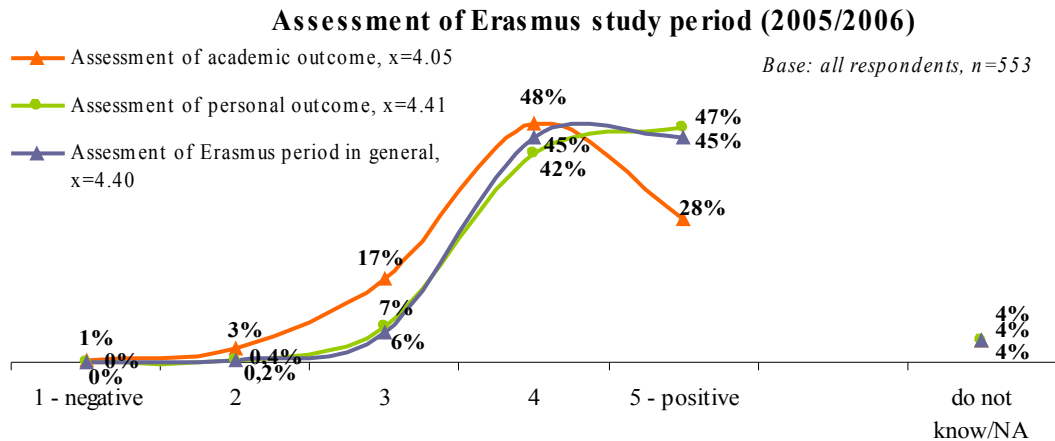
According to the information obtained during the research process in general nearly 40% have pointed out that they had to pay study fee at the host institution and only a bit more – 46% - have marked that they have studied without covering additional tuition.

Upon the assessment of data regarding the sums of money mentioned by students within the framework of the question it can be assumed that the term ‘tuition fee’ was interpreted by students in a broader aspect and various insignificant everyday costs e.g. for stationary, transport expenses etc., were included in the ‘tuition fee’ as well.

Personal experience – Assessment of Erasmus Study Period

The conclusive section of survey asked the students to assess the Erasmus study period at the host institution in various aspects – academic results of studies, personal experience as well as their general stay abroad. The students were also asked to indicate the possible problems in the study period as well as to give recommendations for improvement of the programme.

The following graph reflects the data on responses as to academic year 2005/2006.



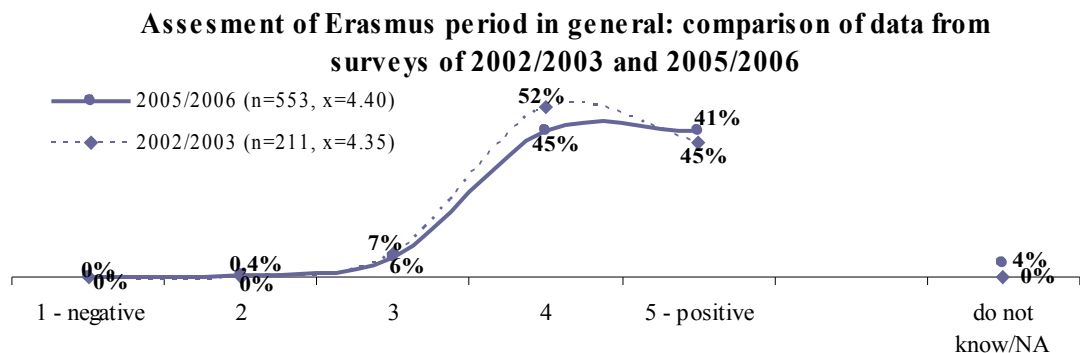
According to the obtained data the students were in general very satisfied with their studies within the framework of Erasmus programme. Their personal experience and general stay abroad were assessed especially positively, their academic results – a little more reservedly.

Assessment of stay abroad in general

As already mentioned staying abroad was assessed very positively a proof of which is the arithmetical mean indicator of 4.40.

Observing the data of socio-demographical groups there are no significant differences just to mention that the PhD students were the most positive regarding this issue.

The following graph reflects the data regarding the assessment provided by the participants of Erasmus Programme of academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006.



Data show that during the three years no particular changes can be observed regarding

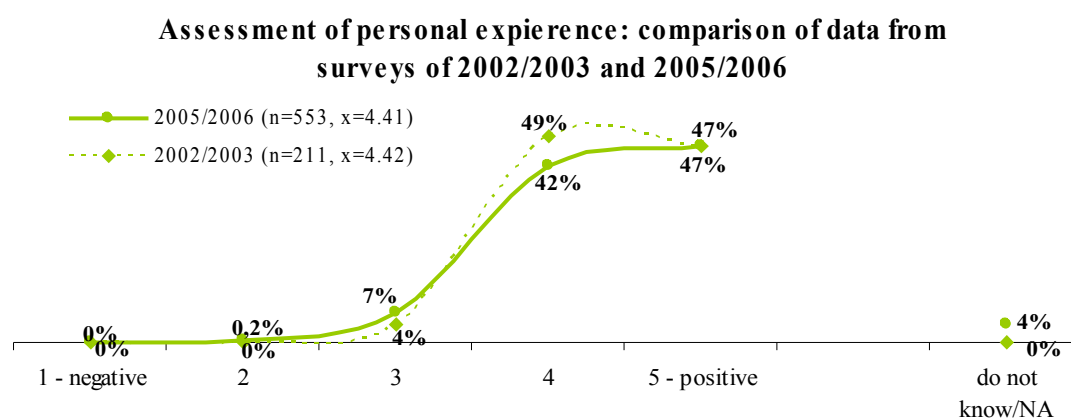
general stay abroad within the framework of Erasmus programme.

