

PERCEPTIONS OF ERASMUS STUDENTS ABOUT EUROPEAN IDENTITY

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the European identity perceptions of Erasmus students. The nature of this study required a qualitative case study methodology using in-depth interviews to collect the data. This study attempted to answer the questions: What are perceptions of exchange students about European identity? Does participation in the Erasmus Program contribute to the creation of the European identity?

The participants in this study were students who had applied to the European Commission to qualify for the Erasmus University Charter and also had scholarships as a result of the partnership between their own universities and Istanbul's Boğaziçi University in 2005-2006 Fall. Ten participants were selected and interviewed during single meetings that were recorded. Full tape transcription was being used. The data were analyzed according to the inductive analysis approach.

According to the findings, three definitions of "European" mainly emerged: one who is a citizen of the European Union, one who is from a country in Europe (from Moscow to Bosphorus), and one who shares the history, culture and tradition of the European civilizations. According to findings, the Erasmus Program is a well known exchange program and accepted as an opportunity to provide different partnerships and grants. However, although the participants were affected by this exchange experience, only one emphasized that the program strengthened the European identity by bringing different students from different countries and different cultures together. It was not possible to say that the participants have a common European identity; however "being European" is an identifier for them.

## ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Erasmus öğrencilerinin Avrupa kimliği algısını incelemektedir. Bu çalışmanın doğası niteliksel veri toplamak için derinlikli görüşmeleri kullanarak bir vaka çalışması metodolojisini gerektirmiştir. Bu çalışma, Erasmus öğrencilerinin Avrupa kimliği algısı nedir? Erasmus Programı'na katılmanın Avrupa kimliği algısının oluşmasına katkısı var mıdır? sorularını cevaplamayı denemiştir.

Bu çalışmanın katılımcıları, Avrupa Komisyonu Erasmus üyeliğine hak kazanmış ve 2005-2006 Sonbahar döneminde, kendi üniversiteleri ile İstanbul'daki Boğaziçi Üniversitesi arasındaki ortaklık sonucu burs kazanmış olan öğrencilerdir. On katılımcı seçilmiştir ve kaydedilen tek kişilik görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Kayıtların tamamının deşifreyonu tercih edilmiştir. Veriler tüme varımsal analiz yaklaşımına göre çözümlenmiştir.

Buluntulara göre, temel olarak "Avrupalı" üç tanımı ortaya çıkmıştır: Avrupa Birliği vatandaşı olan, Avrupa (Moskova'dan Boğaziçine kadar) içinde bir ülkeden biri olan, ve Avrupa medeniyeti tarihini, kültürünü ve geleneğini paylaşan. Buluntulara göre, Erasmus Programı en iyi bilinen öğrenci değişim programıdır ve üniversiteler arası farklı ortaklıklar ve burslar sağlama bakımından bir fırsat olarak kabul edilmektedir. Bununla beraber, katılımcılar bu değişim deneyiminden etkilenmiş olsalar da, sadece bir katılımcı programın farklı kültürleri ve farklı ülkeden insanları bir araya getirerek Avrupa kimliğini güçlendirdiğini vurgulamıştır. Katılımcıların ortak bir Avrupa kimliğine sahip olduğunu söylemek mümkün olmasa da "Avrupa'lı olmanın" onlar için bir tanımlayıcı olduğu söylenebilir.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CEEC	Countries from Central and Eastern Europe
CDCC	Council for Cultural Cooperation
EC	European Community
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EEA	European Economic Area
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EILC	Erasmus Intensive Language Course
EU	European Union
EURATOM	European Atomic Energy Community
EURYDICE	Information Network on Education in Europe
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Motivation for the Study

According to Maxwell (2005, p. 15), the goals motivating a study are an important part of qualitative research. The goals help the researcher not to lose sight of what he or she wants to accomplish, as well as shape the study, from the beginning to the end of all steps.

As a teacher working in a secondary school that has the aim to improve the quality of education, I have attended a seminar about European Community action programs. The programs were defined as an innovation in the educational field. The cultural dimension of the education was emphasized and especially peer work was cited as the most important thing. Education was not limited to the classroom environment; it was discussed in its international dimensions.

The school managers wanted the teachers to develop projects and take part in the Leonardo da Vinci Program which is one of the European Community action's programs for the secondary school students. They gave us some brochures with information about

the program; it was hard to say that I was well informed about the program. I have gained much second-hand knowledge on what it is like to take part in a project.

The manager told me that the Ministry of Education wanted us to support these programs; we could, for example become the active participants in the program. In many private schools, teachers were involved in Leonarda da Vinci program with different projects. In doing so they could stay for two or three weeks in a European country and students from European countries could come to our country. Cultural interaction between students was supported and interactive education was available so both European and Turkish students could collaborate with each other. However, many government secondary schools were very new in this area and had not participated in those programs yet. Taking part in the program was a new and important issue for my school.

Turkey has been in the process of becoming a member of the European Union for a long time; however, membership is generally discussed in the context of economy and human rights mostly; educational is generally not regarded. Programs like Socrates, Erasmus, and Leonardo da Vinci are called “European Union education programs.” It was necessary to understand the aims of these programs.

First of all, it was important to narrow the study to one program to be explored and understood. Because of the practical reasons, university student exchange program Erasmus was chosen to discuss in detail. As an also a university student and studying adult education, it was more practical exploring a university program. I have come to believe that participating in such an exchange program would affect the individual in many ways.

Participants communicate in a language that is not their own, stay in a different country and, educate in a different education system. However, it was not an ordinary exchange program, the European students benefit from the program. Being European was an important identifier. So how they define being European, or European identity? As a university student, first of all it was important to discuss the Erasmus Program. Are the Erasmus students satisfied with the program? How is the relation between the Erasmus Program and European identity? To discover more about this issue, I have conducted a qualitative research project that revolved around those questions from cultural and educational policy perspectives.

### Purpose of the Study

This study attempts to understand the identity constructed through the process of European integration particularly in education. The aim is not to explain the types of identity emerging from the European integration process or to compare the European and national identities within the European Union countries; it is rather to investigate the perceptions of Erasmus students about the European identity. The overarching questions of the research are how the “European identity” can be defined by the participants of the Erasmus Program and whether such an identity exists or not.

In the study, the development of a common European identity is discussed through the European integration process. From a subjective standpoint, the perceptions of the Erasmus students about European identity come to the fore. “Identity” is taken as a defining element in the concept of personal, political, cultural, national identities and

more specifically European identity. According to Delanty (1995, p. 45), the idea of Europe, evolved from a geographical concept to a cultural idea and the European identity could have been spoken from the sixteenth century. But after 1945, the idea of Europe became the basis of a new political identity.

The identity issue is not discussed separately from that of European identity. Even though identity is a complicated concept, it will be discussed from the students' perspectives. The aim is to derive a definition of identity from the students' statements in general and also a definition of European identity. To discover the affect of the Erasmus Program on the European identity perceptions' of students, it is also important to discuss the Erasmus Program in some detail.

This study is aimed at generating hypotheses leading to further investigations that explore the European identity and the relation between the Erasmus Program in order to provide more attentive higher education for all, and not just for those who participate in the program.

### Significance of the Study

In the post-war era what 'Europe' means has become increasingly bound up with the process of European integration. 'Europe' has come to be used as shorthand for the EU (Dunkerley, Hodgson, Konopacki, Spybey and Thompson, 2002, p. 116).

The European Union is almost half a century old and it is taken together with the earlier organization of the European Coal and Steel Community<sup>1</sup> (ECSC), as well as the establishment of the European single market between fifteen participating states in 1992.<sup>2</sup> According to Bruter (2005, p. 73), it was necessary to guarantee a balance between economic integration and the socio-political aspects of European integration, accordingly the programs of cultural and educational exchange were developed.

The educational programs were constructed by the European Community to make education more attractive and competitive in the European higher education area than in other parts of the world. Another aim of the exchange programs is to create awareness of the “European consciousness” of the participants. For people in Europe, European consciousness is being aware of sharing a common cultural heritage, common values, and global responsibilities throughout Europe (Ertl, 2003, p. 21).

It could be claimed that education programs play a crucial role in the formation of the European identity. The twenty-five nations forming the European Union have joined together to eliminate economic barriers among member countries while increasing the movement of goods, capital, and labor across national borders.

To realize increased mobility and to create a more effective work force, the European Union has set a number of community-wide programs between education and industry. These partnerships have been achieved primarily through restructuring higher education among member countries, with the specific purpose of increasing student mobility among nations (Langan, 2000, p. 21).

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<sup>1</sup> The initialing of the Treaty of Paris on April 15, 1951, marked the first great step toward the economic and political integration of Europe (Dinan, 2000, p.179).

<sup>2</sup> This information was taken on June 17, 2005 from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/treaties/dat/11992M/htm/11992M.html>

All of the mobility programs are administered by the European Commission in Brussels, with the intention of creating multinational and transnational networks. The term “education” did not come to the fore until the Maastricht Treaty signed in 1992 whereas on 15 June 1987(Council Decision no: 87/327/EEC), the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (Erasmus) was adopted. The number of countries that signed the decision was twelve; furthermore, in 2006 the participant countries increased to thirty-one. Erasmus, one of the higher education mobility programs, was established to contribute to the development of quality education and training and creation of a “Europe of Knowledge” for cooperation. It is claimed that these programs will bring the people of Europe together.<sup>3</sup>

There is little investigative research has been done in the area of education on the European dimension and European identity that involves an explorative approach. Beyond that, this study presents a qualitative design and method by which valuable information can be gathered to the benefit of exchange programs and especially the Erasmus program. It is hoped to discuss the position of these programs within the educational policies, that is to say, the effect of the educational programs in the “European dimensions.” How do they construct the awareness of being a European? How do they create a European identity through these programs?

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<sup>3</sup> The information was taken on 15 April 2006, from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31987D0327:EN:HTML>

## CHAPTER II

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In a qualitative study, “the literature is used to ‘frame’ the problem in the introduction to the study” (Creswell, 2003, p.30). That is to say, in a qualitative inquiry, the assumption is learning from the participant so it is important to underline that a researcher should not answer the questions from his or her own standpoint.

This study is an exploratory one so the aim was to listen to the participants and build an understanding based on their ideas, as Creswell (2003, p.30) emphasized for qualitative studies. The conceptual framework of this study was formed while the data were gathered. This framing with contingent and available studies and background literature was the intent to provide a broad look at the themes that were discussed in the study.

“With an approach grounded in learning from participants and variation by type of qualitative research, we see several models for incorporating the literature in a qualitative study” (Creswell, 2003, p. 31). In this qualitative study, the use of conceptual framework in the beginning of the plan would be conveyed to the reader through an inductive design.

The conceptual framework for this study encompasses a broad scope of theories that consider identity in general, the European identity and also the European Union in the construction of the European identity. Education in the European dimension is worked out. Then the Erasmus Program with its four phases is studied; it is essential for understanding students' perceptions about the Erasmus Program and the European identity.

## Identity

Identity, human identity in particular, is a universal phenomenon that is often treated as problematic. As a concept it is linked to such variables as cultural identity, national identity, transnational identity, ethnic identity, social identity, individual or personal identity, and so on. Many attempts at defining the concept have been made; however, identity resists clarification.

According to Hogg and Abrams, "People derive their identity (their sense of self, their-self concept) in great part from the social categories to which they belong" (1988, p. 19).

'Social identity' was conceptualized as that aspect of person's self-concept based on their group memberships; it was a person's definition of self in terms of some social group membership with the associated value connotations and emotional significance (e.g., a self-definition as 'us women', or 'we Americans') (Turner, 2000, p. 8).

In addition, it is concerned with group which are unequal in status, power, or prestige and with the strategies that their members employ to address the unequal condition.

Social Identity Theory also proposes that in addition to people perceiving themselves as belonging to specific social categories, these groups are internalized as part of the self. However, since context and perceptions involve groups in society, this identity is called social identity. According to the model, social identity is distinct from personal identity. Personal identity is self-concept as a person; whereas, social identity is “self-conception as a group member” (Abrams & Hogg, 1988, p.21).

According to Hogg, Terry, and White (1995) social identity theory is a social psychological theory that sets out to explain group processes and inter-group relations. An individual represents himself/herself as a member of a group or groups. Those memberships are represented in the individual’s mind as a social identity and both describe and prescribe one's attributes. They can be referred to as what an individual should think and feel, and how the individual should behave. It concerns inter-group relations and group processes, in-group or inter-group behavior of an individual such as conformity, collective action, stereotyping and group solidarity is focused on social identity theory.

According to Bruter (2005, p. 9), the elements of identity can be ranked in three categories: personal identities, social identities and political identities. He writes that these are strongly related components of identity and can not be separated. All patterns of real identity that can be used to describe an individual are relevant as long as this individual thinks of them as parts of his/her own constructed identity. Personal identity is made of a network of references to family belonging, upbringing, personal and cultural characteristics. Personal identity therefore appears to be a form of identification

directly centered on what the individual identifies as his/her world ‘inductively’ from his/her own self, defining the various yardsticks of his/her identity.

As Bruter (2005, p. 9) has stated, social identity and personal identity form the political identity of an individual and they are not separate. He criticizes how political identities are classified social identities by many sociologists, but he emphasized that political identity should be considered predominantly as a feature of social difference or distinction rather than a deeper cultural sense of belonging to a given community. Political identities are not a sub-category of social identities but they are a form of identity in their own right, which can be reduced neither to a social component nor to a personal component of identity and involves both. Therefore, the importance of both social and personal elements in political identities should not be ignored while measuring them.

Hermann and Brewer (2004, p. 6) have confirmed that social identity can be categorized in three different aspects. These would be a definition of the representation of persons in groups: the composition of group identity, the content of the group identity and role identity. The questions: who is “us”, what people belong to the in-group, and what defines the boundaries of the group, and who doesn’t belong? The answer to these questions can be called conceptualization of social identity, or the composition of group identity. The content of the group identity is a label used for referring to what attributes, symbols, and values describe the prototypical member of the group and the defining content of the group more generally. Social identity is used to refer to the relationship between the in-group and out-groups within a structured network of social groups. It will be referred to as role identity. These aspects define the representation of a person within

a group; however, three types of identities are represented within a group, and these are not separated easily.

People play different roles in groups and they have multiple group identities. However, multiple identities can be balanced and related with each other. There are three ways of doing this.

First, identities can be *nested*, one as one inside the next, such as Russian Matruska dolls. In this configuration everyone in a smaller community is also a member of a larger community.

Second, identities can be *cross-cutting*. In this configuration, some, but not all, members of one identity group are also members of another identity group. And this other group is composed of members who share identity within that group but also have identities with other groups that are not shared with the same people.

Third, identities can be *separate*. In this configuration the different groups that a person belongs to are distinct from one another, with essentially non-overlapping memberships. The number of people who share identities across the groups is so small that it does not constitute a potential cross-cutting group (Hermann et al., 2004, p. 8).

Identity is not defined as something static that people are or that they have, but as something that they can orient to and use as resource in the course of interaction.

Social influence processes such as education, rhetoric, propaganda, polemic, persuasion establish systems of value and beliefs, reified in social representations, social norms, and social attributions, that specify both the content and value of individual identities (Breakwell, 2004, p. 30).

In other words individual identities are not durable. According to Smith, this is the main distinction between individual and collective identities. He defines the collective identity as “pervasive” and “persistent” and also “situational” (1999, p. 230).

According to definition of the group in which the person lives, cultural identities or national identities are also defined as collective identities. Cultural identity is “the feeling of belonging to culturally-meaningful human community and the perception of

being culturally closer to people within the group than to people outside the group”  
Bruter (2001, p. 244).

Consequently, according to Greenfeld, every identity represents a means of constructing and defining the social reality of the bearer. The social importance of an identity increases with the importance and size of the group that shares it, but even more so with the extent of its applicability (2004, p. 38).

### European Identity

European identity can be defined in various ways. There is not a unique idea of Europe common among all European states or also a unique description of European identity. West and East Europeans, Northern and Southern Europeans each may have their own definition of what Europe means and where it ends. In the process of European integration, it became important to form a unity within this diversity.

According to Wallace, what Europe means to a European depends on where he/she lives in that continent. “Europe” is a moveable set of myths and images, both positive and negative, rooted in national histories and vernacular literature. It can be claimed that being European or the definition of European identity, depends on which part of Europe is taken into consideration while giving these definitions (2000, p. 79).

Europe is an imaginary space, shaped and reshaped by politicians and intellectuals to serve their changing purposes. There is no “natural” basis for solidarity of Europe. Europe as a set of values or as a region of shared history, has no clear outer limits, and many competing claims to constitute its historical core... An operational, institutionalized Europe can not be constructed without drawing boundaries, without bringing some states in and

leaving others out (Wallace, 2002, p. 82).

Given these facts, it is important to define Europe first of all. According to Delanty, the dominant discourses on Europe can be classified into five main sections: the role of Europe as a geographical concept, the concept of liberty, Europe as Christendom, the balance of power and European civilization. He defines Europe as “more than a region and polity, it is also an idea and an identity” (1995, p. 3).

This idea defines a cultural model of society and a focus of collective identity. Delanty distinguishes between personal and collective identities. He claims that although a collective European identity has existed in some form since the sixteenth century and it had evolved gradually since the Enlightenment, European identity as part of personal identities did not exist until the late nineteenth century. The idea of Europe was derived mostly from “above” not from “below” in concrete forms of life and political struggles and the idea of being “European” in fact has been reconstructed since the late nineteenth century (1995, p. 6).

Bruter (2005, p. 5) also discusses the formation of a European identity from both a “top-down” and “bottom-up” perspective. According to him, the top-down model is more focused on what unifies Europe and Europeans in terms of cultural heritage, values, etc. However, using the bottom-up model, a behavioral perspective and an individual level perspective can yield an answer of who feels European, and what they mean when they use the word “European”.

