

An inquiry on application process of EU Erasmus programme & students' views regarding Erasmus programme of student exchange

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Abstract

In the globalising world, the number of international organizations in education field increases with each passing day as in all the other fields. The most meaningful one among the said organization is Education Programmes of European Union (Demir ve Demir, 2009). The Europe based activity in higher education was changed into a structural frame through Erasmus Programme of Student Exchange as from 1995 and it keeps continueing increasingly today. Erasmus Programme of Student Exchange was formed to increase the quality of higher education in Europe and to give weight to European facet. It provides the exchange of students and educators in Europe encouraging universities to cooperate. (Yagci, Ekinci, Burgaz, Kelecioğlu & Ergene, 2007).

The aim of this study is to examine the progress and historical process of Erasmus Programme of Student Exchange in Turkey and to introduce the current situation seeking the views of students who benefit from the programme. In the first part of the study, the aim and formation of Erasmus Programme of Student Exchange and the process of Turkey's participation in this formation were examined while in the second part of the study, you can find the results of the study in which the views of students who participated in Erasmus Programme of Student Exchange in Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University regarding this exchange programme were examined. The views of students were stated using a half structured form of interview which was developed by Sahin (2007). When looked at the results of the interviews, it is seen that students stated this experience stood out with meeting different cultures, seeing different countries and making new friends. They also stated that they were going to keep their experiences in their future professional life and the program was going to make a positive contribution to their profession. The students participating in the inquiry also indicated that the experience they gained made them to have more self-confidence in themselves, to have a intercultural perspective and it was beneficial to improve their horizon.

Key-words

Education programmes of European Union, Erasmus programme of student exchange, Progress in Erasmus programme of student exchange in Turkey, Students' activity

Globalism caused several changes almost every field and basic principles of global politics restructured sectors related to economy, business world, social relationships, cultures and public services. When we look at the heart of global politics, we see internationalism in every field (Agri, 2006). Education field also is being included in this day by day.

Higher education heads the list of fields in which global values have been disposed. Universities began to study on setting international standards and in this respect forming of the Project of Erasmus came up in Europe in the end of '80s. Principles of global politics on higher education hold a place in the content of the project (Agri, 2006).

Erasmus Programme was formed to increase the quality of higher education in Europe and to give weight to European facet. Nonetheless, it provides the exchange of students and educators in Europe encouraging universities to cooperate. Consequently, it helps recognition of studies and places academically in the countries which join the program (Yagci and others, 2007).

Erasmus Programme has three sub-programs. These are; cooperation between European universities, exchange of students and educators and networks with subjects. Exchange of students and educators branch off in itself. In student exchange, every student but freshmen can be included in the program for 3 to 12 months with the criteria of being successful. Students of Erasmus can benefit from this right once in their school life. Students of Erasmus receive monthly gift aid at the rate which National Agencies in their country determine. Also they are exempted from fee of education in the university they attend. Students of Erasmus are also the citizens who support European facet providing the dialogue between cultures and make the concept of citizenship of the European Union live (Tanyeri, 2006).

25 countries in the European Union, 3 candidate countries (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey), 3 countries of European Free Trade Association (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) can attend in these programs. 31 countries in the aggregate have equal rights in all 3 sub-programs. Citizens of the countries are equal to each other in the rights raising from the projects (<http://ec.europa.eu>).

Erasmus Programme was started as a pilot application in 2003-2004 academic years together with the establishment of National Agency in Turkey and all inquiries regarding the commission were planned to executed here (Tanyeri, 2006).

1 Turkey's participation in education programs of the European Union

Turkey's participation in education programs of the European Union was put on the agenda together with its being accepted as a candidate country at Helsinki Summit in 1999 and studies were started regarding this subject. It took for Turkey long to form required infrastructure and to complete legal process. Turkey's being under economical and political indefiniteness then were to be the reason for this delay.

Some legal arrangements and work for preparation before Turkey's participation in Erasmus program had a great importance. Several pilot projects and some other work equal to these pilot projects were executed in the scope of preparation work. All of these had an effect on the evaluation of the process of Turkey's participation in the program (Agri, 2006).

1.1 Forensic studies Turkey executed in order to participate in education programmes of the European Union

Turkey could start preparation work in order to participate in the programme in 2002 while it was supposed to start it in 2000. Studies regarding participation process started after 59th government of Turkey was instituted. The most important evolution was the "**Framework Agreement**" signed between the Republic of Turkey and European Community. With this agreement, a decision was made on general principles of Turkey's participation in the Programs of Community. Thus, it was indicated that Turkey was also a candidate country like the other candidate countries and could benefit from the programmes under the same conditions. Framework Agreement was approved by the law no 4793 in Turkish Grand National Assembly and published in official gazette on 28 June, 2002. By the Framework Agreement, the authority of determining special conditions regarding Turkey's participation in education programmes of the European Union was given to European Commission and Turkish authorities (Agri, 2006).

With this agreement which started preparation work, it was dwelled upon a unit which was supposed to coordinate and introduce the program nationwide in the first place. For this purpose, a governmental unit was established regarding these studies within State Planning Organization. The name of this governmental unit was determined as "**Department of European Union Education and Youth Programmes (Turkish National Agency)**". This center gained an autonomous statute and its name was changed to "**Center for European Union Education and Youth Programmes (Turkish National Agency)**". Within the scope of preparation work, infrastructure of Turkish National Agency was changed, pilot projects were done, presentation meetings were arranged and people who were going to apply the programme were given required education.

Preparation work started with the Framework Agreement in 2002 was completed on 31 March, 2004. Turkey took its place among participant countries after memorandum of understanding came into effect by being signed with European Union and published in official gazette on 8 May, 2004.

1.2 Institutional structuring in order to execute education programmes: Turkish National Agency

In order to introduce, coordinate and evaluate the Education Programmes of European Union, a National Agency was established in all participant countries. The functions of Turkish National Agency which was established for this same purpose are listed herebelow.

