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**MĀSU IZGLĪTĪBAS INTERNACIONALIZĀCIJA BALTIJAS
JŪRAS REĢIONĀ**

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RĪGA 2015

UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

**INTERNATIONALIZATION OF NURSING EDUCATION IN THE
BALTIC SEA REGION**

MASTER'S THESIS

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RIGA 2015

ANNOTATION

Internationalization of university activities serves as a central development focus for higher education players in the contemporary academic milieu. The creation and implementation of internationalization strategies is the higher education institution reaction on the recent trends of globalization. In order to observe the beginning of the aforementioned processes in the nursing education in the Baltic States, this thesis examines several aspects of post-soviet reforms in higher education, as it helps to observe the output position and present stage of nursing education internationalization. The student mobility among higher education institutions is the most often applied measurement to indicate the level of university internationalization. The thesis examines inbound and outbound nursing student mobilities and its influencing factors in the Baltic States. The conclusions and final remarks of the paper are drawn upon the collected literature, statistical data and author's professional experience as a student and employee of higher education institutions.

Key words: *internationalization, higher education, student mobility, nursing education*

ANOTĀCIJA

Universitāšu internacionalizācija kalpo kā centrālā attīstības koncepcija mūsdienu augstākās izglītības vidē. Internacionalizācijas stratēģiju izveide un ieviešana ir augstākās izglītības iestāžu reakcija uz globalizācijas tendencēm. Lai izprastu iepriekšminēto procesu sākumu māsu izglītībā Baltijas valstīs, šis darbs pēta vairākus post-padomju augstākās izglītības reformu aspektus, jo tas palīdz novērot izejas pozīciju un pašreizējo māsu izglītības internacionalizācijas līmeni. Studentu mobilitāte starp augstākās izglītības iestādēm ir visbiežāk piemērotais mērījums, lai novērtētu universitātes internacionalizācijas līmeni. Darbā tiek aplūkoti ienākošo un izejošo māsziņu studentu mobilitāte un to ietekmējošie faktori Baltijas valstīs. Secinājumi un gala piezīmes tiek sastādītas pamatojoties uz savākto literatūru, statistikas datiem un autora profesionālo pieredzi kā studentam un darbiniekam augstākās izglītības iestādēs.

Atslēgas vārdi: *internationalizācija, augstākā izglītība, studentu mobilitāte, māsu izglītība*

CONTENTS

Abbreviations.....	6
Introduction.....	7
1. Internationalization and its key concepts.....	11
1.1.Characteristics of contemporary higher education	11
1.2.Internationalization of higher education	15
1.3.Peculiarities of university staff mobility.....	19
1.4.Student mobility and its trends in the Baltic States	21
2.Nursing education in the Baltic States	26
2.1.Higher education reforms in the Baltic States after the collapse of the Soviet Union	26
2.2.Organizational changes in the Baltic higher education institutions.....	31
2.3.Characteristics of contemporary nursing education in the Baltic States	35
2.4.Strategies and development plans for nursing education internationalization in the Baltics	39
3.Nursing student and university staff mobility in the Baltic States.....	43
3.1.Research programme	43
3.2.Case study Latvia – Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia	45
3.3.Case study Lithuania – Šiauliai State College	48
3.4.Case study Estonia – Tallinn Healthcare College.....	53
3.5.Added value and understanding of internationalization of nursing education in the Baltic States	57
Discussion between theory and findings.....	68
Conclusions.....	69
References.....	72
Affiliations	77
Annex 1 Questionnaire <i>Nursing education internationalization in the Baltic States</i> ..	78
Annex 2 IP Rainbow survey	82

ABBREVIATIONS

CFCA – Central Finance and Contracting Agency

EACEA – Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

EC – European Commission

EHEA – European Higher Education Area

EU – European Union

EUA – European University Association

HE – higher education

HEI(s) – higher education institution(s)

IC – Intensive Course

IP – Intensive Programme

LU RMC – Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia (Latvijas Univeritātes Rīgas Medicīnas koledža)

OECD – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

SEDA – State Education Development Agency (Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra)

SVAKO – Šiauliai State College (Šiauliai Valstybine Kolegija)

TTK – Tallinn Healthcare College (Tallinna Tervishoiu Korgkool)

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

VIKO – Vilniaus Kolegija/ University of Applied Sciences

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary settings of higher education milieu imply the necessity for internationalization of university activities. *Internationalization* can be understood as a complex of processes, determined to increase involvement of organization in international markets (Iljins et al, 2014: 48). This implies that education is in a state of constant movement and development, the same as its subjects – students and university staff. Academic mobility among higher education institutions is one of the processes that characterise university internationalization. Through student and teacher exchange universities become active players in global education settings.

It is said that ‘education is one of the most powerful and least understood forces in human society’ (Martin, 2011: 203). Education is not only a force, but also ‘an interaction between an individual and a culture in which the both parties change’ (ibid.). Taken together, both statements lay predispositions for researching academic mobility of students and teachers, as it leaves the imprints on all those involved – the mobility participant, host institution and home university. According to B. Wächer (2008), student mobility is the key indicator of university internationalization, as it provides not only academic benefits, but also develops intercultural and linguistic competences of the mobility participants (Wächer, 2008; in Boge, 2011: 11).

The academic mobility is a true phenomenon with number of mobile students and teachers increasing every year. Professional experience of the author of this thesis has led to an observation that students of healthcare, particularly nursing, study programmes are considerably less active internationally than student of other fields of study. Previous research, conducted by N. Modebadze and T.Mikeladze (2010), indicate such student mobility hindering factors as financial problems, curriculum inelasticity, lack of information, and the language barrier is indicated as the central problem (Modebadze and Mikeladze, 2010; in Boge, 2011: 11).

The aim of the Master thesis is to observe and analyse healthcare, particularly nursing, student and university staff mobility trends, as one of the higher education internationalization processes in the Baltic Sea region, with particular focus on Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, and to provide conclusions on contributory and impedimental factors, influencing student mobility in healthcare sciences.

The research problem is to investigate the role, contribution and opinions of directly involved parties – students and university staff – participating in the process of internationalization of higher education of healthcare professionals.

The author's professional experience as international coordinator of a medical university college was taken into account, when designing the research problem and aims. The mobility flows observed in author's professional work context has fostered a remark that students and staff, representing healthcare discipline, are less active in exchange programmes than those representing other branches of science.

In order to achieve the research goal, the author of the thesis has set out the following tasks:

1. assemble literature on definitions and concepts of education and contemporary academic environment in higher education and university internationalization predispositions;
2. investigate transition process of healthcare, particularly nursing, education that transpired after the collapse of the Soviet Union;
3. investigate present stage of university internationalization by comparing strategic planning documents among selected professional higher education institutions in Baltic States;
4. collect and analyse statistical data on student and staff mobility in the higher education institutions in the Baltic States, with regard to healthcare faculties; investigate student comprehension of higher education internationalization in the Baltic States by applying student survey;
5. draw conclusions and offer suggestions, with regards to contemporary situation and possible future improvements.

The research hypothesis, raised by the author is 'despite the low percentage of mobility participants among full time healthcare, particularly nursing, students in the Baltic States, students and staff are increasingly contributing to the internationalization of nursing education'.

There are following research methods, applied to achieve the proposed tasks:

1. literature and library research on theoretical material base and previous research in the field of higher education internationalization;

2. observation of university processes in the Baltic States; comparative analysis;
3. surveys, developed to investigate students' motivations, understanding and involvement in the internationalization process of the healthcare education;
4. interview, designed to observe the organizational paradigms of healthcare education, structural changes over the past decades and future prospects of professional higher education;
5. case study from the perspective of author's own professional experience as university employee and investigation of selected higher education providers in the Baltic States.

Literature on concepts of internationalization, global competition for students and university staff in the framework of internationalization, Europeanization, and globalization of higher education is the theoretical material base of this thesis. Besides literature, the author has collected unpublished conference and methodological materials available at higher education institutions. Data obtained for this study is organized in order to develop a description of higher education foreign student enrolment patterns in each of the Baltic countries. The data was collected from five main sources: research articles, methodological materials, internet databases, university statistics collections and applied survey results. Additional information was discovered during interviews with university staff and through websites of government ministries and representatives of nursing schools. The conclusions in this paper on the internationalization of higher education were derived from comparative analysis of data from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and by evaluating this data in light of propositions made in the literature on internationalization and globalization of higher education.

The contents of the thesis consist of introduction, three main chapters and concluding remarks and suggestions. The first chapter of the paper gives a theoretical insight of higher education, observing characteristics of contemporary higher education, concepts and definitions of internationalization. The first chapter offers an insight to student and university staff mobility, as the central tool for internationalization of higher education.

The second chapter accounts for an insight to nursing education in the Baltic States, describing structural foundations for university internationalization. This chapter examines the transition process in the Baltic States after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as it provides an insight to the source principles and development peculiarities of the region. This section of the thesis provides information on present stage of development of higher education institutions, offering healthcare study programmes.

The third and final part of the paper display collected data on student and staff mobility, peculiarities of student understanding and involvement in the internationalization of university processes. The statistical information, displayed in the chapter is gathered both by the International Offices of the healthcare faculties of selected higher education institutions of the Baltic States, and the author herself.

The conclusions and remarks are drawn upon collected literature and theory of higher education internationalization, its peculiarities in education of healthcare professionals and author's empirical findings. Author gives final remarks, based on collected data from higher education institutions of the Baltic States, and student and staff mobility participants, as well as own professional experience as medical university college employee.

1. INTERNATIONALIZATION AND ITS KEY CONCEPTS

1.1. CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTEMPORARY HIGHER EDUCATION

Previously widely differing education and training systems in Europe made it hard for Europeans to use qualifications from one country to apply for work or further studies in another. In order to consolidate higher education in Europe, the Bologna Process – European Higher Education Area was declared in 1999. All three Baltic States are signatories and full members of the Process since the adoption on June 19, 1999 (Bologna Declaration, 1999). The Bologna Process has transformed the face of European higher education. Participating countries have made significant changes that have enabled the European Higher Education Area to emerge (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, Eurostat and Eurostudent, 2012: 7). Increased compatibility between education systems now makes it easier for students and employees to move within Europe.

The Bologna process is a collective effort and a voluntary process, involving all possible stakeholders, ranging from students and university staff to the European Commission. The main focus has been to introduce the three cycle system of bachelor, master and doctoral studies, strengthen quality assurance and ease the recognition of qualifications and periods of study. A lot of progress has been made in implementing the reforms, as shown by the regular reports. When observing to what has been achieved, the reports show that higher education structures have been modified, quality assurance systems developed, mechanisms to facilitate mobility established, and a range of issues for the social dimension of higher education identified (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, Eurostat and Eurostudent 2012, 2012: 7). The Bologna Process also supports the modernisation of education and training systems to ensure the changing needs of labour market are met. This is important as the proportion of jobs requiring high skills grows, and the demand for innovation and entrepreneurship increases. At the same time, the Bologna Process has made European universities and colleges more competitive and attractive to the rest of the world.¹

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/bologna-process_en.htm

R. Davies (2008) summarises key milestones and action lines of the Bologna Process. The six original action lines set out in 1999 are:

- adoption of easily readable and comparable degrees;
- system of two-cycle of degrees (undergraduate and graduate degree);
- system of credits (ECTS);
- promotion of mobility;
- promotion of quality assurance;
- promotion of the European Dimensions of Higher Education.

Prague declaration in 2001 added three action lines:

- lifelong learning;
- involvement of students in higher education institutions;
- attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education.

Berlin summit in 2003 added 10th action line

- Third-cycle (doctoral studies) (Davies, 2008: 936).

As summarised by G. Luzzatto (2011), after summit in Berlin no new action lines were identified, but important reference tools for the EHEA were put in place. Those were, for example, framework for qualifications, standards and guidelines for quality assurance, the mobility benchmark for 2020 and others. The list shows that Bologna Declaration did not enounce a static set of goals, but started a dynamic process, which enriched itself during the implementation. The systematic monitoring and benchmarking, through Ministerial meetings every two years, turned out to be successful. Benchmarking and scheduling of the objectives, and the work of a permanent follow-up group, proves to be very profitable. The enlargement of the set of actors, involving not only education ministries, but also universities and other higher education institutions, students and social stakeholders, had a fundamental role. Along the years the connection and coordination of actions between involved parties has supported the implementation of the Bologna Process and its development (Luzzatto, 2011: 2-3).

As the responsible Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, Mrs. Androulla Vassiliou writes, ‘the Bologna Process has achieved remarkable results over its first decade, driving positive change in European higher education. The foundations of the European Higher Education Area are now in place, enabling better quality education with greater opportunities for mobility for all’ (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, Eurostat and Eurostudent 2012,: 4). The

scale and success of Bologna Process is unprecedented, considering the voluntary basis of cooperation among participating 47 countries.

Terri Kim (2009) describes the contemporary era as an academic *marketplace* which is becoming increasingly transnational under the influences of global economy (Kim, 2009: 397). Authors of Lithuanian background Tereseviciene and Zuzeviciute suggest three important features, which characterize higher education institutions in the current stage of development. Firstly, the higher education providers have become mass institutions, with students of all age groups joining universities. The return of older students is stimulated by changes of requirements in labour market, also changing needs of self-actualization (Tereseviciene and Zuzeviciute, 2006; Kim, 2009:397). Aforementioned labour market requirements are particularly demanding in regulated professions, such as the research area of this thesis – nursing education, which is influenced and regulated by employers, professional associations, and national and international policy makers. Another reason influencing an increase of a number of older students, according to Tereseviciene and Zuzeviciute, is the fact, that universities have become more open and accessible. Second feature of this stage is diversification, which is reflected in the diversity of types of universities and provided educational services. Third, this stage is characterised by fragmentation, which is related to the explosion of information in the learning society resulting in specializations in various, particularly professional, activities (Tereseviciene and Zuzeviciute, 2006)

The concept ‘sustainable’ has entered the educational discourse, and though it has a number of nuances of connotations, it tends to mean something that is ‘able to continue over a period of time’ (Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2005). Discussions, both concerning the phenomenon of student learning that takes place in studies under the pressure of intra-university social circumstances and the need to equip students with certain strategies that would enable them to study independently in the context of lifelong learning, have been repeatedly actualized for the past decades. The need for sustainable learning practices is constantly growing, as do attempts to meet ever increasing professional requirements in the labour market leads to a narrowed and much more focused expertise (Tereseviciene and Zuzeviciute, 2006)

The dominant paradigm of thinking about the nature of learning and about when and where people learn is changing, due to the accessibility to learn and provision of opportunities of learning in higher education. The idea of sustainable learning unites the internal drives, such as the need for professional, personal, and social growth, and external opportunities, such as the variety of educational services provided by formal and non-formal education, as well as other systems, such as professional organizations (Tereseviciene and Zuzeviciute, 2006)

Cornford (2002) states that, an important factor of learning is readiness of each student to use the provided learning opportunities (Conford, 2002 in Tereseviciene and Zuzeviciute, 2006). Another interesting student learning paradox, as proposed by Jarvis (2001), is that learning to learn is crucial, when analysing successful learning through the individual's lifetime, as learning, even if it is socially constructed, nevertheless remains essential an individual activity (Conford, 2001 in Tereseviciene and Zuzeviciute, 2006).

Knowledge is something which only humans possess. People are aware of things, computers cannot be aware. Traditionally, in the higher education system and in many organizations, knowledge is seen as a personal possession. Knowledge gives one the ability to take action, obtain certain status and be in professional demand. Knowledge is based on experience, it requires information, and it involves the application of theory and heuristics² and it allows one to make reasonable decisions (Milton, 2005: 1).

“Know-how” is knowledge which leads to actions. Experience, theories and heuristics to which one has access, allows knowing what to do, and to know how to perform it. In higher education and in organizations where people work in teams and networks, knowledge and know-how are increasingly seen as a public possession, rather than an individual one. Communities of practice are networks of people who have collective ownership of certain knowledge. This common knowledge is based on shared experiences, and on collective theory and heuristics that are defined, agreed and validated by the professional society (Milton, 2005: 3). The quoted author's judgement on communal ownership of knowledge strongly correlates to healthcare space, where knowledge is cumulative and communal, rather than individual.

² "Heuristics" refers to the rules of thumb, guidelines, working models, and educated guesses which people use to solve problems.

Shared experience and competence is often transferred within a project by communication and learning meetings, and between projects by processes such as peer assists, optioneering, and action learning. The theories and heuristics can be written down and codified into case histories, lessons learned, project best practices, and ultimately policies and conventional professional standards (Milton, 2005: 3).

1.2.INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

In contemporary era, interpreted as the age of ‘knowledge economy’, higher education has become an indicator of economic competitiveness of the nation state, and the internationalization of higher education is regarded as an innovative response to external economic forces. A high level of internationalization of higher education is increasing global economic competitiveness of many countries, putting an emphasis on *trade* among higher education institutions and the world university rankings, and the international recruitment of the best and brightest students and academics (Kim, 2009: 396). Terri Kim (2009) on the *trade* aspects of contemporary higher education continues ‘in the contemporary era, the academic *marketplace* is becoming increasingly transnational under the influence of economic globalization’ (ibid.:397). However, globalization and internationalization are not the same processes. As suggested by J. Knight and P.G. Altbach (2007), ‘globalization is the context of economic and academic trends that are part of reality of the 21st century. Internationalization includes the policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and institutions – and even individuals – to cope with the global economic environment’ (Knight and Altbach, 2007: 290).

Internationalization is a very often used term, when discussing the international dimension of higher education. Even though ‘internationalization’ serves almost as incantation not only for higher education institutions, but also policy makers and various national bodies involved in higher education, the term can be understood differently. As Knight (2007) describes, internationalization

‘is a term that means different things to different people and is thus used in a variety of ways. While it is encouraging to see the increased use and attention being given to internationalization, there is a great deal of confusion about exactly what it means. For some, it means a series of international activities such as academic mobility for students and teachers; international linkages,

partnerships and projects; new international academic programs and research initiatives. For others, it means the delivery of education to other countries through new types of arrangements such as branch campuses or franchises, and using a variety of face-to-face and distance learning techniques. To many, it means the integration of an international, intercultural and/or global dimension into the curriculum and teaching learning process. Still others see international development projects and alternatively the commercial trade of higher education services as internationalization' (Knight, 2007: 207).

