
Impact of European Union Educational Mobility on the Employability of Polish Youth and their Social Integration

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Abstract:

Purpose: The aim of the article is to analyze the impact of international educational mobility, particularly the Erasmus+ program, on strengthening social security in Poland and the European Union. The author focuses on the role of these initiatives in developing competencies, promoting social integration, and counteracting exclusion and marginalization.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The article applies the method of literature review and analysis of strategic documents of the European Union concerning international educational mobility and social security. The author uses quantitative data and reports from programs such as Erasmus+ to illustrate the scale and scope of educational mobility in Poland compared to other EU countries. The analysis is embedded within a broader socio-political context and is based on available academic studies and institutional materials.

Findings: The analysis showed that international educational mobility significantly contributes to strengthening social security by developing competencies, increasing employment opportunities, and promoting social integration. Poland actively participates in the Erasmus+ program, ranking 5th in the EU in terms of the number of funded projects in 2023. This mobility is growing not only in scale but also in quality supporting the development of language, digital, and intercultural skills, thereby enhancing social and economic resilience.

Practical Implications: The results presented in the article shows that international educational mobility has practical significance as a tool for strengthening social security, integration, and employability. It can support educational and social policies, contributing to socio-economic stability.

Originality/Value: The article offers an original perspective connection international educational mobility with social security, highlighting its impact on integration, employability, and stability. In the Polish context, it provides arguments for treating mobility as a strategic tool of social policy.

Keywords: Social security, international educational mobility, European Union, Erasmus+, social integration, labour market.

JEL codes: I23, J13, J24, J61, O52.

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1. Introduction

Contemporary Europe faces challenges in the area of social security, such as social inequalities, demographic changes, migration, and transformations in the labor market. One of the tools that strengthens social stability in the European Union (EU) is international educational mobility.

This program is the result of a combination of EU initiatives, economic, cultural, and social factors. Educational mobility, which includes students, researchers, youth workers, and teachers, enables the acquisition of knowledge and skills abroad. International cooperation under programs such as Erasmus+ support collaboration among EU member states, enhancing innovation and the competitiveness of participants in the labor market while reducing the risk of social exclusion.

The article analyzes the role of educational mobility in the context of social security in the EU and its impact on social integration, human capital development, and the labor market. It will also present the benefits of international educational cooperation and the significance of EU policy in further developing educational mobility as a tool for stabilizing society.

2. The Concept of International Educational Mobility in the European Union

Education plays a key role in stimulating growth, innovation, and job creation. Both the Polish and European education systems must provide forward-looking knowledge, skills, and competencies. It is widely recognized that internationalization processes should encompass all areas of education—not only teaching, but above all, scientific research activities and cooperation with the socio-economic environment². Although raising the level of education may be difficult and costly, neglecting this area entails even greater costs for society in the future³.

Supporting young people obtain the best possible education and then find employment is one of the key elements in ensuring Poland's security and a major priority of the European political agenda. To achieve this goal, the EU proposes numerous new initiatives and improves existing ones, such as the Erasmus+ programme, which is the European Union's programme in the fields of education, training, youth, and sport. Its aim is to support pupils, students, teachers, lecturers, and volunteers in conducting international projects aimed at enhancing their skills

²M. Dymyt, *Innowacje w procesie umiędzynarodowienia szkół wyższych*, Zeszyty Politechniki Śląskiej- Organizacja i Zarządzanie z. 131, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Śląskiej, Gliwice 2018, p. 118

³C.E. Rouse, *The Labor Market Consequences of an Inadequate Education*, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey 2005, p. 26.

and competencies. It is a continuation of European educational programmes implemented since 1998.

The past decade has brought a modernization of the education sector, which has strengthened the internationalization of educational systems. A major outcome of this process is increased educational mobility among students and researchers. Although studying abroad is the most visible aspect of this process, it is not the only indicator of internationalization.

The education sector places strong emphasis on mobility projects, aiming to deepen international cooperation within the European Education Area and higher education systems⁴. Currently, the European Union places importance on education at all levels. The evolution of regulations has been primarily driven by current economic priorities and the need to adapt education and training systems to labor market demands⁵. Modern educational systems aim to focus on advanced technologies and combating unemployment⁶.

One of the most important issues for European governments is reducing the high level of unemployment, particularly among young people. Too many young individuals leave education prematurely, putting themselves at risk of unemployment and social exclusion⁷. International educational programmes increase opportunities for cooperation and mobility between partner countries, especially in the fields of higher education and youth⁸.