Giving information to originators of a plan regarding the conditions and process of participation, organization of application procedure,

- Directing originators of a plan who prepared a project proposal and applicants regarding the application of elected projects,
- Evaluation of the applications before acceptation and give opinions on projects to European Commission at the election of European Commission centered projects,
- Providing the signing of required agreements between people who are going to benefit from the programme and European Commission,
- Observation and evaluation of the projects which were financed,
- Providing the propagation of results of projects in land and abroad.

National Agency performs its duty between European Commission and the people who want to benefit from the programme. The judgement of National Agencies has an important role when European Commission elects projects and this makes these institutions more important. Thus, National Agencies should be at equal distance to all originators of a plan and should work independently and equitably. It is vitally important for individuals to benefit from Education Programmes of European Union as they deserve (www.ua.gov.tr).

1.3 Process of Turkey's participation in education programmes of European Union

Process of Turkey's participation in education programmes of European Union and work executed within this process have been examined in three stages. These are preparatory measures, pilot applications and signing of memorandum of understanding and full participation. Preparatory measures includes the period between years 2002

and 2003. Pilot applications were performed in the academic year 2003 and 2004 after preparatory measures were completed. Official participation were actualized after memorandum of understanding was signed and Erasmus programme started to be institutionalized in the universities in Turkey (Agri 2006).

1.3.1 Preparatory measures

In this period, it was tried to establish and improve the infrastructure of Turkish National Agency. After several efforts, Turkish National Agency became autonomous and its infrastructure was formed in the meaning of resources in men, management and finance. After infrastructural work was completed, presentation and education activities were done. These activities were firstly done for the workers of Turkish National Agency. Documents about education programmes were translated into Turkish and introductory materials were prepared to present programmes. After these works, presentation activities were started for the ones who were going to apply the programmes, for guiders and for the ones who were going to benefit from the programmes throughout the country. 7 local conferences and 84 presentation meetings were arranged in between June – October 2003 (Yaman, 2002).

It is stated that the number of universities at which a presentation was made is 80 as per March 2004. In addition to these works, national and international conferences were arranged, universities in Turkey and Turkish System of Higher Education were introduced in the meetings held abroad. Universities which were going to participate in the pilot project were determined in this period and preparation works were done (www.erasmus.metu.edu.tr).

In conclusion, works made in this period started with election of the ones who were going to apply the programme, their education and presentation of the programmes. Then, education programmes started to be introduced nationwide. The main target was enabling necessary for the application of the programme.

1.3.2 Pilot applications

After preparatory measures were completed and necessary presentation activities were done, application of the pilot project was started. The temporary commission constructed by Turkish National Agency in this period chose 15 universities which were going to participate in pilot application on 18 April, 2003. Geographical distribution and the number of the students were important while choosing these universities. Yildiz Technical University, Bogazici University and Uludag University were not turned to account in the process of choice since they participated in the Project of “**Culture of Quality**” (www.erasmus.metu.edu.tr).

In each of 15 universities chosen within the frame of the pilot applications,

three departments were chosen. Also, consultants of ECTS/DS and foreign relations consultants chosen in these universities received an education in land and abroad during preparation process.

After education was completed, universities chosen for the pilot project and universities chosen by European Commission were matched and some limited visits were arranged regarding exchange activities and preparation. Universities participated in exchange programme and universities in Europe they were matched are listed herebelow:

- Akdeniz University – Hannover Medical School (Germany)
- Ankara University – Bologna University (Italy)
- Bilkent University – Turku University (Finland)
- Cukurova University – Linköping University (Sweden)
- Dokuz Eylul University – Maastricht University (the Netherlands)
- Ege University – Porto University (Portugal)
- Galatasaray University – Paris 1 Pantheon Sorbonne University (France)
- Gaziantep University – Algarve University (Portugal)
- Istanbul University – Humboldt University (Germany)
- Istanbul Technical University – Technical University of Munich (Germany)
- Karadeniz Technical University – Gent University (Belgium)
- Marmara University – Johannes Keppler University (Austria)
- Orta Dogu Technical University – University of Cologne (Germany)
- Sabanci University – Aarhus University (Denmark)

Within the scope of pilot applications, 124 students from Turkish universities went abroad in the aggregate while the number of students coming from European universities to Turkey was 17. There are several reasons of why the number of students came to Turkey was so limited. First of all, universities in Europe make their exchange programmes earlier as they have been attending Erasmus Programme for a long time. In addition, Turkey attended Erasmus Programme for the first time and universities in Turkey were not known enough abroad. These could be some other reasons as well (Agri, 2006).

Close attention of Turkish universities to Erasmus Programme showed that presentation activities were successful. According to these numbers, universities qualified Erasmus Programme to be successful and showed their desire to cooperate with European universities.

1.3.3 Full participation in the programs' becoming definite

Preparatory measures and pilot applications were concluded as per March 31st, 2004. Turkey took its place among the countries which benefit from the programme as per May 8th, 2004 after Memorandum of Understanding signed with European Union was approved by President and published in the official gazette. In the Memorandum of Understanding, detailed arrangements regarding Turkey's taking advantages of the programmes were stated. In the first attachment of Memorandum of Understanding, there were terms and conditions of Turkey's participation in the programmes while it was stated that what financial contributions Turkey was going to make in the second attachment. It was also stated that Turkey could use pre-accession aids while doing the payments and these could be deducted from the indicated amount.

1.4 Evaluation of process of Turkey's participation in Erasmus Programme

Experiences of Erasmus students have a great importance in evaluation of participation process in Erasmus Programme. When the reasons of students examined for participation in Erasmus Programme, it is seen that their desire for having experience in abroad and meeting different cultures walk away. Seen from this aspect, cultural perspective of Erasmus Programme is more important for students. Meeting people from different cultures, learning about different points of view and education systems are among the reasons why students want to participate in Erasmus Programme. The other reasons are obtaining a new ambit, having experience in Europe and doing academic studies. When all these reasons are evaluated, it is seen that the number of participant students increases each year.