Wallace (2002, p. 88) has suggested that the idea of European has existed in history but has disappeared for long stretches, and then reappeared with partly new meanings, and twisting and turning, giving it yet new content. The definition of Europe

in terms of shared values generally implies the spread of Western values inherited from the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the English and French Revolutions. Those shared values state clearly Europe. These share values are discussed in the construction of the European Identity.

If the construction of European identity is selective with regard to what is included as part of a 'European spirit', it is similarly partial in terms of what is ignored. For example, if 'democracy' is at the core of a European identity, how are we to explain the forms of government across Europe that, even during the course of the twentieth century, have been anything but democratic? (Dunkerley et al., 2002, p. 115)

Smith states that the given shared traditions and heritages (such as Roman law, political democracy, parliamentary institutions, and Judeo-Christian ethics, and also cultural heritages Renaissance humanism, rationalism and empiricism, and romanticism and classicism) do not form a constitute over the idea of "unity in diversity". He has claimed that the shared traditions and heritages create "a family of cultures" in Europe (1999, p. 242).

### The European Union in the Construction of European Identity

According to Ertl (2003, p. 14), the legal basis of the original European Community should be taken into consideration. It rests upon three treaties: the Treaty of Paris (1951), which set up the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), and the two Treaties of Rome (1957), which set up the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Committee (EURATOM).

In 1957, the European Union was created with the six member states: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxemburg and Netherlands. In 1973, Britain, Ireland and Denmark joined the union. In 1981, the accession of Greece was accepted. Spain and Portugal joined in 1986. In 1995, the accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden to the European Union was adopted (Dinan, 2000, p. 167; Dunkerley et al., 2002, p. 142).

On 1 May 2004, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined the EU. This was the largest number of countries accepted at once to the union.<sup>4</sup>

Europeanization and European integration in the European Union have had an impact on the construction of European identity; however, people might feel a sense of belonging to Europe in general, while feeling no attachment to the EU and vice versa. The question here is whether the EU can be an active identity builder and successfully achieve identity hegemony in terms of increasingly defining what it means to belong to Europe.

“In the post-war era what ‘Europe’ means has become increasingly bound up with the process of European integration” (Dunkerley et al., 2002, p. 142). Moreover, “Europe” has meant the European Union. The aim is to promote a common identity among Europeans and also give a public persona to the European Union (Dunkerley et al., 2002, p. 117).

EU membership has had significant constitutive effects on European state identities. While the states in Europe increasingly have been defined as EU members, it should not be disregarded that the status of nonmembers, or would-be members, depends

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<sup>4</sup> This information was taken from on 24 April 2006 from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enlargement\\_of\\_the\\_European\\_Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enlargement_of_the_European_Union)

on these categories. That is to say, those states can not ignore the EU even though they are not included in the EU. For the individuals living in those states, it can be suggested that a European identity is attached to the part of the individual's self-concept so that the value and emotional significance of being a member of a social group can not be disregarded.

To the extent people identify Europe with the EU; this would be a remarkable achievement of forty years of European integration. If Europe and the EU are used interchangeably, it means that the latter has successfully occupied the social space of what it means to be European. One could then not be a "real" European without being an EU member. This point appears to contradict the notion of Europe as an empty identity category. At least, it would mean that the EU increasingly fills the meaning space of Europe with a specific content (Risse, 2004, p. 255).

Delanty suggests that "with the foundation of EEC in the 1950s, for the first time in history the idea of Europe was institutionalized in a political framework with which, in time, it inevitably became wedded: the idea of Europe finally ceased to be merely a cultural model and became a reality but one whose identity was less European than 'western'" (1995, p. 115). He writes that in the second half of the twentieth century the idea of Europe articulated a particular way of life which can be said to have been distinctively European. Europe had a political, military and economic significance.

It has been suggested that common shared values of all Europeans do not exist, just as to speak of certain core aspects of a European identity, such as Christianity or Graeco-Roman heritage, is to miss the fact that these do not reflect the experience of all Europeans. The role of the Council of Europe and the EU is an engagement to consider what the core elements of shared European culture are. Both the Council of Europe and the EU underline a cultural heritage; that is to say, they are both universal concepts, such

as tolerance, the rule of law and respect for human rights. They are represented as the basis of a modern European identity. These thoughts indicate there is a rich reservoir of ideas linked to Europe, but that there is no stable core, no given European identity (Dunkerley et al., 2002, p. 114).

While discussing unity of Europe, Rome and its successors or the Church came to the fore as identifiers. According to Brock and Tulasiewicz, it should be also taken into account that social class, age and experience form significant differences in attitudes to European integration in all member states. Many Europeans indicates that they have had to take account of the historical and geographical European commonality and its cultural and political diversity but also both the older and younger generations of Europeans seem to have been learning by adjusting to new experiences which are the outcome of the diversity, inherent in the European commonality. Victories, scientific discoveries, humanitarian work and also tragedies, wars and discrimination are being recorded for the European commonality (1999, p. 11).

Brock and Tulasiewicz (1999) and also Zielonka (2002) suggest that the mid 1980s was a defining point for the emergence of a European identity and a need for Europeans to start perceiving themselves as European. In 1985 the Single European Act was signed, eliminating trade barriers between the countries, leading to the creation of a common market. The European Community, which was renamed the European Union, became increasingly politicized and a European identity was assisted by the often directly linked campaigns to give the EU a public persona: a European passport, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as the unofficial anthem of the Community, and the EU

flag were adapted and became the symbols of the EU. For a sense of European identity to develop, the EU must acquire a psychological existence in the minds of its citizens.

The most high-profile effort in this sense has been the EU notion of “unity in diversity” as the basis of European identity. Diversity in the European context does not equate with unity. “Europe” is identified with the EU; denial of accession to the EU is thus seen as a denial of the claim to share a European identity. Refusal to recognize such claims is seen as exclusion. It is the perception of exclusion that is most damaging. Even though Europe may have no clear boundaries, it is difficult to conceive of the European Union without them. Boundaries enable social systems to relate to their environment in a regular and predictable way. European identity is not being constructed by abolishing national differences, their existence is guaranteed by the independent member states (Dunkerley et al., 2002, p. 116).

While the effects of the EU on the identity construction are being discussed, it is difficult to reach valid conclusions on the degree of support. According to Wæver, Buzan, Kelstrup and Lemaitre (1993, p. 81), “how much the EC (former EU) affects the social and cultural life of EC (former EU) citizens, how much support people in Europe give to the EC (former EU) how much they identify themselves with the common European goals and/or with the institutions” should be detected at first to show the degree of identitive support of the EU. It is hard to say a common European identity or formation of such an identity has taken place through a connection with European institutions as there has not yet been any decisive change towards forming a new EC (former EU) European identity (Wæver et al., 1993, p. 81).

Castano has argued that the relationship between the European institutions and EU citizens is based not just on economic benefits. He states that people would not participate in such an “arid” community conception so that a system of values was offered. Those values became clear in time and they inspired the European integration process, however, the EU has a major problem in gaining a place as an identity element, since its category characteristics currently are unclear (2004, p. 55).

It has no ambiguous or unchallenged social meaning and has limited symbols. It has a short and unromantic history without what might be called heritage. (i.e., the emotion-ridden myths, legends, and personalities used by nations to claim distinctiveness, continuity, efficacy, and esteem). Though doubtless it will develop social meaning, symbols, and heritage with time (and is starting to do so – with, for instance, the corruption of commissioners; iconic associations of momentous decisions with place, for example, Maastricht; and some recognizable personalities) (Breakwell, 2004, p.32).

Bruter (2005, p. 5) asks that questions such as who “feels” European (using an individual perspective)? Why do some citizens identify as feeling European? Such questions are an understanding and defining a European identity.

Castano (2004, p. 43) adds that the integration processes or the treaties such as the Treaty of Rome may cause the emergence of a union among the people of Europe but it should not be taken as the creation of a European people even though it should not be neglected that through its institutions such economic, legal and educational, European Union may motivate behavioral or identity changes.

The objective of the Schengen arrangements is to create an area of free movement by removing controls at the common borders of the participating states; to compensate for the lifting these controls, external frontiers controls are strengthened and standardized, and are accompanied by an array of “flanking” measures designed to enhance security and improve cooperation within the Schengen area (Anderson, 2002, p. 245).

Traveling also seems to influence the sense of European identity. Convery and Evans conducted a study in 1997. Their aim was to examine whether visiting another European countries affects the participants attitudes towards feeling European. It did seem to have some effect on their attitude towards decision-making on issues. Of those who had not been to another European country, 26.4 per cent felt “not all European” as opposed to 20 per cent of those who had been (Zielonka, 2002, p. 245).

According to Breakwell (2004, p. 36), it should be stated that not all the European Union countries joined the euro such as Britain. She writes that it is interesting to examine this rejection by a member state of a major institutional change that the EU had introduced.

Laffan (2004, p. 96) claims that the Euro coins are designed to connote the coexistence of European and national symbols. Although it is debatable whether the national and European symbols are compatible, the illustrations of architectural feature such as bridges, doorways, arches and windows and do not feature real buildings. According to Shore (2000, p. 115), the reason for this is not only less national emphasis on local currency, but also it should be considered that the real buildings are enclosed spaces, fixed, finite and contained but not transcendent. It is claimed that such a design symbolizes transition, mediation, movement and the promise of a brighter future.

## Education in European Dimension

The European Union web page states that “at the European level, education in general and higher education in particular are not subjects of a common European policy.”<sup>5</sup>

The example of German unification shows that Interrail and Interfood do not make a European community. Neither a transfer of financial resources, nor shared language and history, could really bring together both parts of the country. There also needed to be an exchange of information and understanding, from which interests, intimacies, sympathies, and feelings of having things in common develop. Integration in this sense is a learning process on different levels. And such a learning process needs to be guaranteed by sustained efforts for the improvement of the education system (Hettlage, 2004, p. 258).

In the Treaty of Rome, the word “education” was not used, but training activities passed the scrutiny of the member states. In the report, the emphasis was shifted to vocational training and higher education.<sup>6</sup>

In the early years of the European Union, education was only of indirect importance until the launch of the Action program in 1976. The main objectives of a European education policy were defined at this framework; for example, improving education and training facilities, foreign language teaching, achieving equal opportunities for free access to all forms of education and promoting closer relationships between educational systems in Europe.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This information was taken on 7 April 2006 from [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/higher/higher\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/higher/higher_en.html)

<sup>6</sup> This information was taken on 1 July 2006 from [http://ec.europa.eu/education/programs/evaluation/finalfin\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programs/evaluation/finalfin_en.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> This information was taken on 16 June 2006 from [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/evalreports/education/2005/erasmus-inst/erasinstintrep\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/education/2005/erasmus-inst/erasinstintrep_en.pdf)

It was evaluated that the role of the European Economic Community, but after 1970s it had a developing role on the European scale in education. The first meeting of the community's ministers of education was taken as a cornerstone on the European scale in education. In 1976 the community's first educational program of activities was established.

The 1980s showed considerable progress in terms of co-operation. Individual mobility increased, European programs for research and technology were launched and implemented, as well as programs like Comett in 1986 (higher education and industry co-operation), Eurotecnet in 1985 (professional education and information technology), Delta in 1987 (learning technologies) and Lingua (language program) in 1990.<sup>8</sup>

A breakthrough came in 1986 with the signing of the Single European Act, which led to a new dynamism within the European Community. Its preamble reiterated the broad objective: the creation of a European Union and it also laid down the legal framework for establishing a single market by 1992. Many action programs were launched in the late 1980s in order to prepare the way for the training of the human resources needed to achieve this objective. These included programs such as Comett, Erasmus, Eurotecnet, and Petra.<sup>9</sup>

Education in Europe has both deep roots and great diversity. In 1976, education ministers first decided to set up an information network as the basis for better understanding of educational policies and structures in the then nine-nation European Community. This reflected the principle that the particular character of education

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<sup>8</sup> This information was taken on 16 June 2006 from [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/evalreports/education/2005/erasmus-inst/erasinstintrep\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/education/2005/erasmus-inst/erasinstintrep_en.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> This information was taken on 25 June 2006 from <http://www.eduvinet.de/eduvinet/irl007.htm#History>

systems in the Member States should be respected fully, while coordinated interaction between education, training and employment systems should be improved.

In 1986, attention turned from information exchanges to student exchanges with the launch of the Erasmus Program (currently part of the Socrates program), often cited as one of the most successful initiatives of a European Community that had just expanded to 12 countries. Yet it was not until 1992 and the creation of the single European market that education became recognized formally, in the Treaty on European Union signed in Maastricht, as a legitimate area of EU responsibility in its own right.<sup>10</sup>

These two articles (Article 126 and Article 127), despite careful wording that preserves the “subsidiarity” principle of reserving actions for the individual states except where there is agreement that they can be done better at union level, for the first time a treaty basis for educational action in a way that did not previously exist (Ryba, 2000, p. 254).

However, according to Article 149 of the Treaty of Nice;

the Community “shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States”, through a wide range of actions, such as promoting the mobility of citizens, designing joint study programs, establishing networks, exchanging information or teaching languages of the European Union. The Treaty also contains a commitment to promote life-long learning for all citizens of the Union.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, the Community has a complementary role to play: to add a European dimension to education, to help to develop quality education and to encourage life-long learning. On 11 November 2003, the Commission adopted the Communication "Education & Training: the Success of the Lisbon strategy hinges on urgent reforms".<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> This information was taken on 7 April 2006 from <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c00003.htm>

<sup>11</sup> This information was taken on 7 April 2006 from [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/higher/higher\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/higher/higher_en.html)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

The continuing evolution of European integration creates new realities for the people of the European countries. If these realities are to be fully appreciated and fully integrated into lives of future citizens of those countries, it is clear that the national educational systems concerned, and particularly the curricula of those systems, need to respond appropriately. Only when this is achieved will education in European countries be appropriately adapted to the new situation (Ryba, 2000, p. 244).

This is an important claim in discussing the education in the European countries. While considering the European countries, the members of the European Union and the members of the Council of Europe should be kept in mind.

Before considering in more detail the developing roles of the Council of Europe and the European Union in the evolution of the European dimension of education, it might be well to emphasize the differences between these two organizations. According to Ryba (2000, p. 246), the Council and the Union are often confused with each other. The Council of Europe was set up in 1949. Compared to the European Union, it is the less powerful and less well-funded organization. On the other hand, it involves more European countries in its membership than the European Union. Its one of the major tasks is the development of cooperation in the field of education. It is a body essentially founded to encourage cultural cooperation.

It's Council for Cultural Cooperation (CDCC), which involves itself particularly in educational matters, has always made a point of offering involvement to non-member countries who nevertheless shared its educational and cultural objectives. This means that its influence is limited to the successful results of discussion, exhortation, advice, publication, and the application at the national level of common decisions (Ryba, 2000, p. 246).

Rather than the educational and cultural dimensions of the Council of Europe, the European Union is quite a different and separate organization and its central purposes, at least until relatively recently, are essentially economic and political.

Even though educational activities within the European Union have been developed over the years, it is significant that in the articles of the Treaty of Rome as a founding treaty of the organization no comments referring to education are present. According to Ryba (2000, p. 246), the efforts in the Europeanization of education began to increase in the 1950s. This process was evaluated as slow and continued to be difficult.

Brock and Tulasiewicz (1999, p. 16) accepted that the original text of the Treaty did not mention education even though this was a somewhat false distinction because in fact it enabled progress in preparing for the appropriate development of human resources for technological requirements, especially in the further and higher sectors of education.

It is the most important development that “the term European dimension of education has come to be used almost universally instead of older terms such as Europeanization. It has come to be accepted as more representative of what most workers in this particular field have felt needed to be done” (Ryba, 2000, p. 251).

In the field of general education, the concept of a European dimension in education was widely discussed. This concept is frequently proposed as a way forward with regard to the discussions about the integration progress in Europe. The term first appeared in 1970s, but the concept was not further specified until 1988. The general aims of this concept are to enhance young people’s awareness of their European identity and to prepare them to take part in the economic and social development of the Community, to create awareness of the advantages of and challenges to the Community, to improve

knowledgeable of the Community as well as the individual Member States, and to emphasize to them the importance of co-operation with the wider international community (Ertl, 2003, p. 21).

According to Ryba (2000, p. 25), by the 1980s two major kinds of development occurred. The first and most financially significant of these was the setting up of a number of exchange programs. The second major development with which the European Community concerned itself was related to schools as well as other institutions.

The most important of these exchange programs and probably the best known was the Erasmus Program for inter-university exchange. Ryba (2000, p. 25) states that the Erasmus Program is a proof of a successful way of stimulating higher education cooperation. It has shown constant growth and development ever since its foundation, including an increasing number of universities and other institutions of higher education. Other significant programs of an exchange nature also have been set up such as the Arion Program, the Comett Program and Youth for Europe. At the very end of the 1980s, two other big programs, known as Lingua and Tempus, were set up. A dedication to the indirect development of the European dimension of the participants' education through the programs can be emphasized as what they have in common.

Teaching a European dimension in education within the curricula of educational institutions at all levels, but particularly at the levels of schools and teacher training, is the second major development. Ertl (2003, p. 13) writes that the sharp rise in youth unemployment had an important effect on the emphasis towards education and in the world of work in the 1980s.

The Sign of the Single European Act encouraged an ever closer union of the member states and their peoples in social as well as economic terms. In the field of

education, for the first time, a specific article was introduced by signing the Maastricht Treaty (Treaty on European Union) in 1992 with the intention that the legal bases for education and training were created. The role of the European Union is to contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between member states. Before the Maastricht Treaty, the role of education in the European integration process had been unclear (Blitz, 1998, p. 55).

With the acceptance of Article 126 of the Maastricht Treaty, the commission's support for activities at the school level extended. Shore points out that "the Maastricht Treaty enlarged the European Union's sphere of governance, furnishing it with a host of new legal and technical powers to intervene in domains of everyday life hitherto outside of its direct influence" (2000, p. 53).