Participation in international educational projects fosters the development of entrepreneurial, prosocial, civic, and democratic attitudes, enhances interpersonal skills, supports effective participation in the labor market, and encourages fuller engagement in social life⁹. These projects have a significant impact on the education

⁴M. Zapotoczna, *Międzynarodowa mobilność edukacyjna jako determinanta rozwoju osobistego i zawodowego studentów*, *Kultura - Społeczeństwo – Edukacja* nr 2(20), Poznań 2021, p. 221.

⁵Mierzwa, *Podstawy traktatowe polityki edukacyjnej Unii Europejskiej – ich ewolucja i perspektywy*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Zakładu Europeistyki Wyższej Szkoły Informatyki i Zarządzania w Rzeszowie, Rzeszów 2006, nr 1, p. 11.

⁶Aspridis et al. 2013. *The Erasmus Student Mobility Program and Its Contribution to Multicultural Education : The Case of Technological Education Institute of Thessal*, *Journal of Educational and Social Research* Vol. 3 No. 3, Rome-Italy 2013, p. 182.

⁷T. Nogueiro, M. Saraiva, F. Jorge, E. Chaleta, *The Erasmus+ Programme and Sustainable Development Goals—Contribution of Mobility Actions in Higher Education*, *Sustainability* 2022 n. 14, Portugal 2022, p. 5.

⁸Erasmus+ Programme Guide, Version 2 (2019),

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/default/files/erasmus-plus-programme-guide-2019_en_1.pdf.

⁹S. Beech, *International Student Mobility: A Critical Overview, Geographies of Children and Young People* Volume 10, Singapore 2017, p. 295.

system by increasing the knowledge and skills of both teachers and students, while also promoting a sense of social responsibility¹⁰.

Educational mobility is an exceptionally valuable experience, as it enables the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for personal, educational, and professional development, civic engagement, and social inclusion¹¹.

Organizing educational mobility serves as a strong incentive to improve the quality of education—both in formal educational institutions and in organizations providing non-formal and informal learning. In the face of ecological and digital transformation, which demands a “skills revolution,” educational mobility helps bridge skills gaps, accelerates skills development, and strengthens a sense of citizenship and understanding of shared values, both within Europe and beyond.

For the purposes of this study, the definition of international educational mobility adopted is the one used by the European Union within the Erasmus+ programme. According to this definition, international educational mobility refers to the physical relocation to a country other than one’s country of residence in order to undertake studies, training, or non-formal or informal learning.

This term encompasses a wide range of educational activities and applies to all sectors of lifelong learning, including primary, higher, and vocational education, as well as adult education. The common international mobility system of EU member states is intended to increase the employability of school and university graduates within the unified European labor market and the increasingly harmonized European education market¹². International educational mobility also refers to the mobility of young people, youth workers, professionals working in early childhood education and care, and those active in the field of sports.

3. Educational Mobility as a Factor Strengthening Social Security

Social security is a key element of the European Union’s policy, encompassing efforts to protect citizens from economic, social, and health-related risks. The concept refers to ensuring the stability and well-being of society through social protection systems, labor market support, and the promotion of integration and equal opportunities. For years, the European Union has implemented strategies and

¹⁰E. Torończak, *Międzynarodowe projekty edukacyjne drogą do rozwoju kompetencji kluczowych*, Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji, Warszawa 2018, p.167.

¹¹Komisja Europejska, *ZAŁECENIE RADY „Europa w ruchu” – mobilność edukacyjna dla wszystkich (Tekst mający znaczenie dla EOG) {SWD(2023) 719 final} - {SWD(2023) 720 final}*, Bruksela 2023.

¹²W. Kostrzewa-Zorbas, *Harmonizacja systemów szkolnictwa wyższego w Europie. Polityka Unii Europejskiej*, Warszawa 2003, *Polsko-Holenderskie Podyplomowe Studia Europejskie*, p. 9.

policies aimed at strengthening social security through the free movement of people, services, and capital—fostering both occupational and educational mobility.

In the context of educational mobility, social security takes on a new dimension. Programmes such as Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe contribute to enhancing citizens' professional skills, improving their employability, and promoting European integration. EU educational cooperation enables society to be better prepared for the challenges of globalization, mitigating the risks arising from dynamic socio-economic changes.