The number of students who benefited from Erasmus programme in academic years 2004/05, 2005/06 and 2006/07 were listed in herebelow table.*

Table-1 Numbers of students who benefited from Erasmus programme in academic years of 2004/05, 2005/06 and 2006/07

Institution of Higher Education	Number of Student Exchange	Number of Student Exchange	Number of Student Exchange
	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
Abant izzet Baysal University	-	8	22
Adnan Menderes University	-	5	70
Afyon Kocatepe University	-	14	27
Akdeniz University	40	79	90
Anadolu University	68	185	328
Ankara University	21	73	120
Ataturk University	-	-	1
Atilim University	5	6	9
Bahcesehir University	21	24	22
Balikesir University	-	6	6
Baskent University	3	10	21
Beykent University	4	8	13
Bilkent University	25	67	98
Bogazici University	43	84	101
Celal Bayar University	-	-	-
Cumhuriyet University	2	5	20
Cag University	-	-	14
Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University	11	19	48
Cankaya University	9	19	23
Cukurova University	71	131	178
Naval Academy	-	2	1
Dicle University	-	4	8
Dogus University	1	17	11
Dokuz Eylul University	36	70	75
Dumlupinar University	-	6	11
Ege University	98	193	283
Erciyes University	-	2	5
Eskisehir Osmangazi University	-	26	31

Fatih University	15	25	40
Firat University	-	-	2
Galatasaray University	49	87	99
Gazi University	33	30	63
Gaziantep University	20	27	25
Gaziosmanpasa University	-	-	2
High-Tech Institution of Gebze	-	15	22
Gulhane Military Medical Academy	-	-	-
Hacettepe University	34	129	199
Halic University	-	-	-
Harran University	-	-	2
Isik University	-	-	5
Inönü University	-	1	4
Istanbul Aydin Universitesi	-	-	7
Istanbul Bilgi University	16	42	55
Istanbul Kultur University	25	23	34
Istanbul Teknik University	123	205	324
Istanbul Ticaret University	-	9	5
Istanbul University	56	131	143
Izmir University of Economy	-	20	15
High-Tech Institution of Izmir	-	16	26
Kadir Has University	5	16	30
Kafkas University	-	-	8
Kahramanmaraş Sutcu Imam University	8	25	45
Karadeniz Technical University	29	57	73
Kirikkale University	-	17	17
Kocaeli University	18	29	64
Koc University	9	13	35
Maltepe University	-	11	10
Marmara University	37	121	181
Mersin Vocational High School of Navigation and Trade	-	4	15
Mersin University	13	25	33

Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts	11	25	31
Mugla University	5	32	53
Mustafa Kemal University	8	28	18
Nigde University	-	5	8
Okan University	-	-	4
Ondokuz Mayıs University	1	15	28
Orta Dogu Technical University	24	97	193
Pamukkale University	7	27	59
Police Academy	0	5	9
Sabancı University	37	54	62
Sakarya University	3	30	166
Selcuk University	31	68	84
Suleyman Demirel University	29	72	133
TOBB University of Economy and Technology	-	-	-
Trakya University	7	18	13
Uludag University	17	88	161
Yasar University	-	13	22
Yeditepe University	8	22	42
Yildiz Technical University	6	110	188
Yuzuncu Yil University	-	-	1
Zonguldak Karaelmas University	-	2	3
TOTAL	1.142	2.852	4.438

* quoted from <http://www.ua.gov.tr>

When we look at the table showing numbers of student exchange, it is clearly seen that the number of the students who went abroad increased each year. It is possible to say for Erasmus Programme that it is a student exchange programme which is known better among students gradually and students want to participate in that programme along their university life.

2 Inquiries done regarding Erasmus programme

Yagci and others did an inquiry (2007) in order to determine the level of satisfaction of the students who went abroad by Erasmus Programme from Hacettepe University regarding their daily life, academic life and student support services. Results of the inquiry showed that most of the students' expectations were met regarding their daily

life, academic life and student support services. But it was also determined that there were a notable number of students whose expectations in some points were not met.

Sahin did another inquiry in 2007 and examined how much Erasmus programme met the expectations of the students, if they achieved their personal purposes and how much attitudes and behaviours of students who participated in the programme about Europe changed after their experience in Europe. Results of the inquiry showed that all participants were extremely pleased with their lives within Erasmus Programme in host countries. According to the findings, Erasmus was seen as an important opportunity in terms of international environment and possibilities for scholarship it provides. These students indicated that the programme was very beneficial since their experience within the programme increased their self-confidence, earned them an international perspective and broadened their mind.

Bulut did an inquiry (2008) in Orta Dogu Technical University and examined the efficiency of management in Erasmus Programme according to the students and Erasmus coordinators. Results of the inquiry showed that the students and the department coordinators were more pleased with managerial services than they are pleased with the points of communication, interaction and academical subjects.

Another inquiry was done regarding Erasmus Programme by Demir and Demir (2009) . The aim of this inquiry was to determine experiences of the students of Erciyes University, Faculty of Education who spent some part of their educational process in abroad through Erasmus Programme of student exchange, regarding social and cultural atmosphere they are in and to evaluate its attribution to themselves and to the society regarding formation and development of a universal culture. Inquiry put forth personal and professional acquisition of teacher candidates participated in Erasmus Programme after social and cultural interaction. Themes which personal development was observed were improvement in self-confidence and ability to handling with problems, increase in the capacity of undertaking responsibility, aptitude in positive thinking, declining of bias, awareness regarding their own culture, orientation in dialogue between cultures and religions. Professional advantages of the programme were determined as development of professional self-confidence, learning about other / different education systems, improvement in the level of foreign language knowledge.