Assessment of personal experience

The students were very positive when assessing their personal experience, too. Almost all of them marked the highest rates of the scale (the arithmetical mean indicator of 4.41).

There are no significant differences among the data of different socio-demographic groups just to mention that non-Latvians were more sceptical as to this question than representatives of other groups.

Data on 2002/2003 as well as 2005/2006 Erasmus students responses regarding the above mentioned question are reflected in the following graph.



Although no significant changes can be observed still it must be noted that in comparison with the students of academic year 2002/2003 the students of 2005/2006 have more often marked the midpoint of the scale (assessment – satisfactory)

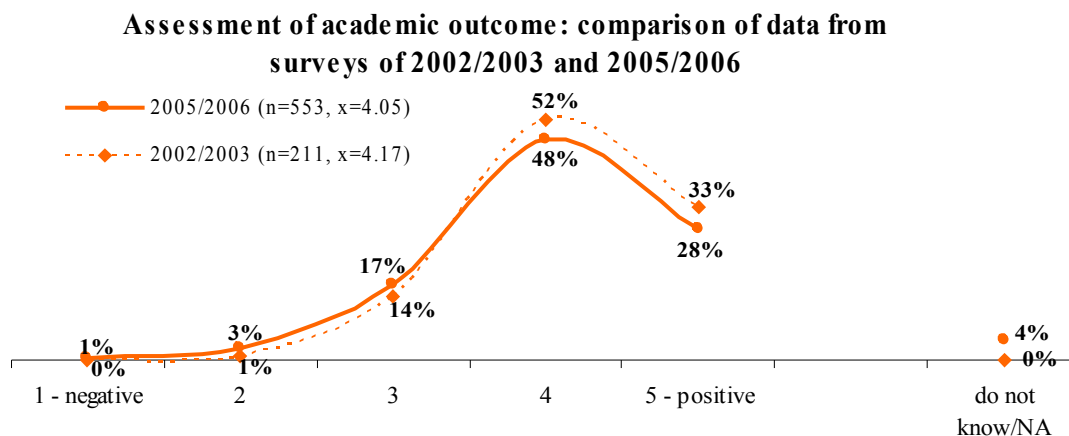
Assesment of academic outcome

Although by assessing the academic results of Erasmus studies, programme participants were comparatively slightly more sceptical yet it must be regarded that also within this aspect vast majority of respondents were positive a proof of which is the arithmetical mean indicator of 4.05.

In general students above the age of 25, master and doctoral students as well as those involved in the Erasmus Programme for period longer than six months have assessed the academic results of their studies more positively.

Non-Latvians were more critical regarding this issue.

The graph in next page compares the data on academic assessment of Erasmus students between academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006.

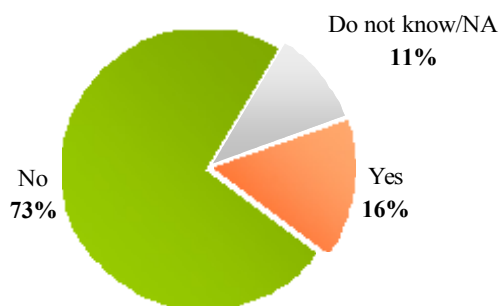


Although the arithmetical mean indicator does not reveal any significant changes yet it must be regarded that during the three years the number of students assessing their academic results of Erasmus studies by marking the highest points of the scale – ‘4’ and ‘5’ has slightly decreased.

Problems encountered during Erasmus studies

In order to improve the programme it is necessary to identify the most significant problem areas therefore within the survey of Erasmus students mobility report the programme participants were asked if they have encountered any problems during Erasmus study period and if so to name these problems. Data on their responses are reflected in the following graph.

**Problems encountered during Erasmus studies
(2005/2006)**

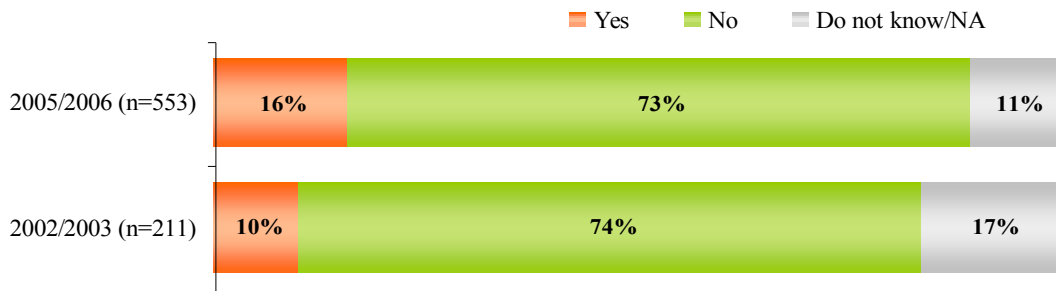


Base: all respondents, n=553

Although the vast majority of students have pointed out that they have not encountered any serious problems yet about each sixth student has answered this question positively.

