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Educational exchange and new opportunities : the perspectives of Polish Erasmus students in Portugal

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EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES — THE PERSPECTIVES OF POLISH ERASMUS STUDENTS IN PORTUGAL¹

1. INTRODUCTION

The recommendation of the European Parliament stating that: “The transnational mobility of people contributes to enriching different national cultures and enables those concerned to enhance their own cultural and professional knowledge and European society as a whole to benefit from those effects. Such experience is proving to be increasingly necessary given the current limited employment prospects and an employment market which requires more flexibility and a greater ability to adapt to change”² sets the framework for the European student mobility programmes. Official goals of the “Erasmus Student Mobility for Studies” programme by the European Commission include: “educational, linguistic and cultural benefits of the students, promotion of the institutional cooperation in Europe and contributing to development of well-qualified, open-minded and internationally experienced future professionals”³. This also implicitly suggests the inclusion of more general aims, such as creating common European identity⁴.

Lisbon Strategy launched over ten years ago put emphasis on “knowledge-based economy” to which programmes as Socrates and Leonardo were supposed

¹ Shortened version of this article is waiting for publication in post-conference book of VII Portuguese Sociological Congress.

² Official Journal of the European Communities, 9 August 2001, cited in: J. Stier, *Taking a Critical Stance towards Internationalization Ideologies, Higher Education: Idealism, Instrumentalism and Educationalism*, Globalization, Societies and Education (2004)2, p. 83–97.

³ ERASMUS Student Mobility for Studies, <http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/study_en.htm>, (accessed at 26.02.2013).

⁴ Cf. E. Sigalas, *Does ERASMUS Student Mobility promote a European Identity?*, <<http://www.wiso.uni-hamburg.de/conweb>>, (accessed at 31.11.2012); M. Duczowska-Piasecka, K. Mazurkiewicz, *The significance of developing european identity — the analysis of Polish students*, European Integration Studies (2012)6.

to have significant input⁵. Europe 2020 Strategy, also draws attention to developing “knowledge society”, *inter alia* through aforementioned programmes⁶.

On the basis of the discussed declarations it can be concluded that through Erasmus programme European institutions would like to develop three, interconnected fields:

- academic: developing knowledge of students and academic staff,
- economic: creating flexible and interculturally experienced professionals for economy and business
- social: fostering the development of tolerance and openness as well as strengthening bonds among Europeans.

Another question is whether individual plans and purposes of the Erasmus Scholarship holders are coherent with previously discussed, general objectives of the programme. Attendants’ motivations for taking part in the programme and ways the students spend their scholarship period may differ and depend on many factors. For example, the destination of their stay is a significant aspect, as students choosing places famous for its touristic and leisure opportunities may think and behave differently than those preferring to stay in academic, political or administrative centers. This study focuses on Polish students who went for their ‘Erasmus experience’ to Portugal. This country combines two discussed elements because it is well-known for both its touristic opportunities and for widely appreciated university centers in Coimbra, Lisbon and Porto⁷.

The key question of this study can be summarized as follows: are the official goals assumed by European institutions with regard to Erasmus Programme achieved? Which part of the plan is achieved and which remains unfulfilled according to experiences of Polish students in Portugal?

The Erasmus Programme can be perceived as the boundary object (using the term of Susan L. Star and James Griesemer⁸). It integrates two environments of different interests and expectations over one project. The first group are officials of EU and designers of european education programmes, the second- students having in mind their own individual goals. Therefore, the success of the Erasmus

⁵ Cf. *Presidency Conclusion —Lisbon European Council — 23rd and 24th March 2000*, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm>, (accessed at 26.02.2013).

⁶ Cf. *Communication from the Commission, Europe 2020 Strategy, A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*, p. 13, <<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>>, (accessed at 26.02.2013).

⁷ Cf. R. Wiśniewski, *In search of common ground and engagement: Scholarship Programmes*, in: *Poland–Jordan–European Union: Future Aspects*, eds. S. Abudayeh, K. Bojko, University of Jordan, Amman 2011, p. 129–146.

⁸ S.L. Star, J. Griesemer, *Institutional Ecology, ‘Translations’ and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley’s Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907–39*, *Social Studies of Science*, Sage, London, Newbury park and New Delhi, (1989)19, p. 387–420.

initiative lies in the skillful coordination and translations (communication?) of the interests of these two groups, which is done by specific bodies engaged in the programme, e.g. Erasmus Student Network.