The term *internationalization* can be understood as a complex of processes, determined to increase involvement of organization in international markets (Iljins et al, 2014, p.48). The concept can be transferred to the higher education environment as a coordinated process or even a desire of a particular higher education institution to increase its influence in international competition for students, staff, research and development etc. According to Leask (2009), the internationalisation is 'the incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the content of the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning arrangements and support services of a program of study' (Leask, 2009:209). The author's definition implies that an internationalised curriculum will:

- introduce students with international research and cultural and linguistic diversity;
- develop students' international and intercultural perspectives – the knowledge, skills and self-awareness they need to perform effectively as professionals in ever changing social settings, characterised by the increasing diversity;
- remove traditional frame and prepare students to deal with uncertainty by opening their minds and developing their ability to think both creatively and critically (Leask, 2011:1).

As noted by M. Kelo (2008), 'European higher education has always been international: students have moved for purposes of study since the establishment of the first universities' (Kelo, 2008: 43). Wächer (2008) emphasizes that university internationalization has become the central guideline in European higher education policy. Internationalization is integration process of international, inter-cultural or global dimension in post-secondary education functions, aims and realization process.

Internationalization is the process of change in higher education, shifting from national level learning processes to international standard (Wächer, 2008; in: Boge, 2011: 10).

According to previous research by J.Knight and P.G. Altbach (2007), N. Kemp (2008) and I. Boge (2011), the higher education policy makers have following motifs to internationalize education:

- to improve public policy, research, economic, trade, social and educational fields with the help of graduates returning to their home country; to attract foreign students to gain economic benefits from tuition fees;
- knowledge and language acquisition – enhancement of curriculum with international content;
- commercial advantage – attracting foreign students to compensate lack of certain professionals;
- include the international dimension in higher education study plans, thus promoting students to gain experience abroad, thereby improving nation state's competitiveness in Europe and the world (Knight and Altbach, 2007, Kemp, 2008, Boge 2011).

Authors on internationalization of higher education distinguish six indicators, characterising university internationalization:

- student mobility;
- recognition of degrees and qualification among European countries;
- study programme reforms, including such international elements as international students, intercultural studies, joint degrees and study options in foreign languages (mostly English);
- transnational education (with education offer coming from abroad instead of students going to foreign countries, for example distance learning);
- educational offer advertising abroad (mostly as education exhibitions) with aim to attract foreign students;
- activities dictated by the European Higher Education Area (three-cycle degree structure, common guidelines for quality assurance and accreditation) (Wächer, 2008 and Kelo, 2008; in: Boge, 2011: 11).

In recent findings by European Universities Association, EUA (2013) on internationalization in European higher education, respondents were asked to provide suggestions on how internationalisation could be enhanced. The most frequently mentioned areas for improvement were:

- language skills of students and staff: respondents mentioned that more courses should be offered in English; teaching staff and students should be given an opportunity to improve their language skills;
- increased funding: respondents suggested more funds to support student and staff mobility and international projects;
- more comprehensive, strategic approaches to internationalisation: respondents noted the need for a more comprehensive and systematic approach to internationalisation that considers the *bigger picture*; universities wish internationalisation to be reflected in strategic goals and to be considered in staff recruitment and development, resource allocation, support services and so on;
- internationalisation at home, the need for staff exchange opportunities, structured cooperation (e.g. joint degrees), and the need for more flexible curricula (European University Association, 2013:16).

As proposed by Iljins et al. (2014), the internationalization of higher education institution takes two directions: external – collaboration with foreign partners, projects and recruitment of international students and academic staff. Internal, on the other hand is higher education institution's structural, cultural, curricular and other changes (Iljins et al., 2014: 48). As observed by the author of this thesis, the largest internal changes of Baltic higher education institutions took place between the regaining of independence and joining the European Union. The examination of the aforementioned period will be described in further chapters.

In the contemporary world universities worldwide have been *volunarily forced* to enhance *education export* in order not to lose in global competition for students, and thus becoming more international. Internationalization plays an important role for attractiveness of higher education providers (Iljins et al., 2014: 49). Just the same as global trade market, the competition for students is no longer a national issue among higher education providers in a particular county; it has grown to be a global phenomenon. Not only authors of available literature, but also national and

international institutions have begun to see students as a commodity, confirming or rebutting the higher education institution's capability to compete internationally. The author of this thesis would like to strongly criticize such approach, when exchange students are just numbers to be proud of. This kind of attitude in the academic milieu is dangerous, because it threatens the value of personal and human interaction. However, the academic mobility prevails as the key tool of internationalization of higher education. According to L. Getto (2014), an author of Croatian background, 'student and staff mobility is considered a very important precondition of the strengthening of the international component in every institution of higher education' (Getto, 2014: 147). Furthermore, as Teekens (2011) say, 'mobility will always remain central, at the heart of internationalization. However, it should not be an end in itself but a means to boost the quality of education and research; and it should not be limited to the physical mobility of students, staff and researchers, but extend to the mobility of curriculum' (Teekens, 2011; in Odina, 2014: 121). Therefore this thesis will focus on student and staff mobility as indicator for internationalization of higher education in the Baltic States.

1.3.PECULIARITIES OF UNIVERSITY STAFF MOBILITY

Mobility has always been at the heart of the Bologna Process. It has been conceived both as a transversal action to complement the original action lines of the process, and as a key instrument to develop the European Higher Education Area (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, Eurostat and Eurostudent, 2012: 151). The Bologna Process envisages mobility of teachers, researchers and other university staff, outlining the value of staff mobility and the necessity to attract highly qualified staff to higher education institutions (European Commission/ EACEA/ Eurydice, Eurostat and Eurostudent, 2012: 171). Empirical studies by Lepori, B. (2015) display insights of the higher education institution's capability of attracting foreign academics. The aforementioned author's research proves that university internationalization is dependent on characteristics of the host country – its economic wealth and the strength of the national research system, while in less attractive countries, even highly reputed higher education institutions face difficulties to attract significant numbers of foreigners. Finally, he demonstrates that the ability of attracting foreign academics is strongly associated with university's international network (Lepori et al., 2015: 799).

Terri Kim (2009) adds that ‘in the current area of globalization, global connection and networks can be more significant than the human capital *stock* residing in a particular country’ (Wescott, 2005; in Kim, 2009:401).

As discussed by previous researchers (Kim, 2009), the contemporary academic mobility has become a part of neoliberal free market movement. It is suggested that transnational academic mobility and recruitment is affected by market values (Kim, 2009: 399). The author of this thesis highly agrees that staff mobility within university networks is dictated by certain market value, sometimes even putting a danger to surpassing the academic added value. As an example here serves the staff mobility trends in the Baltic States, displaying a clear preference pattern in the teaching staff decision making process, when it comes to choosing a host country for their mobility. During the 2014/2015 academic year, 75% of mobile staff of Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia chose neighbouring Baltic States as their mobility destination.

The author Terri Kim (2009) writes, that transnational academic mobility is a complex force with academics moving ‘between’ or ‘above’ territorial boundaries with emphasis on individuals and movements which occurs in ‘transnational space’ (Kim, 2009: 396). Student and university staff mobility is always a cross-cultural encounter. Another author J.R. Martin (2011) in her *Education Reconfigured* writes that, ‘theorists and philosophers in the Western tradition tend to look at education today from the standpoint of the individual. There is, however, another equally valid point of view to take – that of culture’ (Martin, 2011:7). Martin is ‘reconfiguring education as an interaction between an individual and a culture in which the both parties change’ (ibid: 203). The aforementioned concept is directly applicable to student and staff mobility outcomes. Due to the cross-cultural interaction during an exchange period, it is observed that both, host university and the guest, change. According to Martin (2011), many educational thinkers agree that culture leaves its fingerprints on education. However, those who highlight education’s cultural dimension often give the impression that culture and education is something separate. Culture is viewed as an external force, which simply leaves its marks upon education. The theory of education as encounter assumes a far more intimate connection between culture and education. Insisting that culture is an integral element of every educational event, it represents education as an interactive process in which both individuals and culture change (Martin, 2011: 22-23).

1.4. STUDENT MOBILITY AND ITS TRENDS IN THE BALTIC STATES

When observing J.R. Martin's (2011) work, where she writes that 'education evolves as an encounter between an individual and something external and that this encounter brings about change', the theory of education as encounter makes it clear that whenever and wherever education occurs, it is at one and the same time an instance of individual learning and a case of cultural transmission (Martin, 2011: 7). Cultural transmissions very clearly occur during the process of university internationalization, particularly student and staff exchange. As proposed by Terri Kim (2009), the 'prime version of internationalization implies the successful recruitment of international students and is concerned with how to enhance international students' experience' (Kim, 2009: 396). Also according to B. Wächer (2008), mobility is one of the main indicators of internationalization of higher education, providing student development opportunities not only with regard to the academic benefits, but also intercultural and linguistic competence formation. The same author indicates several types of student mobility:

- the mobility can be long-term or short-term, depending on whether the mobility participant is obtaining full degree or certain amount of credits;
- horizontal mobility among countries with equal level higher education system development, such as Erasmus programme³;
- vertical mobility from countries with lower development level of higher education systems to OECD country universities (Wächer, 2008; in Boge, 2011: 11).

Since the 1990s, internationalization has become a predominant trend in higher education, accompanied by the rapid expansion of physical mobility in Europe (Teichler, 2004: 14). The increased mobility of students and staff is fostered by the policies set out at the European level, such as the Bologna Process, advancing the quality of higher education as a means of increasing the global competitiveness of Europe. International mobility of students and staff has been a priority of the European higher education agenda since the launch of the Bologna Process (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015: 209). At the same time, the quality of

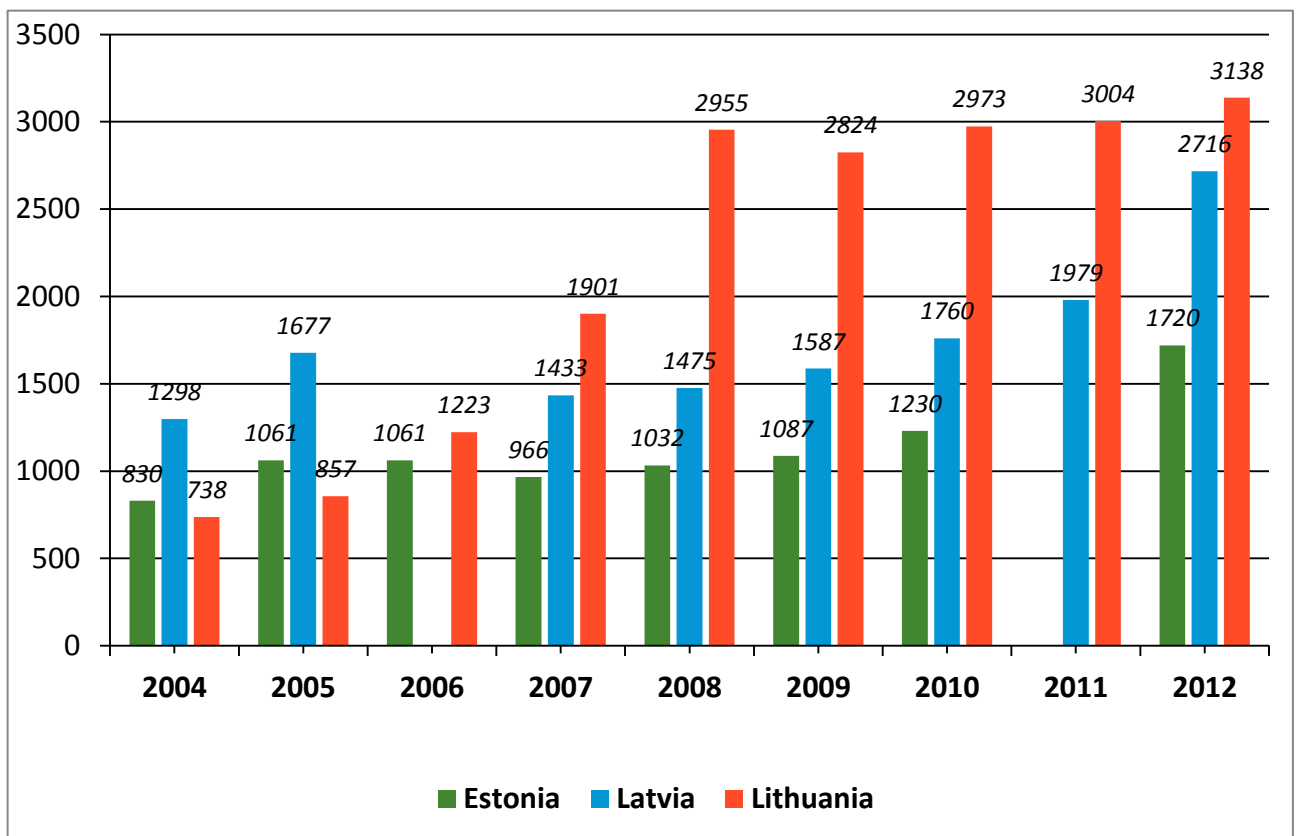
³ The Erasmus Programme (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) is a European Union exchange programme established in 1987. Erasmus+ is the new programme combining all the EU's current schemes for education, training, youth and sport, which was started in January 2014

education and quality of mobility outcomes is closely linked to the knowledge of the language of instruction. The mobility of students and staff requires a common language of communication for both hosts and visitors. It stems from the literature that the internationalization of higher education appears to drive the expansion of English rather than increase the diversity of languages used, despite the political initiative on the level of the European Union to support multilingual education (Kaša and Mhamed, 2013: 31). L. Getto (2014) writes that, in order to enlarge the international mobility, it is necessary to offer courses in English, which is undoubtedly an important precondition to attract incoming students. It is evident that higher education institutions which have introduced courses in English and joint programmes within international university network cooperation succeed in attracting a higher share of foreign students (Getto, 2014: 147). On the other hand, as the national languages of the Baltic States belong to so-called small languages, there is a need for special treatment and consideration.

Kaša and Mhamed (2013) discuss the academic use of “small languages” in the higher education. Author of this thesis has own very interesting experience regarding academic writing and concept of small languages. After project development discussions, during a coffee break conversation with a recent PhD graduate from Sweden, one inquired – what language did you write your thesis? “English of course! Nobody reads in Swedish” was the answer. If the country as large as Sweden does not read in Swedish, what chance do the Baltic States have? The conclusion drawn from the conversation – in order to be competitive in the academic world, one must use English as the academic language. In order not to miss out on this trend, countries with native languages other than English are increasingly offering study programs in English as well. Education in the English language is both a method and a symbol of becoming and being a member of a cosmopolitan culture (Kaša, Mhamed, 2013: 29).

The above observations directly apply to the case of the internationalization of higher education in the Baltic States. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania all have expressed a national policy aim to increase the international competitiveness of their national higher education systems. Increasing the number of international students is one of the key tasks, and thus, language of instruction is becoming an important issue: the availability of study programs in languages of incoming students is critical to a country’s capacity to attract foreign students (van der Wende, 2000: 209).

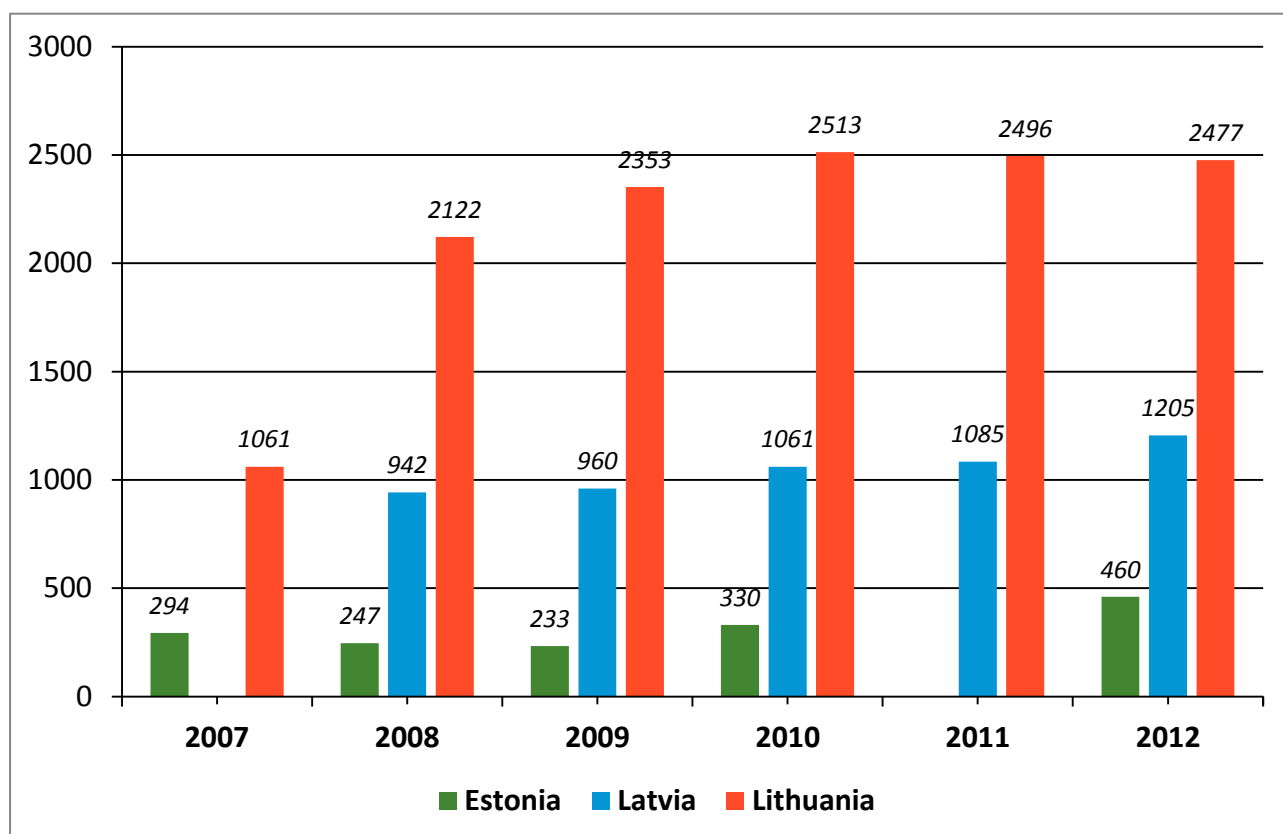
Further paragraphs of this paper describe not only physical mobility of students, but also the availability of study programs in foreign languages of instruction in correlation to outbound and inbound student mobility in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, thus illustrating how the higher education systems of the three countries are positioned in the global settings. In order to explore the ability of Baltic States to attract international students, as core aspect of higher education internationalization, the author has retrieved statistical data on foreign student enrolment in Baltic higher education institutions. The statistical information presented in further paragraphs was collected through the database of UNESCO Institute for Statistics.