The graph on next page compares the data on participants’ answers between academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006.

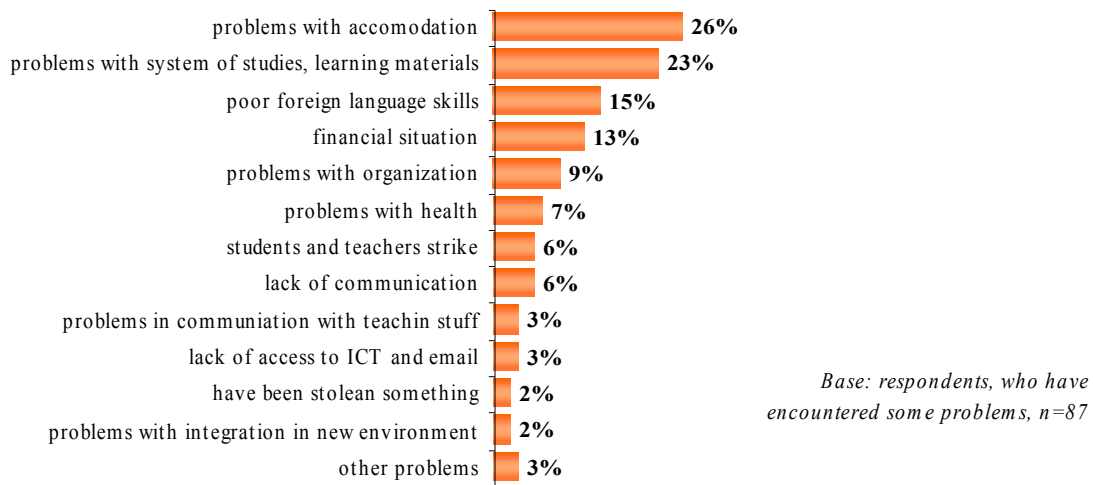
Problems encountered during Erasmus studies: comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006



Research results show that although the changes are not significant it must be noted that during the three years the number of students claiming that they have encountered certain serious problems has slightly increased. It is true though that the characteristics of problems have remained the same.

The students claiming that they have encountered certain serious problems in academic year 2005/2006 were asked to specify the problems. Data on students' responses are reflected in the following graph.

Most significant problems during Erasmus studies (2005/2006)



Data prove that the problems mentioned relatively most often are:

- Problems with accommodation and
- Problems arisen through the study process – study materials, credit transfer etc.

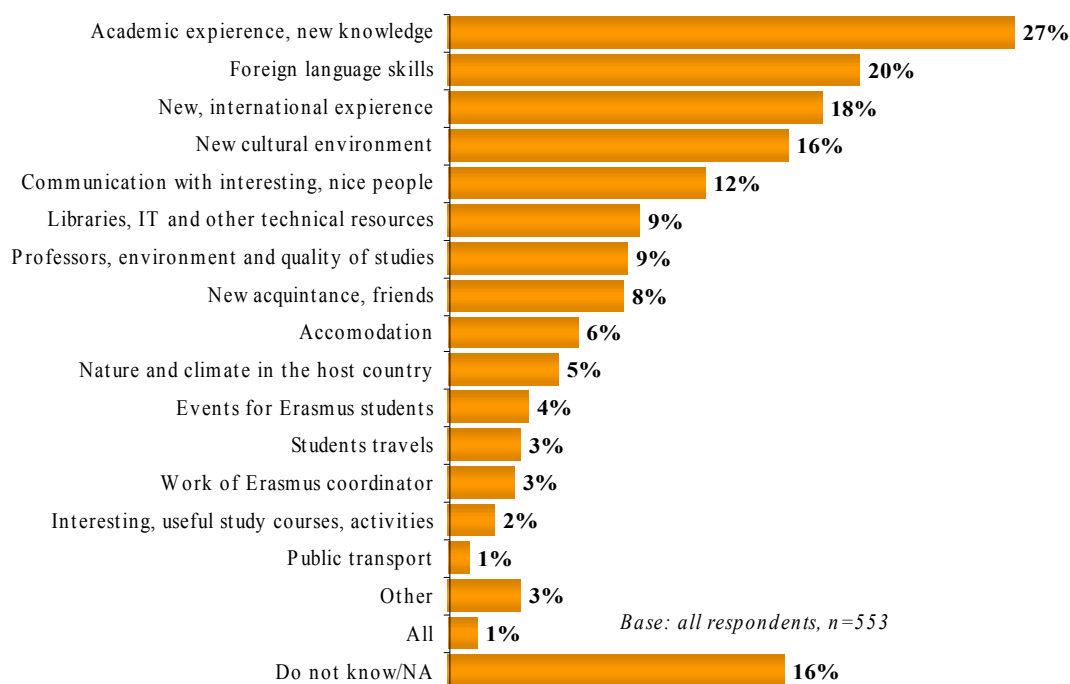
When taking a more detailed look at problems most often mentioned by the students on a socio-demographic bases, it can be concluded that male students, master students, those who were involved in the programme for the period of 5 months and students studying in the fall semester in comparison with representatives of other groups have more often mentioned problems with accommodation.

