

## IEREST

### Intercultural Education Resources for Erasmus Students and their Teachers

#### Module 3 - Introduction

This third module collects three activities to be taught when students return from their stay abroad. Their titles are:

1. Bringing interculturality back home;
2. One, two, many... Erasmus experiences;
3. Student mobility beyond the Academy.

These activities have the purpose to encourage students to look both ways: back to their past Erasmus experiences, and ahead to how they can capitalise on their new competences and understandings in their social and (future) professional lives. In doing so, the module recalls most of the theoretical concepts introduced in the previous ones (the subjective nature of narratives, how to avoid essentialist views of people and places, etc.) and introduces some new notions (e.g., that of 'small cultures', Holliday, 1999) and methodologies (e.g., autoethnography, Ellis et al., 2011).

The concept of 'small cultures' is central to Bringing interculturality back home. 'Large' and 'small cultures' (Holliday, 1999) have the same inherent properties: a culture is a set of common features, such as for example purposes, values, habits and language, shared by a cohesive social group. However, while people are generally aware of the existence of large cultures (e.g., national or ethnic cultures), they usually ignore the small ones, e.g. the culture of a family, of a group of students sharing an apartment or that of Erasmus students in a given host university. The concept of 'small culture' closes the circle which began with the examples of essentialism which students analysed in the previous modules, and opens up new possibilities for them to give meaning to their past experiences abroad. Methodologically, this activity is constructed so that the new insights the students gain are offered to future Erasmus students during a final workshop led by the students themselves.

Often returnees express difficulties when trying to convey to others their experiences abroad and the changes they have been through. One, two, many... Erasmus experiences uses this sense of discomfort as its starting point, encouraging students to investigate where this feeling comes from. The underlying assumption for this activity is that a cause of such discomfort may reside in 'the what' and 'the how' of returnees' narratives: students often underestimate that

their interlocutors (e.g., family members, non-mobile friends, etc.) are actively engaged in giving meaning to their narratives, and that such meaning can be considerably different from what the speaker meant. Therefore offering a thoughtful and responsible narrative is an intercultural act, as it implies considering the issues involved and mediating between one's own meanings of the events in the story and the meanings others may attribute to them. The activity draws on autoethnography, as a combination of autobiography and ethnography (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). For what concerns the concept of 'narrative', teachers may also want to consult [Exploring narrative in intercultural mobility contexts](#) in module 1, for a similar use of narratives set in a pre-departure context.

Student mobility beyond the academy invites students to ask themselves "What have I got from my Erasmus experience that is not strictly related to my academic career?". In particular, it encourages them to reflect on the possible effects that study abroad has (not) had on their sense of European and/or global citizenship. A second main theme of the activity revolves around how mobility is perceived in the professional world, what skills the students have acquired from the Erasmus experience, and how they can communicate those gains to future employers. Critical reading of the media, street interviews and role-playing are the methodologies employed throughout the activity.

This third module aims at the following learning objectives and outcomes. As mentioned before, only the relevant objectives and outcomes are given for each activity.

|          | <b>Learning objectives</b>  | <b>Learning outcomes</b>   |
|----------|---|--|
| <b>1</b> | Explore how an Erasmus experience contributes to their personal and professional identity development beyond the academy. | Identify and explain the benefits of their sojourn experiences for their personal and professional identity development.   |
| <b>2</b> | Understand and appreciate how language and interculturality are empowering resources for engagement with others.          | Use their language and intercultural skills as empowering resources for engagement with others.                            |
| <b>3</b> | Become aware that interlocutors are active producers and receivers of meanings (e.g., through the narratives they tell).  | Monitor how they convey their meanings to others, taking into account that interlocutors are active producers of meanings. |
| <b>4</b> | Develop the ability to name, critically question and explain to others their  | Name, critically question and explore ways to explain to others their Erasmus  |

|          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
|          | Erasmus intercultural experiences.  | intercultural experiences.  |
| <b>5</b> | Develop an awareness of the importance of monitoring their own language to avoid perpetuating culturalist discourses. | Use their own language in a way that avoids perpetuating culturalist discourses.  |
| <b>6</b> | Develop a sense of responsibility towards future mobile students as recipients of one's narratives.                   | Act upon a sense of responsibility towards future mobile students and reflect on their own Erasmus stories accordingly. |