Picture No 1 “**Total inbound internationally mobile students, both sexes (absolute numbers)**”
Source: Graph constructed based on data available in UNESCO Institute for Statistics

The number of total inbound mobile students in three Baltic States has steadily increased over the past decade, as can be observed in the Picture No 1. Over the last five years of the available data (2008-2012) it is notable that Lithuania attracts most of the mobile international students among the Baltic States. The steepest increase of mobile students in Lithuania can be observed in 2008, when the country managed to

attract over a 1000 extra students in comparison to previous statistical period. Lithuanian higher education institutions are outnumbering Latvian and almost doubling those of Estonian. Latvia and Estonia has had a steady increase of the number of inbound students, doubling the amount of incoming students in the period from 2004 till 2012, suggesting the success of Bologna principles and higher education internationalization processes in the Baltic States.

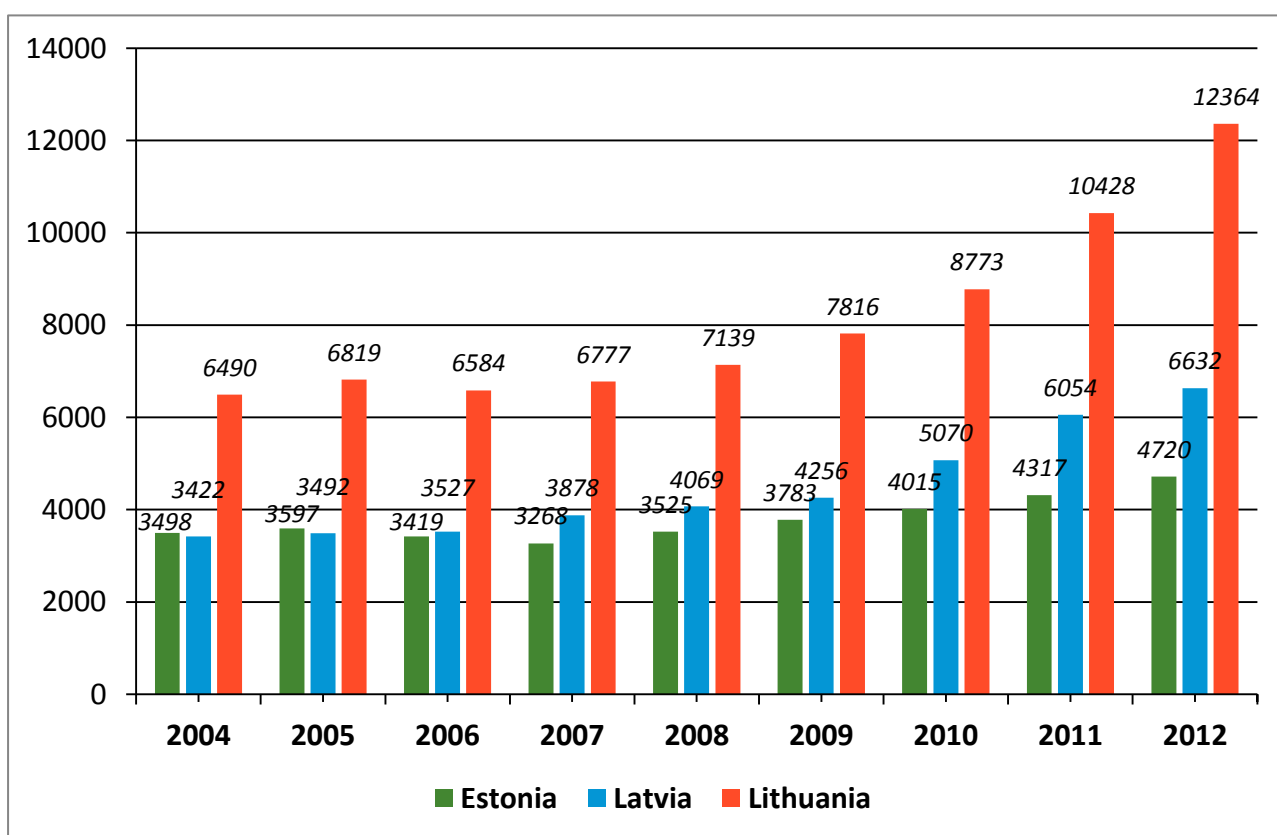


Picture No 2 “**Inbound internationally mobile students from Central and Eastern Europe, both sexes (absolute numbers)**”

Source: Graph constructed based on data available in UNESCO Institute for Statistics

In order to find the reasons for Lithuania’s success in attracting foreign students, as one of the measures for internationalized higher education, the author of this paper has extracted data, based on the inbound students’ country of origin. A rather interesting trend can be observed in the Picture No 2, if we compare it to Picture No 1. By analysing the numbers of incoming students between the two graphs, it is clearly visible that most of Lithuania’s inbound students come from the neighbouring region, Central and Eastern Europe, respectively. Thus we can observe a formation of higher education cluster in the region.

Higher education institutions in all three Baltic countries offer multiple study programs in English next to the study content in the national official languages and in Russian. According to research, conducted by Kaša and Mhamed (2013), there is no evidence of substantial use of EU languages other than English. In Estonia and Latvia, Russian language study programs reflected local demand rather than an international orientation in higher education (Kaša and Mhamed, 2013: 43). Among the most popular study programs taught in English in all three Baltic States, according to the same research were programs in business, medical sciences, and social sciences (ibid.).



Picture No 3 “Total outbound internationally mobile tertiary students studying abroad, all countries, both sexes (absolute numbers)”
Source: Graph constructed based on data available in UNESCO Institute for Statistics

When observing the outbound students from the Baltic countries, the absolute leader again is Lithuania. As can be seen in Picture No 3, the last available data of year 2012, shows that Lithuanian mobile students two times outnumber those of Latvian and Estonian origin. According to aforementioned research, the most popular countries Lithuanians choose to study in are Germany, Russia, Poland, Latvia, United

Kingdom and United States (Kaša and Mhamed, 2013: 37). As can be seen, when comparing the Picture No 1 and No 3, there is four times more outgoing students from Lithuania than there are incoming. The contemporary flows of academic movements in econometric perspective are conventionally called *brain drain*. However, academic mobility leads to flows of knowledge that benefits both sending and receiving institutions. This means that mobility is not a *zero-sum game*. In other words, the contemporary processes are not so much *brain drain* or *brain gain* in the milieu of nation states; it is rather a *brain transfer and transformation* in a globalized space (Kim, 2009: 401).

For Latvian students, however, according to Kaša and Mhamed research, the most popular destinations are the United Kingdom, Russia, Germany, the United States and France (Kaša and Mhamed, 2013: 37). The Estonians are making similar choices, when it comes to choosing a foreign country for their studies. Students of Estonian origin are choosing the same countries as Latvians and Lithuanians, but adding Finland (*ibid*).

To sum up the choices made by Baltic students, the most popular common countries for outbound students are Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. All three Baltic States have ties and common history with Russia, therefore the study choice in this country is not surprising. As mentioned beforehand, the choice to study in the United Kingdom can be explained by late migration and labour market trends and the fact, that United Kingdom offers excellent education in top-ranking English speaking universities.

2. NURSING EDUCATION IN THE BALTIC STATES

2.1. HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS IN THE BALTIC STATES AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION

In order to give better perspective on current processes in higher education of nursing professionals, it is necessary to observe the transition process that transpired during the 1990's after the regaining of the independence by the three Baltic States. Understanding the base line and exit point of professional higher education of healthcare professionals justifies current development stage. Still a few years after the Baltic States were officially recognized as independent nation states, nursing education was, according to former Soviet standards, still a professional secondary

education. The post-Soviet scene in the Baltics is a period of rapid change in nursing education. In the middle of the decade started a very complex, but rather interesting transition process of raising the professional qualification of healthcare specialists and lifting the nursing study programmes into higher education.

J. Toliušienė and E. Peičius (2007) describes the period of nursing education between 1945 and 1990. The nursing education curriculum at the time was strongly unified and centralized by the government institutions of the USSR; it was not supposed to be changed nor even adjusted to any specifications. Nurse training was provided by some 14 medical schools around the territory of Baltic States. The curriculum was extensively politicized: besides the medical subjects, study of the history of the Communist Party, military medicine, dialectic materialism and atheism was recognized as mandatory and displaced the important role of the training of nurses (McKee, 2004; in Toliušienė and Peičius, 2007: 754). Meanwhile, ethical aspects of nursing were mostly related to these subjects, especially atheistic ideology, and the role of the nursing profession was limited to technical and procedural duties in medicine (Loewy, 2003; in Toliušienė and Peičius, 2007: 754).

When describing the first steps of Baltic nations after the regaining of the independence in 1991, I. Kestere (2014) writes that 'exit to freedom was chaotic and full of happenstance. Researchers, now able to breathe more freely, continued on projects already begun, but university academic staff was left in an awkward position. The Soviet system, along with its clearly defined rules, had collapsed, but students still needed to be taught; yet officially accepted curricula no longer satisfied them, or their teachers' (Kestere, 2014: 849). The Baltic nations had to adapt rapidly from a politicized nursing and ethics curriculum to European regulations and from a paternalistic style of care to one of engagement with choices and dilemmas (Toliušienė and Peičius, 2007: 753).

In 1991 the new governments drafted democratic constitutions, introduced market economy, and chose to fundamentally amend the educational systems, in order to sustain the transformation process away from the communist system. The first readjustments revealed that major economic reforms had to be coupled with educational changes, upon which to build and sustain the industries of the Baltic States. Without competitive educational reforms, the national and economic advancement of the Baltic States would be at risk from other more developed capitalist systems (OECD, 2002: 3). In response to this, the governments

acknowledged that educational development of its human capital was of exceptional importance. However, educational reforms were not only focused on economic prosperity, but they were also intended to secure European Union accession by demonstrating just how “European” the Baltics had already become (Beresniova, 2010: 254).

Higher education reforms were driven by a clear determination of Baltic universities to embrace European standards, policies, and practices. The European Union, especially the Bologna Process, played an important role in determining the direction of higher education reforms in the Baltic States. It is in the context of these multiple, conflicting, and overlapping international influences that define the complex re-configuration of the post-Soviet higher education space (Silova, 2011: 10). The central motif of post-Soviet higher education reforms in the Baltic States was seen as a return to Europe. Neither the vast majority of society nor political elites questioned the desire to break ties with Russia and become a part of Europe, which at the time appeared as the only alternative for post-Soviet transformations for the Baltic nations. The integration of the three Baltic States into the EU in 2004 clearly signalled a desire to adhere to the shared European values of liberal democracy and free market economics. From this perspective, educational policies in the Baltic States have been naturally pro-Western (Silova, 2011: 10). Meanwhile Russian Federation tried to use higher education as a foreign policy tool in attempt to maintain its influence in the Baltic region. One such foreign policy strategy included scholarships for Russian-speaking residents of the Baltic countries to pursue higher education or teacher training in Russia (Silova, 2011: 10). In 1999, for example, the Moscow City Council established “Luzhkov scholarships” for Russian-speaking students from Latvia, awarding a number of scholarships annually to study in Russian universities (Muiznieks, 2006: 129). However, the more Russia strived to maintain influence over the Baltic States, the more the Baltic republics expressed the commitment to Europeanization, thus ensuring the irreversibility not only of the independence, but also of integration into the West. In higher education Russia had lost its influence over the Baltic States. Currently it is the European Union that dictates the trends and directions of higher education in the Baltic region. Most of the European Union measures do not explicitly aim at regulation of national policies; the impact can be felt more indirectly through European educational cooperation (Silova, 2011: 10).

At the beginning of the 1990's, the Baltic States joined other European Union accession countries in a wide range of educational catch-up programs, which helped in the preparation process for the European Union accession. The available programmes were, for example, SOCRATES, LEONARDO da VINCI, TEMPUS and PHARE. The basic philosophy behind these educational initiatives was to promote international cooperation, enhance the quality of education, encourage social integration, and increase the employability of the graduates. These aims generally corresponded to national development goals, forming the cornerstone of education policies in the new accession countries (Silova, 2011: 10). The PHARE programme was implemented as European Union pre-accession programme in Latvia, elevating the nursing curriculum in the higher education (ibid.). According to official information on PHARE programme, provided by the Central Finance and Contracting Agency of the Republic of Latvia (CFCA), the programme is one of pre-accession instruments financed by the European Union to assist the applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe in their preparations. Originally created in 1989 the PHARE programme covered 10 countries, assisting them in a period of massive economic restructuring and political change. PHARE's objectives are:

- strengthening public administrations and institutions to function effectively inside the European Union;
- promoting convergence with the European Union's extensive legislation and reduce the need for transition periods;
- promote economic and social cohesion (CFCA, 2011).

The universal aim is to assist the authorities in the candidate country in their efforts to comply with the accession criteria (ibid.).

The official published information on the transition processes that occurred within healthcare education institutions during the 1990's is rather poor. Therefore the nursing study programme methodologist from Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia Mrs. Mg.paed I. Fedotova has provided the author of this thesis with personal insight and professional information regarding the transition process of nursing education. Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia, as Riga Medical School No 5 participated in PHARE programme *Professional Education Reforms* as a pilot-school. From October 1, 1997 till the end of academic year 1996/1997, the educational institution contributed to the newly developed educational programme

Healthcare – nursing education introduction and implementation in medical schools of Latvia.

A new understanding of the nurse profession was introduced in the academic world of Latvia and the Baltic States. According to the newly developed view, a nurse is a comprehensively developed person who cares for the individual, family and community health, its preservation and promotion; professionally and independently perform patient care and takes responsibility for the outcomes. The framework of learning process of healthcare professionals has developed from methods used to acquire factual knowledge to integrated learning methods and approaches that facilitate understanding, and integration of theory and practical experience.

There are a number of changes that have transpired in the nursing education:

- the philosophy of educational programme;
- outcomes of the educational programme;
- the contents of the nursing study programme;
- the leaning process – forms of learning, learning methods and instruments;
- evaluation form and methods;
- the duration of study programme.

To summarize the transformations, D. Celma and O. Zīds (2003) offer following developmental milestones of Latvian and Baltic education systems:

- depolitization of education – the restoration of the principles of democracy in the political and social structures has interrupted the former ideological control over the content of education and teaching methods which was applied as an ideological means towards the young generation;
- possibilities to choose the type of education – the new system of education liberates the youth to choose studies according to their interests and abilities;
- liquidation of state monopoly – significant step in the return to market economy and democratic society was the liberation of educational market, which now guarantees the right to establish private and NGO educational institutions. A healthy competition has developed among the educational institutions;

- decentralization of education administration – the autonomy and certain functions of decision-making have been delegated to higher education institutions (Celma and Zīds, 2003: 80).

Implemented transition programmes and reforms have harmonized the professional higher education in Baltic States and elevated the professional standards of healthcare professionals to European level. Nursing education transition is particularly interesting due to the philosophical changes in nursing study programmes.

2.2.ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES IN THE BALTIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

A quiet revolution has been taking place within the European world of nursing higher education, known as the Bologna Process. It is the single most important reform of higher education to take place in Western Europe in the last thirty years and will, in the long-term, affect millions of nurses in practice, education and research who work in countries that make up the European Union (Davies, 2008: 935). The Bologna process leads to the unification of professional and higher education and facilitate work migration for graduate nurses across the European community (ibid.). As concluded from the previous chapter, the nursing educational status in the Baltic States have been raised from diploma to graduate level, however, in order to strengthen and maintain the Bologna Process implications, further development is essential. In order to observe the contemporary changes in the nursing higher education towards internationalization, it is necessary to look into organizational changes that are still transpiring.

Previous researchers, such as Carnall (2007), set out the key influences on the nature of any organizational change. This relates to the scope, scale and complexity of change, these being important determinants of many of the issues which arise for those managing major changes (Carnall, 2007: 174). The core of major organizational changes is the process of strategy formulation, as it should seek to explore the organization's limits and capability (ibid: 175). The aforementioned author's „Outline map” of organizational change suggests that strategy formulation, which is in the core of the process, should also be in close correlation with competitive bench-marking,

strategic organizational diagnosis, specific changes, quality assurance, multi-organizational change programmes and cultural change (Carnall, 2007: 175).

Strategic change achievement can thus be described comprising organizational vision and strategy, and understanding stakeholders' and organization's capacity (Iljinset al, 2014: 50). In order to be successful, strategic changes need to be managed in such a way that three necessary conditions for effective change are in place: Awareness: stakeholders understand and believe in the vision, the strategy and the implementation plans; Capability: stakeholders involved believe they can develop the necessary skills and can therefore both cope with and take advantage of the changes; Inclusion: stakeholders involved feel that they value the new jobs, opportunities, etc., and choose to behave in the new ways (new attitudes, skills and ways of working) (Carnall, 2007: 177).