Problems with study system, study materials and credits on their turn were more often than on average mentioned by female students and students who within the programme framework stayed abroad for four months.

Most positively evaluated aspects of study period

It is interesting to see the data on those aspects of Erasmus study process which contrary to problems and difficulties, were evaluated most positively. Data on last academic year regarding this question are reflected in the following graph.

Most positively evaluated aspects of study period (2005/2006)

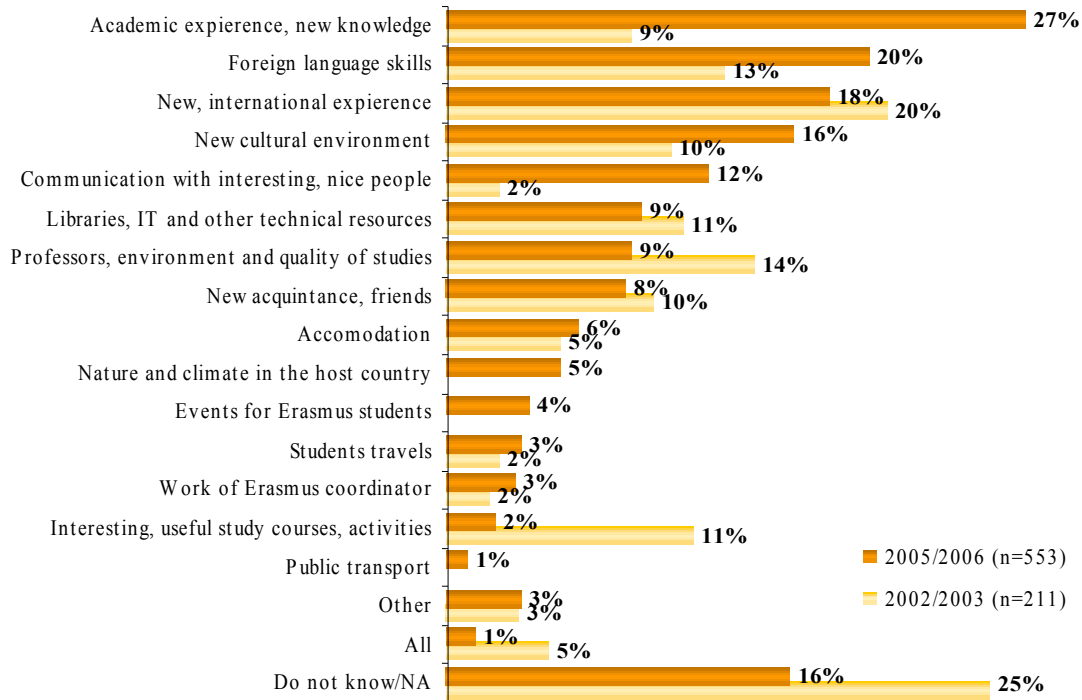


Data prove that nearly a half of students stated the academic side of the study process as that of the greatest value by marking academic experience and the obtained knowledge, more precisely – knowledge of foreign language as the worthiest gains. Slightly lower but still comparatively high assessment was demonstrated as to the so called social factor of study process – gaining new experience, meeting new people, insight into new environment.

By comparing the data of both surveys several interesting changes can be observed. Data prove that during the last years both indicators have increased – it can be said about the number of students highly appreciating the academic factor as well as number of those students who regarded the above mentioned social factor of studies – new cultural environment, meeting new people - as such of a great value.

Graph on next page compares the data on the answers of programme participants between academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006.

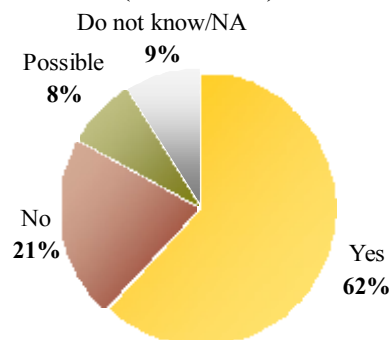
Most positively evaluated aspects of study period: comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006



Attitudes towards employment prospects

Nowadays in the context of actual mobility the following question is of importance: Would you consider a possibility of working abroad? The responses are shown in the following graph.

Attitudes towards employment prospects in foreign country (2005/2006)



Base: all respondents, n=553

Students' responses show that the vast majority – nearly two thirds of students – have answered this question positively. In total 8% of students were not so sure and chose the answer 'possibly, maybe' but one fifth of the students were sceptical and pointed out that they do not admit it possible to work abroad after Erasmus study period.