3 An investigation on Erasmus student exchange programme:

3.1 Sample of Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University

Erasmus Student Exchange Programme has been put into practice in Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University since 2004. 154 students benefited from this programme

and were sent abroad in between 2004 and 2009. The number of students who benefit from this programme has been increasing each year. The distribution of students in Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University who went abroad in between 2008 and 2009 by means of Erasmus Student Exchange Programme is shown according to academic units at Table-2*.

Table 2. Distribution of students who went abroad in 2008 / 2009 according to academic units

	Students Who Went Abroad in 2008 / 2009		
	Female	Male	Total
Biga Faculty of Economics and Administrative Science	10	15	25
Faculty of Education	16	4	20
Faculty of Art & Sciences	4	3	7
Faculty of Fine Arts	0	0	0
Faculty of Theology	2	0	2
Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	2	2	4
Faculty of Fishery Products	0	1	1
Faculty of Agriculture	2	0	2
Tourism High School	7	8	15
Total	43	33	76

* taken from <http://erasmus.comu.edu.tr>

The general aim of this study is to receive views of the students who benefited from Erasmus Student Exchange Programme in Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University in between 2005 and 2010 regarding this exchange programme. Within this scope, we tried to determine experiences of the students who participated in Erasmus Student Exchange Programme in Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University regarding this programme, their impression regarding Europe and their perceptions regarding Turkey's participation in European Union.

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Model of the investigation

The views of students who participated in Erasmus Student Exchange Programme in Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University regarding this exchange programme were examined by using qualitative method.

3.2.2 Means of collecting data and application

A half structured interview form developed by Sahin (2007) was used to receive views of students who participated in Erasmus Student Exchange Programme. Interview forms were examined based on personal information, Erasmus experience, experiences regarding Europe and Turkey's being a member of EU. Each student was interviewed for once and these interviews were recorded.

3.2.3 Sampling

36 students who participated in Erasmus Student Exchange Programme during their education of licence and postgraduation in Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University in between 2005 and 2010 have been constituting the sampling of the study. 28 of 36 Erasmus students are female and 8 are male. Interval of students' ages changes from 20 to 26. Faculties and Departments in which students study are listed at Table-3.

Table 3. Distribution of the students who participated in Erasmus student exchange programme according to faculties and departments at which they study

Faculty / Department	Number of Students
Faculty of Education / Preschool Teaching	9
Faculty of Education / Teaching English	6
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Science / Labour Economics and Industrial Relations	3
Faculty of Education / Classroom Teaching	2
Faculty of Education / Computer Teaching	2
Tourism and Hospitality / Travel Management	2
Tourism and Hospitality / Accommodation Management	2
Faculty of Education / Social Science Teaching	1
Faculty of Education / Physical Education Teaching	1
Faculty of Education / Arts and Crafts Education	1
Faculty of Education / Science Teaching	1
Faculty of Education / Teaching German	1
Faculty of Theology / Basic Islamic Sciences (MA)	1
Faculty of Architecture and Engineering / Food Engineering	1
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Science / International Relations	1
Faculty of Agriculture / Horticulture	1
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Science / Public Administration	1
Total	36

When we examine Table-3, we see that 9 students in the sampling group have been studying on Preschool Teaching, 6 have been studying on Teaching English and 3 have been studying at the Department of Industrial Relations and Labor Economics. 2 students from each Teaching, Computer Teaching, Travel Management and Accommodation

Business Department; 1 student from each Social Science Teaching, Physical Education Teaching, Painting Teaching, Science Teaching, Teaching German, Basic Islamic Sciences, Food Engineering, Horticulture and Public Administration Departments participated in this study.

35 students in the sampling group participated in Erasmus Student Exchange Programme during their education of licence and 1 during their education of postgraduation.

Countries which students in the sampling group went by means of Erasmus Student Exchange Programme are presented at Table-4.

Table-4 Distribution of students who went abroad by means of Erasmus student exchange programme according to countries they went

Countries	Number of Students
Belgium	15
Slovakia	3
Finland	2
Germany	2
Hungary	2
Norway	2
Czech Republic	2
Bulgaria	1
Italy	1
Spain	1
Poland	1
Denmark	1
Holland	1
Greece	1
Lithuanian	1
Total	36

When Table-4 is examined, it is seen that 15 students in the sampling group benefited from Erasmus Student Exchange Group by going to Belgium, 3 students to Slovakia, 2 students each to Finland, Germany, Norway and Republic of Çek, 1 student each to Bulgaria, Italy, Spain, Poland, Denmark, Holland, Lithuania and Greece.

3.3 Findings

When views of Erasmus students were examined, findings were structured on three main matters. These matters were Erasmus Experience, Experiences Regarding Europe and Turkey's Being a Member of EU. Subcategories were formed in the light of these main

matters. These subcategories were views regarding participation, academic experience, difficulties of their experience, effect of their experience on the students, attitudes towards host countries, impression about Europe, definition of being a European, self-identity, being a Turk in Europe and Turkey's being a possible member of EU.

3.3.1 Findings obtained regarding Erasmus experience

a. Participation

Views of students in the sampling group were examined on two bases which were the reason why the students preferred studying abroad as a part of their educational life and why they preferred those host countries in Erasmus Student Exchange Programme. Reasons Why Students Participated in Erasmus Student Exchange Programme are presented at Table-5.

