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# **A contribution to the study of the global competition for talent**

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## **Abstract**

In a globalized economy, it is widely acknowledged that the competitiveness of a country depends on the skills of its workforce. Higher education is therefore responsible for developing the students' skills, especially their multicultural skills so they improve their employability on the international labour market. For this reason, the European Union has fostered student mobility through two main programmes: the Bologna process and the Erasmus programme.

These policies, despite their ability to offer study abroad programmes to a large number of young people, have reshaped the "higher education landscape" by creating a global competition for talent. The courses offered by universities, their quality and their funding have profoundly been modified over the last twenty years.

The empirical part of this paper examines the student mobility phenomenon: its determinants and its consequences on the labour market. For the estimation, we used Probit regressions. Exploiting the answers to a questionnaire submitted to 543 graduates of Belgian (French-speaking) universities, we show that student mobility depends largely on the family background, and whether they gave their children an international education (language courses, repetition of last year of secondary school abroad...). We then confirmed the results of previous studies by Oosterbeek and Webbink (2009), Parey and Waldinger (2010) or Von Gordon (2011): student mobility improves the chances of leading an international career. The Erasmus experience is one the study abroad programme that contributes to this higher mobility, but internships and other types of exchange programmes are also important determinants.

We then illustrated the new trends reshaping the higher education system, described in the first two sections, with the British example. The UK receives very important inflows of students; it has put pressure on its higher education funding and on the allocation of student places between the domestic and the overseas students.