According to Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001) there are three types of organizational change: developmental change, transitional change, and transformational change (Anderson and Ackerman Anderson, 2001: 31). Therefore, a type of changes is also important in order to understand the stage of internationalization of nursing education in Baltic States. In this thesis, according to the theory, the most appropriate for contemporary professional higher education institutions in the Baltics is *Developmental change*. In order to provide substantiation for the aforementioned statement, the author of this paper has conducted a comparative analysis of the organizational changes that transpired in the 1990's and nowadays.

Type	Degree of <i>pain</i> felt	Primary motivation	Degree of threat to survival	Gap between environmental needs and opportunities	Clarity of outcome	Impact on mind-set	Focus of change	Orientation	Level of personal development required	How change occurs
Developmental change	1	Improvement	1	1	4 It is prescribed against standard	1 Little if any	Improvement of skills, knowledge, practice and performance	To do better in a certain area: project oriented	1	Through training, skill development, communications, process improvement
Transitional change	2	Fix a problem	2	2	4 It is designed against criteria	1 Little if any	Redesign of strategy, structures, systems, processes, technology or work practices	Project oriented; largely focused on structure, technology and work practices	2	Controlled process, support structure, timeline
Transformational change	4	Survival: change or die; Trivial: breakthrough needed to pursue new opportunities	4	4	1 It is not initially known; it emerges or is created through trial and error continuous course correction	4 Forced to shift: old mind-set and/or business paradigm must change	Overhaul of strategy, structure, systems, processes technology, work, culture, behaviour, and mind-set	Process-oriented requires shift in mind-set, behaviour, and culture	4	Conscious process design and facilitation; high involvement; emergent process

Table 1 “Three Types of Organization Change” Rating scale: 1=low; 4=high
Source: matrix modified from Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001)

From the information given in the previous chapter about higher education, with focus on nursing education, reforms in the Baltic States, we can conclude, that changes, that transpired in the Baltics during the 1990's, can be defined as *transformational change*. The degree of *pain* felt during the transition period was rather high, as the primary motivation for the organizational changes in the nursing education was rather cruel: *change or die*, and the degree of threat to survival were very high. The clarity of outcome of the change was low – it was not initially known. The present nursing education system, which emerged, was created through trial and continuous error corrections. The organizational changes of the 1990's had particularly strong impact on mind-set of the teaching staff and the students. Healthcare professionals were forced to shift their old mind-set and embrace new philosophies and approaches. The focus of change that transpired was aimed at complete overhaul of the working strategy, structure, systems, work, culture, behaviour, and mind-set, and it required a high level of personal development of nursing teaching staff. The transformational change that transpired was consciously designed and process-oriented.

Types of changes vary from motivation to occurrence of change. It is important to identify the changes that are transpiring, as it helps to understand the present stage of internationalization of higher education institution. When observing the current type of organizational changes in the nursing higher education, according to theory by Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2001), the most appropriate is *Developmental change*. The primary motivation is improvement; therefore the degree of *pain* felt and threat to institutional survival, during the internationalization process at the current stage, is low. Unlike in the 1990's when the transformational changes occurred, the clarity of outcomes is high. The impact on mind-set of the developmental changes is low, but very important, never the less. In the ever alternant academic world it is crucial not to get trapped in one mind-set. Focus of the present changes is improvement of skills, knowledge, practice and performance; the higher education institutions aim to do better in a certain area and activities are project oriented. The change occurrence is through training, skill development, communications and process improvement. According to D. Anderson and L.A. Anderson (2001) and Iljins et al. (2014), the *developmental change* mainly occurs in project based activities and primary motivation is improvement. Therefore it can be concluded that in first level professional higher education institutions in the Baltic States, offering nursing education, internationalization is project based process and change it brings can be named *developmental change*.

2.3.CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTEMPORARY NURSING EDUCATION IN THE BALTIC STATES

The knowledge of a nurse is a combination of experience, theory and heuristics, developed by the society of practitioners and student as individual, which allows justified decisions to be made and correct actions to be taken. As Milton (2005) further explains, the shift from seeing knowledge as personal property, to seeing knowledge as communal property, is at the heart of knowledge management (Milton, 2005: 5). It is also suggested that ‘knowledge management is fundamentally a systematic approach for optimising the access, for individuals and teams within an organization to relevant actionable advice, knowledge and experience from elsewhere’ (Gorelick et al, 2004). This definition looks at knowledge from the point of view of the knowledge user rather than the knowledge supplier. It emphasises the need for the knowledge to be relevant and actionable, and therefore valuable to the knowledge user.

The term *knowledge management* can be challenged due the intangible tacit nature of knowledge, the difficulty to separate knowledge from people, the difficulty of measuring the flow of knowledge. However, we are becoming increasingly familiar with managing the intangibles. Knowledge is no less tangible or measurable than risk, brand or safety, which are all recognized management approaches. The value of knowledge is as enormous as the value of brand, and to leave this asset unmanaged strike as nonsensical. Knowledge sharing as proven its merit, that knowledge needs to be captured, shared and applied with a degree of punctual management. (Milton, 2005: 5)

“Knowledge feeds performance, and knowledge is also derived from performance” (p.15). Performance and learning creates a closed loop as one learns from the performance and performs by applying the knowledge (Milton, 2005: 15). The terms *tacit* and *explicit* can be applied when describing knowledge in healthcare professions. Tacit knowledge means competency held instinctively, in the unconscious spheres of mind and in the muscle memory, which cannot be transferred in words alone. Therefore, knowledge which exists only in human mind is termed *tacit knowledge*, and knowledge which has been recorded somewhere is termed *explicit knowledge*. Tacit knowledge can therefore be made explicit if it is captured and recorded (Milton, 2005: 3). The peculiarities and specifics of knowledge required for nursing specialists, explains the Article 31 of the EU Directive 2005/36/EC, which states that the duration of the clinical training of nurses responsible for general care shall be at least one half of the training period (EU, 2005).

Project knowledge and knowledge gained during international exchange is placed in between tacit and explicit, as some of it can be codified, but some cannot. This statement implicates those university internationalization activities, concerning student training in intercultural settings need to address both the tacit and explicit dimensions in order to be successful (Milton, 2005: 4). Interculturality and intercultural competences, however, go beyond a mere *tolerance of the other*. It requires engagement and development of creative abilities that convert challenges and insights into innovation process and into new forms of expression (Kim, 2009: 396).

During the past two decades the concept of nursing education in the Baltic States has changed rapidly and representatives of the profession have experienced not only regulatory, but also philosophical changes of the professional standards. As can be concluded from before, the European collaboration and Bologna Process has influenced the implementation of nursing education in Europe, with member countries working towards strengthening nursing education in higher education institutions, establishing comparable nursing degrees and collaborating in matters of quality assurance (Lahtinen et al., 2014: 1041).

As described in the Bologna Process Implementation Report 2015, the European Higher Education Area has evolved towards a more common and much more understandable structure of degrees. There is, however, no single model of nursing programmes in the EHEA. Most countries combine programmes of 180 ECTS and 240 ECTS. Short-cycle qualifications are the exception to the rule of convergent development in degree structures. They have a different status in different countries, being recognised in some as a part of higher education, in others as part of post-secondary vocational education or even as part of secondary education. They may also be called very differently from one country to the next (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015: 17). Adding to this, ‘every member state has its own legislation, culture, healthcare needs, healthcare philosophies and structures and economic situations’ (Lahtinen et al., 2014: 1041), however, the collective efforts of Bologna Process member states has successfully created *profile of nursing as graduate profession* (ibid.).

In order to observe and compare the professional qualifications of nurses among the Baltic States, the author of this paper has conducted a comparative analysis of the three nation states, comparing entry requirements, system of education, duration of studies, amount of practical training and awarded degrees.

	Latvia	Lithuania	Estonia
Name of institution	College	College/University	College
Entry qualification (s)	Secondary education or Vocational school	EU min 10 years ⁴	Secondary education or Vocational school
Level of professional qualification/title awarded	First level professional higher education and qualification: general nurse	Professional Bachelor/ Bachelor degree	A professional higher education diploma
Duration of study in years	3	3.5/4	3,5
ECTS per study cycle	180 (with secondary education) 120 (with vocational education)	180 College 210 University	210
Practical training ⁵	50%	50%	50%
Post graduate study: Master	Yes	Yes	Yes
Post graduate study: DhD	No	Yes	No

Table 2 “**Higher education in the Baltic States**”

Source: Nursing curricula of LU RMC, SVAKO and TTK

⁴ Article 31 of Directive 2005/36/EC states that training for nursing requires completion of general education of ten years. (EU, 2005) The length of education can be longer than ten years.

⁵ Article 31 of Directive 2005/36/EC states that the duration of the clinical training of nurses responsible for general care shall be at least one half of the minimum duration of the training (EU, 2005).

According to P.Lahtinen's et al. recently conducted research, entry qualifications and practical training, as the requirements set by EU Directive 2005/36/EC (EU, 2005) for admission to and the amount of practical training included in nursing education programs are currently being met by all 29 of the Bologna Declaration signatory and original member countries. The minimum entry qualifications involve completing ten years of general education (Lahtinen et al., 2014: 1044). Each member country can more specifically state the prior education requirements and, as can be seen in the Table 2, Baltic States are closely following the recommendations, with Latvia and Estonia requiring the minimum of secondary education, and Lithuania requiring the EU minimum of 10 years prior education.

As can be observed in Table 2, nursing education in the Baltic States is strongly practice-based, in accordance to standards of professional higher education. The division between theory and practice is 50:50, which is regulated by the nation state legislation. For example, in the Republic of Latvia, the Regulations on the first level professional higher education State standard implies that no less than 30% of study courses should be implemented in practice (20.03.2001. MK noteikumi Nr 141.), but as can be observed in the Table 2, the EU Directive prevails and distribution between theory and practice in nursing education in Latvia is 50% each. Article 31 of EU Directive 2005/36/EC (EU, 2005) on the professional qualifications for trained nurses applies not only to all EU member states, but also to Norway, Iceland and Switzerland. It outlines general principles and practices for nursing education, for example admission, theoretical and clinical training, and the extent of the education. The same EU Directive implies that nursing training at higher education levels must be at least three years long or include 4600 hours of theoretical and clinical training (EU, 2005). All Baltic countries with higher nursing education programs comply with the requirement.

The conclusions drawn by P. Lahtinen et al., also applies to the case study of this thesis. As Lahtinen (2014) writes, 'the 29 countries that signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999 have had the longest amount of time to adjust to the nursing education reform' (Lahtinen et al., 2014: 1041); hence the Baltic States, as original signatories of the Declaration, have used the time allowance accordingly and nursing education systems at college level are very compatible.

Research by P.Lahtinen et.al., shows, that In the EHEA, master's and doctoral degrees in nursing are offered in 60% of the countries. In 27% of the countries, it is not yet possible to study for a postgraduate degree in nursing. Only in six EHEA countries master's degree is the highest possible degree in nursing. Most countries that offer the post-graduate possibility to study for a master's degree also have studies at the doctoral level (Lahtinen et al., 2014:

1042). As can be concluded from the Table 2, Latvia and Estonia are one of the few EHEA countries, not offering a post-graduate study option to obtain PhD in nursing sciences. Doctoral study options for those, wishing to obtain PhD in Latvia, are doctoral school in Public Health.

2.4. STRATEGIES AND DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR NURSING EDUCATION INTERNATIONALIZATION IN THE BALTICS

The Baltic academic society began to talk about internationalization in 1990's after the regaining of independence. The term was put in context of higher education after 2009 (Iljins et.al. 2014: 48). When the term was first introduced in the Baltic academic milieu, internationalization first appeared only as integral chapter of higher education institution development strategy, but at present stage of university evolution, we can observe separate university internationalization strategies. The internationalization of higher education has been taken as a university strategy with aim to increase competitiveness, with emphasis on the recruitment of the best and brightest students and scholars (Kim, 2009: 396). In a research done by Sursock and Smidt in 2010, within European Universities Association (hereinafter – EUA), 61% of universities confirmed that internationalization is the key reason to change university strategy (Sursock and Smidt, 2010; in Iljins et al, 2014: 50). As suggested by previous researchers, “internationalization globally plays an important role for attractiveness for higher education systems” (Iljin et al, 2014: 50). The same author mentions that in order to participate in global education market, Latvian and Baltic higher education institutions have to make curricular, structural and faculty alterations (ibid.).

Authors of available literature and case studies offer an assumption that early stage internationalization is project based. When observing the strategic development of Baltic HEIs, we can see that only in recent years it is possible to see internationalization as a coordinated process, not only project based activity (Iljins, 2014: 50).

According to Iljins et al (2014), the increase in volume of international students has been possible due to project-based activities. However, the aforementioned growth has not changed internal processes, rather posing new challenges to Baltic higher education institutions. Authors find essential need to “learn and explore more how to manage change” (Iljins, 2014, p.50). When observing the internationalization strategies of nursing education providers, it is notable, that professional higher education institutions hardly ever have separate planning document for internationalization. The concepts and visions concerning internationalization are usually included in general development plans and strategies.

	Latvia	Lithuania	Estonia
HEI	Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia	Vilniaus Kolegija/UAS	Tallinn Healthcare College
Name of the document	Mid-Term Operational and Development Strategy of Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia	Integrated Development Strategy of Vilniaus Kolegija/University of Applied Sciences	Development Plan
Activity period	2010-2015	2012-2020	2012-2016
Mission	Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia implements the first level professional higher education study programmes to educate health care professionals necessary for the field and contribute to the field research with an aim of further promotion of quality in the health care system.	To provide practice-oriented study programmes designed for students' self-development to become specialists with the professional bachelor's degree in biomedicine, agricultural, physical, humanitarian, social and technological sciences and arts, who meet economic and social needs of Vilnius region and the entire Lithuania. To ensure a modern study process complying with the European standards and develop an effective cooperation with representatives from the business world. To develop students' generic competences and civil values, necessary for VIKO graduates' future work and continuing studies.	The College trains innovatively and critically thinking health professionals.
Vision	A college of medical professional education that provides the first level professional higher education study programmes to educate and train qualified and competitive health care professionals necessary for the field to ensure a targeted implementation of the state health care strategy in all health care institutions	Open to innovations, flexible, and continually changing professional higher education institution that is harmoniously combining labour market needs with the development of perspective areas of science and art. An institution cherishing the spirit of creativity among teachers and students and responsibility based on the requirements for a high quality performance. An international recognition gained educational institution successfully integrating into the EHEA	The College is in continuous development, nationally and internationally networked, where, in cooperation with national and international partners and involving learners, current challenges are addressed.

Table 3 “**Internationalization strategies of higher education institutions of the Baltic States**”

Source: Strategies and development plans of LU RMC (2010), VIKO (2012), TTK (2011)

Internationalization			
Name and placement in the document	International cooperation (chapter)	Strategic objective No 2 – Develop the internationalisation of VIKO	Internationalisation (chapter)
Mission/objective of the internationalization	<p>Contribution to the development of the European higher education area.</p> <p>LU RMC provides students with a possibility to study in other European countries and thus obtain valuable academic, language and culture experience. Furthermore, it also promotes further education of well-qualified and internationally experienced emerging medical professionals. By attracting foreign academic staff, LU RMC provides students with an opportunity to gain knowledge and expertise from the lecturers of the partner schools abroad.</p>	<p>The internationalization mission of VIKO is to guarantee a modern study process, complying with the European model while effectively cooperating with the representatives of the business world.</p>	<p>The objective of internationalisation is to be a higher education institution in the field of health and welfare being a respected and reliable partner to learners and professionals in other countries. The College will expand its international dimension and increase its international visibility by promoting its research, development and creative activities in cooperation with foreign institutions of higher education and other enterprises and organisations. The College will have developed measures to support mobility</p>
Summary of key tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mobility of students and lecturers; - participation in international academic and professional organizations; - improvement of the foreign language proficiency of the teaching staff; - participation in international scientific research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop international studies - develop internationalization of the study process - develop network of international partners - academic mobility - disseminate information about VIKO international activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - outbound mobility – reach 12% student and teacher mobility by 2016 - balance inbound mobility - internationalisation at home – engage 25% of staff in international activities and projects development - effective participation in international networks and projects

Table 3 (cont.) **“Internationalization strategies of higher education institutions of the Baltic States”**

Source: Strategies and development plans of LU RMC (2010), VIKO (2012), TTK (2011)

Most countries encourage the internationalisation of higher education through their steering documents (EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015:22). As can be seen from the information, provided in the Table 3, the current development plans of the higher education institutions were formalized around the same time period, between 2010 and 2012. Considering the theoretical background, the internationalisation of professional higher education institutions in the Baltic States is highly determined and influenced by the principles of EHEA.

The central objectives of internationalisation for all three organizations are to expand their international dimension. Higher education institutions aim to increase their international visibility by promoting international research collaboration, actively participating in international university network activities and projects. According to the opinion of the author of this thesis, it is very important that TTK acknowledges the significance of internationalization at home by increasing the staff language proficiency and involvement in international project development. As I. Odina (2014) writes, the university cannot restrict itself to internationalize through mobility, as it is impossible to send out all students and staff on international exchange, therefore a lot of work has to be done at home. Odina (2014) further suggest that higher a plan must be developed for other internationalization activities, excluding mobility (Odina, 2014: 123). However, the academic mobility prevails as the central vision on how to internationalize the observed higher education institutions.

The summary of three higher education institution development plans, displayed in Table No 3, implies following conclusions. Firstly, all three higher education institutions emphasize further increase of academic mobility of students and teachers, which implies that universities have already established a stable network of foreign partners. Secondly, a new phase is being introduced by VIKO, in form of a coordinated study process internationalization. Finally, despite minor differences and peculiarities of each organization, all higher education institutions are purposefully working towards internationalization of their educational offer.