By comparing the data on socio-demographic bases it can be concluded that the possibility to work abroad after Erasmus studies was more often than on average admitted by students between the ages 25 and 29, non-Latvians, master students as

well as those who within the framework of Erasmus programme had studied abroad for half a year or longer

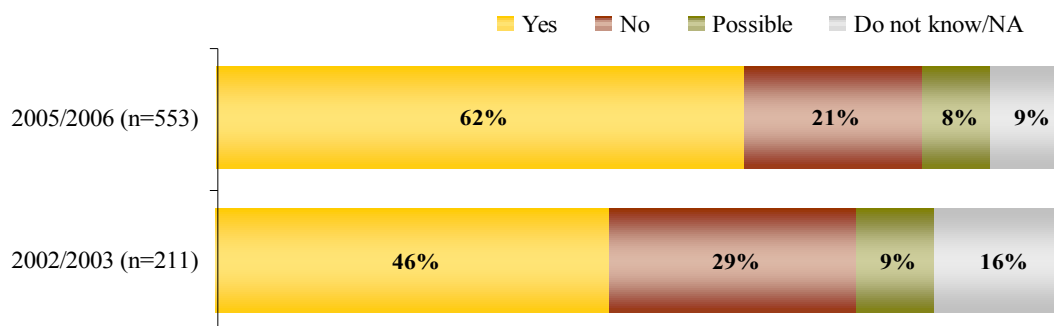
Negative answers on their turn were more often given by respondents above the age of 30, doctoral students and those who had involved in the programme for a period of 5 months.

In additional research, as part of which a WEB survey of Erasmus students was carried out, the respondents were asked to substantiate their answers. It is interesting to note that several students emphasized that if they were provided an opportunity to work abroad they would choose their host country of Erasmus studies to be their destination.

Several Erasmus students have regarded that the possibility of their working abroad has increased due to their involvement in exchange programme since they have gained international experience, insight into new culture, better knowledge of foreign language as well as new acquaintance.

It is interesting to see whether students' opinions regarding this question have changed during last three years. The following graph compares the data on Erasmus students' answers between academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006.

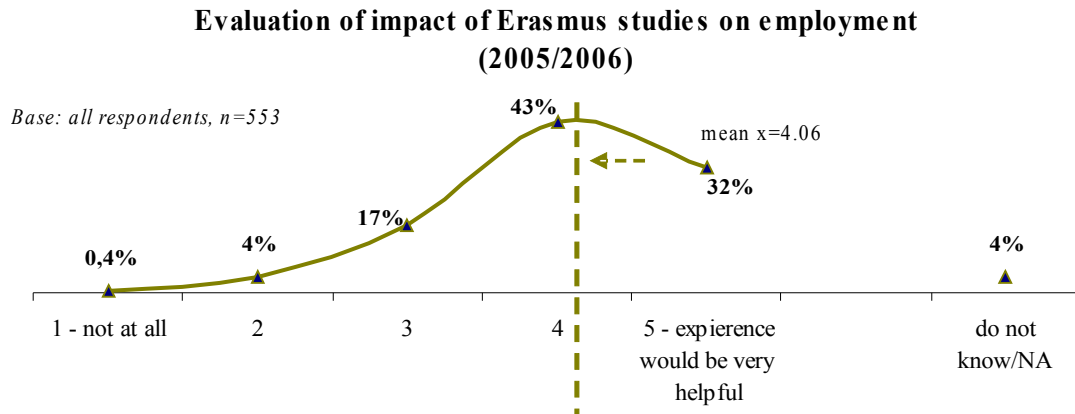
**Attitudes towards employment prospects in foreign country:
comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006**



Research results show that during the three years the students' opinion regarding possibility to work in any of participant countries of Erasmus programme upon accomplishment of their studies has changed quite significantly. If only less than a half of programme participants of academic year 2002/2003 admitted such possibility then among the students of academic year 2005/2006 positive answers were given by nearly two thirds of the respondents.

Evaluation of impact of Erasmus studies on employment

All in all positive evaluation was given as to the aspect of future employment. Data prove that the vast majority of students asked if their studies abroad would help to build their career marked the highest points of the 5 point evaluation scale. The graph next page reflects the data on students' responses.



Data prove that Erasmus students' assessment of impact of their studies abroad on their future career is highly positive – more than two thirds of programme participants had stated that such experience would be very helpful in building their future career.

In general more approving assessment of impact of Erasmus students on future professional development was presented by students above the age of 30 and those programme participants who had stayed abroad for half a year or longer.

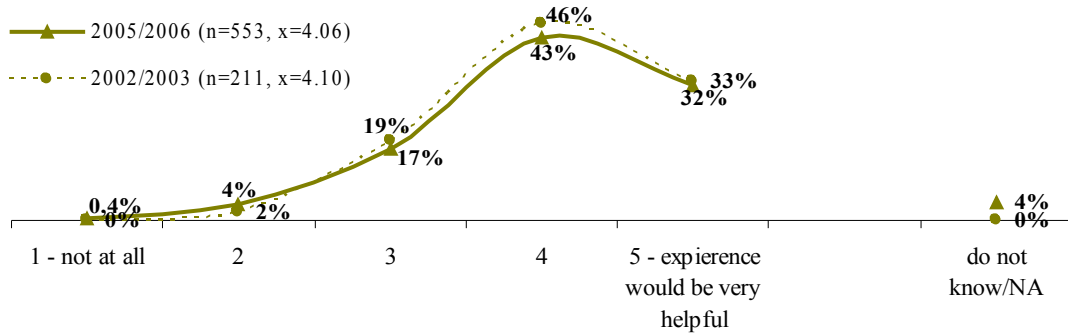
Students under the age of 29 as well as non-Latvians on their turn have been more sceptical as to this question.