This analysis is divided into four stages: experiences during first cultural interaction, observations from the study period, memories after the return to Poland and student's own assessment of the program's consequences.

2. SURVEY OVERVIEW

The first conclusions presented in the following report are the result of a survey project conducted by the Authors in May 2012. The aim of the survey was to provide the necessary knowledge about Polish participants of the Erasmus program in Portugal. The survey was based on IDI — *Individual In-Depth Interviews* method. We selected 25 people for survey using snowball sampling and 21 interviews were used for the analysis. Survey was conducted among the persons who participated in the Erasmus Program in the period between 2004 and first half of 2012. Usually the stay in Portugal lasted half a year (one semester), however several persons stayed for the whole year (two semesters). The shortest stay was two months (one person) and the longest one — 2.5 years (one person) All respondents live in Warsaw, however some of them only because of their studies. Most of the graduates or students completed or study Sociology or European Studies, although some studied economy, management, finance, human resources management, English philology, Latin American studies, IT and even design studies. Respondents represented most of the major Warsaw universities: University of Warsaw, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Warsaw School of Economics and Warsaw University of Life Sciences. The majority of participants were full-time students although there was one person who attended extramural studies. Most of the respondents are currently employed, however some of them combine work and studies. There is also a group of people who continue with their studies. Among the ones who are employed, the majority work in companies (and corporations), although several responses indicate that not in all cases it is work under contract of employment. The majority work in finance and HR, but some are employed in advertising and consulting.

For most of them the Erasmus Program in Portugal was not something that they planned beforehand. The decisive factor was that in accordance with the documentation, no knowledge of Portuguese was required. Only English language was to be used (although the situation in some cases proved to be different). Portugal was a choice alternative to Spain and Italy. Advantages of Portugal also included its location, climate and tourist attractions as well as its exotic nature. Moreover, the offer — in the opinion of the participants — was very specific and the contact with the Portuguese representatives of the program was smooth.

Stay in Portugal was relatively the easiest and the fastest to arrange at their home universities. Some respondents chose Portugal because their friends were on exchange programs there and they were happy with their stay. Majority of the respondents had no contact with Portugal prior to their stay. Sporadic contacts were limited to vacations or short visits of friends. Knowledge about this country was very limited. It did not go beyond the information learnt at school. Persons with interests in football were an exception however their knowledge was not very extensive. There was also one admirer of Portuguese wine.

All respondents know (and had known prior to their stay in Portugal) English at different levels. This knowledge usually enabled them to communicate freely. Most of them have basic knowledge of Portuguese although there are some who continued their studies after their return and their knowledge may be considered as good. One person teaches Portuguese. Quite a few people speak or study Spanish. Moreover the respondents said they had poor knowledge of French (mostly school level), German and Russian.

3. FIRST CULTURAL INTERACTION

The first impression of the participants in the Erasmus Program who came to Portugal was disappointment about the place. They expected among others, a large city and the university of the similar size as their home institutions. It turned out that in Portugal everything was smaller than they expected. Especially if they came from Warsaw (almost 2 million inhabitants) Porto was seen as significantly smaller (almost 270 thousand inhabitants). The weather was also a surprise. Winter was quite cold and the rainfall was quite heavy, and Poles expected warm and almost summer-like weather. Summer was very hot. Customs such as siesta and no rush attitude proved to be a significant problem. Portuguese were not in a hurry to deal with various matters, therefore in the eyes of Poles even basic things (such as issuing of a library card) became a problem. Respondents also expected that their social life, mostly with Portuguese, will start as soon as they arrive. It turned out that it took days, weeks and even months to meet new friends. And very often they were not Portuguese but fellow countrymen (there were lots of Poles) or Erasmus participants from other countries. Another problem was that the Portuguese and students from other countries, especially where there were large numbers of them (among others Spaniards, Italians), often preferred their own company. Language proved to be a significant problem. Contrary to the information that they received, the knowledge of English among the Portuguese, especially the older generation was not common. Neither did many Portuguese students and lecturers speak fluent English and that proved to be the greatest obstacle in establishing new contacts. However people who attended the university with the extended offer of subjects taught in English, emphasize that the level of

classes of high and this had a considerable effect on their entire exchange program experience.