The Maastricht Treaty formally enabled the EU to intervene in some aspects of policy-making in the fields of education, youth and culture. Of particular importance are the Treaty's references to the necessity of "developing the European dimension in the education" (Article 126) and of "bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore" (Article 128) in the EU policy (Dunkerley et al. 2002, p. 118).

Ertl, on the other hand, notes that some writers argue that the 1992 Maastricht Treaty was a missed opportunity to create a European framework for education and training. Reference to non-harmonization has appeared as the price paid for including education in the Treaty, as several Member States were very concerned about the possible effects of its incorporation (2003, p. 25).

The expectations during the debate on harmonization have received criticisms. According to Breakwell, it is a form of explicit engineering of social norms. "It can not

be treated as if it would leave national identities untouched. The changes caused by harmonization will be associated with changes in normative assumptions. They may be very subtle, but they are inevitable” (Breakwell, 2004, p. 37).

Unity in diversity is another aspect while discussing a European dimension in education. Diversity is an existing situation, but it can be emphasized as an advantage and also a policy within the European Union and by the Council of Europe. Diversity is accepted as an asset resource that would enable the most appropriate models, a unifying move, to be adopted. Unity in diversity is the view of “doing things together” for future developments. As Brock and Tulasiewicz (1999, p. 18) write ““doing things together’ could activate European values. A European education must consider the needs of the ‘new Europeans’.” Their origins are outside the traditional boundaries of Europe and the education should require adaptation for their intellectual and cultural priorities. The components of such an education must show Europeans that they can work more efficiently and live more comfortably together. That is why learning from diversity has been one of the stated aims of comparative education.

Education continues to remain a matter for the Member States and what the European Union is empowered to do is intended solely to complement action taken by them. Consequently, only a limited amount of budgetary resources is earmarked for education-related actions. It is therefore up to the Member States to bear the cost of their education systems, particularly in terms of grants and loans, including contributions for student mobility to other countries.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> This information was taken on 7 April 2006 from [http://www.ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/erasmus/answers\\_en.html](http://www.ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/erasmus/answers_en.html)

## The Erasmus Program

The Erasmus Program (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) was adopted on 15 June 1987 with the (87/327/EEC) Council Decision. It was named after the philosopher, theologian and humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam (1465-1536). He was identified as an untiring antagonist of dogmatic thought. As he had lived, worked in several parts of Europe, he became the symbol of mobility grants.<sup>14</sup>

The Erasmus Program provides mobility grants to cover the additional costs of a study period. The aim is not to pay the entire cost of the stay abroad. During the Erasmus Program, a student does not have to pay university fees abroad.<sup>15</sup>

The Erasmus Program is open to all academic disciplines, all types of higher education institutions and all levels of higher education. Higher education institutions can be also called universities. Higher education institutions from the 31 countries are participating in the program. Institutions have to be recognized by the national authorities as eligible for Erasmus activities and also must obtain an Erasmus University Charter, which is a certificate signed by the European Commission.<sup>16</sup>

Universities should maintain those required conditions and have a mobility agreement to send students via the Erasmus Program to another university of a participating country. Every student has the right to choose the host university.

Partnership between universities is not the required condition. However, while choosing

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<sup>14</sup> This information was taken on 7 April 2006 from [http://www.ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/erasmus/what\\_en.html](http://www.ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/erasmus/what_en.html)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> This information was taken on 7 April 2006 from [http://www.ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/erasmus/university\\_en.html](http://www.ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/erasmus/university_en.html)

the host country, the discretion of the universities is significant, it does not just depend on the student's choice.<sup>17</sup>

Every student who is at the higher education level leading to a degree or a diploma in one of the participating countries and has successfully completed at least the first year of his/her university studies can participate in an exchange via the Erasmus Program. The period can be between three and twelve months. The host university facilitates language courses and also academic advice to students or assistance with practical matters, but all these kinds of support depend entirely on the host university. In addition, preparatory language courses are eligible either at the students own university or at the host university before the beginning of study period abroad.

Erasmus intensive language courses (EILCs) are supported by the European Commission in the less widely used and less taught European Union languages and the languages of other countries participating in the Erasmus Program. The EILCs give Erasmus Program participants the opportunity to study the language of the host country for three to eight weeks in the host country.<sup>18</sup>

If the student wants to receive academic recognition for the courses s/he takes at the host university, s/he is required to pass the examinations. The examination procedure carried out by the host institution may be written papers, oral examinations, etc. The student does not have to pass the exams; it depends on the learning agreement signed before student came to the host university. After returning from the exchange period, the student may be asked for feedback which may include writing a short report

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<sup>17</sup> This information was taken on 7 April 2006 from [http://www.ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/erasmus/answers\\_en.html](http://www.ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/erasmus/answers_en.html)

<sup>18</sup> This information was taken on 16 June 2006 from [http://www.ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/erasmus/eilc/index\\_en.html](http://www.ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/erasmus/eilc/index_en.html)

on his/ her experiences abroad. Providing information, advising outgoing or incoming students and helping local student organizations may be counted as other tasks that may be required by the universities.<sup>19</sup>

Bruter (2005, p. 73) evaluates this action programs as the guarantee a “balance” between the economic and the socio-political aspects of European integration. Those programs are designed as both cultural and educational exchanges. The names of the programs such as Socrates are referring to Ancient times and also referring to concepts and values such as Eureka, Tempus, and Lingua. The Erasmus Program which uses the name of the great philosopher of the Enlightenment is a co-operation program between universities. Bruter says that the choice of names for programs of the European Union is relatively minor; however, it should not be negligible.

They are linked to the quasi-obligation for administrative efficiency and managing purposes to create meaningful and appealing acronyms for the newly launched programs of the Community. At the same time, historical references are extremely limited when compared to the future. Moreover, with respect to the study of the symbols of the European Union, it is made extremely obvious that European unification definitely aims at being a construction of the future and must refer to it rather than to any past person, event, or period in the history of European civilization (Bruter, 2005, p. 90).

Shore (2000, p. 57) emphasized that the European identity is built on a selective history including ancient Greece and Rome, to the spread of Christianity, the Renaissance and the scientific revolution, the Age of Reason, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the triumph of liberal democracy. These are the key episodes for the formation of a European cultural community.

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<sup>19</sup> This information was taken on 7 April 2006 from [http://www.ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/erasmus/answers\\_en.html](http://www.ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/erasmus/answers_en.html)

According to Shore (2000, p. 57), the Europe identity is based on these common bonds, shared heritage, moral ascendancy, and cultural continuity. The European Union's choice of 'Erasmus', 'Socrates' and 'Leonardo' as acronyms for its major education exchange programs are a minor example of this.

Education and active educational programs are evaluated as a third area where EU officials have sought to invent Europe as a category of thought. Introducing the European dimension into education is an effort for the creation of the young Europeans of tomorrow. At the level of higher education, the Erasmus Program, and to a lesser extent, the Lingua and Tempus Programs are now well established, involving, a greater number of higher education institutions and departments within the institutions every year. As a result, the number of higher education students taking a part of their courses in at least one European Union country other than their home base has increased dramatically during the past decade.

On the other hand, little is really known about the effects of this development on the attitudes of the students involved. Positive outcomes are assumed rather than established. Moreover, even at the higher education level, the number of students involved is still very much a minority of the total population. According to Swing et al., "at the lower levels of education and in relation to non-formal education, the direct impact of the exchange programs has so far remained marginal, to say the least" (2000, p. 258).

## The Erasmus Program 1987-1994

Erasmus Program started in 1987 and, according to the council decision, it was completed on 30 June 1991.<sup>20</sup> It was a four year program but in 1989 it was decided to extend the program to five years. The Council of the European Communities launched the program in order to increase significantly mobility in the Community and to promote greater cooperation between universities. The member states of the European Union were Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Britain, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Spain, and Portugal by 1987. The higher education institutions from those European states were in co-operation for the Erasmus Program.

The students, who were undergoing or had completed higher education and training, might receive credits for the training they carried out at universities in other Member States. This could be possible with the European Community Course Credit Transfer System (ECTS) on an experimental and voluntary basis. It also was decided to promote Inter-university cooperation in the Community. Agreements between higher education institutions were established to promote co-operation programs between member states as regards student exchange and recognition of study periods as part of the students' home country qualifications.<sup>21</sup>

The objectives of the Erasmus Program were stated in the decision of Council no: 87/327/EEC as follows<sup>22</sup>:

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<sup>20</sup> This information was taken on 15 June 2006 from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31987D0327:EN:HTML>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

- (i) to achieve a significant increase in the number of students from universities as defined in Article 1 (2) spending an integrated period of study in another Member State, in order that the Community may draw upon an adequate pool of manpower with first hand experience of economic and social aspects of other Member States, while ensuring equality of opportunity for male and female students as regards participation in such mobility;
- (ii) to promote broad and intensive cooperation between universities in all Member States;
- (iii) to harness the full intellectual potential of the universities in the Community by means of increased mobility of teaching staff, thereby improving the quality of the education and training provided by the universities with a view to securing the competitiveness of the Community in the world market;
- (iv) to strengthen the interaction between citizens in different Member States with a view to consolidating the concept of a People's Europe;
- (v) to ensure the development of a pool of graduates with direct experience of intra-Community cooperation, thereby creating the basis upon which intensified cooperation in the economic and social sectors can develop at Community level.

To achieve its objectives, the Erasmus Program concentrated on a student grants scheme, involving financial support for students following a period of study in another member state. During the 1980s, the process of European policy-making in higher education was accelerated up while the attention on the non-economic spheres broadened. "It should be stressed that European activities in fact lacked a legal basis for action. Education was considered to be a national issue."<sup>23</sup>

This idea also was stated in the commission decision. The action program included aspects related to education and, according to the Community law, this might be regarded as falling outside the scope of the common vocational training policy even though it had objectives closely linked to the vocational training objectives and also

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<sup>23</sup> This information is taken on 16 June 2006 from [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/evalreports/education/2005/erasmus-inst/erasinstintrep\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/education/2005/erasmus-inst/erasinstintrep_en.pdf)

contributed to the harmonious development of economic activities throughout the Community.<sup>24</sup> Although the *Encyclopedia of the European Union* (2003, p. 418) states that the Treaty extended the Community's power to new fields, the decision about education had to wait the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. It can be claimed that it was a good answer for the people who felt that Single European Act had not gone far enough.

### Socrates I / The Erasmus Program 1995-1999

The Community action program Socrates was established on 14 March 1995 with decision no. 819/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the council for the period 1 January 1995 to 31 December 1999. Contribution to the development of quality education and training and the creation of an open European area for cooperation in education came to the fore with the establishment of the Community action program Socrates. This program was to encourage cooperation between Member States in the field of education; it was to support and supplement their action while fully respecting their responsibility for the content of teaching and the organization of educational systems, and their cultural and linguistic diversity.<sup>25</sup>

Socrates is based on Articles 126 and 127 of the Maastricht Treaty.<sup>26</sup> They formed the legal basis of the program. Socrates was a complementary program; it was not an alternative to national education policies.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> This information was taken on 15 June 2006 from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31987D0327:EN:HTML>

<sup>25</sup> This information was taken on 15 June 2006 from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31995D0819:EN:HTML>

<sup>26</sup> The articles 126 and 127 were the ex-articles of articles 149 and 150. They were renumbered by the Amsterdam Treaty on 10 November 1997. The full texts of the articles are stated in Appendix A.

Socrates program included three areas of action. The first area was higher education- Erasmus Program. The second area was school education, - Comenius; and the third area was defined as horizontal activities in the areas of language skills in the Community (Lingua), open and distance education, the promotion of the exchange of information and experience (including Eurydice and Arion). The budget conserved for the Erasmus Program was 55 % of the overall budget. The Erasmus Program formed the main part of Socrates. The objectives of the Socrates program were stated as follows<sup>28</sup>:

- (a) to develop the European dimension in education at all levels so as to strengthen the spirit of European citizenship, drawing on the cultural heritage of each Member State;
- (b) to promote a quantitative and qualitative improvement of the knowledge of the languages of the European Union, and in particular those which are least widely used and least taught, leading to greater understanding and solidarity between the peoples of the European Union, and to promote the intercultural dimension of education;
- (c) to promote wide-ranging and intensive cooperation between institutions in the Member States at all levels of education, enhancing their intellectual and teaching potential;
- (d) to encourage the mobility of teachers, so as to promote a European dimension in studies and to contribute to the qualitative improvement of their skills;
- (e) to encourage mobility for students, enabling them to complete part of their studies in another Member State, so as to contribute to the consolidation of the European dimension in education;
- (f) to encourage contacts among pupils in the European Union, and to promote the European dimension in their education;
- (g) to encourage the academic recognition of diplomas, periods of study and other qualifications, with the aim of facilitating the development of an open European area for cooperation in education;

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<sup>27</sup> This information was taken on 7 April 2006, from [http://ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/legal\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/legal_en.html)

<sup>28</sup> This information was taken on 15 June 2006 from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31995D0819:EN:HTML>

- (h) to encourage open and distance education in the context of the activities of this program;
- (i) to foster exchanges of information and experience so that the diversity and specificity of the educational systems in the Member States become a source of enrichment and of mutual stimulation.

Under the umbrella of Socrates and its objectives, the higher education program Erasmus had two action fields, which aimed to promote the European dimension in universities and encourage student mobility and to finance Erasmus grants.<sup>29</sup> These actions covered: Erasmus student mobility, teaching staff mobility, curriculum development projects, intensive programs, and Thematic Networks.<sup>30</sup>

In 1995, the number of the member states increased to fifteen when Austria, Finland and Sweden joined the European Union. Higher education institutions in those 15 member states of the European Union, and in those signatory to the agreement on the European Economic Area (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) implemented the Socrates I/ Erasmus Program between 1995 and 1997. The program was also open to the participation of the associated countries of central and eastern Europe (Romania, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia) in accordance with the conditions agreed to in the additional protocols to the association agreements and to the participation of Cyprus and Malta on the basis of additional appropriations in accordance with the same rules as apply to the EFTA countries.

During this first phase, program information was one of the most criticized points. Some criticisms can be listed as the difficult coordination and communication

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<sup>29</sup> This information was taken on 15 June 2006 from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31995D0819:EN:HTML>

<sup>30</sup> This information was taken 15 June 2006 from [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/evalreports/education/2005/erasmus-inst/erasinstintrep\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/education/2005/erasmus-inst/erasinstintrep_en.pdf)

between the different partners and also the diverse management styles of the national agencies. Improvement in the information and program coordination mechanisms are stated as the program needs by the European Commission.<sup>31</sup>

### Socrates II/ Erasmus Program 2000-2006

The European Parliament and the Council of European Union launched the second phase of the Community action program in the field of education, including the ‘Socrates Program’ with decision no. 253/2000/EC. The program was adopted on 24 January 2000 for the period until 31 December 2006.<sup>32</sup>

The Socrates Program involved all sectors of education ranging from school education and higher education to adult education. The program became an effective instrument to meet the needs of a policy agreed upon jointly by the Member States and also to fulfill Europe’s goal of becoming the most competitive knowledge-based society in the world.<sup>33</sup>

Socrates II was open to students from all member countries of the European Union, the EFTA/EEA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway), the associated countries from Central and Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) and the pre-accession countries (CEEC) (Cyprus, Turkey and Malta. Malta and Cyprus, Turkey).

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<sup>31</sup> This information was taken on 7 April from <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c11023.html>

<sup>32</sup> This information was taken on 15 June 2006 from [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2000/l\\_028/l\\_02820000203en00010015.pdf](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2000/l_028/l_02820000203en00010015.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> This information was taken on 16 June from [http://ec.europa.eu/education/programs/evaluation/intsocrates\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programs/evaluation/intsocrates_en.pdf)

Cyprus was funded by additional appropriations in accordance with procedures to be agreed with that country. Malta and Turkey were funded by additional appropriations in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty. All of the countries listed above were already participating in the program. For Turkey, it was decided 2001 would be a preparatory year.<sup>34</sup>

The second phase of the Socrates action areas was enlarged and eight action programs were launched in 2000. These were: School education (Comenius), Higher education (Erasmus), Adult education and other educational pathways (Grundtvig), Teaching and learning of languages (Lingua), Open and distance learning, Information and communication technologies in the field of education (Minerva), Observation and innovation, Joint actions and Accompanying measures.

The program main objectives were to promote lifelong learning and to develop Europe of knowledge. Other specific objectives were listed in Decision no 253/2000/EC as follows<sup>35</sup>:

- (a) to strengthen the European dimension in education at all levels and to facilitate wide transnational access to educational resources in Europe while promoting equal opportunities throughout all fields of education;
- (b) to promote a quantitative and qualitative improvement of the knowledge of the languages of the European Union, in particular those languages which are less widely used and less widely taught, so as to lead to greater understanding and solidarity between the peoples of the European Union and promote the intercultural dimension of education;
- (c) to promote cooperation and mobility in the field of education, in particular by:

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<sup>34</sup> This information was retrieved on 17 June 2006 from [http://ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/transition\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/transition_en.html)

<sup>35</sup> This information was retrieved on 15 June 2006, from [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2000/l\\_028/l\\_02820000203en00010015.pdf](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2000/l_028/l_02820000203en00010015.pdf)

- encouraging exchanges between educational institutions,
  - promoting open and distance learning,
  - encouraging improvements in the recognition of diplomas and periods of study,
  - developing the exchange of information, and to help remove the obstacles in this regard;
- (d) to encourage innovation in the development of educational practices and materials including, where appropriate, the use of new technologies, and to explore matters of common policy interest in the field of education.