It must be noted that within additional research the students were asked to substantiate their opinions. According to the research results the improved proficiency of foreign languages was the most frequently mentioned factor which according to the students' opinion would ensure more successful competitiveness in the labour market. At the same time academic and life experience were also highly appreciated.

Students who were quite sceptical about the impact of Erasmus studies on their future career were also asked to express their opinion in more detail however all of them abstained from further explanations.

Following graph compares the data of Erasmus students' answers between academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006.

**Evaluation of impact of Erasmus studies on employment:
comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006**

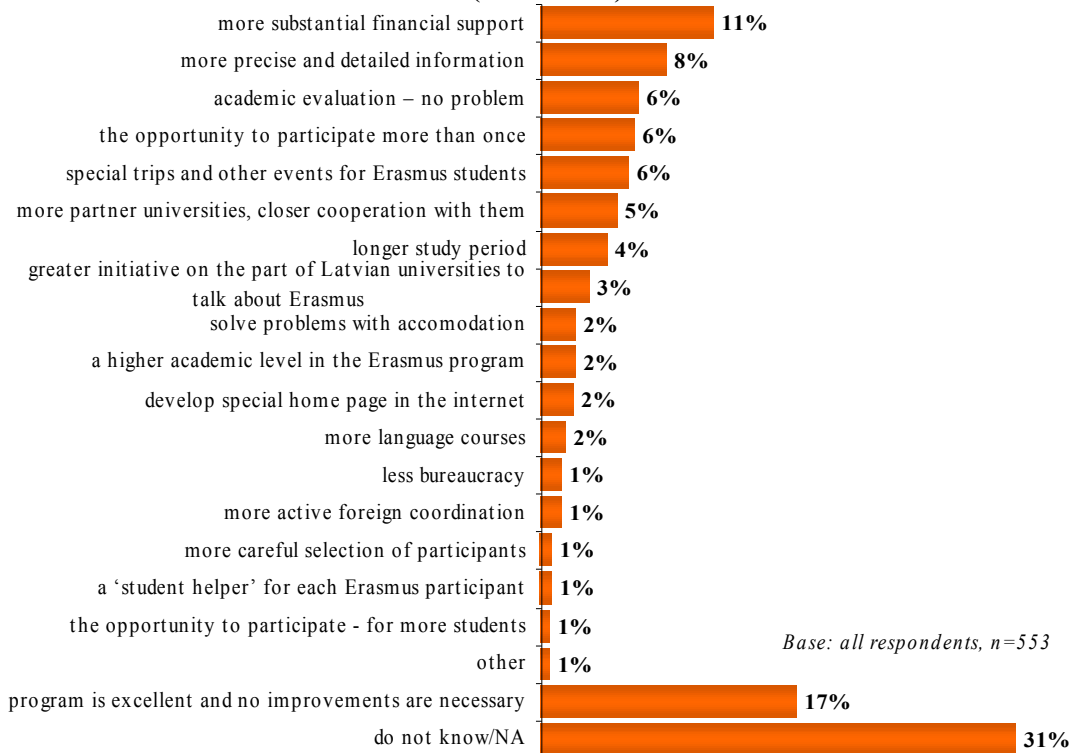


Data prove that no significant changes have been observed regarding the opinion of Erasmus students on impact of their studies on their future career.

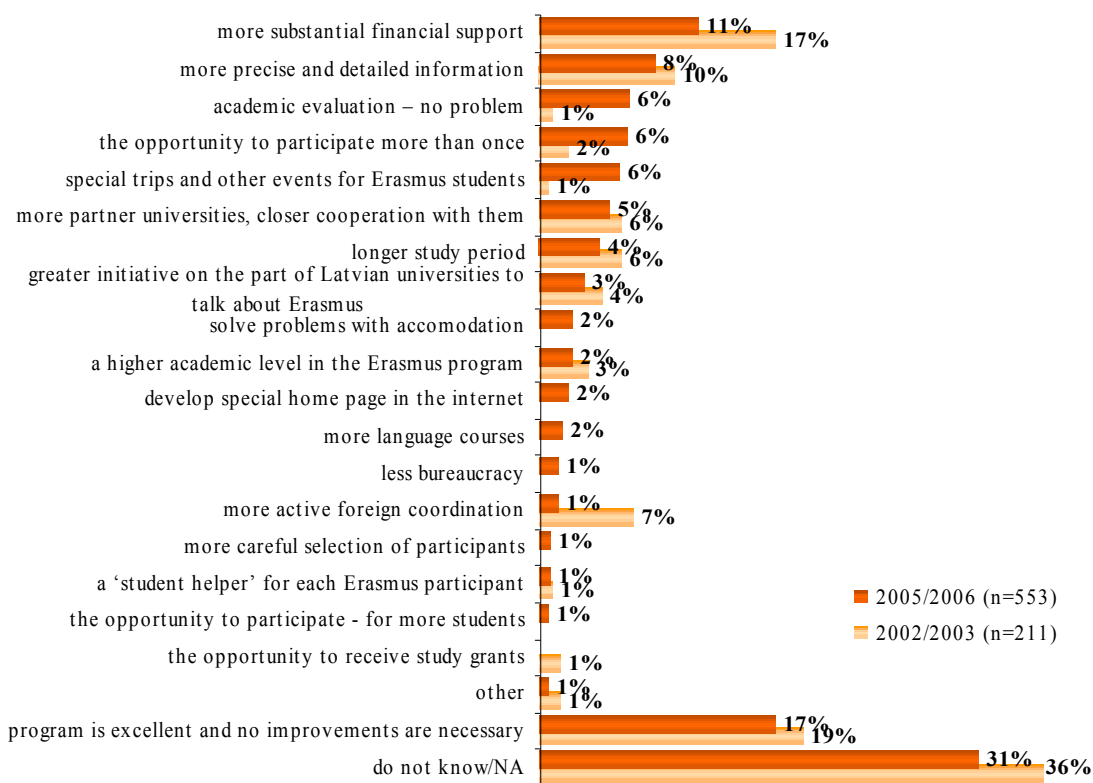
Recommendations for improvement of Erasmus Programme