3. NURSING STUDENT AND UNIVERSITY STAFF MOBILITY IN THE BALTIC STATES

3.1. RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The author of this thesis has designed following steps of the research programme. In order to select the theoretical basis for further research, the first task was to collect literature and summarise definitions and key concepts of internationalization of higher education. The professional experience of the author has led to the next logical task – before further investigation of contemporary stage of Baltic higher education internationalization, it is necessary to observe the transition process of healthcare, particularly nursing, education that transpired in the Baltics after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Only after understanding the complexity of processes that took place in the Baltic nursing educational milieu, it is possible to further investigate internationalization processes by comparing strategic planning documents of the higher education institutions. As refined in the analysis of theory, academic mobility is at heart of university internationalization; therefore the next step towards the research aim is statistical data collection and interpretation on student and staff mobility peculiarities in the higher education institutions of the three Baltic States. Finally the author draws conclusions and offers suggestions, with regards to contemporary dispositions and possible future improvements.

There are following research methods, chosen for application in order to achieve the above proposed tasks:

1. **literature and library research** on theoretical material base and previous research in the field of higher education internationalization; literary collection of this thesis includes also such unpublished materials as student and study guides, university methodological materials and conference spread-sheets;
2. with the aim to observe university processes in the Baltic States, **comparative analysis** was conducted, contrasting and comparing education systems and university processes;
3. **interviews** were conducted with an objective to observe the current organizational paradigms of healthcare education and structural changes over the past decades;
4. a **survey** was developed to investigate students' understanding and involvement in the internationalization process of the healthcare education.

For further analysis the author of this thesis has chosen three higher education institutions in the Baltic States, which offer nursing education.

Šiauliai State College in the Northern Lithuania was chosen as one of the research bases, due to the two-faculty structure of the higher education institution and the wide range of study programme offer. According to proposed research hypothesis, it was necessary to compare the student activity in mobility programmes between students of the Faculty of Healthcare and students of the Faculty of Business and Technologies. Due to the size and scope of the higher education institution, Šiauliai State College is the most appropriate to conduct this part of investigations.

Riga Medical College of The University of Latvia has been chosen for case study form the perspective of author's own professional experience as administrative employee of the aforementioned higher education institution. The most part of research data collection and interpretation was conducted in Riga.

Tallinn Healthcare College was selected because the higher education institution has the largest nursing faculty in Estonia, and the institution's International Office is running multiple mobility and international cooperation programmes, which gives a different perspective on data interpretation possibilities. All three higher education institutions have similarities in their historical development, experiencing mergers, reorganizations and other transitions.

The research idea of this thesis supported the development of two student surveys. The first survey was conducted in spring of 2014, after the Erasmus Rainbow Intensive Programme. The questionnaire was originally designed for the project report requirements, but it has been adopted to match the research goals of this thesis. It was done due to the rare complexity of available focus group, which comprised 47 nursing students from 10 European higher education institutions. The number of received applicable surveys is 34; the rest were either incomplete or retained by the students.

The second student survey was executed during the spring semester of 2014/2015 academic year. The questionnaire was designed to investigate the added value and student understanding of the internationalization of higher education, with particular focus on nursing study programmes. Aforementioned survey was circulated among nursing student international mobility participants in the current academic year 2014/2015. The questionnaire was circulated electronically, using online computer application for data collection. Survey included 10 questions and the request was sent out to 25 nursing students, who have had training abroad in the current academic year. The system has collected 20 complete surveys, which can be used for further analysis and data interpretation.

3.2.CASE STUDY LATVIA – RIGA MEDICAL COLLEGE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA

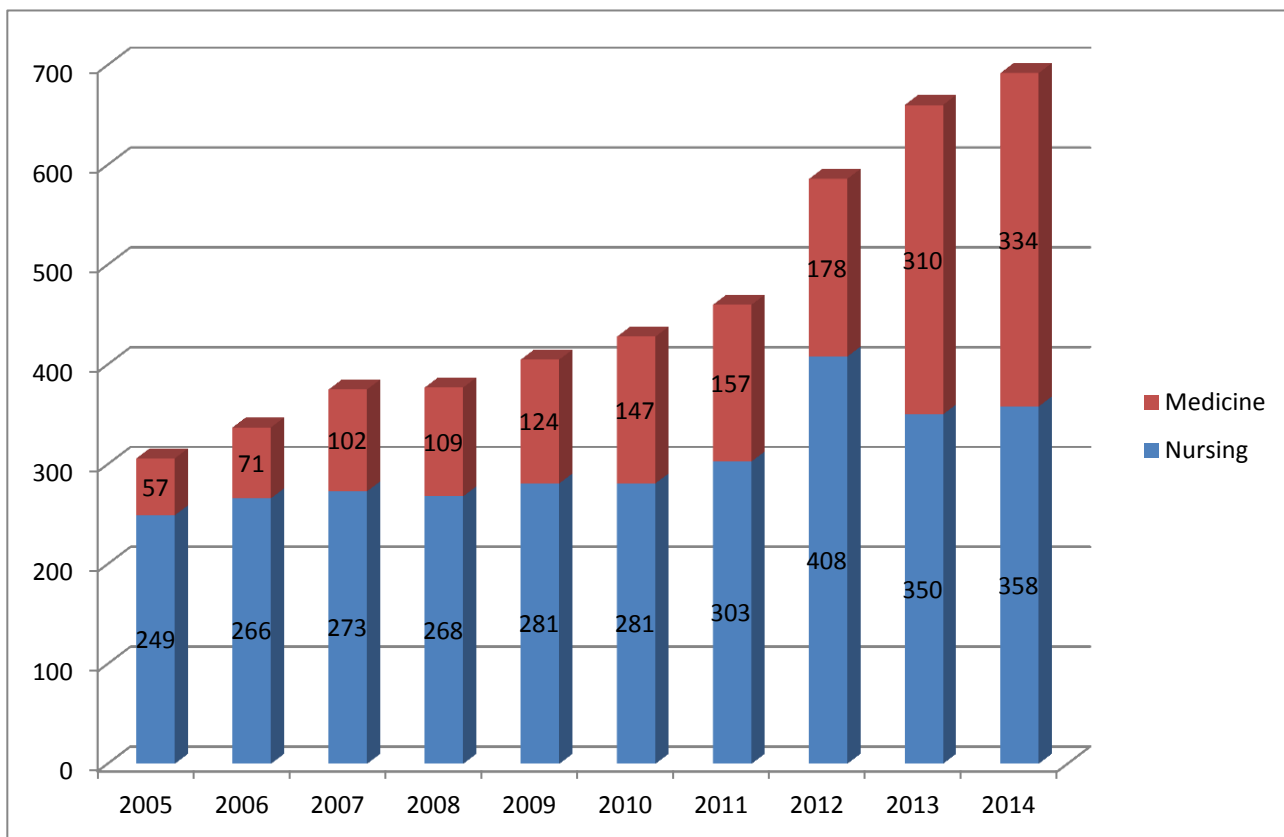
Although there is a concrete target for mobility, with a call upon each country to increase mobility and *to diversify its types and scope*, there are no provided general definitions, and reference is only to *a study or training period abroad* (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, Eurostat and Eurostudent, 2012: 153). The peculiarities of healthcare, particularly nursing, education, is that most student exchanges are *training mobilities*. *Study mobilities* are hardly ever implemented due to the schedule differences among partner universities and inelasticity of curriculum.

Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia was founded in 1980 as Riga Medical School No. 5. The education institution implemented professional vocational education at the time. In mid-1990's the education institution was a pilot school, implementing PHARE programme, to elevate the nursing education in professional higher education, as mentioned in previous chapters of the paper. In 2004, in compliance with legislation of the Republic of Latvia, the school was transformed to Riga Medical College, offering the first level professional higher education. Finally, in 2010 the College was restructured as agency of the University of Latvia and assumed the current title – Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia (Development Strategy of LU RMC, 2010: 2).

According to the Mid-term development strategy of the university college, the higher education institution implements the first level professional higher education, offering its students knowledge, competences and skills relevant and appropriate for the present-day labour market and health care system. The main aim of the College is to contribute to European Higher Education Area by developing those professional and personal skills of students that are vital for people in a European multicultural society (Development Strategy of LU RMC, 2010: 2).

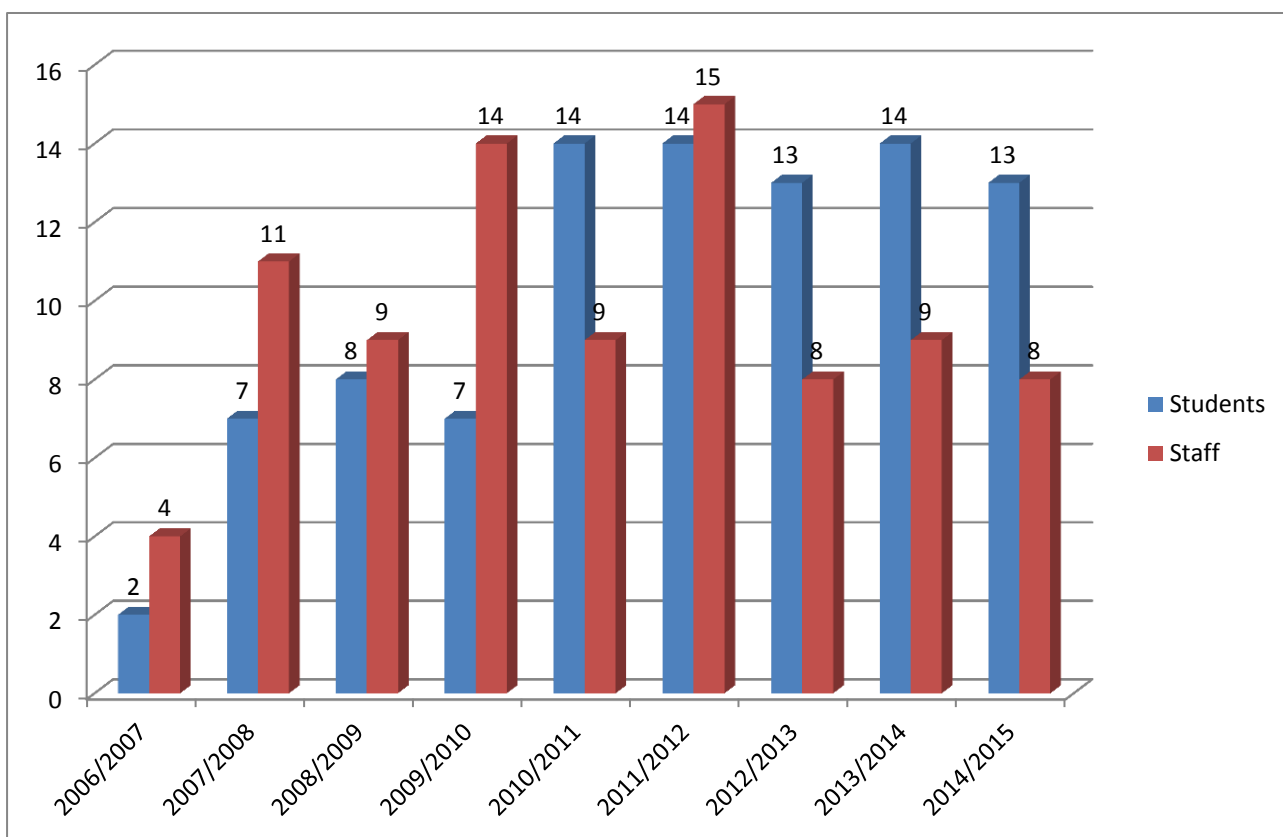
In order to evaluate the internationalization processes in LU RMC, the author of this paper has collected information on mobility statistics of the higher education institution. As mentioned before, international mobility of students and staff has been a priority of the European higher education agenda since the launch of the Bologna Process. The strategic targets of academic mobility in Europe were formulated at Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve in 2009 and outlined key actions required by EHEA countries to move towards more high quality exchanges and the removal of obstacles to mobility across the continent. The mobility target adopted in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve is that at least 20 % of those graduating in the EHEA should have had a study or training period abroad by 2020 (The Bologna Process 2020: The

European Higher Education Area in the new decade, 2009: 4). In order to observe the progress of LU RMC towards the common mobility targets, the author offers a percentage comparison between number of students and implemented student mobilities.



Picture No 4 “Total number of students in LU RMC per annum per study programme”
 Source: Graph constructed based on statistical data collected at LU RMC

The data in Picture No 4 displays number of Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia graduates since 2005, as it marks the entry into higher education. The statistical data of previous years was not selected due to irrelevance to the study of this paper. As can be concluded from the graph in the Picture No 4, the amount of students in both study programmes is increasing with every admission. There has been a contribution from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Latvia to the increase of the number of students, allocating funds to elevate the qualification of working nurses with professional vocational education. Increasing number of students put extra demands on the higher education institution. In order to observe if international activities of the higher education institution comply with the growth of number of students, another graph was constructed, based on student and staff Erasmus mobility statistics.



Picture No 5 “Number of outgoing Erasmus mobility participants per academic year”

Source: Graph constructed based on statistical data collected at LU RMC

The Picture No 5 shows fluctuations of outgoing student and college staff mobilities per academic year, since 2006/2007 study year, when the higher education institution was awarded Erasmus charter. As found out during the data collection process, the staff mobility fluctuations can be explained with external influences, such as mobility funding allocation to higher education institutions and exchange programme requirements, dictated by the European Commission, State Education Development Agency (SEDA) and other responsible bodies.

When comparing the percentage difference between the total number of nursing study programme students and mobility participants of the same study programme, it comes to 3,9% of students, who have had training abroad. The number seems rather far from the 20% mobility target adopted in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve. However, the Picture No 5 displays Erasmus programme exchange participants only. The author of this thesis draws attention to the need for more clear definition of *training abroad*, because higher education institutions in the Baltic States have the possibility to participate also in Nordplus⁶ and other international university projects. However, the training period abroad often is considerably shorter than

⁶ The Nordplus Higher Education Programme is a mobility and network programme in the higher education sector, on bachelor and master levels, for the Nordic and Baltic countries

Erasmus mobility, but never the less, it provides the international perspective to students and teachers. If we factor also such activities as intensive courses and express mobilities, the number of students with international experience would double at the very least, and the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve mobility target wouldn't appear so distant for Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia.

The definition issues also apply to university staff mobilities. The number of internationally experienced teaching and administrative staff is much higher, if the calculations would include other international activities besides Erasmus teacher exchange. If we would factor also international conference participations, Nordplus university network activities, planning meetings and many other activities where direct teaching activities do not occur, the international experience and personal development of the mobility participant is incontestable. However, even with the Erasmus mobilities only, the percentage of teaching staff with international experience is high. Considering that the medical college have 17 elected academic staff members, during the peak academic year 2011/2012, 88% of full staff members went abroad. During the last three reporting periods, observed in the Picture No 5, the average staff mobility ratio is 47%.

3.3.CASE STUDY LITHUANIA – ŠIAULIAI STATE COLLEGE

According to the information, provided by Šiaulių Valstybinė Kolegija (Šiauliai State College) International Office, the higher education institution was established after the reorganization and merger of medical and technical higher schools. The Šiauliai State College proceeds with the long-term experience and traditions of professional training of both former higher schools. The history of Šiauliai higher medical school began on July 1, 1946 at 16 M. K. Ciurlionis Street in the outskirts of Šiauliai. In 1991 the Medical school was changed to the Higher Medical School and on September 1, 2002 it became the Faculty of Health care of the Šiauliai State College.

Šiauliai Higher Technical School began its history when Šiauliai Agrozootechnical School was founded in 1959. In 1961 it became Šiauliai Polytechnical School and since 1991 the school has functioned as Šiauliai Higher Technical School. On September 1, 2002 Šiauliai Higher Technical School became the Faculty of Business and Technologies of the Šiauliai State College.

Šiauliai State College, established in 2002, is a higher non-university school. It is the only State College in the north of Lithuania. Over 2300 students study at University and over 260 teachers work there. Both students and teachers constantly participate in various

seminars, conferences, organize and implement various international and vocational projects, carry out applied research, have their training practice in the enterprises of social partners or continue their studies at universities. In 2007/2008 the College carries out nineteen non-university programmes. The organization of contemporary college activities strives for the following goals:

- ensure accessibility of higher education for everybody who desires and is able to study;
- prepare the specialists of high qualification;
- ensure the quality of studies;
- create a constantly studying society and conditions for those who express the desire to perfect their qualifications, to continue everlasting studies.

The aim of Šiauliai State College is to remain transparent and open to the society, and to be able to react on the ever changing labour market demands. College strives to satisfy the educational and self-actualization demands of young people and everybody who has the desire to study.

According to the higher education institution's strategical vision, available on the college website, the Šiauliai State College is an intellectual organization, which is a leading state higher education institution in the Northern Lithuania. The college is competitive and well recognized higher education institution in Lithuania and Europe, ensuring the offer of prospective study programmes and high quality studies, as well as coherence between knowledge and practical skills, developing social partnerships, creating a motivating academic environment and forming common human values.