Reinforcing the European dimension of higher education, encouraging transnational cooperation between universities, increasing European mobility in the higher education sector and improving the transparency and academic recognition of studies and qualifications throughout the Community were the stated objectives of the Socrates second action program, Erasmus. European interuniversity cooperation, the mobility of students and university teachers and thematic networks were defined as sub-actions to satisfy the objectives of the Erasmus Program.<sup>36</sup>

Among these many objectives and actions of the Erasmus Program, the student mobility has been the most popular activity even though the higher education Socrates/Erasmus Program seeks to integrate such mobility into a wider framework of cooperation activities which aim at developing a European dimension within the academic programs of universities. "Bringing students to Europe, bringing Europe to all students" is the new spirit of the Erasmus Program.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> This information was retrieved on 17 June 2006 from [http://ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/transition\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/transition_en.html)

<sup>37</sup> This information was retrieved on 7 April from [http://www.ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/erasmus/university\\_en.html](http://www.ec.europa.eu/education/programs/socrates/erasmus/university_en.html)

Socrates and also Erasmus have played fundamental roles in the preparation for EU enlargement. Thirty-one countries have been brought as close as possible through the program. The second phase of the Socrates program will end in 2006. Erasmus will continue after certain modifications.<sup>38</sup>

### The Erasmus Program after 2006

The European Commission adopted proposals for the new generation of programs in the education, youth, culture and audiovisual fields on 14 July 2004. The Commission has been preparing the post-2006 future of the Community action programs because the existing programs in the field of mobility and co-operation in education and training are coming to a close at the end of 2006.<sup>39</sup>

The Commission has offered to run the new generation programs from 2007 to 2013. The Council of Ministers and the European Parliament said they would approve the proposal before the end of 2005.<sup>40</sup>

The Integrated Program will be divided into four sectoral programs: the Comenius Program for school education, the Erasmus Program for all forms of learning at the university level, the Leonardo da Vinci Program for initial and continuing vocational education and training, and the Grundtvig Program for adult education. The

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<sup>38</sup> This information was retrieved on 16 June 2006 from [http://ec.europa.eu/education/programs/evaluation/intsocrates\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programs/evaluation/intsocrates_en.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> This information was retrieved on 28 July 2006 from [http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/other\\_actions/after\\_2006/after2006\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/other_actions/after_2006/after2006_en.html)

<sup>40</sup> This information was retrieved on 1 August 2006 from [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/newprog/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/newprog/index_en.html)

student participants of the Erasmus Program are projected to be at least three million by 2010.

The Bologna (higher education) and Copenhagen (vocational training) strategies, intended to strengthen the coherence and quality of European policies in their respective fields, recognize the role played by Community policies. In response to public consultation, which showed that current programs were too complicated, this integrated program will be more flexible and easier to access. It will be heavily decentralized, with 80% of the funds administered by national agencies in the participating countries.<sup>41</sup>

The creation of a coherent, compatible and attractive European higher education area in accordance with the Bologna declaration of 1999 is the main structural means of meeting these challenges and increasingly has involved the Community in recent years. This is evident in fields such as quality assurance, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), the promotion of mobility and the European dimension of education.

The most visible proposed change to the Erasmus Program is a very substantial increase in student and teacher mobility. Currently just over 120,000 students participate in Erasmus mobility annually. Under the new program, that rate would need to increase to some 375,000 per year, in order to reach the target of three million Erasmus students by 2010.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> This information was taken on 25 July 2006 from <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/04/315&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

<sup>42</sup> This information was taken on 10 August from <http://www.tiigrihype.ee/static/eudoc/Uue%20polvkonna%20programmim.pdf>

At its meeting in Lisbon in March 2000, the European Council agreed on a strategic target “to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” for 2010.<sup>43</sup> These programs also will contribute to achieving the Lisbon objective, namely of making Europe the most competitive knowledge-based economy by 2010.

These require many changes but especially on education programs. The approach in the area of education and training was stated as an open method of coordination. The idea behind the open method of coordination is improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the EU, facilitating the access of all to education and training systems, and opening up education and training systems to the wider world.<sup>44</sup>

On 14 February 2002, an objectives report was adopted in Stockholm. This was the first official document sketching a comprehensive and coherent European approach to national education and training policies in the EU. Thirteen objectives were accepted as the future goals of the education and training as follows<sup>45</sup>:

1. Improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the EU;
  - Improving education and training for teachers and trainers,
  - Developing skills for the knowledge society,
  - Ensuring access to ICT for everyone,
  - Increasing recruitment to scientific and technical studies,
  - Making the best use of resources,

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<sup>43</sup> This information was taken on 14 July 2006 from [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/et\\_2010\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/et_2010_en.html)

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

2. Facilitating the access of all to education and training systems;
  - Creating an open learning environment,
  - Making learning more attractive,
  - Supporting active citizenship, equal opportunities and social cohesion
3. Opening up education and training systems to the wider world;
  - Strengthening the links with work and research and society at large,
  - Developing the spirit of enterprise,
  - Improving foreign language learning,
  - Increasing mobility and exchange,
  - Strengthening European cooperation.

Mobility promotes the feeling of belonging to Europe and the emergence of European citizenship. It allows young people to improve their personal skills and employability, and offers teachers and trainers an opportunity to broaden their experience and enhance their skills. In an increasingly complex Europe all available means to make mobility easier and promote it concretely must be used effectively in order to enable people, and in particular young people, to identify with Europe.

The European Union already has a solid basis in this field. The Socrates, Leonardo and Youth Programs provide good examples of this, even though concrete experience shows that the potential of mobility as an instrument towards the Lisbon goals is still far from being used to the full extent. The mobility action plan approved by the Nice European Council, the recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on mobility and the work on new European labor markets are signals showing that mobility now receives high political recognition.

However, it is the Commission's intention not to maintain the popular "Socrates" label, the umbrella name for the current Community action program in the

field of education. Since the Socrates program includes sub-programs called Comenius, Erasmus, Grundtvig, Lingua and Minerva, this creates a degree of confusion through “double-branding.” The other names, Lingua (language teaching and learning) and Minerva (Information and communication technologies in education), also will disappear since the activities linked to language learning and ICT largely will be mainstreamed under the new Integrated Program. It should be noted that the disappearance of the three names (Socrates, Lingua, Minerva) will not affect any of the actions supported by the European Union so far.

In short, the Commission decided to avoid a specific label for the “umbrella program” and to focus on brand names for the specific sub-programs which are relevant for applicants and future beneficiaries.

New actions were defined under the Erasmus Program. They were

1. Special mobility to support students enrolled on Joint Masters programs abroad,
2. Long-term teacher mobility (new full teaching program combined with research),
3. New under Erasmus: Incorporation of advanced vocational placements formerly supported under Leonardo and development of links to industry.<sup>46</sup>

The next generation of an EU program in the field of lifelong learning was proposed on 14 July 2004. The major changes were made based on the previous programs experience and taking into account new policy developments. Four programs in the field of lifelong learning were integrated and proposed for the period 2007-2013. The European Commission proposed to regroup its current activities into two frames in the field of Education and Training for 2007-2013. One is a single and unique integrated program

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<sup>46</sup> This information was taken on 7 April 2006 from [http://ec.europa.eu/education/programs/newprog/doc/faq\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programs/newprog/doc/faq_en.pdf)

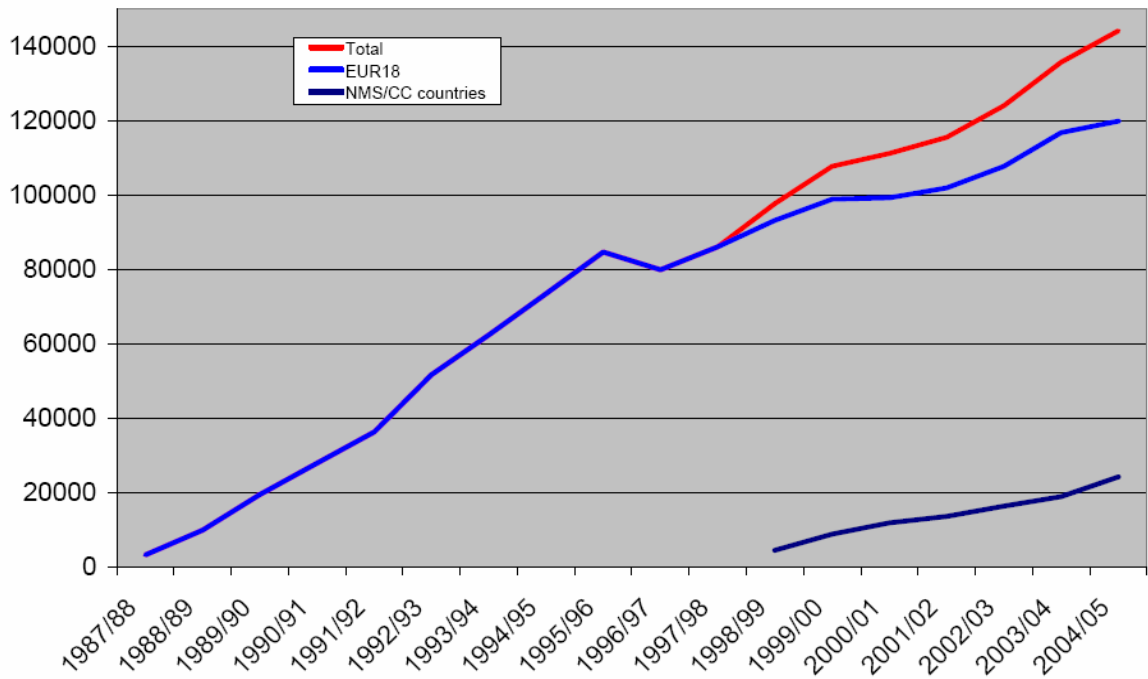
for education and lifelong learning for the Members States, EFTA countries and the candidate countries and the other one is the Tempus Plus. The Comenius Program on school education, the Erasmus Program on higher education, the Leonardo da Vinci Program on vocational training and the Grundtvig Program on adult education were stated under this group. The proposal also incorporates a Jean Monnet Program to support action related to European integration and European institutions and associations acting in the field of education and training.

The aim of the new program is to contribute through lifelong learning to the development of the Community as an advanced knowledge society, with sustainable economic development, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. It aims to foster interaction, cooperation and mobility between education and training systems within the Community so that they become a world quality reference. The Lisbon Strategy was focused on three major goals accepted by the ministers of education. Improving the quality and effectiveness of EU education and training systems, ensuring that they are accessible to all, opening up education and training to the wider world should be achieved by 2010 are the goals of the program. For the Erasmus Program, the aim is to contribute to the achievement by 2011 of three million individual participants in student mobility.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> This information was retrieved on 1 August 2006 from [http://ec.europa.eu/education/programs/newprog/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programs/newprog/index_en.html)

Table 1: The Number of Erasmus Students from 1987 to 2005.<sup>48</sup>



It also takes into account the objectives set for the establishment of a knowledge-based society (the Lisbon process), the European Higher Education and Research Area (the Bologna process) and an enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training (the Copenhagen process).<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> This information was retrieved on 19 June 2006 from <http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/erasmus/statisti/chart1.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> This information was retrieved on 31 July 2006 from [http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/COM\\_NL\\_2004\\_06.1080291882113.pdf](http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/COM_NL_2004_06.1080291882113.pdf)

## Research Questions

The educational policies are assumed to have an important role in constructing the European identity for the young people of Europe. This study started with this acknowledgement and set out to investigate the perceptions of the participants of the Erasmus Program. Two main questions arose from the study.

1. What are the perceptions of the exchange students about European identity?
2. Does participation in Erasmus Program contribute to the creation of a European identity?

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### The Qualitative Paradigm

This research was conducted by using a qualitative inquiry methodology. It allowed the opportunity to gain multiple perspectives of the participants. One goal of this kind of research is to explore what people think and which variables are important for them. As Gay, Mills and Airasian (2006, p. 402) state, the main idea of qualitative research is to understand the phenomena from the perspectives of the research participants. The research findings are described from that perspective.

According to Maxwell, “the strengths of a qualitative research derive primarily its inductive approach, its focus on specific situations or people, and its emphasis on words rather than numbers” (2005, p. 22). Qualitative research is descriptive and explorative.

Maxwell emphasizes the openness and flexibility of the qualitative inquiry. A researcher can modify his or her study during the research to understand new discoveries and relationships (2005, p.22).

Patton writes that, “Qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number and cases. This increases understanding of cases and situations studied, however reduces generalizability” (1990, p. 14).

Further, the real purpose of the qualitative research is defined by Gaskell as “not counting opinions or people but rather exploring the range of opinions, the different representations of the issue” (2000, p. 41).

Qualitative research is concerned with matters of meaning. *Meaning* is an elusive term, and one way to treat such elusive matters is to neglect them entirely. Behaviorism took this road. What matters most in behaviorism is what people or animals do, not what doing means to them. For qualitative researchers and evaluators meaning, though elusive, still counts. In this sense qualitative researchers are interested in matters of motive and in the quality of the experience undergone by those in the situation studied (Eisner, 1998, p.35).

Meaning is used in a broad sense, but for this study it can be called the perspectives of the participants. The matter is how the participants make sense of the physical events and behavior taking place and how the participants’ understanding influences their behavior (Maxwell, 2005, p.22).

Qualitative inquiries usually study very small numbers of individuals or situations because it is necessary to understand the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions. It is important to figure out how unique circumstances shape the actions and attitudes of participants or events (Maxwell, 2005, p.22). The focus is on the process rather than outcomes.

The success of a qualitative inquiry is judged by its coherence, insight and instrument utility. The strength of a qualitative inquiry is measured not by described

cause and effect relations; qualitative studies employ multiple forms of evidence, and they persuade by reasons (Eisner, 1998, p. 35).

The cases selected for this study are considered to be unique and give in-depth information about the phenomenon under investigation. In qualitative inquiry, the researcher looks below the surface and is interested in constructing meaning.

### Case Study

The case study involves particularly valuable information from a person, a program, an event, a group or an organization to describe that unit in depth and detail (Patton, 1990, p. 54). Cases can be individuals, groups, programs, organizations, cultures, regions etc. A case study may consist of many cases that will be studied as individual cases. It is important to distinguish a case study from other research strategies.

A case study is an empirical inquiry that:

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context; when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which
- multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin , 1984, p. 23).

Although this definition helps to understand a case study, there are different views for conducting a case study, according to what is to be studied; one of these approaches should be fixed. This case study was analyzed hermeneutically (Patton, 2002, p. 447).

That is to say, this study is based on the idea of circularity of understanding.

The hermeneutic circle, as an analytical process aimed at enhancing understanding, offers a particular emphasis in qualitative analysis, namely, relating parts to wholes, and wholes to parts” (Patton, 2002, p. 498).

This will lead the researcher to alter the understanding of the pieces and the whole repeatedly. Hermeneutic approach tries to get in-depth understanding of personal meanings. The everyday participatory understanding of people and events are the subjects of the study. The case in this particular study was a group of Erasmus students from European countries. The intention of this case study was to gain an in-depth understanding of these students' study experience and perceptions about the program and European identity.

### Sampling

Purposeful sampling within qualitative research allows for the in-depth study of the concepts and relationships primary to the project. The selection of information-rich cases is a key factor in qualitative sampling procedures. Indeed, one of the primary distinctions between quantitative and qualitative methods centers on sampling procedures: while quantitative methods rely on representativeness, qualitative methods are driven by the research questions (Patton, 2002, p.230). As Gay, Mills and Airasian mention, "many potential participants are unwilling to undergo the lengthy demands of participation; sampling in qualitative research is almost always purposive." (2006, p. 230).

The sample of this study was defined as the students who were participating in the Erasmus Program. The sample was narrowed down to the students coming to Boğaziçi University because it was more convenient for the researcher. At the beginning

of the Fall of 2005-2006, a meeting was organized with the International Relations Office of Boğaziçi University to explain the study and to ask for their assistance in finding Erasmus students who would be willing to participate. The Erasmus Program advisor provided help in reaching the sample for the study through electronic media. She was not allowed to give the personal data of the students, so she forwarded an email<sup>50</sup> written by the researcher to these thirty seven students. This was an introductory email explained the aim of the study, and asked for whether the students would be willing to participate. After sending the email, two students replied and indicated they were willing to participate. After a few days, the Erasmus Program advisor was asked to send the same email again. Even though she sent the email again, none of the students replied.

The Turkish Language Courses for foreigners at Boğaziçi University were the second places to get into contact with these students and short information about the research was given at the beginning of the courses by getting the permission of the instructors. In this way two more students volunteered to take part in the study. The other six students were found with the help of the first four volunteers.

Consequently, the participants of the study could be accumulated by both purposeful sampling and the snowball sampling strategy. “Snowball is the most useful way of sampling when it is difficult to find participants of the type needed” (Gay et al., 2006, p. 115). The first four participants identified the other participants. It was possible for the researcher to get into contact with other Erasmus students who volunteered to take part in the study. Doğuş University was not chosen as the field of this study.

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<sup>50</sup> This email can be found in Appendix B.

However, because two students from that university were introduced by the other interviewees and they were volunteered to take part in the study, they were added to the sample.

## Participants

While more complete and vivid introductions to each participant are provided in the findings and discussion chapter, the basic demographic is summarized below. The participants of this study were the university students who applied European Commission for getting Erasmus University Charter and also had scholarships as a result of the partnership between their own universities and Istanbul's Boğaziçi University in the Fall of the 2005-2006 academic year.

Table 2: The Demographic Information of the Students Coming to Boğaziçi University via the Erasmus Program between 2004- 2005 and 2006-2007<sup>51</sup>

	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	Total
Female	24	35	43	102
Male	17	30	33	80
Fall	26	37	72	135
Spring	15	28	4	47
Total	41	65	76	182

In the Fall of 2005-2006, thirty-seven students came to Boğaziçi University via the Erasmus Program. The distribution of the students from the European countries was as follows: sixteen from Germany, ten from Holland, four from Sweden, one from

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<sup>51</sup> This information was retrieved from the Boğaziçi University International Relations Office. The information about 2006-2007 showed the applications, applications were going on when the information was gathered.

Denmark, two from Greece, and two from Austria. Seventeen of the students were female and twenty of the students were male. Among those thirty-seven students, ten were selected to be the sample of this study. Eight of them were from Boğaziçi University and two were from Doğuş University. The age of the participants ranged between twenty-two and twenty-seven.