Although the programme participants have provided highly approving assessment of Erasmus activities in both – their experience in general as well as separate positions of the programme yet its is undeniable that there are always possibilities for growth. Therefore at the end of the survey the students were asked to make recommendations for improving Erasmus activities. The following graph reflects the data on participants' answers of academic year 2005/2006.

**Recommendations for improvement of Erasmus Programme
(2005/2006)**



**Recommendations for improvement of Erasmus Programme:
comparison of data from surveys of 2002/2003 and 2005/2006**



According to the compiled information, the first two aspects mentioned most frequently by the students which according to their opinion should be changed in the activities of the programme have maintained their topicality during the last years – students still regard that more substantial financial support as well as more detailed information as the most important areas to be changed. However, by analyzing the data certain interesting trends can be observed.

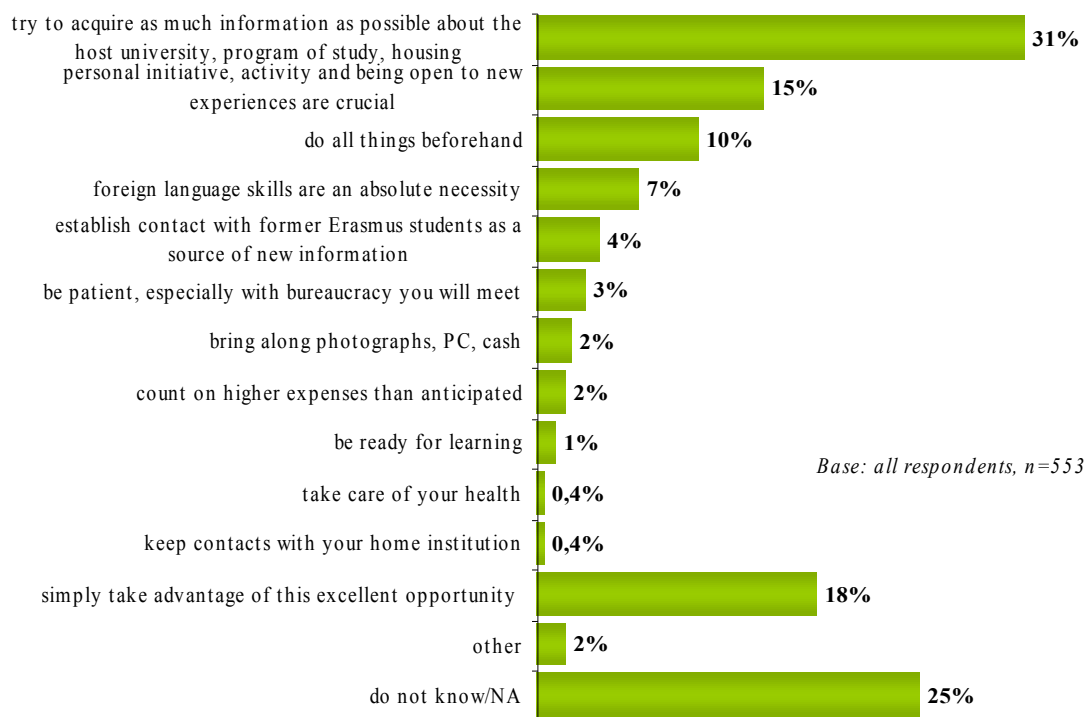
Thus, for example, the number of students stating that co-ordinators of host institutions should be more active, has slightly decreased, but more often factors such as adequate academic assessment of studies as well as repeated participation in the programme was emphasized. Desire for special events organized for Erasmus students was also expressed more frequently than previously. It may be assumed that such specifically organized events would foster the level of students' integration in the local community.

The graph next page provides visual reflection on data of students' responses of academic years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006.