Any possible friendships with the Portuguese proved to be quite shallow as well. This hindered not only social interactions but also studying and exchange of experiences. It was the hardest for people who lived in halls of residence to establish new friendships. They were practically limited to contacts with fellow participants in the Erasmus Program. Although the student organization Erasmus Student Network operates quite effectively and organized a large number of events and meetings, they took place in a closed circle of participants in the Program. However the members of the organization could take advantage of discounts in theaters and museums. But any possible disappointments did not dominate in the feelings of former participants in the program. Most of them were happy and sometimes even thrilled after their arrival in Portugal. What came as a surprise was the permission to smoke in public places.

The organization of classes was different as well, as almost of them were practical in nature. And that suited the students fine. With few exceptions, Portuguese lecturers were open to cooperation and ready to help. Erasmus participants noted among others differences that the lecturers did not create a distance that is a common practice in Poland. They were also very interested in students. It was easier because the university in Portugal was usually much smaller than in Poland and the students and employees of particular departments were far less anonymous. After several months most of them knew each other at least by sight. Employees in the Dean's Office were also very helpful and although their way of work (slow in comparison to Poland) was different from what is experienced in Poland, the cooperation was usually very good. Poles also evaluated positively the infrastructure where they studied (condition of buildings, toilettes, cafeterias etc).

Despite the problems with the language and selection of classes, students had a lot of work. Naturally, the timetable was dependant on individual preferences but even in the case of students who were focused on sightseeing and leisure, there was a lot to do. It was difficult for those who worked especially hard to find time for entertainment. Working day started at 8 am in the morning and usually ended at 7 pm. Of course this included siesta break. Persons who were involved in the implementation of projects worked as late as 11 pm or longer. Additionally there was a Portuguese language course. At the beginning, there was an intensive course i.e. the classes took place every day and lasted approx. 2 hours each. After the intensive part was over, the Portuguese language classes were 2–3 times a week. The organization of studies in Portugal was that even the small number of lectures took a lot of time, especially that the attendance, even at the classes taught in Portuguese, was usually mandatory. Students had to be prepared all the time.

In summary, the programme lacks some preparation courses concerning cultural differences which proved to be significant obstacles in the first stage of scholarship stay. Insufficient language skills in Portuguese did not allow Polish students to benefit from the university's offer, so it would be recommended for the sending institutions to prepare their students better in this respect. Some efforts from host institution would also be beneficial- mainly widening the spectrum of subjects available in English on every faculty and training lecturers to be more fluent in English. It would be also a good idea to prepare a special program directed to local students which would encourage them to open towards foreign visitors and notice advantages resulting from such intercultural contacts. Erasmus students could have their own input during classes, e.g. presenting thoughts of the scientists from their countries or specific problems of their region. It could enrich the lecture with another perspective which would be beneficial for other students.

4. EXPERIENCES FROM THE STUDY PERIOD- EVERYDAY LIFE AND UNIVERSITY

Poles perceived the Portuguese as very open and friendly as well as helpful and nice. Strangers in the street took their time to help them or take them to the place they were looking for. Friends readily assisted in everyday problems. However, as time went by, in the opinion of the majority of the Erasmus participants, it turned out that the Portuguese keep their distance and it is difficult to befriend them. It was also more difficult to befriend young Portuguese women than Portuguese men. This applied both to female — female as well as female — male contacts. One should also note that in the opinion of the Erasmus participants, Portuguese are mostly friendly, helpful and peaceful people. Just like Poles they are very family-oriented. But at the same time they keep their distance. According to the Polish students there are big cultural differences between the South and the North. This applies particularly in relation to the language. The North is less developed than the richer South. The North is more conservative. Lisbon is very different than all other regions of the country. The capital is a large, cosmopolitan and open city. Just like in Poland there are significant differences between the countryside and cities. Another dividing line is between the coast and the areas located further from the ocean. The coast is more open.

Erasmus participants were probably most impressed with the Portuguese way of life perceived as peaceful, happy and warm. They also remembered open and friendly people as well as landscapes, cuisine and parties. As far as studies are concerned, some students were impressed by the Portuguese system of studies which put a lot of emphasis on practical aspects. Summing up their stay in Portugal, students claim that they divided their time more or less equally between studies and leisure. Of course there are people who devoted most of their stay

to sightseeing and having fun, without doing any real studying. However this was not a rule. The most important disadvantage pointed by the students was the insufficient number of classes in English. Trouble with the language made it difficult for some of them to evaluate the level and selection of classes. However people who studied at the university with the wider selection of classes in English or spoke better Portuguese, claim that the selection of classes was wide and they were taught at the high level. Cooperation with lecturers who tried to get to know the students, was also valued highly. Poles also liked the practical way of conducting classes.