Table 3: Participants' Demographic Data<sup>52</sup>

Demographic name	Gender	Nationality	Country of home University
CG	M	German	Germany
CW	M	German	Netherlands
TW	M	Austrian	Austria
AR	M	German	Germany
GP	M	German	Germany
MS	M	German	Germany
HC	F	Austrian	Austria
DK	F	Dutch	Holland
HG	F	German	Netherlands
MN	F	German	Netherlands

As seen in Table 3, the number of German students was high in the sample; however three German students' home universities were in the Netherlands. Four of them were female and six of them were male. Each interviewee was coded with capital letters, and the nationality and his/her gender.

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<sup>52</sup> The table was formed according to the data gathered during the interviews.

## Instrument

An interview guide was used to conduct the interviews. An interview guide was formed to ensure the same basic line of researched topic was discussed with each interviewee. According to Patton, an interview guide provides a comprehensive and systematic way of interviewing in a limited time (2002, p.343). The researcher does not have to follow the same order for each interview, since the aim of using an interview guide is simply to provide a checklist for the interviewer. According to Patton, the interview guide approach is more appropriate for group interviews. It is also offered when the interviewer is free to explore the topic and free to build the conversation within the subject area and also focus on a particular subject (1990, p. 283).

The interview guide was constructed by using the help of two previous studies. The first one was a case study conducted by Elise Langan in 2000. The title of her study was “The European Union's Erasmus Mobility Policy: A Case Study of Three French Higher Education Institutions.” The questions about the Erasmus Program were taken into consideration. Langan used questionnaires when conducting her study. One of the questionnaires was prepared for students who were participants of the Erasmus Program and came to their home institutions back. This questionnaire was written in French. It was translated into Turkish and used as a base line for the questions about the Erasmus Program in the interview guide.

The second study was conducted by Michael Bruter in 2001. Its title was “Understanding Identity Realignment: The Emergence of a Mass European Identity.” Bruter proposed the study to understand the formation and evolution of feelings of

European identification at the individual level, and the evolution of a mass European identity in the last fifty years. In addition, he was discussing the Eurobarometer and the identifier questions while exploring the European identity. His study provided a good source while preparing interview guide.

In the end of the spring semester of the 2004-2005 academic year, two pilot interviews were conducted. The first one lasted 44 minutes. The second one lasted 69 minutes. After conducting pilot interviews, the interview guide was revised. Three questions were taken out from the guide. The first one was about the students' universities and programs in which they studied. The researcher already had this information from the International Relations Office of Boğaziçi University. The second was related with to family backgrounds. It was seen as an unrelated topic with their perceptions about the topic. The last one was about European unification. It was decided that this question directed the participants so it was removed from the guide.

### Data Collection Procedures

Research data was collected by conducting in-depth interviews. The method used in the study to capture individual differences and also variations from one person to another was a qualitative interviewing method. According to Patton, "qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit" (1990, p. 278).

The persons being interviewed responded in their own words and expressed their own personal perspectives. The interviews were done in English which was a

foreign language both for the participants and interviewees. However, even though all the participants used English fluently, it was not their native language. Accordingly it was not possible to assume that the language factor did not affect the interviews.

Each interview was carried out in a single meeting. The students accepted participating in face-to-face interviews. They were comfortable with the use of a tape recorder during the interviews. Moreover, the interviews were arranged on convenient days and at times to the interviewees, who seemed to enjoy the personal contact during the interview. Before the interviews, detailed information about the study had been given to the participants.

The first interview was conducted at the end of October and the last one was conducted in the first week of December. Efforts were made to conduct the interviews within a month because of the approaching Christmas break and final exam period; during which the students would not have been easily available for interviews. It was further assumed that it would be important to conduct all of the interviews within the same period because the experiences of the participants and their responses could change over time.

Seven interviews were conducted at the researcher's house. Three of them were conducted on the south campus of Boğaziçi University. The places where the interviews were conducted were selected to provide peaceful and comfortable atmospheres where the quality of the recordings also would be satisfactory. In order to lighten the mood, a few simple questions about anything interesting that had occurred during the day or anything the participants wanted to talk about were asked at the beginning of the

interviews. This was found to be an effective way to get the conversation flowing prior to asking questions that were more difficult to answer.

The length of the interviews ranged from 15 to 65 minutes and the average interview took 40 minutes. When the recorded interviews were typed up, the average text took ten A4 size pages (ranging from five to fifteen pages) when 1.5 spaced lines were used. The pages' font was Times New Roman, regular, size 12.

### Participants' Feedback

All participants were asked to review their responses and clarify any details that were unclear to the researcher, in order to ensure accurate interpretation and validity of the data collected. The text of the records were sent to the participants and six of the participants made revisions and elaborated on meaning. They were also correcting the spelling mistakes. Participants checked the accuracy of the document as well as the plausibility of the transcribed words.

One of the participants made corrections together with the researcher while listening to the record and, five of them chose to provide feedback and responded via email. Two of the participants read the texts and did not make any corrections to them. The last two participants did not make any comments about the texts and it was not possible to make contact with them.

## Role of the Researcher

According to Patton, in qualitative inquiry, “the researcher is the instrument” (1990, p.14). That is why the role of the researcher is very important for the validity in qualitative methods. In collecting data using interviews, it is important to understand that the meaning observed between the researcher and the participant is negotiated.

According to Gaskell (2000, p.45), one-to-one interviewing is not an ordinary conversation because there is an unusual relationship between the two people. He also has mentioned that the role of the interviewer is putting the interviewee at ease and establishing a relationship of trust and confidence. Verbal and non-verbal reinforcement and being relaxed became important in providing these conditions to the interviewee.

## Data Analysis Procedures

Valid analysis and interpretation of face-to-face interviews depend on carefully capturing the actual words of the person being interviewed. One way of doing this is tape recording and careful transcription. Even though full tape transcriptions or only parts of the tape are used to obtain the data, in the study full tape transcription was preferred (Patton, 1990, p. 348). Transcribing the tapes would allow for a deeper familiarity with the data, allowing the researcher to listen the participants’ voices, recalling tone, inflection, hesitations, and pauses again. Maxwell recommends doing one’s own transcription, as the “actual process of transcribing interviews” is an opportunity for data analysis (1996, p.78). To listen each record for several times, the

researcher was able to relive the interview. It was a great opportunity to have a complete understanding of the data.

All of the interviews were considered as individual cases. As Patton (1990, p. 381) asserts that “content analysis is the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data.” For this study, this means analyzing the content of interviews. In this particular inquiry, the interviews were organized and classified into five thematic categories. The categories included: identity, the definition of European, European identity, European integration, the Erasmus Program. These categories emerged as data were being collected. The content analysis was based on the inductive analysis approach. “Inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior data collection and analysis” (Patton, 1990, p. 390).

Patton describes an inductive analysis for several cases as “an inductive approach begins by constructing individual cases, without pigeon holing or categorizing those cases” (2002, p.57).

According to Bauer (2000, p. 138), content analysis brings the sampled materials and research materials together. The data analysis was done by using both the case and cross-case analysis, but at the beginning case analysis was used then cross-case analysis led to organizing the data.

Beginning with case analysis means writing a case study for each person interviewed or each unit studied. Beginning with cross-case analysis means grouping together answers from different people to common questions or analyzing different perspectives on central issues (Patton, 1990, p. 376).

That is to say, the initial focus is on the full understanding of individual cases. After that, each case can be combined thematically. Patton (1990) and also Gay, Mills and Airasian (2006) recommend listing themes as the first step of data analyzing in qualitative research. In the study, the interview texts were given codes. Then in each text, the statements related with the study were quoted. These quotations were divided into the themes that emerged from the texts themselves. Then for the cross-case analysis, they were brought together and divided into five main categories emerged from the text. The findings were interpreted in relation with the recurrent themes emerged from the data collected. They are given in the findings and discussion chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The validity of a qualitative research is defined as the degree to which the qualitative data collected accurately measures what is trying to be measured. Reliability is defined as the degree to which the study data consistently measure whatever they measure (Gay et al., 2006, p. 403). According to Patton, the validity and reliability of a qualitative study to a great extent depend on the methodological skill, sensitivity, and integrity of the researcher (Patton, 1990, p. 11). So it should be stated that the researcher in the qualitative study is also the research instrument, as Patton indicates (1990, p. 14), therefore the data collected may reflect biases of the researcher.

Evaluative validity has to do with whether the researcher was objective enough to report the data in as unbiased a way as possible, instead of making judgments and evaluations of the data (Gay, 2006, p. 403).

For this reason, during the interviews, it was important to talk little, listen a lot and take notes. The data was recorded accurately and written down fully as early as possible. However, there is an interaction between the researched and researcher, so the researcher's bias enters into the picture even if the researcher tries to stay out of it. It was hardly possible to mountain objectivity keep and personal reactions out of the study when there was relevance in the researcher's feelings to the matter at hand.

To ensure validity of a qualitative study, some basic steps are defined. First, all complexities in the study are encountered, then descriptive and context-relevant statements with as much detail as possible should be included. Although the quotations from the research participants were tried to be accurately portrayed and not to distort anything, the texts of the records were not checked by every interviewee (Gay, 2006, p. 403).

How participants responded during the interview process may not be truly representative of their perceptions. According to Smith (1999, p. 230), individual identity is situational. In other words, it is important to understand in which situation the individual participant is located. That is why situational variables might have played an important role in how the Erasmus students responded to the interview questions. In addition, interviews were conducted in English, which was a foreign language both for the researcher and the participants. This might have affected the way of responding to the interview questions, as well as the interpretations done by the researcher.

As mentioned by Gaskell (2000, p. 43), the number of interviews is determined according to the nature of the study. Therefore, collecting more data does not necessarily provide more detailed understanding of the phenomenon. According to Gaskell (2000, p. 43), saturation is able to be realized when “no new surprises” or “insights are forthcoming.” The data saturation can be considered to be reached when new data doesn’t seem to produce additional information. The number of participants was not rigidly fixed, because the data collection was to continue until data saturation was reached. In this study after the fifth interview, common themes began to appear. After conducting ten interviews, it was accepted as an end point for the interviews.

## Limitations

Research and analysis conducted with individuals from a particular cultural situation should not be generalized to other cultural settings. It can not be assumed that the experience and perceptions of the participants in this study can be applicable to the all Erasmus students.

In this study, due to the difficulties in reaching the participants, snowball technique became unavoidable to use. On the other hand, it can be considered as a source of bias that German students were more representative in the sample than students from other European countries.

The interviews were conducted during the fall semester. The participants had then spent one and a half month in their host institution in Istanbul. It is therefore possible that their impressions were limited, and could have been different after spending more time in Turkey. Lastly, the researcher in this study is also the research instrument as Patton indicated (1990, p.14), therefore the data collected may reflect biases of the researcher. There is an interaction between the researcher and researched, so the researcher bias enters into the picture even if the researcher tries to stay out of it. It was hardly possible to keep own feelings and personal reactions out of the study when there was relevance in the researcher's feelings to the matter at hand.

This project was motivated by the researcher's values and interest in assuring that higher education does not intentionally aim to homogenize knowledge and thought to a European perspective. However, the researcher approached this study from a critical theory perspective based on the views of social and cultural reproduction. The higher

education institutions and higher education programs might have the potential to be manipulated by a certain approach whether intentionally or unintentionally. The underlying aim was then to determine the educational approach that may exist for Erasmus program in order to improve European identity in Erasmus students' attitudes.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter documents and explains the empirical findings derived from the interviews with Erasmus students. The participants are described in detail. The in depth interviews with the Erasmus students are analyzed and the major themes were interpreted. Major findings were related back to the questions guiding this study in order to provide clarity and cohesiveness. Major findings were structures around five discussion themes: identity, the definition of European, European identity, European integration and the Erasmus Program. In this chapter, findings and discussion of emerging concerns are given under these five major themes.

#### Participants

The information about the participants is listed below in the order of the interview date. The information was gathered before and during the interviews. The participants' ages range from twenty-two to twenty-seven.

First Interviewee (CG, Germany, M): He was living with two Turkish people in the central region of the European side of Istanbul. He was an undergraduate at the University of Konstanz, in the field of political sciences, economics and administrative sciences; he was in his fifth semester. He had visited a lot of countries, among them European countries and non-European countries. He had been in Istanbul once during a journey with his high school class and had had good impressions of Turkey. He gave importance to experiencing a lot of things and collecting cultural objects. He was paying his education fees on his own.

Second Interviewee (CW, Germany, M): He was living in the central region on the European side of Istanbul. He came from the University of Maastricht, in Limburg, Netherlands, which is a highly multicultural area. He liked traveling a lot. He said he may never work in Germany. He had come to Turkey in summer before the courses had started at university and visited some parts of the Turkey and even had worked for a few weeks at a beach. He had given private German lessons in Istanbul.

Third Interviewee(TW, Austria, M): He was not brought up in Austria, because his father was a teacher in Istanbul, so he was brought to Istanbul and they went back when he was ten. He wanted to improve his Turkish and he thought might live in Istanbul longer in the future. He was living in the central region of the European side of Istanbul. He studied at the University of Wien in Austria, in the field of Turkish Literature and Language.

Fourth Interviewee (AR, Germany, M): He studied Physics at Freiburg University. He came to Istanbul with a friend from his department. He was a senior and did not want to lose the year. He could speak English, French, a bit of Turkish and a bit of Spanish. He had already made some friends in Istanbul whom he had met on a holiday two years earlier. He had not come to Turkey before but he had friends here and those friends had helped him a lot while he was renting his house in the central region of the European side of Istanbul. He was living with his friends in Istanbul but he lived alone in Germany.

Fifth Interviewee (GP, Germany, M): He was living in the Superdorm<sup>53</sup> of Bogaziçi University. He thought the Superdorm was the easiest choice for living in Istanbul; however he had many problems while he was moving. He studied at Eindhoven University of Technology. He lived in a small town which is forty kilometers away from Helden. He liked playing soccer. In choosing Istanbul the weather was another criterion for him as well as its close situation to many countries. For him, Istanbul was worth seeing and visiting.

Sixth Interviewee (DK, Holland, F): She was interested in human rights, the Middle East, identity, politics, sociology, and hanging out with her friends. She liked traveling and seeing different cultures. She had been to Egypt the previous summer and she had decided to come to Turkey because she thought that this would be the safest way of studying the Middle East. She was living in the Superdorm of Bogaziçi University

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<sup>53</sup> Superdorm is only one alternative for all of the exchange students, who want to stay in a dormitory of Boğaziçi University. As a result, the number of exchange students is high in that dormitory.

where she was happy because it was possible for her to be together with the other exchange students. She was a student from the University of Utrecht in Holland.

Seventh Interviewee (MN, Germany, F): She was living on the Asian side of Istanbul because of the transportation problem. Her university in Istanbul was in the Asian side which was not near the central region of Istanbul. She was from Eastern Germany. She studied at the University of Maastricht in the Netherlands in Limburg.

Eighth Interviewee (HG, Germany, F): She was living on the Asian side of Istanbul. She studied at the University of Maastricht. She lived in the city of Bonn which she liked very much and with which she identified with throughout her studies in the Netherlands. She wanted to learn Turkish properly.

Ninth Interviewee (MS, Germany, M): He became interested in the Turkish language so he took a language course in Germany without planning to come to Turkey. It was just for being able to communicate with Turkish people in Germany. The Turkish teacher who was giving the course talked a lot about Istanbul and in this way he decided to come to Istanbul. He studied physics at Freiburg University. He was a senior when he and his friend decided to come to Turkey. He was living in the central region of the European side of Istanbul. He sometimes felt insecure in Istanbul. He mentioned that this was because his home city, Freiburg, was a small city when compared to Istanbul and also because he was living together with a girl from Germany and sometimes she felt a little bit threatened by the men in Istanbul.

Tenth Interviewee (HC, Austria, F): She could speak Turkish fluently, her parents were from Turkey, but she was born in Austria and in Austria she only had contact with Austrian people. She had been studying at the University of Wien, in the field of Turkish Literature and Language, for three years. She was living in a dormitory of the *Kredi Yurtlar Kurumu*<sup>54</sup> (Institution for scholarship and accommodation which is governed by the Ministry of Education). She had always wanted to come to Turkey.

## Discussion Themes

### Identity

Two related issues were discussed with the participants to ascertain their perceptions about the identity. First of all, the participant was asked to talk about herself/himself. Most of the participants introduced themselves as exchange students in Turkey and mentioned their universities and departments. On the other hand, when they were invited to discuss their identities, they could not decide what they really wanted to describe. Identity was a broad term, even though each one had a general definition of his or her own identity for sure, they mostly thought of types of identity and tried to consider about which types of identity they were willing to talk. They were told that they were free to make any definitions that they wanted. From these two issues, three different definitions of identity emerged from participants' report; personal identity, multiple identity, and

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<sup>54</sup> It was translated into English by Gülbahar Tunç.

“being European.”

According to Bruter (2005, p. 9), a definition of personal identity formation can be based on belonging, upbringing, and personal and cultural characteristics. Personal identity, therefore, appears to be a form of identification which is centered directly on the individual and extends towards the rest of the world. Three of the ten participants reflected on personal identity, and they described their identities based on such variables as their special characteristics, hobbies, and interests. It is possible to categorize this kind of identification as personal identity.

I am not racist, religious, really. I do not know, actually. I am just a student. (GP, Germany, M)

I am male, I live alone in Germany. My parents are normal, working class people. I can speak English, French, a little bit of Turkish and a little bit of Spanish... (AR, Germany, M)

I like to travel a lot. I like to see different cultures. I am interested in human rights, the Middle East, identity, politics, sociology, hanging out with friends, I do not know. (DK, Holland, F)

Although one participant mentioned his national identity and national background, other participants defined their own identities by putting the multiple or cross-cultural perspective in the core of their definitions. They made definitions based more on cultural perspectives and interactions between the cultures and nations.