Recommendations to other Erasmus students

It is important to take advises of programme participants for their counterparts – future Erasmus students. Data on students’ responses – recommendations regarding academic year 2005/2006 are reflected in the following chart.

Recommendations to other Erasmus students (2005/2006)



Data prove that the recommendation that has been emphasized most often is to try to acquire as much information as possible on studies abroad – as from the information regarding their accommodation, to the detailed information on study process etc. It is important to note that personal initiative, being open and active and to settle all the necessary formalities in time are also the factors that were specifically pointed out as important for future Erasmus students.

As recurrently reflected within the framework of this survey the majority of programme participants have been highly satisfied with the activities of Erasmus programme. Their positive attitude is also demonstrated by the fact that each fifth of the students recommend to the potential future participants of Erasmus programme to simply take advantage of this opportunity and participate in the programme.

NARRATIVE REPORT FROM STUDENT TO INSTITUTION.

Minimum requirements are points no: [numbers]

Socrates/Erasmus Student Report Form (Message to student e.g.: <i>This report on your experiences will provide the Socrates/Erasmus programme with valuable information which will benefit both future students and contribute to the continual improvement of the programme. We are grateful for your co-operation in filling out the questionnaire. Signed</i>)
Please return this form to your home institution at the end of your study period abroad
In filling out the questionnaire, please write clearly or answer by ticking/circling the appropriate answer
1. Identification of student Name : (+other student identification data as appropriate)
2. Study period and motivation
Dates of study period/duration : From date – to date
Do you consider the study period to have been: Too short <input type="checkbox"/> - too long <input type="checkbox"/> - just right <input type="checkbox"/>
Which were the factors which motivated you to go abroad? Academic <input type="checkbox"/> - cultural <input type="checkbox"/> - friends living abroad <input type="checkbox"/> - career plans <input type="checkbox"/> - a new environment <input type="checkbox"/> - European experience <input type="checkbox"/> - other (please specify):
3. Information and support
How did you get information about the study programme of the host institution/general information? Home institution <input type="checkbox"/> - Host institution <input type="checkbox"/> - Internet <input type="checkbox"/> - Other (please specify):
How useful was this information? scale 1-5 : 1=poor/negative, 5=excellent 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
On your arrival at the host institution, were you offered: A welcome event <input type="checkbox"/> - An information session <input type="checkbox"/> - An orientation programme <input type="checkbox"/>
Were any other special events organized for Erasmus students in host institution during your stay? yes – no
Did you receive adequate support from host/home institution before and during your Erasmus study period ? scale 1-5 : 1=poor/negative, 5=excellent 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
How do you consider your degree of integration with local students in the host institution? scale 1-5 : 1=poor/negative, 5=excellent 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

4. Accommodation and infrastructure
Type of accommodation at host institution : University accommodation θ - apartment or house together with other students θ - private housing θ - other (please specify) :
How did you find your accommodation ? University housing office θ - friends/family θ - private market θ - other (please specify) :
Access to libraries, study materials : scale 1-5 : 1=poor/negative, 5=excellent 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
Access to PC and e-mail in host institution : scale 1-5 : 1=poor/negative, 5=excellent 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

5. Academic recognition
Were you provided with a learning agreement prior to the commencement of your study period? yes – no
Did you sit exams ? yes – no
Was ECTS used ? yes – no
Will you gain academic recognition for your study period abroad ? yes – no
Will you get credits for completing language courses ? yes – no

6. Linguistic preparation
Language(s) of instruction in host institution :
Was language preparation provided before and/or during placement ? yes – no
Who was responsible for the language course(s) ? home institution θ - host institution θ - other (please specify) :
Weeks of language training total number of weeks : hours per week :
How would you rate your competency in the language of your host country <u>Before Erasmus study period :</u> no knowledge θ - poor θ - good θ - very good θ <u>After Erasmus study period</u> no knowledge θ - poor θ - good θ - very good θ

7. Costs
Costs during study period : (average per month) : To what extent did the Erasmus grant cover your needs ? scale 1-5 : 1=not at all, 5=fully 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
When did you receive your Erasmus grant (how many instalments) ?
Did you have other sources of funding ? -Sources : state grant/loan θ - family θ - own savings θ - private loan θ - other (please specify) : -Amount other sources in total per month:(currency)
How much more did you spend abroad compared to what you normally spend in home country ? Extra amount per month :
Did you have to pay any kind of fees in host institution? If yes, please state the type and amount paid:

8. Your personal experience – evaluation of Erasmus study period
Judgment of academic outcome of placement : scale 1-5 : 1=poor/negative, 5=excellent 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
Judgment of personal outcome of placement : scale 1-5 : 1=poor/negative, 5=excellent 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
Did you encounter any serious problems during Erasmus placement? If yes, please specify :
Which aspects of the placement did you particularly appreciate?
Are you more likely to consider working in another member state at the end of your course as a result of your Erasmus experiences?
Do you think the placement will help you in your career? scale 1-5 : 1=not at all, 5=very much 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
Overall evaluation of Erasmus placement : scale 1-5 : 1=poor/negative, 5=excellent 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

Recommendations to other students concerning information, application procedures etc. :

How do you feel the Erasmus scheme can be improved?