Table 5. Distribution of students according to reasons why they participated in Erasmus student exchange programme

Reasons Why Students Participated in Erasmus Student Exchange Programme Erasmus	Frequency
Visiting different countries, learning about different cultures	29
Improving their foreign language	21
Contribution it would make to their educational life, their area of study and their professional life in the future	16
Meeting new people, having relations regarding cultures, learning about different religions and languages and promoting their own culture	13
Improving themselves, their horizon and their vision of the world	10
Experience in abroad	7
Learning about different education systems and comparing them with their own education system	6
Seeing Turkey's place in the others' eyes	4
Travelling, having fun	3
Curiosity	1
Being away from Turkey for a while	1

Students in the sampling group used the expression of "Visiting different countries, learning about different cultures" as their reason for participation at the top level (29). This reason was followed by improving their foreign language (21) and contribution it would make to their educational life, their area of study and their professional life in the future (16).

"The most important reason why I would like to participate in the programme was to have experience in abroad. Besides, improving my

foreign language, having an opportunity to practise, meeting people from different nationalities and broaden my vision regarding European culture and people by sharing the same environment with them could be taken into account as my other most important reasons.' (S20, Holland)

Students in the sampling group used the expressions of curiosity (1) and being away from Turkey for a while (1) as the reasons at the bottom of frequency.

'I participated in Erasmus Programme in order to learn about different cultures, to travel, to examine emotions, thoughts and lives of people who live abroad, to learn how my own country is seen from abroad, to have a change in my life in Turkey which became monotonous, to raise the average of my marks, to stay away from distress and trouble in Turkey, to obtain information about other countries based on my close and personal observation in order to compare Turkey and other countries in the politic, economic, geographical and physical ways and for other reasons similar to these ones but I do not remember now.' (S31, Denmark)

Reasons which students in the sampling group considered while choosing the country they were going to go by means of Erasmus Student Exchange Programme are presented at Table-6.

Table 6. Distribution of students in the sampling group according to their reasons. Why they chose those countries to go by means of Erasmus student exchange programme

Reasons for Choosing Those Countries	Frequency
The country is in the Central Europe and close to other countries	18
The importance given to education, the quality and being improved in the area	11
Positive opinions of the students who went to that country before	9
Being a developed country	5
Guidance of lecturers in their own university	3
Being easy to Access	3
Being the only country which was made an agreement with	2
Having a low rate of crime	2
Having a lot of places to see	1
Since English is spoken widely	1
Since there are a lot of Turks there	1
Having cultural similarities	1
Having foreign friends in the country to go	1

50 % of the students in the sampling group stated that the reason for choosing the country to go by means of Erasmus Student Exchange Programme was that the country is in the Central Europe and close to other European countries (18).

'The effect of presentations made by my friends who went before and the country's being capital of Europe. Being close to all countries.' (S11, Belçika)

Students in the sampling group stated that importance given to education by the countries had a great effect on deciding which country to go.

'The reason why I preferred Finland was its being one of the countries which has the best education system in the world and its having proved this with the success of PISA. Another important reason for choosing Finland was a book I read about this country.' (S4, Finland)

When Table-6 is examined, it is seen that 3 students in the sampling group indicated that the reason for choosing the country they were going to go by means of Erasmus Student Exchange Programme was guidance of lecturers in their own university.

'In fact, I was going to go to Holland first. Our university had an agreement with Holland for Classroom Teaching. Then, I learned I could go to Belgium after talking to my advisor. Luckily, I went to Belgium.' (S9, Belgium)

b. Academic experience

All the students who participate in Erasmus Student Exchange Programme take a lot of lessons during their education there. All the students in the sampling group participated in classes in the host country for an academic term. When students were required to compare education system in the host country with the education system in their own country, the answers appeared to change greatly. Academic experience were examined in 4 dimensions as techniques of education-instruction, instructors, contents of courses and evaluation.

First of all, students in the sampling group were required to compare academic experience in the meaning of techniques of education – instruction. Students, at the first level, stated that there were a various kinds of techniques regarding education and instruction and these techniques were modern and aimed at practice.

'There was not only technique of presentation as in our country. Even, I could say we tried all techniques. Discovering, searching / examining, group working etc.'(S5, Finland)

Another criterion students dwelled upon was technological rigging and usage of technology (8) and techniques' being student-centered (6).

'It was a school in which technology is used extremely well. Everything was progressing on computer environment and in the parallel of it. I think, it was very beneficial. Lecturings were mostly made by using projections

and videos. There was a class environment during which both students and lecturers were active using visual materials and making discussions.' (S24, Norway)

When it comes to comparing instructors, students in the sampling group indicated at the first level (24) that instructors in the host country were dominating in their area, open-minded, communicating easily and friendly.

'Instructors I met and observed were educators who do their job well and were like friends with their students. In Turkey, there is almost no classroom management. There was not even a little noise there while instructors in Turkey yell, scold, threaten with giving a low mark and even use violence in Turkey. Decisions were made in student-center. Instructors and students esteemed each other. In my opinion, the most important difference was this.' (S9, Belgium)

3 students in the sampling group stated that instructors in the host countries had prejudice about Turks.

'They have prejudice about Turkish students and reacting and cold. Their aim is not to teach something to students who came for a short time but just to parry. They do not pressure too much but they give importance to attendance to classes. I can even say we could not see places enough because we were afraid of absenteeism. I think they should have been more tolerant about this matter because many people who came might not have a Shengen visa once more and even might not go abroad. Every student is not financially strong, so they could be more tolerant in order we can visit and see other countries especially neighbour ones during this period of 2 weeks.' (S27, Czech Republic)

Students in the sampling group stated in the first place that contents of courses were addressed to practice, updated and within daily life in the comparison of contents of courses.

'They give more importance to practice and everything which was learned is applied directly after a short time. For example: A subject learned during Physical Education lesson is applied with children a week later.' (S10, Belgium)

7 students in the sampling group stated that the host country was more fair and neutral within the scope of evaluation.

'Evaluation of each student is neutral and instructor prepares 'an evaluation form' for each student. He / She explains why he / she gave that mark.' (S3, Belgium)

There are 5 students in the sampling group who stated that evaluation was not neutral and there was discrimination of race and gender.