I am something between Turkish and Austrian from my thinking. (HC, Austria, F)

I am an exchange student at Boğaziçi University, coming from the Universiteit Maastricht, in Limburg, Netherlands, which is a very multicultural area...I think it is natural to have a multiple identity. (CW, Germany, M)

“Being European,” as the third theme, raised from the interviews. Being European can be described as a political identity and the participants underlined this as a function of their identities. Being European was defined by Wallace (2002, p. 78) as to share European values, history, identity, to have political, security-related and economic consequences.

I had to reflect a lot also not only about Germany, but also about the European Union, so I think they are like different layers of identity. One of them is my city and the other one is Germany and the other one is also the European Union. (HG, Germany, F)

I see myself not so as real German citizen, so really not. Because in Germany how to say if you say I am German, for example, or if you would I am German, I would be proud to be German, it has a very negative attachment, too. So it is because of the identity. It is just only because I see myself in the generation, let say as the European. (CG, Germany, M)

I feel probably Austrian which to me implies being European because Austria is in Europe. (TW, Austria, M)

This is very difficult because I am actually from Eastern Germany so I have grown up like the first of the citizen of “GDR” and I felt between upward like the heritage of “GDR” and I do not feel really German and may be I feel a little bit European but I am not even sure about that. I do not know if I should really feel European but I do not feel really German. (MN, Germany, M)

In each of the four descriptions, the participants mentioned his or her national identity besides being European. As has been discussed by Bruter (2000, p. 244) and Castano (2004, p. 50), it is not possible to claim that the European identity is compatible with national identities. It seems that the four participants indicated their national identity as a sub-category of their European identity. In addition, they define their countries as “European” because they are geographically in “Europe”.

## Definition of European

Four of the participants used the word “European” while they were defining their identities. The participants were invited to consider the definition of “European.” If they were feeling “European,” how did they define it? Most of them commented that there was no certain definition of being European. Only one participant gave no comment. However, the other nine participants tried to define “who is European.” Their responses could be classified in two: geographical definition and relation with the EU and EU values.

As Wallace (2002, p. 79) has mentioned, a geographical definition of Europe hardly can be given because there is no idea of Europe common to all European states, and therefore there also is no agreement on where Europe ends. He writes that in reality it must be said that the drawing of the geographical boundaries around “Europe” is also a matter of political process and engenders much debate. Although it is claimed that boundaries enabled social systems to relate to their environment in a regular and predictable way, Europe might have no clear boundaries. “Europe as a set of values or as a region of shared history, has no clear outer limits, and many competing claims to constitute its historical core” (Wallace, 2002, p. 82).

Even though Europe cannot be reconstructed without drawing boundaries, without bringing some states in and leaving the others out, when it comes to defining “Europe,” it becomes an imaginary space. Geographically, there is not a unique description of Europe’s boundaries. There are many different boundary descriptions

because of political and cultural reasons.<sup>55</sup>

In general Europe's borders can be drawn from the Atlantic to the Urals, but this geographic conception might no longer be compatible with the realities of the twenty-first century. In spite of this, Hassner has asked, "how can the real borders of Europe be defined if it is not the whole planet?" According to him, "Europe is bounded by fluid and contradictory borders" (2002, p. 45).

However, one participant gave a geographical definition for Europe. Europeans are the people who are living within these geographical boundaries.

The people within Europe are European and here I stick to the geographical definition. Geographically, it is clear where Europe ends: At the Bosphorus. A part of Russia can be considered as European, Ukraine as well. (CW, Germany, M)

Even though two other participants indicated the geographical boundaries, they referred to the Western part of Europe. The Western part of Europe included the founding countries of the European Union or the "the old" EU before the enlargement. However, the European Union has enlarged five times and now it has twenty-five member states. Regardless of this, it is possible to deduce that for them, compared to the Eastern part, the Western part of Europe is more "European."

Then you have to make a distinction between Western European and European in general. It is different than European in general. I mean, by living Europe is European. (GP, Germany, M)

From my point of view it is really those countries where considered to be European like all these Western Europe countries. Eastern countries may be not as much, I do not know why, but I think they are Eastern countries...so I would say the original Europe would really be France, Spain, Italy or Germany, but I would like it to be expanded some how. (MS, Germany, M)

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<sup>55</sup> This information was taken on 24 April from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europe>

Three other participants mentioned the European Union and its values. The European Union's common values were represented as the criteria for being European. The values, as the invisible boundaries which keep Europeans together, were mentioned instead of rigid borders which divide and exclude. Those shared values implied mostly Western values and also European Union's values which were as inherited from the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the English and French Revolutions. These draw up the boundaries of Europe.

...everything that is in the European Union or somewhere around it or near. I don't want to exclude anyone, and I think as the European you shouldn't do that. (MN, Germany, F)

...there are some invisible boundaries. Me from myself, I see Europe, in a very idealistic view. It is an idea about how can we share and live culture, identity, economy every thing that is for a well being. How can we share live together within what do we have to do to guarantee that living in such a system in such a union is quite a good and has a good performance. So this is for me Europe is nothing, it is an idea, it has nothing to do for me with the continent. (CG, Germany, M)

I don't want this conflict. I think, for example if you are born in Turkey, you can also be European, I think it is the way of thinking so the things that I have said first this democratic thinking, may be human rights so it is not only the free living, you can do what you want to do but you have also the thinking of responsibility. (HC, Austria, F)

Delanty (1995, p.3) and Wallace (2000, p. 82) have stated that Europe is more than a region and it is a set of values and has no clear outer limits. According to them, it is possible to state that a specific definition of European would be difficult to delineate. The three participants referred both to the European Union, the geographical definition of the continent, and to the values of the European Union.

European, if you say who is a citizen of the European Union, you can easily define by who is one of the member states, but who is European is may be also from geographically so everything to Moscow and the Bosphorus. (AR, Germany, M)

...the European is when I say the word I mostly, or when I read it, I think of the EU, European. Now it is changing so since the enlarged EU; twenty five countries...This is a strange thing because actually “European” or to “be European” means that you stand on a geographical thing which pretty funny to have a geographical name for a thing like identity. That is a bit weird. That is why for me “European means” these old EU nations. (TW, Austria, M)

I mean you can be European but not be in the European Union. I think it is being European; it depends a lot on the cultural background, the traditions but also this is may be the past like history, culture and tradition, but also I think you can feel European by identifying with the European Union values. (HG, Germany, M)

The definition of the European emerged as a combination of the three definitions which did not contest each other. Nevertheless, they agreed that it is hard to give a unique definition of the European.

### European Identity

In the previous theme, the participants were invited to consider “who is European.” European identity was discussed separately after that. The aim was to handle the relation between being European and the European identity. The participants were invited to describe the European identity. Two of the participants indicated that the European identity could not exist in the consciousness of people. Although, in the previous theme, national identities had emerged as sub-categories of being European, when defining the European identity, the two participants said that people in Europe identify with their national identities and a common European identity had not shaped yet in the

consciousness of people. However, Castano (2002, p. 50) has discussed people's level of identification with the EU and their native countries and if these two were contested, high levels of European identity would go hand in hand with low levels of national identity, and vice a versa. He has said that it could not be said that the two levels of identification contradict or not.

I think the European Identity doesn't really exist in the conscious of the people. They feel more related to their own nations, for instance Italians feel that they are Italian Germans feel that they are German, and I do not think if you would ask someone in France who is a German or an Italian, always says own country... A lot of people just do not relate themselves or their identity to European Identity. (MN, Germany, F)

In Germany, nation or *Volk* has like the Turkish "millet" an ethnic attachment, whereas in France not necessarily. You can become French without originally being French. The concepts of nation and national identity are different all over in Europe. I am not sure whether the European Union as an institution can facilitate such a common identity. Yet, it might be possible for the future, as history has shown that political entities like a state can develop such an identity. (CW, Germany, M)

One of the participants explained that the identity formed different layers and so she felt merely European when she was confronted with the people who were not from Europe.

Smith explained this situation as follows:

Individuals identify themselves and are identified by others in different ways according to the situations in which they find themselves; as one goes abroad, one tends to classify oneself and be classified by others differently from one's categorization at home (Smith, 1999, p. 230).

I only feel European if I am confronted with people who are not from Europe such as maybe Americans or something then only when they specifically ask something about Hollander, Europe But otherwise, for instance right now I do not feel specifically European. I just feel may be a bit Dutch. (DK, Holland, F).

Seven participants related the European identity with the European Union. But they did not give strict definitions about the European identity, referring to the historical background of the idea of European Union and the values of the European Union. In the EU, it is not possible to be claimed that there is one common or widely-shared culture. However, considering the basis of the European identity, it is often argued that Europe as a peace project is an alternative seed crystal of collective identification.

For much of Europe is the unity of diversity and so many different cultures, very different languages and I think this really is what is charming about the European Union. It is so diverse, but this also kind of hinders the decision-making process, like also makes the work more difficult. (HG, Germany, F)

It is not like cultural identities. So I think it is more a formal frame. For example, you can travel to France without showing a passport, just more convenient for the people and you can expect, let's say, the same laws and rights in the other countries, in the other European Union countries. It just brings people closer together and makes everything easier. It is easier for, people to get in touch with each other and to exchange and to reduce prejudices. (AR, Germany, M)

Of course it is the countries that are considered to be Europe but I think I do not know. And now in the news there is a lot about the EU, so I think when I hear about the European identity, I also think about this EU thing. (MS, Germany, M)

So it is an interesting thing to have a something like the European Union which wants to have one identity, but in itself, it has so many different nations, and national identities. But still I think Europe has a very the probably mostly the western part, the old EU part which one usually sees as Europe is coming from there. This identity probably strengths for values like freedom, maybe the French revolution. I think that is quite strong and, of course, the Christian church is also very much related to Europe. That is it and by having these wars, this bloody history now, people can realize that maybe peace is another solution which would one can strive for before shedding too much blood. (TW, Austria, M)

European identity, I mean if you look where the European Union is coming from an origin, my opinion is, of course, some part of the European history after the second world war was formed in, my

opinion, mainly out of the efforts after the stated friendship between France and Germany. So in my opinion the European Union was formed in these two countries, the idea of Europeanism, this is my personal opinion so, they are nowadays, the two most major countries that are trying to implement such European standards and so on. (CG, Germany, M)

It is democratic, it is a free life, free choice... It is possible to have this free choice and everything also inside. I was always a fan of the sixties and seventies thinking; not only hippie generations, but also "love" and "peace" and these things and I think then in Europe, you can't live without these feelings in Europe. (HC, Austria, F)

When the participants defined European identity, they also referred to the common passport and having the right to travel without showing a passport and also having the same laws and rights in the other countries, those points did not emerge when the discussion theme was "who is European."

### European Integration

The participants discussed whether the European integration should continue and they tried to understand what was meant by the word "integration" because sometimes it could be confusing to discriminate European integration as political and economic integration. These dimensions were not mentioned during the interviews. The participants were positive about the European integration process. Only one participant mentioned that the consequences of the regulations through the integration process would not be good for the countries or the cities, and that the life would totally change.

I think the way the countries are doing this EU thing has lots of very bad things, very negative things, for example, I do not know how Istanbul would, I think it would change a lot when it would become a part of the EU. It would become stricter with rules, but the life would totally change. (MS, Germany, M)

Five of the participants indicated that the European integration process should continue. If everyone basically can contain his traditional, original identity and original culture but also will gain something as well, integration can be positive and should be supported. As Shore (2000, p.21) has stated, the integration process strengthens the “European identity” and “European consciousnesses”. One of the participants indicated European integration should be deepened and widened, may be open. Armingeon writes that the support for the European integration will increase as more citizens become aware of it; however it is likely to happen “behind the backs” of citizens. (2004, p. 241) Two of the participants were positive about the integration process and mentioned the fifty years period and the success of economic and peace policies within Europe.

I think it should (continue). People should be more aware of Europe and the European Identity, but I think it is more and more shifting towards the European Identity then towards the national identity, a lot of like economics; they are shifting from national economics to supranational economics and also politics are starting to shift. I think people should be more aware of the fact that they are living in Europe and they have the European identity. Therefore European integration should be deepened and may be open, widened. (MN, Germany, F)

I mean if you regard the historical perspective, the EU is the most powerful, most successful peace policy which has ever existed in human history, in world history. Yet it is a very difficult issue because some people, they do not understand the approach unity in diversity while that is actually what the European Union strives for. Everyone can basically contain his traditional, his original identity, and his original culture but will also gain something. So it should be a “win-win” situation created, not only economically, but also culturally. (CW, Germany, M)

Yes, of course, definitely, I think it is a big chance to share our welfare, not that just some small parts have very, very high standing welfare, the other part doesn't. That is the big challenge and making Europe more stable and for keeping up the European values like freedom and fraternity. These things may be, but it is just the risk of unifying Europe, may be. (TW, Austria, M)

Yes, for example, I was in London, I was in Paris, may be Paris is very far away from London, but it has the same thinking. I mean it is good, if we can say where Europeans belong as cultural and this and that. (HC, Austria, F)

There are so many, there are reasons to vote against the constitution but it seems like people are so afraid to loose their nation states, those nation states are afraid to loose sovereignty, but I am very positive about it. I think last fifty years show that this is a good way to peace and prevent war. (HG, Germany, F)

Although the other three participants were not totally against the European integration process, they were concerned about the limits of the integration. They were afraid of the effects of the integration on the countries and the European Union itself. "Too far" integration might also be a great risk. They were concerned about the problems within the European Union and warned about the limits of integration without solving the problems and providing a balance within the EU.

People can communicate with each other, so that is what I think is great about it. You should always keep your culture, origin, if you go through with the integration too far that might disappear. To some extent, European integration is good, but not too far. (GP, Germany, M)

I am happy to see it that we are opening our boundaries in a cultural way and all the things to the other countries. When I saw these very huge efforts, to let especially the Eastern countries in...I mean integration shall be...So before you open your borders to new countries, the old system, the old union shall be really in very good condition. ...I am only afraid if it is not a big bubble, you know that is getting bigger and bigger and ... (CG, Germany, M)

You are maybe concerned about Turkey and the Eastern Europe countries. I think it is a good possibility to do it. But the European Union has a lot of problems itself right now I think; like internal problems, organization is not very well. I think the European Constitution was not signed.... They always tell about to Turkey may be ten or fifteen years to join. I think it is not realistic to say that it would be faster, that it would be able to do it faster. (AR, Germany, M)

Shore (2000, p. 21) has discussed how whole integration process contributes to the creation of the concept of the new Europe. Additionally it makes the people think that they are part of this community. One of the participants was not against the ongoing European integration process; however, it did not to constitute one unified Europe.

In economic sense it is a good thing because Europe if it wants to conceive form a powerful block against the United States and China as an upcoming economic force. It is a good thing for countries to have interpolated to one another... but I do not think Europe can ever be one unified continent in cultural sense” (DK, Holland, F)

### Common Currency and Common Passport

Common currency and common passport were discussed separately with the participant. They are important steps of the European integration process that affect the peoples' lives in Europe. The participants' attitudes towards having a common passport were taken into consideration. The common passport regulation has provided a common space of mobility for EU citizens. One of the participants defined the common passport as a piece of paper issued by bureaucrats and did not identify himself with it. Another one commented that it was even necessary to have a common passport because passports were in fact common. Two participants stated that the common passport meant independence and was one of the most positive futures of the European Union. And it

was defined as a dream to travel each country freely. Two participants stated that national identifiers had been away by the common passport so that the feeling of European would come to the fore.

I would miss something Austrian; the thing that I am Austrian wasn't in there. So if you just say "I am European, coming from this and this city", I would still probably want to have Austria in it. All of it is ridiculous, like that. If the EU manages to get so far, but the European passport is used or makes sense then it is the same, but "I am Austrian" is useless because then one has to think in bigger dimensions and still I can say "I am from there." The city I am from probably always would be a point around which you focus your life somehow, coming back there some time or spending your vacation there, no matter where you are or go to that is my point of the European passport. (TW, Austria, M)

...So for those in the European Union it would be good. I don't know exactly, but I think it would also be important for European Identity that Europeans have lived in the European Union should also be aware of the fact that "we are more in European Union than only nationality, different national country." (MN, Germany, F)

Although the common currency could be explained just as an economic matter, the participants' attitudes toward it were different. They all welcomed it. Some participants stated that the Euro was an economic thing and was better for the economic staff. They pointed out that because of the common currency, prices had started to rise but now it was a good thing and it was easier for them to travel. One participant noted that the Euro was a part of the process of European integration and added that the Euro had made borders more invisible. The fear that it would affect "national" identity or cultural heritages was stated against the idea of the common currency.

You can compare the price in a very easy way, it is very useful and the European currency, the Euro itself, makes the borders more invisible, you know, you just can go, it is not, you do not feel like a foreigner in another country because of the currency I am very happy about this... I mean even the solution, to let the Euro, European currency regulates

through the international, supranational banking institute the European Central Bank, is in my opinion very good. It makes more independent, you know. (CG, Germany, M)

The common currency was taken into account in the study because in general it is accepted as the most important public symbol of European identity and it is clearly intended to function as an agent of European consciousness. Currencies are vehicles for the expression of cultural identity, particularly national identity; they are reflected not only as symbols of state sovereignty, but also are major determinants of the self-government.

Coins and banknotes have traditionally functioned to define the boundaries of kingdoms, empires and nations. The very first coins bore the profile of emperors and kings and symbols of state power, much as they do today. With their images of national figures, monuments and inventions, banknotes and coins are powerful icons and instruments of government that help to render abstract ideas of state and nationhood a daily political reality (Shore, 2000, p. 91).

It also can be claimed that it shows the power of the European Central Bank's authority and economic sovereignty within the EU because there is virtually no currency in the world that is not controlled by a nation-state, and no country of significant size that does not control its own currency. One participant mentioned that there was no need to use a common currency. After eighteen years, it was hard to adapt to the new currency, but there are the national items still on it so it does not matter. Four participants emphasized their old national currency. The national currency had been abandoned; however, they commented the change in currency was for the sake of the common feeling in Europe and they were not totally against it in the end.