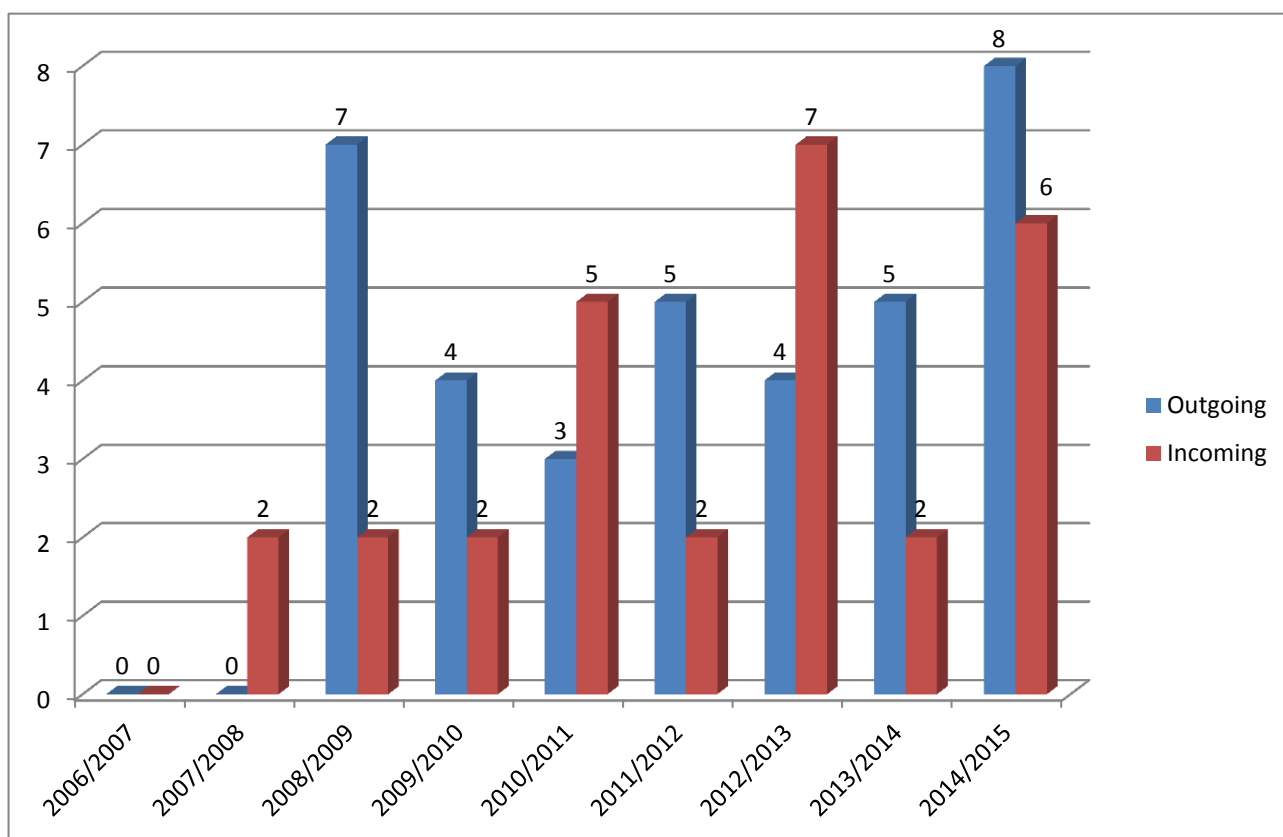
The key points of the strategical mission of Šiauliai State College as the higher education institution are:

- to allow to acquire Professional Bachelor degree and professional qualifications based on scientific applied research, and to ensure the quality of the studies and the study process in conformity with the European Union standards;
- to flexibly and quickly respond to changes in the labour market, to train qualified professionals, and to carry out re-training and to develop the society open to education, culture and knowledge;
- to train a creative, well-educated, dignified, ethically responsible, civic, independent and entrepreneurial personality⁷

⁷ About Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija: <https://svako.lt/menu/about>

In order to observe the success of internationalization activities in Šiauliai State College, the author of this thesis has been granted an access to incoming and outgoing student mobility statistics of both faculties of the higher education institution.

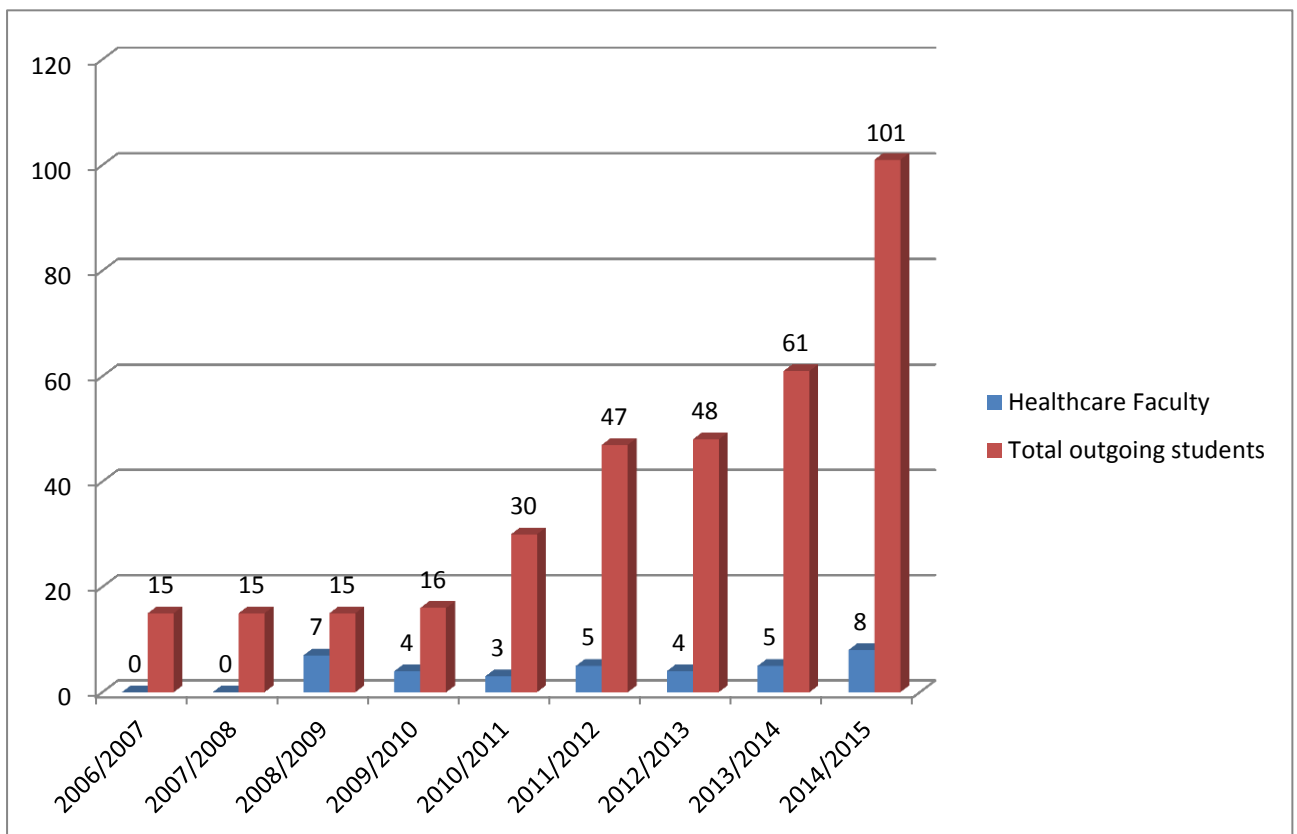
Student mobility parameter serves as one of the determinants and measurement tools for internationalization of higher education. The Picture No 6 displays a graph, constructed on statistical data fluctuations among incoming and outgoing students of the Healthcare Faculty of Šiauliai State College since 2006/2007 academic year, when the higher education institution was granted Erasmus Charter. The available data period is between academic years 2006/2007 and current study year 2014/2015, and data provided for this research includes all international mobility projects and activities, run by the International Office of the higher education institution. Šiauliai State College implements Erasmus and Nordplus study and training mobility projects, ranging from short-term express mobilities to long-term activities abroad.



Picture No 6 “Number of outgoing and incoming mobility participants per academic year”
 Source: Graph constructed based on statistical data collected at SVAKO

It can be concluded from the Picture No 6 that Šiauliai State College, for the most part of the available statistical period is the provider of outgoing students to its' partner universities. Apart from academic years 2010/2011 and 2012/2013, the higher education institution has sent more students for training abroad than received as host institution. The overall patter trend that can be observed in the graph tends to be upward, with the number of mobile students increasing every year.

The drop of outgoing students after the academic year 2008/2009 can be explained by the economical situation and world financial crisis of the time, when mobility budgets were cut and students felt too unsecure to take part in such activities. In correlation to the research hypothesis, there is a need to observe the relevance and mobility share of nursing student participation in the international activities provided by the Šiauliai State College. It is necessary to compare student international activities of the Healthcare Faculty and Faculty of Business and Technologies. The correlation of numbers of outgoing students between both faculties are summarised below in the Picture No 7.



Picture No 7 “Number of outgoing mobility participants in healthcare and Business Faculties”
 Source: Graph constructed based on statistical data collected at SVAKO

As the Picture No 7 displays, there is a very large and continuously increasing gap between the mobility participants from the faculty of Healthcare and the Faculty of Business and Technologies. The disparity between nursing study programme student mobility and total outgoing students has fallen from 47% in 2008/2009 academic year to just 8% in 2014/2015 study year. In 2008/2009 academic year the share of nursing students participating in mobility programmes was nearly half of all mobilities, whereas in present academic year nurses make only 8% share of mobile students representing Šiauliai State College abroad. There are several possible explanations, offered by the International Office representatives of Šiauliai State College. One of the factors, hindering nursing student participation in mobility programmes is not the curricular differences, but study schedule disparities between partner universities. As noted before, the nursing study programmes are very practice-based, with theory and practice going hand-in-hand; therefore both modules are often organized in parallel. Theoretical instructions versus clinical placement periods in the yearly plan of the universities differ considerably. The second factor, deriving from the aforementioned, is mobility type limitations regarding the choice of study versus training activities abroad. Due to the same scheduling issue, the nursing students are hardly ever able to leave for one semester study mobility, because they are very likely to fall behind on home university schedule. Therefore students are limited to training mobility only. This creates a chain-reaction, creating more restrictions, because training requirements for nursing students are very specific and it is not always easy to find appropriate placements abroad. Here comes the third issue, which is the language barrier. First of all, students of nursing and other healthcare professional study programmes are in need of a clinical instructor with sufficient language competences, and secondly the students cannot fulfil their tasks effectively without communication with patients.

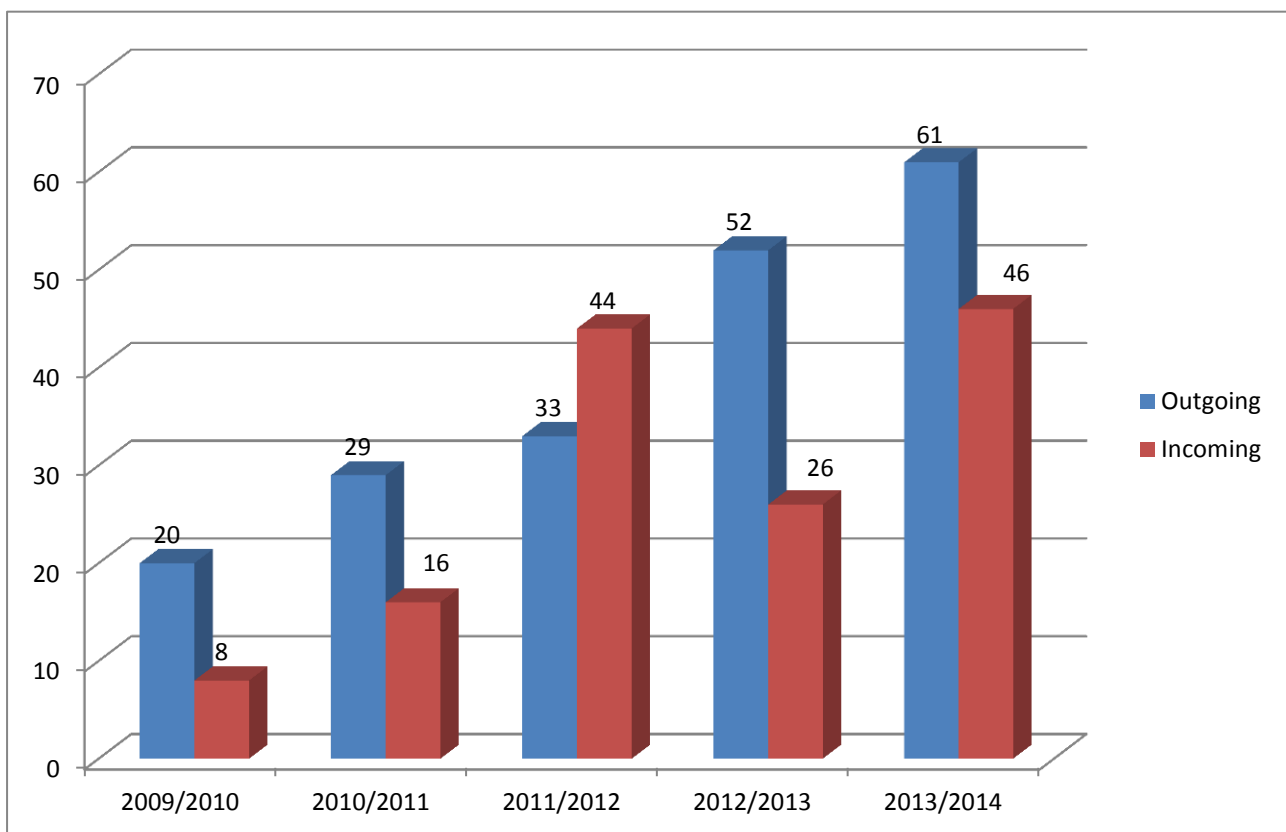
The above mentioned issues apply not only to the Lithuanian case, but also to those of Latvia and Estonia. However, despite some limitations and restrictions, influencing the nursing student *international freedom of choice*, a steady increase of nursing student mobilities can be observed.

3.4.CASE STUDY ESTONIA – TALLINN HEALTHCARE COLLEGE

Tallinn Health Care College is an institution of professional higher education administered by the Ministry of Education and Research. The College provides education at professional higher education and vocational education and training levels (Development plan 2012-2016, 2011: 3). According to the information, provided by the International Office of the Tallinn Healthcare College, as of March 2010, there are around 900 students studying in the nursing department. Studies are conducted in two structural units: in Tallinn and Kohtla-Järve. The first students begun their studies in higher education programme in 1996 and the first nurses received their professional higher education diploma in 2000. The study programme has been accredited on international level in 2008. Every academic year there are 270 study-seats of basic studies that are funded by the State of Estonia. As of year 2000, additional 90 study-seats are added for the working nurses who are on vocational secondary education level. The length of their studies is 2 years and they graduate with higher education diploma. After graduation from basic studies it is possible to continue specializing studies, lasting one year, thus obtaining more narrowed specialization in one of the seven areas of nursing.

The International Office of the Tallinn Healthcare College has granted the author of this thesis access to their nursing student mobility statistics. The college runs a wide range of mobility programmes, which include Erasmus, Nordplus, Leonardo da Vinci and others, besides the data collection system of Tallinn Healthcare College allows observing student mobility from various edges. Moreover, the Tallinn Healthcare College has the largest share of nursing students among the three investigated higher education institutions.

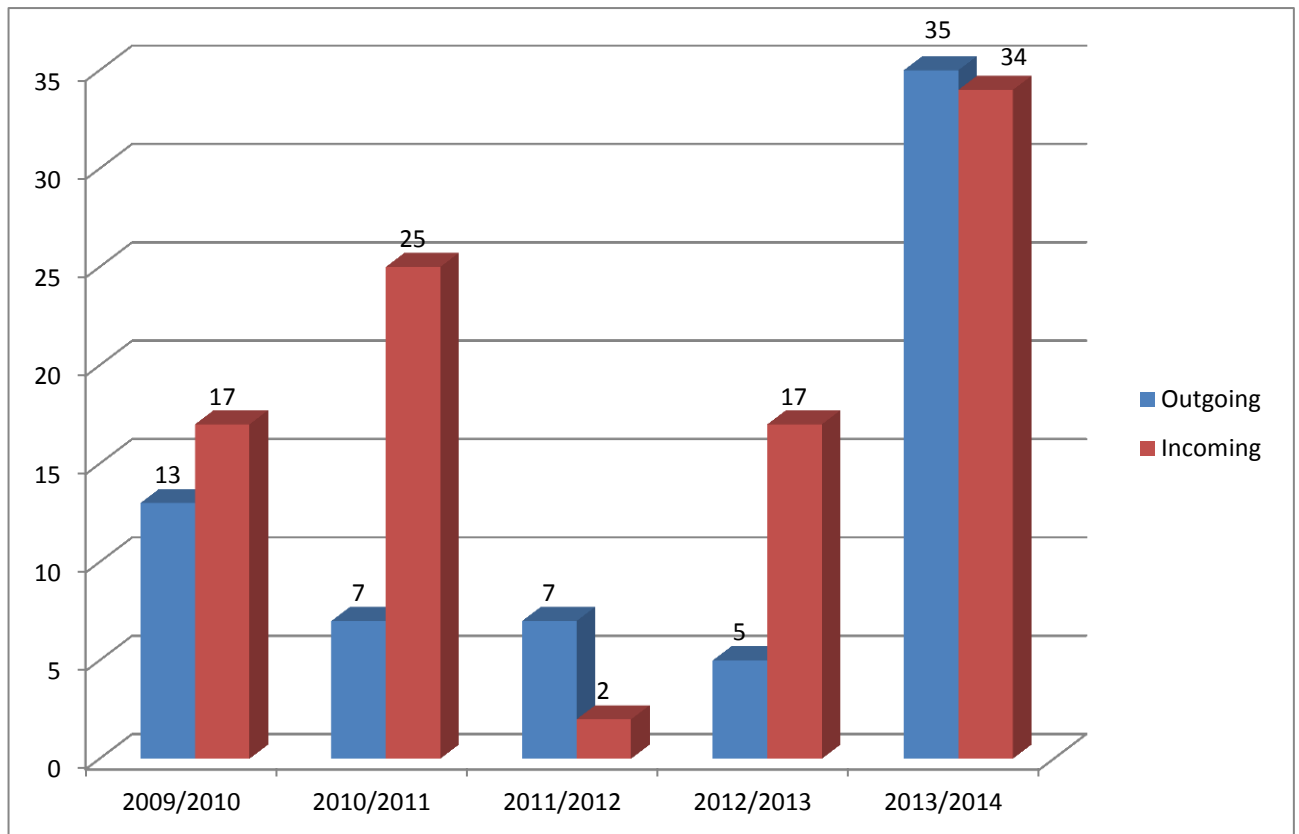
The statistical information on long-term student international activities, such as Erasmus mobility allows observing the scope and range of higher education institution's capacity. The Picture No 8 displays the correlation between incoming and outgoing Erasmus mobility students at Tallinn Healthcare College.