'I think it is not fair. Most of the other students except Turks come from Poland and Ukraine and they do not live any trouble with Czech language. They can understand each other speaking their own language with Czech people everywhere and as a matter of fact, they can succeed in the lesson of Czech language getting high marks. I personally witnessed that instructors do not give very high marks to Turkish students and we heard them saying "You, Turks are all the same." several times. I can only say Czech instructors who came to Turkey are more moderate and unprejudiced.'
(S27, Czech Republic)

c. Difficulties of experience

Students in the sampling group were asked to express their experience regarding the programme as an exchange student. Students in the sampling group stated that Erasmus Student Exchange Programme is not a problem for themselves and most of the problems were about living in a different country.

Matters going to the fore regarding experiences of students in the sampling group about Erasmus Student Exchange Programme are presented at Table-7.

Table 7. Distribution of sampling group

According to matters going to the fore in Erasmus experience

Matters Going to the Fore	Frequency
Meeting different cultures, seeing different places, making new friends	17
Learning how to stand on their own feet, experience in abroad, increase in self-confidence	13
Improving language	11
Learning about different education systems, positive contribution to my profession and its changing my point of view about life	9
Fun, trips	4

Students in the sampling group used the expressions of "Learning about different cultures, Seeing new places, Making new friends (17)" as the point going to the fore in their Erasmus experience at the first level. This was followed by "Learning how to stand on their own feet, Experience in abroad, Increase in their self-confidence" (13)"

'I saw Europe and now I have an opinion about it. I also have an opinion about European culture, their family structure and education system. Now I feel as if I can go anywhere in Europe and I can adapt myself there easily. I can not even describe how much it made me to gain regarding self-confidence.' (S20, Holland)

The difficulties which students in the sampling group experienced during Erasmus Student Exchange Programme are presented at Table-8.

Table 8. Distribution of sampling group according to difficulties they lived during Erasmus student exchange programme

The Difficulties Experienced	Frequency
Having difficulty in adapting to daily life (food, transportation within the city, residence, official holidays, weather conditions)	22
Having difficulty in using language, expressing himself / herself	8
Being away from the family and friends, homesickness	8
Financial difficulties, country's being expensive, having difficulty in drawing money	4
Difficulties regarding health	2
Having no sign boards in English in the country	3
Difficulties in having a visa	2
Course selection	1

Students in the sampling group used the expression of “Having difficulty in adapting to daily life (food, transportation within the city, residence, official holidays, weather conditions) as the point they lived difficulties in, at the first level, during their Erasmus experience.

‘I lived some difficulties with food. Some flavour was not good for me at all as in most of the places in Europe. It was especially difficult to be a place where pork is consumed a lot.’ (S12, Bulgaria)

‘Siesta and official holidays make people to have difficulty with shopping. Besides, Mediterranean people look after their own comfort too much. Italian people are too slow and numb.’(S17, Italy)

‘My biggest problem was the problem of residence. I changed 4 places during my first 4 months. It made me to feel tired both physically and psychologically.’ (S35, Poland)

4 students in the sampling group stated that they had difficulties in both adapting to daily life and had some financial problems.

‘The biggest difficulty is the adaptation process sourcing from Turkish and Danish cultures’ being very different from each other. Because it is one of the most expensive countries, expenses for personal activities cost too much although Erasmus donations meet basic needs. Weather conditions are too hard because it is in the north and because of its geographical position. As

getting farther away from the equator, people get colder too. So, Danish people somewhat coolheaded. I had a big difficulty as a person who loves teasing and fun.' (S31, Denmark)

d. Effect of experience in Erasmus student exchange programme on students

Academic change could be very productive for students in many ways. Views of students in the sampling group regarding the effects of their experiences in Erasmus Students Exchange Programme on their personalities and attitudes are presented at Table-9.

Table 9. Distribution of experience in Erasmus student exchange programme according to Its effects

Effects of Exchange Experience	Frequency
My self-confidence and courage has increased, I have become mature.	20
Positive progress has happened in my own area, level of my being cultured has increased.	12
I met new people, I learned about new cultures.	11
My vision of life has changed. It had positive contributions to my life. I learned to remove my prejudices.	7
I improved my English.	7
It showed me the ways which separate my country from Europe.	5

When Table-9 is examined, it is seen that the most important contribution of Erasmus Student Exchange Programme to students in the sampling group is increasing students' self-confidence and courage.

'Although it is a cliché, I can not find any other expression to use instead of "experience in abroad". I can now place my country, Turkish people and our education system in the general order of the world. I know where we are, I can determine wrongs, rights and what need to be improved in a healthy way. In addition to all those, my self-confidence has increased as an individual and I am more encouraged about abroad.' (S20, Holland)

'Self-confidence, courage and having a lot of friends. The most important one is its contributions to my area by means of benefiting from such a programme during my education period.' (S5, Finland)

In addition to an increase in self-confidence and improvement in language, 5 students in the sampling group stated that they recognized the ways which Turkey is separated from Europe.

'It made me to see the points which my country is separated from other European countries. Although I have a commitment to Turkish culture and customs, I try to apply some new things which I learned there in my life, especially the things in education area.' (S1, Belgium)

3.3.2 Experiences regarding Europe and findings obtained

a. Attitudes towards the host country

An important point which needs to be considered while examining attitudes of the students towards the host country is students' in the sampling group not having a complete information about the host country before going there. When views are examined, attitudes appear to show a great change.

50 % of the students in the sampling group stated that their views regarding the host country and EU have changed in a positive way while 11 students indicated that they exaggerated some points about the host country and they have obtained negative opinions.