This was very good. I like it much, it is very easy. I think till now everybody has except the British, things in the right currency and I do not think in D-Mark anymore, I am calm with Euros. ...And always when I go to a country which does not have it, like to England, may be, they are so stupid, why they do not do it, too, because it would be so much easier for everybody to have to change the currency. I think it is very good. (AR, Germany, M)

For us Germans, it was a trade-off. Many people claim that we sold the D-Mark for the German Unification. I don't know whether this is true, but true is that we gave up some national pride for the sake of Europe. But I am quite happy about that. The Greek Drachme was the oldest currency in the world - they gave it up for the Euro. I think the Euro is not only a currency; it is a symbol as well. (CW, Germany, M)

First there was a bit, again I missed this, my thing... ... It makes easy to talk to people somewhere if so, again you have this more common feeling that is sure. But in the end I am used to it now, I do not care what the old prices any more. I think it is a great thing. It worked. (TW, Austria, M)

### The Erasmus Program

This section explores the Erasmus Program in which participants participated for one and a half months and how this pertained to their own perceptions about European identity. All of the participants discussed the Erasmus Program and their responses were analyzed under five sub-categories: information, participation, selecting Turkey as the host country, strengths and weaknesses of the program and influence of the program. Yet it should be considered that the process was still on when the interviews were conducted.

## Information

The participants were invited to talk about their experiences with the Erasmus Program. The program has been activated in higher education institutions and universities which are responsible for informing students about the Erasmus Program. How the participants are informed and whether they are able to obtain correct information about the program are crucial issues to get the students' perceptions about the program itself. According to the data, one participant stated that she had no information about the program before getting the scholarship. Nine of the participants indicated that they had known about Erasmus before they had become involved.

They talked about when they first had heard about the Erasmus Program. They had heard about it in different ways, like the home page of the university, small parties where former Erasmus students told about their experiences, some information courses about how students can prepare go to a foreign country. They described the Erasmus Program as a "student thing" and "if you enter the university, you get to know it." The Erasmus Program was described as the first address for studying abroad. Going abroad for one semester was mandatory for three participants. Having an "Erasmus semester" was one choice. The other was doing an internship. And they preferred to do Erasmus. It could be said that the Erasmus Program had become part of their studies. One participant mentioned the European Commission and defined the aim of the program as further interaction between Europeans.

Erasmus is an exchange program designed to further interaction among young Europeans. It should also encourage European students to learn another European language, which I find very good. Thankfully, the

Commission sponsors a bit of pocket money. Yet, strangely, I get only eighty € here in Istanbul. If a Turk goes to Holland he gets three hundred Euros that is a rip-off. (CW, Germany, M)

### Participation

The participants were invited to tell about their experiences about participation in the Erasmus Program. It was tried to be understood how they decided to take part in it. The aim was to understand if there were other exchange programs in their university and also why they particularly wanted to take part in the Erasmus Program. It was discovered that Erasmus Program was the well known exchange program at their universities. It was defined as the easiest way of going abroad.

I am positively surprised. What shall I say? I mean as I mentioned before it is very easy. I think it is a very very easy way for students even for lazy students if they are not lazy enough to how look in the internet and fill the forms themselves... (CG, Germany, M)

...it is easy for you to go abroad with an Erasmus actually here they are very nice here, sweetest and easiest to stay too much. (TW, Austria, M)

Although there were other options, they preferred to take part in the Erasmus Program. There were different reasons: first of all, they got credits for the courses they had. Secondly, as far as going abroad is considered, the Erasmus Program was accepted as an opportunity to provide different partnerships and grants. Three participants mentioned the economic reason for getting especially an Erasmus scholarship. Although they mentioned that they were not given much money from the European Commission to meet their needs, it cost less than being a special student, student grants were an

important factor. Beneath the economic reason, one of the participants mentioned that the Erasmus Program advocates the students in many ways.

Actually it is a good thing because you have money; if you have problems they help you, something like that. It is not coming here on your own. You can find friends something like that, but Erasmus is higher and I think it is a very good thing and it is possible to study another country and at the same time you don't study only, you have to make test, you have to become credits. (HG, Germany, F)

One of the participants stated that the program was a way of getting to know another culture. The Erasmus Program provided language courses, too, and this was mentioned as an opportunity to get in touch with the culture of the host country.

I think it is a good program, I think it is useful, it is good to get to know another culture and get in touch with like a certain country, with the language. I think it is important and good. People have to go somewhere else and have their own experiences and can grow there. (MN, Germany, F)

### Selecting Turkey as the Host Country

The participants were invited to talk about their choice of Turkey as the host country. Six of the participants had selected Turkey because it was related to their study fields. Three of the participants indicated that they had selected Turkey because they had wanted to be in Istanbul. One of the participant also mentioned that Turkey was different from other European countries and this had made it attractive.

Turkey was seen from different perspectives, as a European city, especially as an Eastern Europe; as a country outside Europe; and as a Middle Eastern country. These different approaches might stem from the European Union and Turkey relationships and

also the geographical position of Turkey.

I didn't want to stay within the European Union - I am European Studies student but I am not such a big fan of the European Union anymore. Maybe my emotional support for this project slowly comes back now - anyway- that is the first point..... Third, it is the biggest European city (Istanbul). Fourth, to come back to the European Union issue, - am I contradicting myself? - it is a very strong topic at the moment and I would like to see whether Turkey is ready to pool sovereignty with us. (CW, Germany, M)

It should be added that three of the participants had been in Istanbul before they came via the Erasmus Program. One of the participants has dual nationality, so she had always wanted to come to Turkey and experience the culture.

### Relations with the Exchange Students

The participants were asked to tell about their relationships with the other exchange students. The Erasmus Program was adopted in 1987 and one of the objectives of the program was stated as “to strengthen the interaction between citizens in different Member States with a view to consolidating the concept of a People's Europe.”<sup>56</sup> It is crucial that the places where the students lived showed parallelism with their interaction with the other exchange students. One of the participants was living in a dormitory of *Kredi Yurtlar Kurumu* (Institution for scholarship and accommodation which is governed by the Ministry of Education). Two of the participants were living in the Superdorm of Boğaziçi University where most of the exchange students stay in general. However, seven of the participants preferred to rent house. Some of them were sharing

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<sup>56</sup> This information was taken on 15 June 2006 from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31987D0327:EN:HTML>

their house with exchange students and some of them were sharing with Turkish students. The participants said that they had good relations with the other exchange students. Six of the participants said that they were in contact with the exchange students and they had many things in common and it was good to get along with each other.

I see the international students a lot because many of them live in the Superdorm and I think we are all here and we do not know anyone so we are all looking for friends so kind of all the international students know each other because they all are looking for friends so I hang out with them a lot. (DK, Holland, F)

I think it is pretty good. Since all are in the Superdorm that is a good thing about the Superdorm so you can meet them quite a lot of times. And we have the Turkish course, Elementary Turkish, which pretty much all students are in. (GP, Germany, M)

...the group of Erasmus students is too small and not so much you know. We do not stick together too much. I would describe it as good and I am always happy to have somebody who speaks German, who knows Maastricht, who can understand my kind of feelings and I said, "oh, so much chaos here, where are the Dutch bikes?" They can understand me and I feel as really also being part of a whole, makes home kind of here. (HG, Germany, F)

I don't know a lot of international students and but the ones I know I have very good relations with and sometimes it is really useful because you can share experiences, how is your Turkish? Can I go there is it dangerous or not? What can I do in this and this situation? You can give each other idea. (MN, Germany, F)

For me, if I meet some other exchange students and I have seen them somewhere and it is easy to start talking to because you have something in common, but it is not very intensive and I think it is probably because I live here and know a few other exchange students. I do not mind too much because it is nice to know some people from other countries, but it is nice to know some Turkish people. (TW, Austria, M)

...This Erasmus language course they had all the Erasmus students, so they meet all together ...I didn't know them, but now I met some of them and I know everyone. All of them are living in Beyoğlu I think

and you see them often in the streets. So it is very nice, I think. (AR, Germany, M)

Three participants mentioned that they had good relations with other exchange students, but they were not a close Erasmus community and they did not prefer to be with exchange students since they came to Turkey to know another culture. In addition they said that they were already meeting at the Turkish Language and Literature course and also at the Erasmus meeting. However, they mentioned that they did not want to take part in these meetings and be with other Erasmus students.

We say hello to each other. ...But I am not here to meet exchange students, but to get to know the country and the locals. (CW, Germany, M)

Not good, I have only one, he was my friend there (from Austria) and I have no contact with the others there were such evenings where they go to Tophane and something like that, but my friend and I, we do not want to do such things with twenty Erasmus students. (HC, Austria, F)

Of course, it is very easy to, you are always at the Erasmus and you always get in touch with, be with other Erasmus students, but I think we are not such a close Erasmus community as it is in other cities, like I visited a friend, an Erasmus student in Granada in Spain and they were really hanging around with Erasmus students, I think, all the time, and I think this differs here, you are not such a close group of Erasmus students, so for some reason. But may be I also always try to avoid Erasmus parties. I do not know because I think it is a stupid thing in Turkey and being together with in a room with only Erasmus students. (MS, Germany, M)

One of the participants mentioned that there were two kinds of international students, those who wanted to study and those who to party and he did not want to let that year to be a lost year, he go to the parties. He mentioned that it made no difference. It is possible to claim that the Erasmus Program provides opportunities such as meetings and parties and such to the Erasmus students to get into contact with each other.

## Relations with Turkish People

The participants were questioned about their relationships with the Turkish community. They reported that they were not in contact with many of people, but that they had good relationships in general. According to the new generation of the community and education and training programs after the 2006 report, one of the future needs is defined as “the people-to-people” contacts forming part of the external dimension of education and training are increasingly understood as contributing to intercultural dialogue.”<sup>57</sup> It is possible to say that this becomes more important as the societies in the EU continue to become more culturally diverse and intercultural understanding and respect become a need for the people in European Union. Moreover, it is claimed that there is an increasing need to deepen understanding among European citizens of the nature of the European identity.<sup>58</sup>

The participants mentioned that they had good relations; however, two participants indicated the language barrier: it was not easy to get into contact with Turkish people.

I think it is not of the international community because I think, first of all, the language barrier and I think may be, some Turkish students are not so willing to talk to you at first. Because they are afraid their English is not good enough. And I think may be it is also a bit of a cultural difference in that. I think you, as an international student, mostly first have to take the step to approach Turkish students and then everyone is very kind to you after you approach them, but mostly they won't approach you first. (DK, Holland, F)

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<sup>57</sup> This information was taken on 10 August from

<http://www.tiigrihype.ee/static/eudoc/Uue%20polvkonna%20programm.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

I live together with a Turkish student. I met some Turkish people. I am only here a month and a half so I could say I have friends here I don't know them too much. In University it is pretty hard to get in touch with them. They have said you are a foreigner even talk to, you but it is not very easy especially when the other foreigner in the class you do not usually talk to another Turkish people and I got the feeling they do not talk to exchange students by themselves. (TW, Austria, M)

### Strengths of the Program

The participants defined the program's strengths from different aspects. The cultural point of view was mentioned by the half of the participants. Getting to know a different culture and having the opportunity to live within the culture were the underlined points. It was said that they were not treated as tourists; the program made the participants get more information about the culture and understand cultures and other people.

It is very good, offers nice opportunities to broaden one's mind. It is very good, especially for people who haven't been abroad. It is good to learn about a different culture and a different university system. (CW, Germany, M)

The good side maybe get into know other culture, probably also get into know the language and to get a different point of view and to get a lot more experience and to understand cultures and other people. (MN, Germany, F)

I was able to read some reviews of other students with come through Erasmus, is that part of Erasmus about exchange. That made me get some information about Boğaziçi in Istanbul that was going at least and I can read other people have done here, would they told me that I should bring or do or... It is a good thing. (DK, Holland, F)

...so it is only a program that brings students to a country, but also brings students from different countries together, so for me it is a strong point. (HG, Germany, F)

It connects all the European universities to make it possible and very easy to exchange and have the opportunity not only being a tourist in

another country but spending one year of life there. (MS, Germany, M)

Only one participant emphasized that the program strengthened the European identity. It brought different students from different countries and different cultures together. That made bigger interaction and a feeling of being one in a big community possible.

It is very easy to go abroad to have this experience in a very safe way so you do not have to worry about the administrative things when you study. It surely encourages, it makes the European Identity, strengthens this feeling of a bigger society, community we live in not just your country, but having a far more a bigger network over borders. I think exchange thing in universities makes, it is good for everyone and also it is good for the students which are confronted with an exchange student. One person who knows Spain and his own country and then you have this feeling of being more community, you have a bigger interaction I think. It is really helping the European Union to get together more, to make this feeling of one big community. It is what I think and it is a good thing for the educational methods as well. (TW, Austria, M)

The strengths of this program were listed as having a credit system, being an ordinary student in the host university and having the same rights with host university's students, having the opportunity to go to Europe's well known universities without paying money and having the easiest way of going abroad.

#### Weaknesses of the Program

Two participants stated that the program had no real weakness. When they evaluated the Erasmus experiences, they tried to list the weakness of the program. Although they had had some problems during this exchange time, they underlined that they were glad to have had such an experience.

According to the data, one weakness was too much paperwork in the application process. Another weakness was inadequate payment for the program. One of the participants called the money pushed into the Erasmus Program as the “rain over the grassland” and mentioned that there is not enough opportunity to get a scholarship. One participant mentioned that more information should be given about the host university and country. Another participant said that the preparation courses were not organized by the university. It was stated that the coordination was not transparent enough to understand it clearly.

One participant described the Erasmus Program as knowing and living the culture. So living in the Superdorm of Boğaziçi University was listed as a weakness for the program.

Another weakness is if you make in a bigger sense, you probably like here, you have this super dorm where a lot of exchange students live in then it is not especially Erasmus if you have an exchange program, you have many exchange students which do not get into the country stay on their own mostly and then you probably do not have this network effect. If you have too many exchange students in one place. That is probably a weakness. (TW, Austria, M)

### Influence of the Program

Five of the participants took part in the Erasmus Program for one year and five participants took part for one semester. During this period, they got introduced to a different culture and lived a different life. Their evaluation of this period was critical. The participants were invited to tell about the influence of the program on them. Their responses could be listed in two parts: first, four of the participants stated that they were

not really affected by the program. They were affected by this exchange experience; however, they did not relate this to the program itself. The Erasmus Program was just defined as an ordinary exchange program.

...not at all. I don't know what the Erasmus Program itself really does because to me it is basically only an action between two universities. I know that I should get 80 euros per month, but I haven't seen one penny and so I don't know what the Erasmus Program really does for me. No, they said they would give me money, but I haven't received anything. I heard that's normal. In some cases you get it when you already back home. (CW, Germany, M)

I do not think I am affected by it very much because I wanted to come here by myself so I was assisted by the program and it gives me money, so in that way I am affected by that I can live here without having to take out loans. Further more I am affected a lot. (DK, Holland, F)

I really do not know much about it. (GP, Germany, M)

...not at all. I think the program is good. (AR, Germany, M)

I am affected, of course, but this is not the program. They just make it very easy to arrange to be able to live here. But I mean I am not very in touch with the Erasmus Program itself. I think it has affected me a lot because now I live here for a year I think it changes a lot for me. (MS, Germany, M)

Three of the participants underlined that they were affected very much and the program had broadened their minds, they had different experiences and they had even learned the language a bit. They saw and understood the culture by living in it.

I would have broadened my mind of course. It is a good chance to go with the cheapest solution actually to have a university exchange. I do not pay any study fees and I even get much money from Erasmus which is a big support and I think it is really supporting and we have good experience. (HG, Germany, F)

It opens your mind. I mean you see different approaches to some things you saw. It is a different view... I think it makes changes to

your personality as well... I think it can have negative effects as well and I think it makes you much tolerant because you see so many different things and you see they are also working, they aren't so bad after all. I think you have much deeper inside into another country than you have a future to stay where you are. It opens the mind and cultures. (TW, Austria, M)

I was affected in a good way because up to now it has been good to have this experience and it is very challenging and I try to learn the language a bit. I hope that in the end when I go there, it will be, maybe, on a basic level... On the other hand, it is very important to see this culture and to learn about this culture because it makes also familiar to understand something better. When it comes to the European Union, if I hear people talking about that and Turkish people, if I have their point of view, I can really understand certain things and I really take over their opinions because I really feel from their point of view and I have both sides now. (MN, Germany, F)

### Integration of the Program

It is known that the European Community shall make regulations, make decisions, deliver opinions and issue directives, but all of those implementations are different.

Recommendations and opinions have no binding force. A regulation is binding on all member states, but the details of implementation, form and method are left to the member states. A decision is only binding on those who are addressed by it. It does not allow for the harmonization of laws and regulations. "Indeed, it may 'give a legal basis for protection against Community action which is harmful to the identity and language of a certain culture', explicitly preserving 'diversity'" (Brock and Tulasiewicz, 1999, p. 24).

The participants were invited to tell about their integration to the program. One participant did not make any comment. Three participants did not specified their

countries' educational policies on the Erasmus Program, but they mentioned that their home universities are supporting it and added that universities just offered but did not put any restrictions.

One participant mentioned that program is part of the policy of internationalization of education in her country during the European integration process. One participant called the Erasmus Program a European exchange student system and said it has an important place in her home country's educational system.

Four of the participants related the European Union to the policy of the Erasmus Program. Even though the harmonization of education was prevented by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, it was accepted as the policy and regulation of the European Community. The European Union is located as the supporter of these exchange programs or complementation of member state actions.