Conclusions from this stage are quite similar to the previous one- it would be recommended to increase the number of subjects led in English and improve Erasmus participants knowledge of the local language. Additionally, it seems that campaign directed towards the wider society, delivering information about Erasmus students and changing their attitudes towards them would help students to acclimatize and the locals to take advantage from the chance to meet person from the other country.

5. PERIOD AFTER RETURNING FROM SCHOLARSHIP

After their return home upon the completion of the Erasmus program, it turned out that the participants' experiences varied considerably. Some of the Erasmus students were very emotional about the end of their stay in Portugal, others were already a little bit bored with it. This depended among others on the season of the year (eg. it was more difficult to come back from hot Portugal to cold Poland in the autumn time) and the responsibilities that awaited at home. It was easier to adjust for the people who continued or came back to the active social lifestyle in their home country. And in the case of students who reacted badly to their return, the feeling of depression intensified after they got back to their home universities and had to pass additional exams to make up for the differences in the course of studies. They sometimes had the feeling that they were being punished for their activity and curiosity of the world.

Some of the Erasmus participants also had to deal with the social consequences of their exchange program experience. Some of the friendships did not survive or the relations got considerably looser, although there were people who went back to their old social circle without any problems whatsoever. Friends from university reacted differently. They mostly expressed curiosity but there was also envy and sometimes sympathy if the student had to re-sit the whole semester at the alma mater.

Most of the Erasmus participants did not express any negative aspects of their stay in Portugal. Even if they indicated such, they included most often the longing for one's family, problems with sustaining the relationships with partners

left in Poland or keeping in touch with new friends in Portugal. The issue of insufficient classes in English was raised again. The return to their alma maters proved to be a considerable problem. Students did not receive credit for subjects they completed in Portugal or they were given credit only in limited scope. So after their return they had to re-sit the whole semesters. There were even situations where the person sent from the university to Portugal was deleted from the list of students because the information on his/her stay did not reach the appropriate structures. Such situations made the students feel that they were being punished for their stay abroad.

Taking into account the *post-Erasmus syndrome* (feeling of maladjustment after going back to previous environment in home country which is a common expression among previous scholarship holders) visible among students finishing the programme, it would be recommended to take care of such a group by associating them and organizing common programs. Respondents also recalled problems with the university administration and lecturers, which proves that in institutions there are still many prejudices and bad feelings concerning mobility programs. Students made remarks that the fear of losing one year on university and supposed pressure after return were the main reasons why their friends had refrained from applying to Erasmus. It would be also recommended to support returning students on their faculties and institutes, by keeping contact with lecturers and addressing possible problems with acceptance of "Transcript of records".

6. CONSEQUENCES OF THE STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Practically all students, indicated, the possibility to learn and revise the foreign language as the greatest benefit of their stay in Portugal. This concerned both the Portuguese language as well as English. A significant number of students continued after their return home to study Portuguese but in most cases this did not last very long. Some people still keep in touch with friends they met during their stay. Friendships from their stay in Portugal are mainly maintained by the people who came back recently. Facebook is very helpful in this respect. A lot of friendships with Poles, Portuguese and other nationalities have survived. However, a lot of them no longer keep in touch, because spatial distance and different everyday problems after return from scholarship result in loosening of ties. It was very important to get to know the daily life in a different country, get to know people from other countries, make new friends and friendships, which were maintained after their return and are still maintained. The effect of these contacts for the people coming back from Portugal was greater openness to the world and tolerance as well as greater resourcefulness. Different methods of teaching were also noted, more practical and systematic as well as learning how to work in groups. The participation in the exchange program, the need to take care of oneself

in a foreign environment and the constant contact with foreigners contributed to the greater openness and readiness to interact with them. Although some students pointed that the said traits were necessary at the start of the program as they made the stay considerably easier. Even if the languages have not been mastered to the perfection, the mental barrier to speaking vanished. The stay abroad allows people to look at their choices from a distance and to reconsider them, see their limitations and try to overcome them. It helps to gain new experiences. Naturally it helps with the study of foreign languages. Some claim that the stay mostly contributes to the development of social competences and that it does not contribute at all or only in to a very limited extend to widening of the formal knowledge. However all respondents think it was worthwhile to participate in the program.