'I saw that being a fan of Europe is unnecessary and Europe is not so magnificent as it has been told. I do not have a plan to live in Europe except education any more.'(S17, Italy)

'I have a very positive attitude towards my host country, Holland. I personally witnessed and lived the tolerance and facilitating manner of the country to the ones who come from abroad. I can also use these expressions for Germany which I visited during this programme. I can say that my attitude regarding European Union has changed somewhat more after my experience in these two countries. I used to think it was necessary for us to be a member of European Union and now I am satisfied with the opinion that it is a must in order to have living standards as in there.' (S20, Holland)

What I lived during Erasmus Programme has affected my attitude towards Belgium and other European countries very much. Especially there were students from all countries which participate in Erasmus Programme in our classes about European Union. I understood by means of this course which we met every week that how much Turkey is, in fact, aimed at Europe. We were in Brussels which is the heart of European Union via a trip arranged to visit European Parliament. I learned a lot of things regarding European Union.' (S9, Belgium)

b. Impression of Europe

Views of students in the sampling group regarding their impression of Europe after their experience in Europe by means of Erasmus Student Exchange Programme were taken. Although students stayed for a short time in the host country, it is seen that they had a chance to visit and see other European countries too. Views of students regarding Europe and being a European are presented at Table-10.

Table 10. Distribution of sampling group according to their views regarding being a european

Views Regarding Being a European	Frequency
Obeying rules, being arranged, disciplined and systematical.	15
Having high standards of living, being developed and being strong financially	12
Having respect for people and human rights, giving importance to human more than anything	9
Being calm, coolheaded, selfish and distant from other people	7
Having many diversities in itself, being democratic and not discriminative	6
Being able to travel freely	5
Having a high level of education, giving importance to education and being cultured	5
Living in European continent	3

Almost 50 % of the students in the sampling group (15) stated that being a European was 'Being Disciplined, Being Systematical and Obeying Rules'. This was followed by high standards of living (12), having respect for people and human rights (9) and democratic (6).

'To be disciplined well in business, to respect others in business life and within the community, to give more importance to individual life than social life.' (S31, Denmark)

'Being a European is move freely within a large area, tol ive comfortably and to comprehend what justice is completely.' (S3, Belgium)

'Being a European is to give importance to human life more than anything, to give importance to each level of education from preschool to university, to obey rules, to respect everyone at least you do yourself, to think wide, to develop different points of view etc.' (S6, Belgium)

c. Self-identity

After discussing being a European, students in the sampling group were asked whether they feel as a European taking also their own self-identity into account. 15 students in the sampling group stated that they do not feel as a European while 12 students indicated that they feel as a European. 8 students in the sampling group stated that they do not treat differently in this matter.

'No, I do not feel like that. I love my own culture but I appreciate their education, technology and their evaluation of taking opportunities of using them.' (S5, Finland)

'Although we are different in many ways, I feel as 'a European Turk' more than a European.' (S19, Belgium)

'In fact, it is hard to answer that. I define myself to be in a different

category. And maybe it is difficult to say why but there are times I feel neither like them nor totally different from them but as a European who has their own cultural elements in their structure. Maybe it is somewhat because I went abroad.' (S20, Holland)

Students in the sampling group were asked whether they feel as a European and after that they were asked if their experience in Erasmus Student Exchange Programme affected their opinions regarding their own country. 17 students in the sampling group stated that their opinions were affected. 12 students in the sampling group, after this experience, indicated that their country should progress more and the importance given to education should increase.

'I understood that my country should develop more because when I compared Belgium and Turkey, I saw that the population of Belgium is just 10 millions and the population of my own country is 70 millions. I realized that my country condiers itself more important than they really are and in fact, it has a lot to learn. They do not have interest in luxury as we do, they do not ever have irregularity which we have; as a small example, while walking at a pedestrian crossing we give the way to cars but cars have to stop there. They are aware of that they would be fined for that. And there are lots of other differences which are small but were placed in my mind..' (S9, Belgium)

12 students in the sampling group indicated that they understood better how valuable their own country and people in their own country after this experience.

'It affected my thoughts about my own country. I saw that our country is also as modern as at least a European country and Turkey was mentioned as "Modern Moslems". Also I understood how beautiful our culture is when I compare it to other cultures..' (S33, Spain)

On the other hand, 8 students in the sampling group stated that they could look at their country from outside after this experience.

'As I expressed before, I can find more clear answers to the questions like "What is the position of Turkey among world countries?", "What is the thing which seperates Turkish people from European people?", "What are our cultural differences?"' (S20, Holland)

d. Being a turk in Europe

Students were asked how they felt as a Turk during their experiences in Europe. In Table-11, attitudes of people who live abroad towards Turks and experiences of Turkish students regarding their culture and habits are presented.

Table 11. Distribution of sampling group according to their experiences regarding being a Turk in Europe

Experiences Regarding Being a Turk in Europe	Frequency
It was a nice and honourable feeling.	16
I faced with wrong and silly prejudices.	14
I felt ashamed of Turks who live there.	5
I felt we were different in the meaning of cultures and customs.	5

16 students in the sampling group expressed their feelings that they were happy with being a Turk in Europe.

'There was a need in almost every environment to correct wrong information of other Europeans regarding Turks and Turkey. I saw that people had very wrong thoughts about Turkey on subjects I would never expect. I was surprised by an instructor's being surprised by the fact that it is not legal in Turkey for a man to marry with more than one woman.' (S22, Belgium)

When Table-11 is examined, it is seen that 14 students in the sampling group stated that they faced with several prejudices in the countries they went.

'It was definitely an advantage that there was no prejudice against Turkey and I was definitely proud of this situation. Because I both observed personally and heard from many people that Dutch youth had problems with their families while children of Turkish families are at a very very good position. In addition, I was praised by the fact that a lot of friends of mine had a sympathy for Turkey and I think I was a good sample within this context.' (S20, Holland)

3.3.3 Turkey's participation in European Union

Whether Turkey is a part of Europe or not is a question asked frequently in discussions of Turkey's possible membership of EU. In this part, views of students in the sampling group regarding Turkey's participation in EU were taken. In Table-12, views of students in the sampling group regarding Turkey's participation in EU are presented.