The development of EU social and educational policies points to the growing role of mobility in ensuring stability and social security. From a subjective perspective, the concept of security is increasingly being expanded to include values that require protection, taking into account various dimensions such as ideological, cultural, economic, scientific and technological, and social—alongside the more recently recognized dimensions of economic and environmental security¹³.

Currently, a multidimensional approach to the concept of security prevails, leading to the division of the general term “national security” into various fields and sectors¹⁴. Within this framework, a subjective aspect can be distinguished depending on whom the security concerns—an individual, social group, nation, state, associations of states, or the global society.

At the same time, the scope of security studies can be assigned to specific areas, including military, economic, political, public, general, social, cultural, ideological, environmental, and informational security¹⁵. Generally speaking, security studies focus on the conditions necessary to ensure the survival and development of individuals within society and of the state-organized society as a whole, since the state remains the primary guarantor of these conditions¹⁶.

The issue of security is one of the key aspects deserving focused attention, as it is closely tied to an individual's personal sense of safety. Security plays a vital role not only in the internal and local context but also at the international level. Every person desires to feel safe; however, for this to be possible, certain fundamental conditions of social life must be met. People continuously strive to achieve their goals while

¹³W. Kitler, *Bezpieczeństwo narodowe RP. Podstawowe kategorie. Uwarunkowania. System*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Obrony Naukowej, Warszawa 2011, p. 40.

¹⁴J. Gierszewski, *Bezpieczeństwo społeczne jako dziedzina bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, *Historia i Polityka* Nr 23 (30) (2018), Toruń, 2018. p. 21.

¹⁵A. Glen, *Podstawy bezpieczeństwa podmiotu. aksjologia, ontologia, epistemologia, metodologia*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczo- Humanistycznego w Siedlcach, Siedlce 2021, p. 15.

¹⁶R. Wróblewski, *Wprowadzenie do nauk o bezpieczeństwie*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczo- Humanistycznego w Siedlcach, Siedlce, 2017, p. 81.

simultaneously seeking to protect their assets and safeguard themselves from threats that could harm them or hinder their daily functioning¹⁷.

Security is inherently linked to the individual's sense of stability and protection. In pursuing their objectives, people also strive to shield themselves from risks and safeguard what they value against potential dangers that could disrupt their lives. Although many definitions of security exist in the literature, none fully capture the complexity of the concept.

It can be stated that security is a sense of peace, a guarantee of development, and assimilation within a social group¹⁸. Simply put, security is a state and a process free from threats. A citizen feels secure when they are able to respond to dangers and cope with them without experiencing uncertainty. Every person strives to safeguard their basic existential needs, which allow them to feel safe.

The pursuit of development is natural, as people seek to satisfy not only their basic but also higher-level needs. Achieving this is possible through internal motivation or external motivating factors that support goal attainment. If individuals are unable to pursue success on their own, they will not be able to secure the fundamental elements of their physiological needs¹⁹.

International educational mobility contributes to social security by supporting skills development, increasing employment opportunities, and promoting social integration. By enabling learners and workers to gain educational and professional experience abroad, such mobility helps address skills gaps in the economy, thereby reinforcing labor market stability.

Moreover, international educational mobility fosters the development of skills that are essential in the face of digital and ecological transformation challenges, which further enhances social security.

In a broader context, international educational mobility supports the building of intercultural bonds and strengthens the sense of European citizenship, which promotes social cohesion and helps prevent the marginalization of various social groups. In this way, social security becomes increasingly dependent on access to high-quality education and professional development opportunities—both of which are crucial for the stability and growth of society.

¹⁷M. Lorek, *Bezpieczeństwo jednostki a bezpieczeństwo narodowe*, *Modern Management Review MMR*, vol. XXII, 24 (4/2017), Rzeszów 2017, p. 74.

¹⁸R. Kulczycki, *Bezpieczeństwo a nauka i dydaktyka [w:] Współczesne pojmowanie bezpieczeństwa*,

red. K. Jąłoszyński, B. Wiśniewski, T. Wojtuszek, Bielsko-Biała 2007, p. 283.

¹⁹M. Lorek, *Bezpieczeństwo jednostki a bezpieczeństwo narodowe*, *Modern Management Review MMR*, vol. XXII, 24 (4/2017), Rzeszów 2017, p. 75.