The stay in Portugal did not result in the increased interest in this country which was very low or non-existent beforehand. Respondents have fond memories of their stay but in majority of cases this does not mean any specific actions. They are no longer interested in politics (even if they were during their stay). Not many people follow cultural events related to Portugal and only one person said that he/she participated in such event. Only one person is interested in Portuguese literature. Neither are many people interested in Portuguese cuisine or wine, although some say that they sometimes cook Portuguese dishes (they would visit a Portuguese restaurant but apparently currently there is not a single one in Warsaw). Several people visited Portugal again as their holiday destination.

A majority of respondents expected to have fun in Portugal, but it was not reported as the main motivation of selecting the place. In some moments during scholarship period, the stay was supposed to be like a holiday adventure. There was a chance to meet new, interesting people, exotic culture, do some sightseeing and rest. The main benefit not related to leisure was the chance to study a foreign language and that would be mainly English. For some people it was a chance to live on their own, independently (as if only for a while) from their parents. It was perceived as an opportunity to test oneself in a situation where one needs to take care of oneself. All Erasmus participants expected that they would meet new friends in Portugal and that they would be mainly Portuguese as well as people from other countries. They wanted to meet interesting 'cool' people with whom they were going to party. One should note that in the opinion of the Erasmus participants the knowledge of Portuguese may be useful while looking for a job. Some employers also value the stay abroad as such, as a proof that the participant is independent and active. However the majority of recruiters do not put a lot of significance to this fact unless they themselves participated in the Erasmus program. The reason for it is that more and more students participate in such programs and it is not something that would make a person stand out. One of the respondents, working at the moment as recruiter stated that Erasmus Programme in Spain, Italy and Portugal would mean for him only attending good parties and

that it is not a serious point in CV, although he would appreciate people after Erasmus experience in Belgium or United Kingdom. Such opinions should be a basis for countries like Portugal to change their mobility programmes and to put more emphasis on the level of academic teaching.

Neither widening of knowledge nor professional development were mentioned as important benefits of Erasmus scholarship in Portugal.

7. CONCLUSION

This study on experiences of the Polish Erasmus students in Portugal shows clearly some incoherencies between aims presented by originators of the program and these of individual students. It was discovered that objectives such as developing academical knowledge, or getting new perspectives in business are fulfilled to a very little extent. It happens mainly due to the insufficient preparation of both scholarship holders and host institutions before the scholarship period. Universities themselves may be the cause of some ineffectiveness of the programme, e.g. when the possibility of attendance in classes is significantly limited due to the language barrier and few subjects available in English. Very little attention is paid to the aspect of communication between foreign students and home students. The goal of changing attitudes towards “the other” and getting competences in an intercultural surrounding is achieved, however there is still space for some improvement.. Some benefits mentioned by students, for example several aspects of personal development, were not included in the official statements of the Commission but appeared rather as positive side effects. They are not considered as obstacles to fulfilling the programme’s priorities.

Scholarship holders were quite aware of general processes occurring as a result of their attendance in the programme as opening towards other cultures and creating of the common European identity, which was interestingly summarised by one of the respondents:

‘During the last meeting of our stay we sat around with friends and we came to conclusion that Erasmus is an anti-war programme. Somebody said that he couldn’t imagine that now there would be a war against his country and for example mine. Maybe it’s pathetic but there is a grain of truth in that.’

In the introduction of this article it was stated that that Erasmus scholarship connects different interests of two sides- European policy-makers and individual students. The focus of this paper is a following question: what to do to enhance the effectiveness of the programme and mutual satisfaction of both groups?

This study suggests that some improvements to the organization of the Erasmus Programme are necessary. These are:

- Preparation classes concerning cultural differences between home and host country.

- Introduction of the language courses starting soon after finishing recruitment for Erasmus programme.
- Increasing the number of subject taught in English in every institute, improving foreign language skills of academic staff.
- Introduction of programs preparing local students (not only Erasmus Student Network members) for the contact with Erasmus scholarship holders, making them aware of benefits coming from intercultural contact and friendship.
- Encouraging lecturers to engage Erasmus students in their classes by making presentations concerning achievements and important issues from their countries.
- Providing information campaigns directed towards wider society, fostering open attitudes towards Erasmus.
- Integrating attendants after the termination of scholarship (associations, programmes), assisting and supporting them in their home faculties after their return.