Picture No 8 “Number of Erasmus mobility participants”

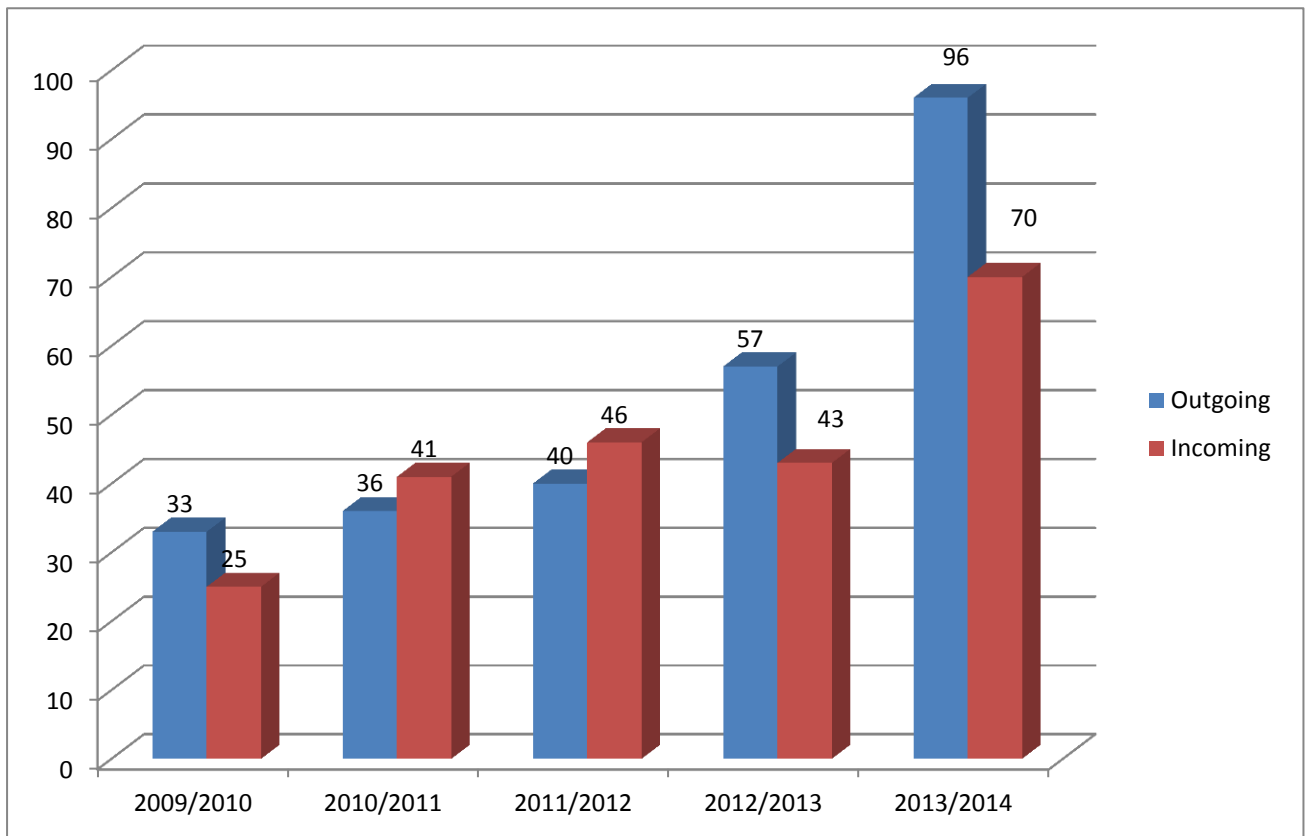
Source: Graph constructed based on statistical data collected at TTK

As can be concluded from the data presented above, the absolute numbers of student exchanges, organized by Tallinn Healthcare College are permanently increasing with every academic year. It can be concluded from the graph, that Tallinn Healthcare College, just the same as Šiauliai State College and Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia is *outgoing mobility provider*, with incoming mobilities surpassing only during the academic year of 2011/2012. Apart from Erasmus programme, the college is implementing a range of other international projects, facilitating student and teaching staff exchange. Due to the statistical data collection approach of the Tallinn Healthcare College, the author of this thesis is able to observe the mobility trends in other international projects and networks. The Picture No 9 displays the aggregate mobility trends within Tallinn Healthcare College’s Nordplus, Leonardo da Vinci and other projects.



Picture No 9 “Number of mobility participants. Excl. Erasmus”
 Source: Graph constructed based on statistical data collected at TTK

The graph in the Picture No 9 displays striking fluctuations in the number of incoming and outgoing mobile students. The explanation of the fluctuant pattern of international exchange participants lies in mobility programme or particular international initiative guidelines, specific rules, and requirements. When comparing the mobility statistics, it can be concluded that Erasmus programme is the strongest and most solid among all, providing predictable and reliable outcomes, regarding the mobility as university internationalization tool. In order to observe if the predominant fluctuations occurring in the graph, concerning other exchange programmes besides Erasmus, influence the total patter of student mobility of Tallinn Healthcare College, the author of this thesis has constructed a combined mobility chart, including all international activities of the students. The data summary can be observed below in the Picture No 10.



Picture No 10 “Total number of mobility participants”

Source: Graph constructed based on statistical data collected at TTK

The mobility participant summary represented in the Picture No 10 shows those other international programmes besides Erasmus has enlarged the number of Tallinn Healthcare College mobile students, but has not altered the growing properties of the pattern. However, when considering all international activities of nursing students of Tallinn Healthcare College, it is notable that inbound and outbound mobilities are more balanced. Still, the development strategy of the college aims at further harmonization of incoming and outgoing exchanges, which is an aspect the two other observed higher education institutions can learn from. According to additional information, received at the International Office of Tallinn Healthcare College, the author notes, that students who have experienced studies or training abroad comprise more than 6% of the graduates. The mobile student share has risen from 2,2% in 2009/2010 academic year to 6,3% in 2013/2014. Considering the rapid upward mobility trend, it can be concluded that mobility aim of 12% by 2016, as proposed in the college strategy, is a realistic and approachable goal.

3.5.ADDED VALUE AND UNDERSTANDING OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF NURSING EDUCATION IN THE BALTIC STATES

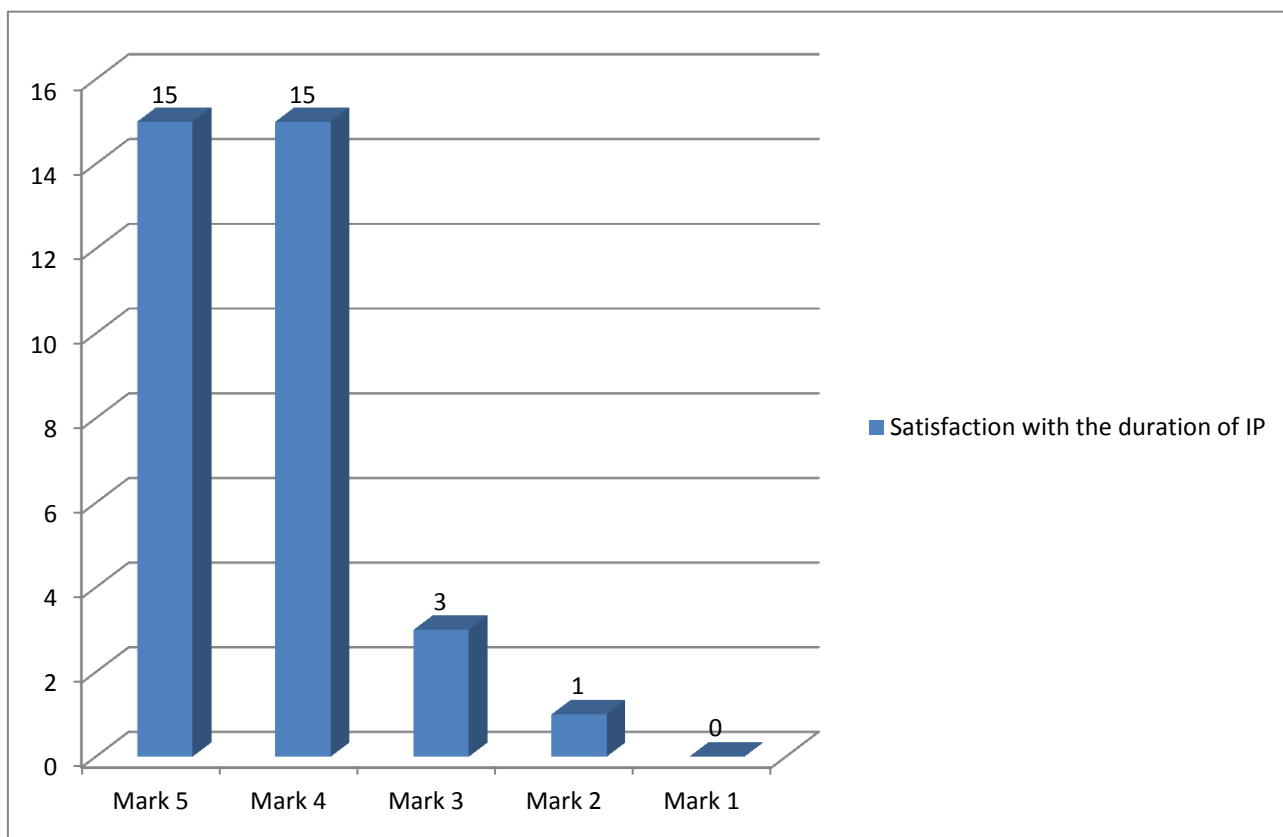
In 2013/2014 academic year the author of this thesis had the chance to survey nursing students from 10 universities, representing 9 European countries. The survey was conducted after the Erasmus Rainbow Intensive Program, entitled *A Transcultural Nursing Approach in Order to Deliver Integrated Care for Mental Health Patients*. The Rainbow network was established in 1994 and Erasmus Intensive Programmes has been held annually since 1997, lasting up to 14 days and hosted by different partners of the Network. The purpose of the Intensive Programme developed by the Rainbow Network is to explore contemporary issues in nursing from a transcultural perspective, encourage mobility between students and teachers from countries within the European Union, and facilitate communication across cultures. The Intensive Programme can be considered as ‘a new instrument to meet the changing demands of mobility: shorter, more frequent and broader in scope’ (Teekens, 2011; in Odina, 2014: 121). The Rainbow Network comprises ten higher education institutions:

- Erasmushogeschool Brussels, Belgium
 - Hogeschool van Amsterdam, Amsterdam School of Health Professions, The Netherlands
 - Kaunas College, University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania
 - Mid Sweden University, Department of Nursing and Health Sciences, Sundsvall, Sweden
 - Novia, University of applied sciences, Department of Health Care and Social Welfare, Vasa, Finland
 - Oslo and Akershus University College, Department of nursing, Norway
 - Polytechnic Institute of Leiria, School of Health Sciences, Portugal
 - Polytechnic Institute of Viseu, Health School, Portugal
 - Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia, Latvia
 - University of the West of Scotland, Paisley, United Kingdom
- (IP Rainbow Programme guide, 2014).

The Erasmus Rainbow Intensive Programme 2014 was hosted by Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia during the spring semester. In order to facilitate student reflection and feedback of the Intensive Programme, a participant survey was conducted on the final day of Rainbow Intensive Programme activities. The questionnaire was originally designed for the project report purposes, with adaptations for the research purpose of this thesis.

The student survey included 7 main questions on student motivation, information and support, recognition of the training period, personal experience evaluation and other aspects. Survey participants were asked to evaluate given statements on a scale from 1-5, where 1 equals complete disagreement to the given statement and 5 equals 100% agreement with the statement (See Annex 2 for full questionnaire). There were 47 student surveys distributed among Intensive Programme participants; the number of collected complete surveys is 34. The author of this paper has selected six questions, for further analysis in context of this thesis. During the data extraction process some of the questions were merged together in order to provide more profound outlook on the given issue.

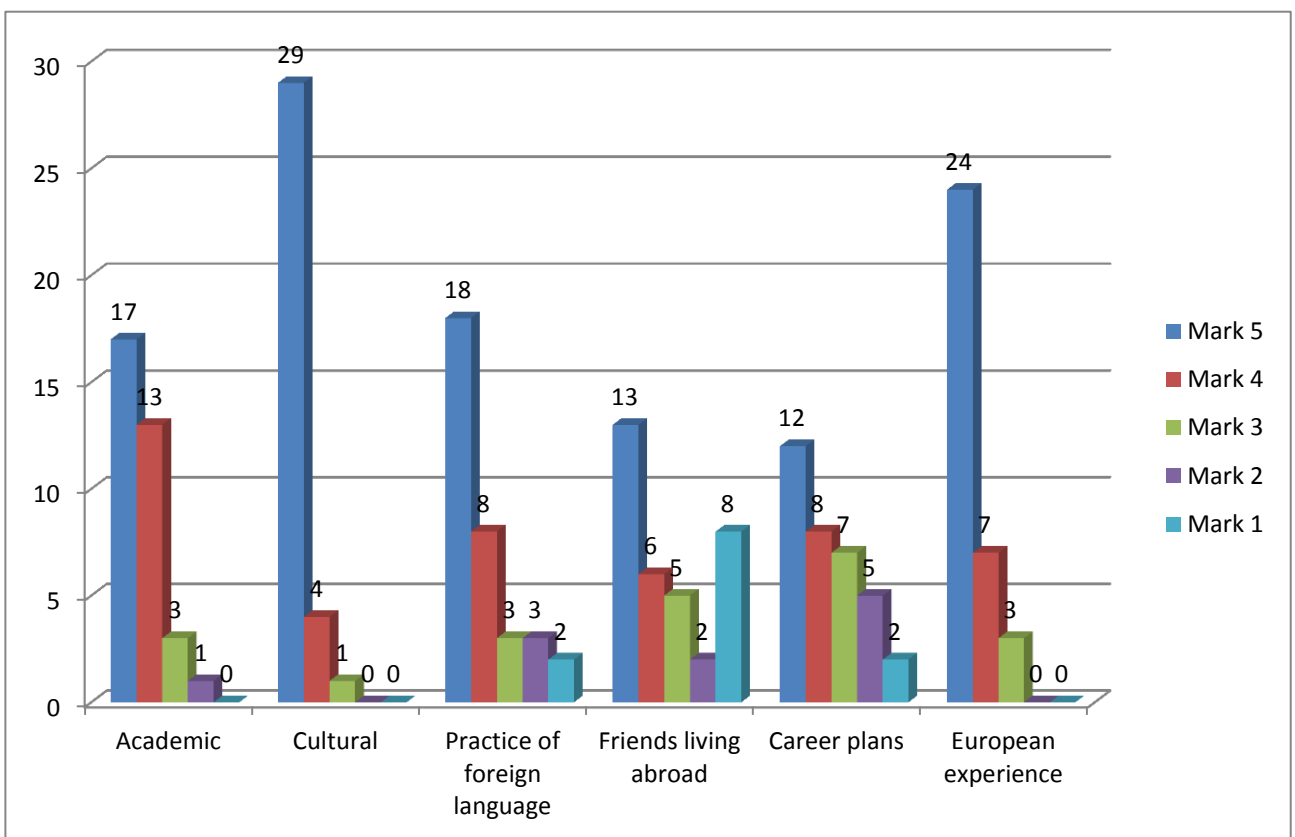
The first inquiry, which stimulates further discussions, is related to student satisfaction with the duration of their international experience in Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia within Intensive Programme. The students were asked to indicate how satisfied they are with the length and particular dates of the Intensive Programme. Respondent results display high and very high satisfaction with the length of the Intensive Programme, as can be seen below in the Picture No 11. More than 88% of respondents have evaluated the duration of their international activities with *high* and *very high*.



Picture No 11 “**Student satisfaction with duration of the Intensive Programme**”
 Source: Graph constructed based on statistical data collected at LU RMC

The possible explanation and comments to the results displayed in the graph is that two-week international experience is very suitable for professional higher education students, as it does not interfere too much with home university scheduled assignments. After returning from a two-week programme, the students do not find themselves lagging behind home university schedule, whereas a long-term mobilities and exchanges can cause a *study debt*, as the curricular differences still prevail and longer study of training periods abroad face more external influences. Shorter mobility periods are attractive also due to personal reason – students do not get home sick and they have to face smaller amount of practical issues, in comparison to long-term training or study activities abroad.

Another important indicator is student motivation to participate in international activities, offered by higher education institution. In the survey the students were asked about their motivation to take part in the Intensive Programme. The graph in Picture No 12 displays evaluation of six factors that could motivate the students to go abroad. The survey participants were asked to evaluate each of the statements on five-point scale.



Picture No 12 “Which factors motivated you to participate in the IP?”