I do not know because it is an EU-program. (CW, Germany, M)

I think Erasmus is the number one exchange program ... may be at the middle, in the midterm of your studying life. I do not think that the Erasmus Program exists in the educational policy. I do not think that in our text of educational policy in Germany I do not think the Erasmus Program is mentioned there. I thought it was a rather European thing from Brussels. I do not know. I always thought this was maybe a thing from the EU, from the educational policy of the EU. (MS, Germany, M)

Some universities know that it is very valuable to have this exchange program from the politicians' side it is more doing something Brussels told us to do. For the universities they know that it is important and it is good and if I also say that the Austrian Government wants to reduce the maximum stay for one term, which I do not think is good because one term is quite short very, very quick. They do this I think to save the money...that characterizes the general view on education that part after. (TW, Austria, M)

I would say the Erasmus Program is the most important exchange

program in all German higher institutions especially because it is a very important part within the European Union and it was to underline this situation. And it of course wants not to let all the students to go into overseas countries. Because it is a lot of knowledge, it is the big priority of the Erasmus Program. I think the only disadvantage is for the applied science university, they have not enough capability for foreign students because they have such strict curricula. But I think it is a very high priority. And then it is suggested to any, every, students to take part in the Erasmus Program. Nobody would say do not do this. (CG, Germany, M)

### The Influence of the EU on Education

The participants were invited to discuss that the European Union did not have the legal rights to harmonize education in Europe and the participants' opinions of influence on education systems was welcome. The responses of the participants could be categorized in three groups. The first group pointed out that the diversity was a chance in education and by harmonizing the education one could reduce the differences and the initiative of the local levels.

Here I wished much more harmonization, for example, in terms of grading. Every country has its own scale and it is almost impossible to recalculate grades from the one system into the other. That is inefficient and not transparent. But at the end of the day, we should stick to the principle that everything which can be done better on the local level should be left there. (CW, Germany, M)

I think this is something that should definitely: the European Union could give a certain framework, certain standards, but I think it is something that should belong to the national level. I think it is good chance for diversity. (MN, Germany, F)

I mean, this is what I mentioned, unity through variety. You know what I mean. It must not necessarily all part of the life be regulated...I am not so happy because this pressured regulations, ja how to say it,

the pressure to unify the education system makes sometimes something worse than it was before. So you have to think very carefully about if you want to really change it... But I am not so sad about now that there is a bachelor, but it dropped a lot of a bit tradition. This tradition must not be necessarily destroyed. It can be had. (CG, Germany, M)

Three participants emphasized the necessity of more harmonized education in European countries. They mentioned that it would diminish the inequality problems between the countries' educational systems. However, one participant mentioned that it would be a problem for the nation-states. Some harmonization was needed, but it should be done by experts. According to Nóvoa and Dejong-Lambert, "Education has been one of the most contested arenas in Europe, not only due to its symbolic value in national imaginaries but also because of public resistance to a 'common policy'" (2003, p.51).

...but harmonized education system, it is a problem with the nation states which probably do not want to change their system to something else, so if you have experts which make you in a European sense, for the community for the level of education then of course. (TW, Austria, M)

The last group talked about a European Union effect on the educational systems of the countries. One of them suggested that the European Union had such a power on doing the bachelor and master system in European countries. Even though the best chance of introducing a European dimension into education is offered through its introduction into the curricular and extracurricular activities of schools in European countries. However it cannot be said that the member states modify their education systems according to the European dimension of the education.

...I think the European Union can influence governments of the different nations and then may be influence the education system. If you get all the power in Europe that is not be a good thing I think. It is a good thing that there is central control (of Europe), but there has to

be some government control as well. (GP, Germany, M)

...I think partly already doing this in the European Union, bachelor and master system. But I think there has been some; I think it is the minor part of the integration process.

(HG, Germany, F)

They do not synchronize or Germany can speak about its education in total and it is always depending where you are so they should do this then they can think about doing this for all EU. (AR, Germany, M)

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

This qualitative study was conducted in order to explore the basic research questions: 1) what are the perceptions of the exchange students about the European identity? 2) Does the participation in the Erasmus Program contribute to the creation of European identity? Findings from this study provide a detailed description of the experiences of the Erasmus Program students about studying abroad and lead to a better understanding of the students' perceptions about the European identity.

The qualitative information collected in this study indicates that participants introduce themselves from personal and multiple identity perspectives. Four of the participants mentioned their national identities besides being European. In addition, they defined themselves as “European” because their countries were geographically in “Europe.” When it came to discuss “who is European”, mainly three different definitions emerged. European: who is member of the citizen of the European Union, who is from a country in Europe (each one from Moscow to Bosphorus), who shares the history, culture and tradition of the European civilizations. These definitions refer to the European Union and the values of Europe promoted by the European Union itself, except the geographical definition of European. However, two of the participants claimed that a

common European identity had not shaped yet in the consciousness of people. It was not possible to emphasize that the participants have a common European identity; however, “being European” was an identifier for them.

Most of the students had known about the Erasmus Program since they entered their home university. The Erasmus Program was well known among the participants yet it seemed that the cooperation between the universities and the information services of their home universities did not satisfy their expectations.

The participants got involved with the Erasmus Program for many reasons. First, they were able to receive credits for the courses they took. Second, as far as going abroad is considered, the Erasmus Program was accepted as an opportunity to provide different partnerships and grants, it cost less than being a special student. Although, the participants mentioned that the Erasmus was an EU program, only one participant said that the Erasmus was an exchange program designed to form further interaction among young Europeans and also to encourage European students to learn other European languages.

Turkey was seen from different perspectives, as a European country, especially as an “Eastern European country”; as a candidate of the European Union; and as a Middle East country. The aim of the Erasmus Program was defined as increasing mobility within the European countries and also increasing the European consciousness. However, most of the students did not define Turkey as a European country. Turkey is not a member of the European Union.

The participants were affected by this exchange experience; however, some of them did not relate this to the Erasmus Program – it was just an exchange program for

them. The strengths of the program were defined as being the easiest way of studying abroad and earning credits and also getting to know a different culture and having the opportunity to live within the culture. Only one participant emphasized that the program strengthened the European identity by bringing different students from different countries and different cultures together. That made bigger interaction and feeling of being one in a big community possible.

The participants indicated that a harmonized European education system could reduce the existing diversity; only one participant mentioned that it would also be a problem for nation states; however, three participants indicated that everything which can be done better on the local level should be left there. Moreover, they pointed out that some basic regulations could be put into force to reduce the inequality in educational systems in European countries. They mentioned the difference between the education systems, especially at the high school level, among the European countries. Even though none of them indicated the necessity for a complete harmonization of European high school institutions, basic regulations would be welcomed to provide good quality and increase the competence of the European Universities.

Consequently, education remains as a primary concern of the Member States and inhibits the integration of policies at the European level. On the other hand, it can be claimed that there has been ongoing effort to inscribe a “European dimension” into member states’ educational policies.

## CHAPTER VI

### RECOMMENDATIONS

This section describes recommendations for further research that are needed as follow-up to the present study. First of all, as stated in the conceptual framework, the Erasmus Program allows the participants to live within a culture different culture. The participants acculturate into another culture and become a part of that culture. Therefore, the time they spend in the host country is important. It is recommended to repeat this study by conducting interviews at the beginning and at the end of their exchange experience. The study can be extended to include the participants' entire stay in the host country.

According to the findings most of the participants mentioned that "Istanbul is a European city," although Turkey is not a member of the European Union. European identity was related to the European Union. The same study could be repeated in a European country; whether the country is in the East or West of Europe would possibly change the findings of the study. Their place of residence also affects the participants' daily life experience. At Boğaziçi University, most of the exchange students stay in the same dormitory. For further studies, interaction between exchange students also could be investigated in detail. Group interviews might be offered for further research.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### MAASTRICHT TREATY (ARTICLE 126, ARTICLE 127, ARTICLE 128)

##### Education, Vocational Training and Youth

##### Article 126

1. The Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organization of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity.

2. Community action shall be aimed at:

- developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States;
- encouraging mobility of students and teachers, inter alia by encouraging the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study;
- promoting cooperation between educational establishments;
- developing exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the education systems of the Member States;
- encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors;
- encouraging the development of distance education.

3. The Community and the Member States shall foster co-operation with third countries and the competent international organizations in the field of education, in particular the Council of Europe.

4. In order to contribute to the achievement of the objectives referred to in this Article, the Council:

- acting in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 189b, after consulting the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, shall adopt incentive measures, excluding any harmonization of the laws and regulations of the Member States;
- acting by a qualified majority on a proposal from the Commission, shall adopt recommendations.

#### Article 127

1. The Community shall implement a vocational training policy which shall support and supplement the action of the Member States, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organization of vocational training.

2. Community action shall aim to:

- facilitate adaptation to industrial changes, in particular through vocational training and retraining;
- improve initial and continuing vocational training in order to facilitate vocational integration and reintegration into the labour market;
- facilitate access to vocational training and encourage mobility of instructors and trainees and particularly young people;
- stimulate cooperation on training between educational or training establishments and firms;
- develop exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the training systems of the Member States.

4. The Council, acting in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 189c and after consulting the Economic and Social Committee, shall adopt measures to contribute to the achievement of the objectives referred to in this Article, excluding any harmonization of the laws and regulations of the Member States.’

## Culture

### Article 128

1. The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore.

2. Action by the Community shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action in the following areas:

- improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples;
- conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance;
- non-commercial cultural exchanges;
- artistic and literary creation, including in the audiovisual sector.

3. The Community and the Member States shall foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organizations in the sphere of culture, in particular the Council of Europe.

4. The Community shall take cultural aspects into account in its action under other provisions of this Treaty.

5. In order to contribute to the achievement of the objectives referred to in this Article, the Council:

- acting in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 189b and after consulting the Committee of the Regions, shall adopt incentive measures, excluding any harmonization of the laws and regulations of the Member States. The Council shall act unanimously throughout the procedures referred to in Article 189b;
- acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission, shall adopt recommendations.'

## APPENDIX B

### THE EMAIL SENT TO THE ERASMUS STUDENTS WITH THE HELP OF THE INTERNATIONAL OFFICE OF BOĞAZIÇI UNIVERSITY

Dear Erasmus Students,

A master student at Adult Education Program is doing research about the Erasmus Program and she really needs your help. For confidential reasons I have not given her your email addresses but promised to send all of you the former mail. Please contact her directly if you are interested.

Best Regards

Zeynep AYNAGOZ

From: Özlem Pehlivaner

Sent: October 25, 2005

Hi, my name is Özlem Pehlivaner. I am a master student at Educational Sciences department at Boğaziçi University. I am in the Adult Education program. This is my second year in the department. I am doing a qualitative research. Its topic is "European Identity and the Erasmus Program." In my research I am planning to make interviews with the ERASMUS students who come from the European countries. The interviews will last an hour at most. I can give more details about my study if you wish. I would kindly ask you to participate in my research as an interviewee.

With best regards,

Özlem.

My e-mail:...

My telephone numbers:...

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE ERASMUS PROGRAM

- Can you introduce yourself?
- How do you describe your identity?
- How did you select Turkey as the host country?
- If you are wanted to describe European Identity, how would you describe it?
- From your point of view who is European?
- Should European integration continue? What do you think about this?
  - √ Common passport
  - √ Common money
- EU does not have legal rights to harmonize education in Europe. Should EU able to have more influence on Education systems?
- How were you informed about the Erasmus Program?
  - √ Office of Erasmus in your university
  - √ conference or preparation courses
- How did you decide to participate in the Erasmus Program?
- How were you affected by the program?
  - √ About Turkey
  - √ About the program-Erasmus
  - √ Relationship with other international students?
  - √ Relationship with the Turkish community?
  - √ Strengths of the program
  - √ Weakness of the program
- If you are wanted to offer any changes for the Erasmus Program, what would be the things that should be changed?
- What is the place of the Erasmus Program in the educational policy of your country?

## APPENDIX D

### DESCRIPTION OF COMMUNITY PROGRAMS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND YOUTH

#### ARION

An initiative under the EU's SOCRATES (educational policy) program, ARION provides financial assistance to facilitate visits by decision makers (e.g., school and university administrators and civil servants in education ministries) to Brussels and to each other's countries in order to strengthen cooperation on education in the EU.

#### COMENIUS

COMENIUS focuses on the first phase of education, from pre-school and primary to secondary school, and it is addressed to all members of the education community in the broad sense – pupils, teachers, other education staff, but also local authorities, parents' associations, non-government organizations...

COMENIUS supports school partnerships, projects for the training of school education staff, and school education networks. It thus aims to enhance the quality of teaching, strengthen its European dimension and promote language learning and mobility.

COMENIUS also emphasizes certain important issues: learning in a multi-cultural framework, which is the cornerstone of European citizenship, support for disadvantaged groups, countering under-achievement at school and preventing exclusion.

#### COMETT

The cooperation program between universities and enterprises for education and training for technology was intended to improve training in advanced technology, develop highly qualified human resources and thereby enhance the competitiveness of European industry through joint university-enterprise training initiatives.

#### DELTA

Delta is directed specifically at learning technologies. This technological and industrial cooperation in the field of research and development must be supported by parallel efforts in the field of vocational training.

## EUREKA

EUREKA is a European-wide initiative aimed at fostering European competitiveness through cooperation among companies and research institutions in the field of advanced technologies.

The initiative has a bottom up approach — it is up to the participating companies and institutions to propose their projects in any domain of research and development. It has a decentralized support scheme: once a project has been EUREKA-labeled, national authorities according to national rules and programs may fund each participant.

## EUROTECNET

The objective of the EUROTECNET program was to promote innovation in the fields of initial and continuing training to take account of current and future technological change and its impact on employment, work and the qualifications and skills needed. The program comprised two types of (complementary) measures:

- a) Launching and implementation by the Member States of a series of innovative projects intended to develop and improve vocational training policies and systems.
- b) European Commission support for these projects in the form of a European network linking them to promote exchange, knowledge transfer and coordination between projects.

## FORCE

FORCE, the action program for the development of continuing vocational training in the European Community, was intended to improve the availability and quality of continuing vocational training for workers in undertakings through innovation and the exchange of experience.

The program comprised two complementary parts:

- a) a common framework of guidelines designed to support and complement the policies and measures adopted by the Member States with a view to promoting the coherent development of vocational training between the Member States.
- b) A number of transnational measures implemented at Community level and designed to support and complement activities developed by and in the Member States.

## GRUNDTVIG

GRUNDTVIG is the name given to Action 3 of the European Union's program in the field of education, Socrates. Its aim is to improve the quality and strengthen the

European dimension of adult education of a non-vocational nature by means of European cooperation activities of various kinds, thereby helping to make better lifelong learning opportunities more widely available to Europe's citizens.

#### JEAN MONNET

The objective of the Jean Monnet Action is to promote knowledge on European integration. The Jean Monnet Action is a European Commission initiative. The European Commission's support measures for European integration studies are open to the world. They provide a response to the need for knowledge about European integration and aim to prepare the new generation of European affairs specialists. In universities throughout the world, the goal is to give greater visibility, at both international and national levels, to scientific resources and academic activities in the field of European integration and European Union developments.

#### LEONARDO DA VINCI

LEONARDO DA VINCI, the Community action program for vocational training, is intended to improve vocational training systems and arrangements in the European Community and improve vocational training measures by means such as cooperation between universities and undertakings. The program also supports the development of linguistic skills, knowledge and the dissemination of innovation in the field of vocational training. The program is aimed at any person, whether employed or not, and those responsible for initial and continuing vocational training.

#### LINGUA

LINGUA, the Community action program to promote foreign-language competence in the European Community, included the following actions:

Action 1: Assistance with in-service training courses for teachers of foreign languages and their trainers.

Action 2: Assistance with foreign-language learning in universities, in particular in connection with initial training of foreign-language teachers.

Action 3: The promotion of foreign languages used at work and in economic life.

Action 4: Assistance with the preparation of exchanges between young people who are undergoing specialized, vocational or technical education. These exchanges are organized through projects involving several establishments.

## MINERVA

Minerva Action seeks to promote European co-operation in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in education.

The Action has three main objectives, (1) to promote understanding among teachers, learners, decision-makers and the public at large of the implications of the use of ICT in education, as well as the critical and responsible use of ICT for educational purposes; (2) to ensure that pedagogical considerations are given proper weight in the development of ICT and multimedia-based educational products and services; and (3) to promote access to improved methods and educational resources as well as to results and best practices in this field.

## PETRA

PETRA, the Community action program for the vocational training of young people and their preparation for adult and working life, was intended to supplement and support the policies of the Member States aimed at raising the standard and quality of initial vocational training.

## SOCRATES

The SOCRATES action program encourages cooperation between the Member States in school education (COMENIUS/school partnerships), higher education (ERASMUS/promoting student mobility), the promotion of language skills (LINGUA) and upgrading of teaching skills. The program is intended for pupils, students, teaching staff, and administrative staff of universities, trainers and the children of migrant workers, travelers and gypsies.

## TEMPUS

The main objective of TEMPUS is to generate and promote international cooperation in higher education between the European Union and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEEC), the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union and Mongolia.

TEMPUS participates in the restructuring of higher education systems and the establishment of national and institutional policy in the CEEC and newly independent states. It is a flexible programme adapting, on the one hand, to new needs such as ensuring the quality, training and management of university staff and project management, and, on the other, to the recent inclusion of countries such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Turkmenistan.

Since 1990, around 12 000 projects and 500 institutions and university departments have received aid under TEMPUS. TEMPUS has also enabled around 15 000 courses and almost 6 000 teaching documents to be created or adapted.

#### YOUTH FOR EUROPE:

The main objective of the YOUTH FOR EUROPE program is, through increased cooperation between Member States, to contribute to young people's development by promoting exchanges and complementary activities outside formal education and vocational training structures. It therefore provides for exchanges for young people permanently resident in the European Community (or Iceland, Liechtenstein or Norway) and those from eligible third countries (activities may take place in Member States or third countries, including those of Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Mediterranean, Central and Latin America and the ACP), young people's initiatives, voluntary service activities (which will now concentrate on the short term to avoid confusion with European Voluntary Service) and training for youth leaders.