Recent information about possible bankruptcy of the programme resulted in the initial summaries and clarifications of advantages of Erasmus. The anxiety about disappearance of opportunities offered by this scholarship was expressed in the media by, both students and leaders of educational institutions. It turned out that the programs' importance is based not only on the 'Erasmus myth' but also on awareness of its influence on personal and educational development of students. This is also confirmed by this study where researchers did not encounter any negative opinions or expressions of disappointment in the general evaluation of the scholarship period.

EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES — THE PERSPECTIVES OF POLISH ERASMUS STUDENTS IN PORTUGAL

Summary

The Erasmus Programme was officially introduced in 1987 despite the discontent of some member states which had their own solutions in the field of educational exchange. Instead, the new programme was supposed to achieve certain far-reaching goals which exceeded the interests of particular countries. Achieving the goals of the program involved some difficulties because the process initiated by the student exchange program last several years and should be consistent with changes taking place at that time in the field of education. Furthermore, the overall objectives should harmonize with the interests of individual institutions and, above all, the plans of individual students.

This study analysed the experiences of 21 Polish students who spent their Erasmus scholarship in Portugal. While the authors concentrated on the specifics of this given location, it did not constitute their only point of attention. The authors analyzed the students' expectations, comparing them later with their evaluation of the benefits that emerged from their stay. The main question was whether the effects noted by the students corresponded with the intentions of the creators of the

programme. They proved to be quite consistent, with some exceptions such as the opportunity to participate in classes in languages other than Portuguese.

Keywords: Erasmus Programme, educational mobility, intercultural communication

WYMIANA EDUKACYJNA I NOWE MOŻLIWOŚCI — PERSPEKTYWY POLSKICH STYPENDYSTÓW PROGRAMU ERAZMUS W PORTUGALII

Abstrakt

Program Erasmus został wprowadzony oficjalnie w 1987 roku pomimo niezadowolenia części krajów członkowskich posiadających już samodzielne rozwiązania w zakresie mobilności edukacyjnej. Nowy program miał natomiast realizować pewne dalekosiężne cele, wykraczające poza interesy poszczególnych państw. Osiągnięcie zamierzeń programu wiązało się z pewnymi trudnościami ponieważ procesy zapoczątkowane przez program wymiany studenckiej trwają wiele lat i powinny współgrać ze zmianami zachodzącymi w tym czasie w sferze edukacji. Ogólne cele powinny poza tym łączyć się z interesami poszczególnych instytucji a nade wszystko indywidualnymi planami studentów. W naszym studium przeanalizowaliśmy doświadczenia 21 polskich uczestników stypendium Erasmus w Portugalii. Koncentrowaliśmy się na specyfice wybranej lokalizacji, ale nie tylko. Przeanalizowaliśmy oczekiwania studentów zestawiając je później z oceną korzyści jakie wyniknęły dla nich z pobytu. Zasadniczym pytaniem było, czy efekty wpisują się w zamierzenia twórców samego programu. Okazały się one dosyć spójne z pewnymi wyjątkami, jak np. możliwość uczestnictwa w zajęciach w językach innych niż portugalski.

Nota o Autorach: dr Rafał Wiśniewski — adiunkt i kierownik specjalizacji *Socjologia Komunikacji Międzykulturowej* w Instytucie Socjologii UKSW. Studiował w Zakładzie Krajów Pozaeuropejskich PAN. Wiceprzewodniczący Polskiego Towarzystwa Socjologicznego i członek Zarządu Polskiego Towarzystwa Afrykanistycznego. Redaktor trzech publikacji i autor kilkudziesięciu artykułów w zakresie socjologii kultury, komunikacji międzykulturowej i socjologii młodzieży.

Mgr Izabela Bukalska — doktorantka w Instytucie Filozofii i Socjologii PAN; prowadzi zajęcia w zakresie socjologii kultury i komunikacji międzykulturowej na Uniwersytecie Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w Warszawie. Zainteresowania badawcze dotyczą tematu mniejszości narodowych, wielokulturowości i relacji międzyetnicznych w Europie Środkowej. Przebywała na stypendium na Uniwersytecie w Porto, a w latach 2010–2011 — na Uniwersytecie Eotvos’a Lorand’a w Budapeszcie, jako laureatka konkursu stypendialnego węgierskiego Ministerstwa Edukacji.

Słowa kluczowe: Program Erasmus, mobilność edukacyjna, komunikacja międzykulturowa