An important component of the European Union's security strategy is the development of education as a tool for building social and economic resilience. Education not only provides the tools necessary to compete in the labor market but also shapes civic attitudes, promotes tolerance, and strengthens social ties. Therefore, investing in education at all levels is essential for ensuring social and economic stability and for building a strong foundation for the future development of EU member states.

For the purpose of this analysis, social security will be understood as a state of socio-economic stability in which citizens have access to essential resources and services such as employment and education, enabling them to meet their basic needs and minimize social risk.

Particular emphasis will be placed on the issues of unemployment, access to the education system, and international educational mobility within the European Union. In this context, social security means not only protection from poverty and marginalization but also the guarantee of equal access to opportunities for educational and professional development—elements that are key to the social and economic stability of both Poland and the European Union.

4. The Scale of Educational Mobility in Poland Compared to the Rest of Europe

In recent years, the scale of educational mobility in Poland has been steadily increasing, making the country a significant participant in the European Education Area. In 2023 alone, under Action 1 of the Erasmus+ programme, a total of 91,045 educational mobilities were planned in Poland²⁰. Of these, nearly 30,000 were related to the higher education sector, and over 15,000 involved vocational education and training. Mobilities also included school education, adult education, and the youth sector, indicating the increasingly broad application of EU programmes across various areas of formal, non-formal, and informal education.

Poland ranked fifth in the European Union in terms of the number of Erasmus+ projects funded in 2023, with 2,519 initiatives—surpassed only by Spain, Germany, France, and Italy. This high position in the European ranking reflects not only the ability of national institutions to successfully apply for funding, but also the growing organizational and strategic potential of Poland's education system.

It is also worth noting that a total of 2,000 institutions from across the country participated as beneficiaries, with the highest number of projects implemented in the Mazowieckie (347), Śląskie (274), and Małopolskie (201) regions. These regions today serve as hubs for the development and diffusion of educational innovations at the international level.

²⁰*Edukacja bez granic. Raport FRSE 2023. Szczegółowe dane statystyczne*, p. 22–23.

Data from the *Education Without Borders* report also point to key destinations for educational mobility. The most frequently chosen countries include Spain (13,189 mobilities), Greece (9,565), Italy (9,265), and Portugal (5,575). The significant number of exchanges to these countries may be linked to cultural factors, academic attractiveness, and the availability of partner institutions.

However, it is also noteworthy that non-European destinations—such as Japan, Canada, Armenia, and Brazil—are becoming increasingly common, highlighting the globalizing nature of educational exchange within the EU framework.

The growing number of educational projects and beneficiaries confirms that Poland is steadily strengthening its position in the European educational mobility system. However, it must be emphasized that the quality of mobility—not merely its scale—is what determines its true social and systemic value.

The development of participants' language, digital, and intercultural competencies, as well as the creation of lasting networks of cooperation between educational institutions, businesses, and NGOs, are key elements in building long-term added value.

From a comparative perspective, it is also important to highlight that while Poland may lag behind some Western countries in terms of total funding received, the rate of growth in both the number of projects and mobilities in recent years is among the highest in Central and Eastern Europe. This demonstrates the effective use of EU instruments to reduce educational and social disparities at the regional level.

Thus, educational mobility is not a marginal phenomenon but a strategic instrument of educational, social, and demographic policy—both for Poland and the EU. It serves as a foundation for building a more open, competitive, and resilient society capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

5. Concluding Remarks

International educational mobility—primarily implemented through program such as Erasmus+ represents not only a key component of the European Union's education policy, but also an effective tool for strengthening social security.

The analysis presented in this article clearly demonstrates that such mobility supports not only skills development and improved employment opportunities but also contributes to building social cohesion, combating exclusion and marginalization, and promoting civic values and European identity.

In the case of Poland, a dynamic growth in participation in international educational mobility is evident, reflecting an increasing social and institutional capacity for the internationalization of education.

In the long term, these efforts contribute to reducing regional inequalities, strengthening society's resilience to contemporary challenges—such as demographic crises, digital and ecological transformation—and laying the foundation for sustainable socio-economic development.

In the context of further development of educational mobility, maintaining a balance between its scale and quality, as well as ensuring broad and equal access to such initiatives, will be of key importance. It is essential that EU Member States, including Poland, continue and intensify investment in programmes supporting educational mobility, viewing it not as a cost, but as a strategic investment in social security and the future of citizens and European communities as a whole.

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