Table 12. Distribution of sampling group according to their views regarding turkey's participation in EU

Views on Turkey's Participation in EU	Frequence
I am against EU and I do not think we could be accepted.	16
We should be a member in the meaning of economics, I support it.	10
Some sanctions for membership are not right, there is a policy of detaining us.	5
I am unstable.	3
Turks are richness for EU, EU needs us.	3
We should have been accepted a long time ago.	2
They would not accept a Moslem country.	1

When Table-12 is examined, it is seen that 16 students in the sampling group indicated that they were against EU and Turkey could not be a member of EU.

'As a Kemalist youth who committed to the concept of independence, I am against European Union which tries to make us to say yes to the criterions that would harm honour of my country, humiliate it and make it more dependant.' (S1, Belgium)

On the other hand, 10 students in the sampling group stated that Turkey's being a member of EU would result well in the meaning of economics and they have positive opinions about Turkey's being a member of EU.

'Turkey is a country which had ruled Europe for a long time. Turkey is an ambassador of culture between Asia and Europe. Turkey has strong relations with both Asia and Europe. It could also be understood from remains we left in many cities of Europe. Turkey should be a member of European Union, yes, I think it should. Because Turkey is above a lot of European countries with its young population already. But if they do not leave history to historians and do not want to accept us into European Unions, I think there is no meaning of trying to make them to accept us by force. We should be a powerful country which knows to suffice itself just like Norway, England.. We are a part of Europe and nobody could change it.' (S9, Belgium)

When students in the sampling group were asked if their Erasmus experience affected their opinions regarding Turkey's being a member of EU, 19 students stated it did while 14 students stated their opinion did not change at all.

'Yes, it did. I was thinking that our being a member of EU would result well in every means. But now, I think that there could be negative ways and what happens if there are negative ways.' (S6, Belgium)

'It never did. It made me to see that I was right about my thoughts

regarding this matter. Turkey is not suitable for EU. I heard that several times during the period I was abroad.' (S1, Belgium)

3.4 Conclusion

The main aim of this study is to determine the views of the students regarding this exchange programme who participated in Erasmus Student Exchange Programme in Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University in between 2005 and 2010. When the results received through interviews made within the frame of this aim are examined, it appeared that Erasmus Student Exchange Programme was seen as a very important opportunity which every student should participate in.

Results of the investigation showed that students were generally pleased with their lives within Erasmus Student Exchange Programme in the host country. Students indicated that learning about different cultures, seeing different countries and making new friends were in the most important place. Erasmus Student Exchange Programme is, in fact, a student Exchange programme which aims students' activity and recognition of academic studies within Europe. Within this frame, Erasmus students who participated in the study in Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University stated that they would keep their experience within the programme in their future professional lives and the programme contributed to themselves in the meaning of their profession. Students also indicated that their experience within the programme was beneficial since it increased their self-confidence, had them acquire an intercultural vision and broadened their horizon. An investigation by Demir and Demir (2009) exposed that an increase had occurred in self-confidence, ability to handling with problems and capacity of undertaking responsibility of the students who participated in Erasmus Student Exchange Programme. Within this context, results of this investigation suited with the results of the investigation carried out by Demir and Demir (2009).

Time period spent in abroad changed the information level of students regarding the host country and their attitudes towards that country in a dramatical level. It was seen that students did not receive enough information about the country and the university they were going to go before their participation in Erasmus Student Exchange Programme. In an investigation carried by Yagci and his friends (2007), students expressed that they did not receive enough service of guidance and counseling on adaptation to the university they were going to go.

Students indicated that their former views regarding Europe became stronger after their participation in this Exchange programme. According to this, two main headings went to the fore regarding students' impressions about Europe: First was existence of a ruling order reflecting on all areas of life and the other was having high standards of

living. Most of the students mentioned about a bias going to the fore against Turkish identity. They stated that this bias was caused by being introduced wrongly and people's wrong opinions started to change when they were explained about the truth. Students see Erasmus Student Exchange Programme as a means of removing this prejudice, improving Turkey's image in the international platform so that facilitating being a member of European Union. Besides, most of the students do not support Turkey's being a member of European Union.

3.5 Recommendations

Recommendations developed based on the findings of this investigation are as follows;

3.5.1 Recommendations regarding Erasmus units in the universities (Offices of Foreign Relations, Offices of EU etc.)

- Erasmus Units in the universities should provide that students who are going to go abroad and who had already gone come together and new students are orientated in order to adapt themselves to the countries they go.
- Students indicated that they lived difficulty in using the foreign language within the first weeks they were abroad. Regarding this matter, language courses could be arranged by Erasmus Units in the universities for the students who are going to go abroad by means of Erasmus Student Exchange Programme to practise their foreign language before going.

3.5.2 Recommendations for Erasmus coordinators of Faculty / Department / Anabilim Dalı

- If Erasmus Coordinators in units work actively and do agreements with different departments and different countries, students who are going to benefit from Erasmus Student Exchange Programme would have an opportunity to make their choices more comfortably.
- Erasmus Coordinators in units could encourage students who had benefited from Erasmus Exchange Programme before to share their experience.
- Erasmus Students Communities could be established to introduce and to share information about Erasmus Student Exchange Programme.
- Selective lessons regarding European Union and being a European, could be included in the curriculum.
- Coordinators could encourage students to host guest students who come to Turkey from abroad by means of Erasmus Student Exchange Programme.

- Coordinators could invite lecturers who come to their university from abroad for 1st and 2nd grade university students to have a visit to their classes.
- Coordinators could encourage university students at 1st and 2nd grades to participate in international works like çalıştay and symposiums.
- Students and their families could be informed about Erasmus Student Exchange Programme by several promotions when they first enter to their universities.

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