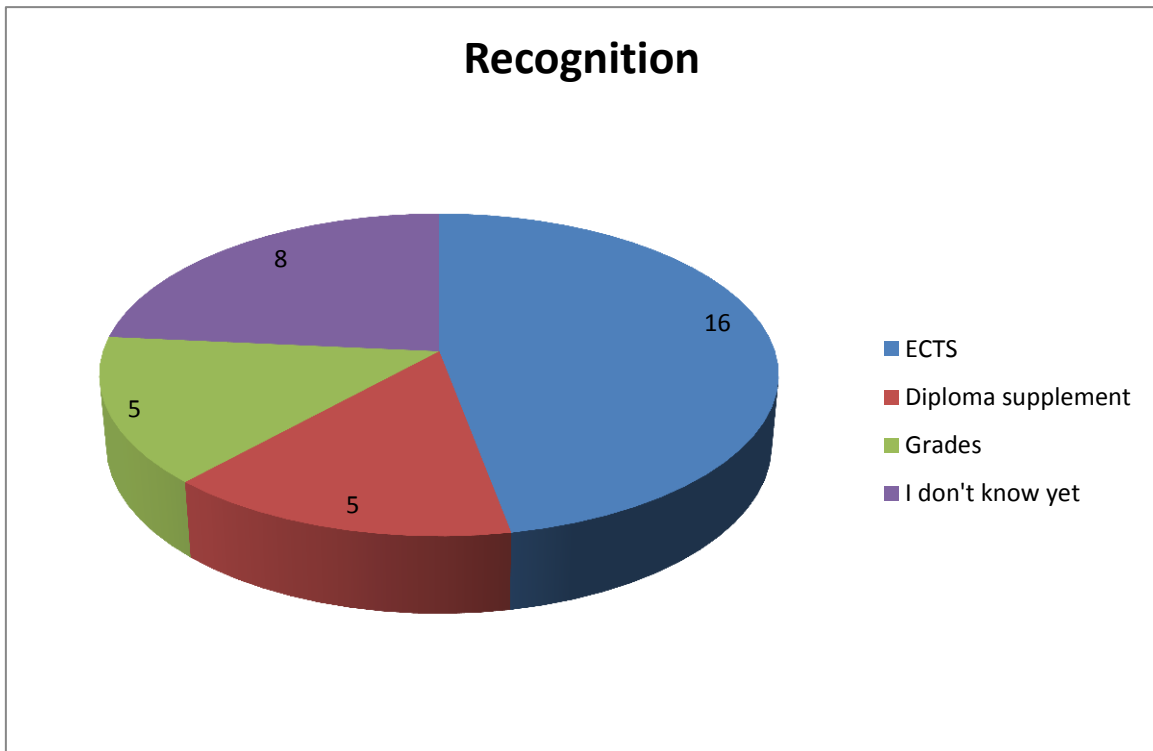
Source: Graph constructed based on statistical data collected at LU RMC

The gathered results on the question regarding student motivation can be interpreted as follows. First of all, the high appreciation of *culture* as the main motivator for participation in

the Intensive Programme correlates to the core topic of the intensive course – *Transcultural nursing*. This implies that students are well aware of the contemporary world requirement for healthcare professionals to be transculturally competent and they are determined not only to study in-depth the transcultural aspects of their future profession, but they are also eager to gain the transcultural experience themselves. The *European experience* in the context of this survey means gaining of the experience in another European country. As can be seen in the Picture No 12, having international experience in another European country is the second most important motivator for university students to take part in international activities. It can be concluded that students appreciate the opportunities of higher education internationalization, in order to gain *European experience*, compare the educational and professional standards, and create networks, thus enhancing their viewpoint.

Improving international competences through practicing languages and gaining academic experience in a partner university are the two very equally evaluated motivators. The author of this paper would like to conclude that student motivation to take part of the international activities is taking a very positive direction. As can be seen from the Picture No 12, the students are not using the mobility opportunities for *touristic* purposes to visit friends. Also, they are not seeking career opportunities in partner country, but going to gain the experience to improve their personal and professional skills. Therefore aforementioned author's Terri Kim (2009) theory can be proven right. The author suggested that academic mobility leads to flows of knowledge that benefits both sending and receiving institutions, and the contemporary mobility processes are not so much *brain drain* or *brain gain* in the milieu of nation states; it is rather a *brain transfer and transformation* in a globalized space (Kim, 2009: 401).

Recognition of the study period abroad is of very high importance not only according to internationalization and student mobility regulatory documents and initiatives, it is essential to mobility participant; the student needs to be sure the completed work assignments abroad will be properly recognized by home institution. The Erasmus Rainbow Intensive Programme *A Transcultural Nursing Approach in Order to Deliver Integrated Care for Mental Health Patients* was a two-week intensive course, including prior home assignments, group work, presentations, study visits, networking activities and many more tasks for the students. The Intensive Programme was designed as modular study course awarding 5 ECTS for successfully completing all assignments. In order to observe the student awareness of the Intensive Programme recognition aspects, the survey included a question, where students were offered various options how home university can award their work.

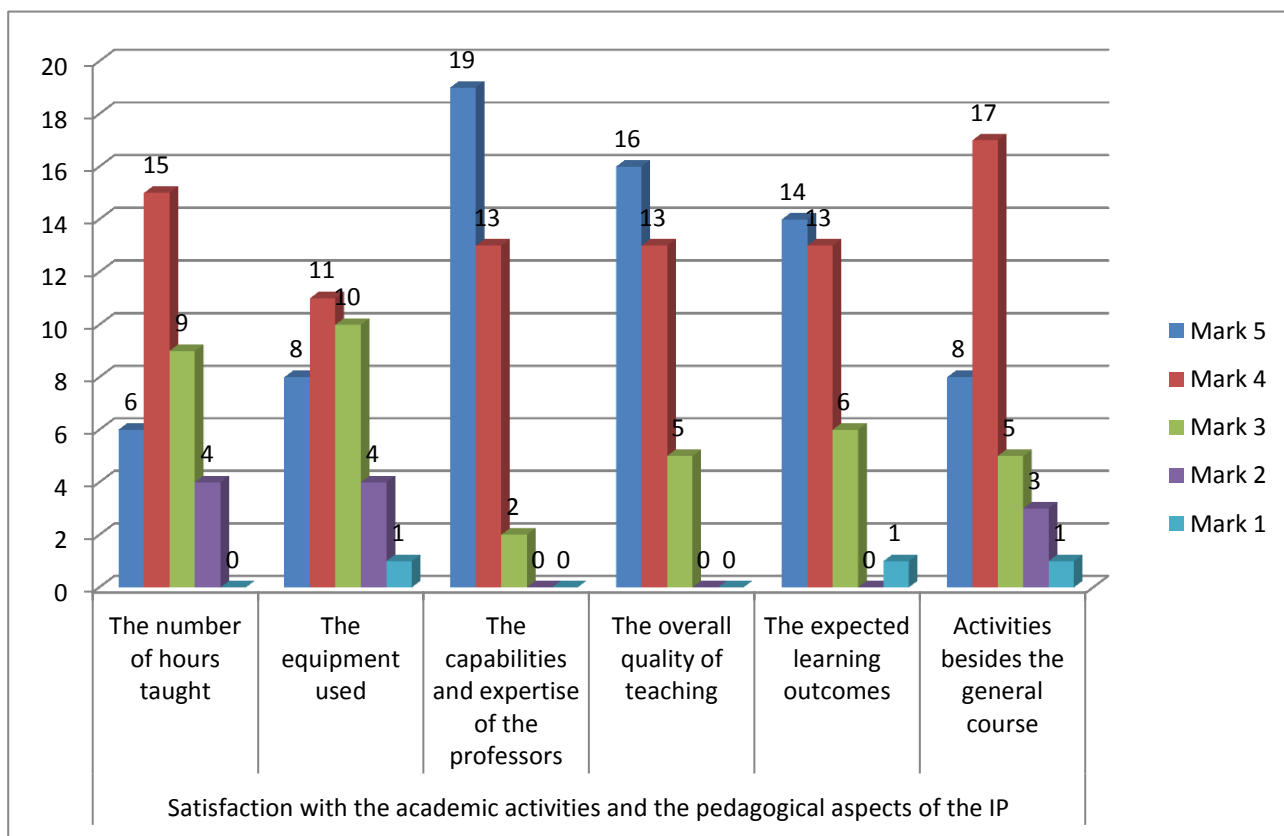


Picture No 13 “Recognition of the study period abroad”

Source: Graph constructed based on statistical data collected at LU RMC

As can be seen from the pie chart in Picture No 13, the majority of students are aware they will be awarded ECTS for completed study period abroad, including the Intensive Programme in the list of passed study courses. Five respondents, as can be seen from the graph, will have a special note in their diploma supplement, indicating the study period abroad. The same number of students will receive a grade at home institution. The author of this paper would like to note the danger of the large amount of intensive course participants indicating that they *don't know yet* how their work will be recognized after returning to home university. 8 students saying *I don't know yet* is equal to 23% of the Intensive Programme participants. Such trend can be explained by lack of information from the higher education institution, but the uncertainty can affect the student decision to take active part of university internationalization activities. There should be clear vision and mutual understanding between the sending institution, mobility participant and host institution on how the student evaluation will be conducted after the return from study or training period abroad.

The questionnaire included the request for students to evaluate certain academic aspects and pedagogical contents of the Intensive Programme. The survey offered 6 criteria, such as the number of contact hours within the intensive course, the technical equipment used, the teacher expertise on the topic and activities besides the general course and the learning outcome expectations. The findings can be observed below in Picture No 14.

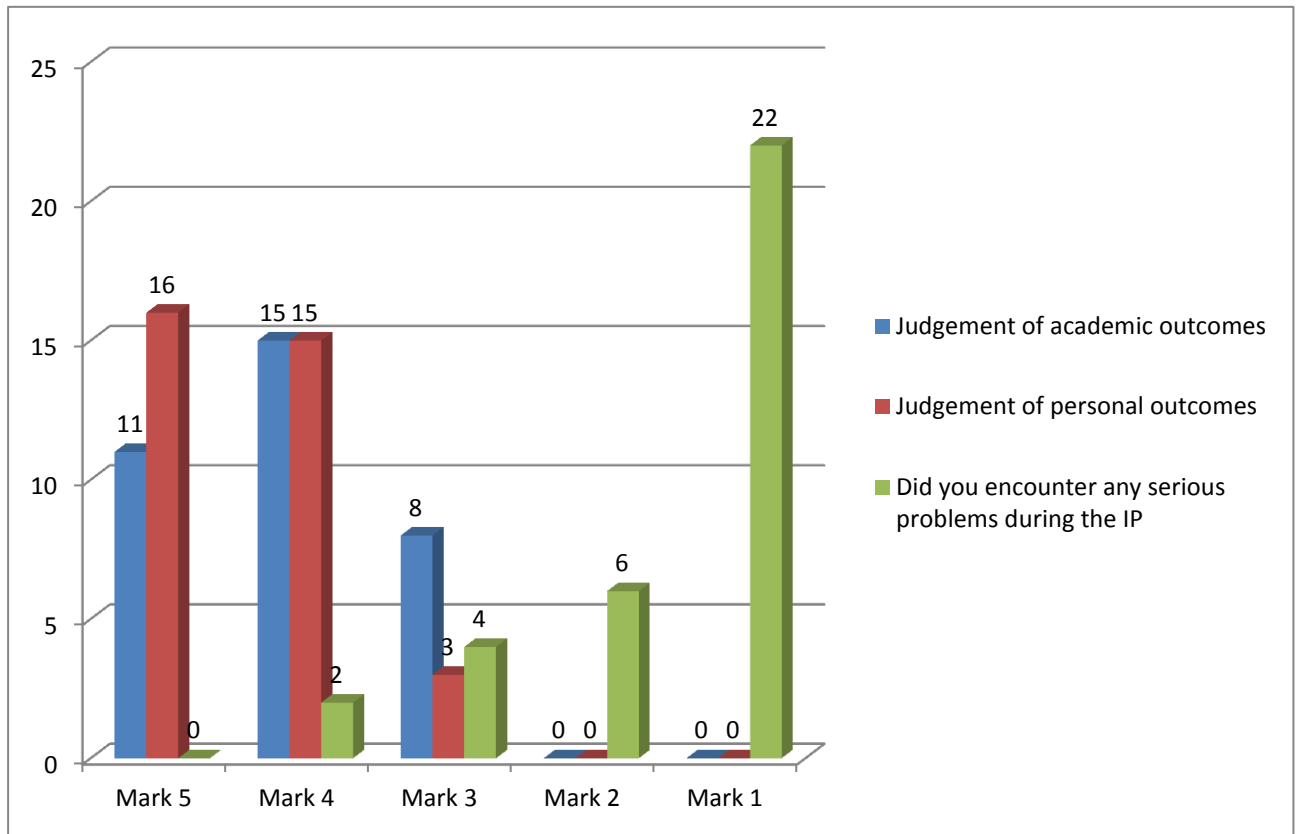


Picture No 14 “Evaluation of the Intensive Programme contents”

Source: Graph constructed based on statistical data collected at LU RMC

The graph in the Picture No 14 leads to conclusion that the participating students extremely highly appreciated capabilities and expertise of the course professors. Only two students, which is a little over 5% of the respondents evaluated the competences of the teaching staff as average, which comes to nearly 95% of *high* and *very high* evaluation of university staff. The student evaluation of the teaching hours is not unanimous, however the comment section for the question provides and insight to the reasons. Many students noted that they would like more contact hours with professors during their study period abroad, however, the overall quality of teaching is evaluated as *high* and *very high* by 85% of the respondents, leaving only 15% *average* evaluations and none below the average. Activities besides general course, such as social and cultural events, are integral part of any international activities. They are *highly* and *very highly* appreciated by the majority of survey respondents. The expected learning outcomes were met by 79% of the Intensive course participants.

The following question, selected for research purposes of this paper included student evaluation of the personal and academic outcomes of the intensive course. Survey participants were asked to judge the academic value and inter-personal benefits. Added to this question was inquiry regarding problems during the intensive course. The *problems* here should be understood as practical, administrative and inter-personal struggle.

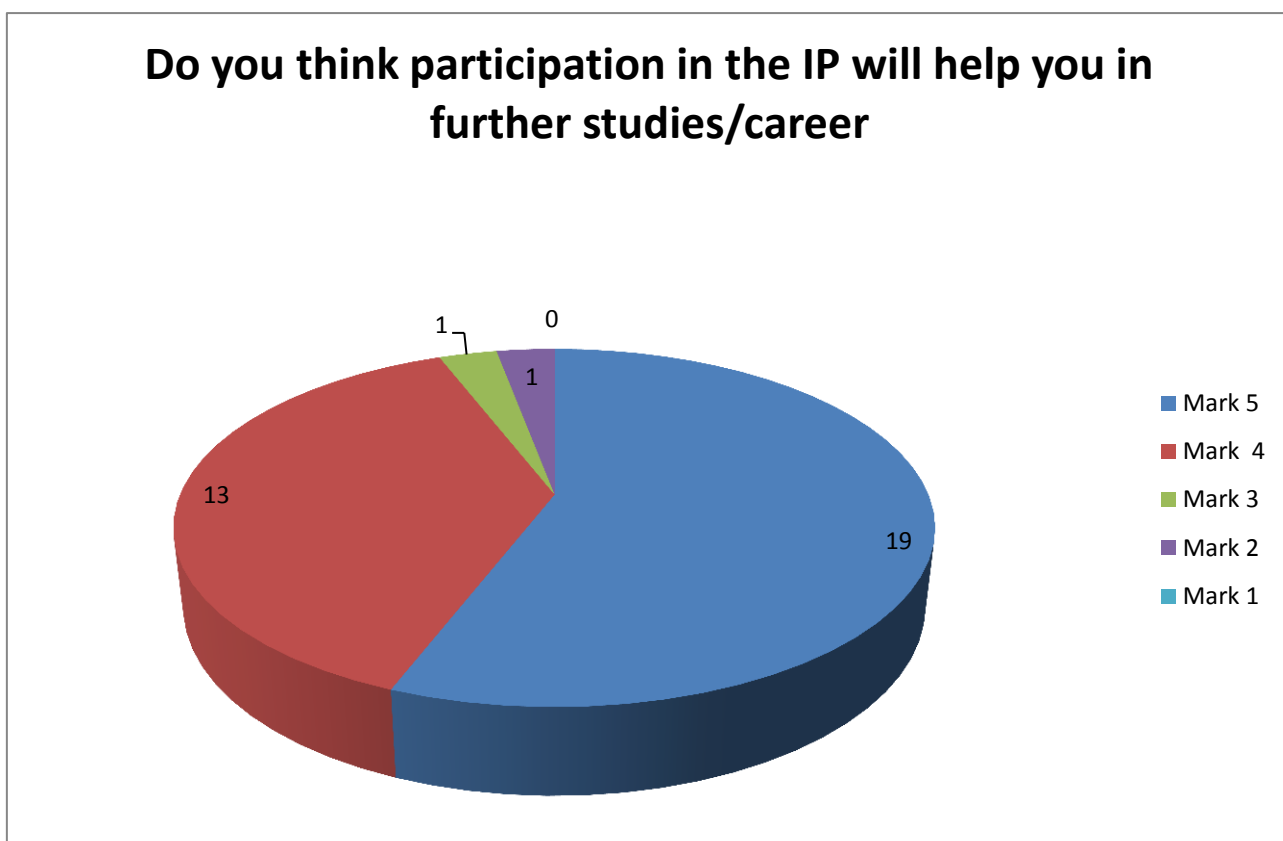


Picture No 15 “Evaluation of Intensive Programme outcomes”
 Source: Graph constructed based on statistical data collected at LU RMC

The Picture No 15 displays the results of student experience judgement. It can be concluded from the graph that Intensive Programme activities have met the student expectations, with academic and personal outcomes being almost equally highly evaluated. The strongly appreciated personal outcomes indicate that student primary motivations and expectations were met and the Intensive Programme has been successful. The author of this paper notes that academic value of such international activities, as intensive course abroad, is also very highly perceived. The above diagram shows that students did not encounter any serious problems during their activities within Intensive Programme. First of all, the student answers compliment the organizers of this international activity; secondly the reason for the positive judgement can be explained with the length of the course – during long-term international activities participants encounter more practical, organizational and inter-personal

issues than during a two-week experience abroad. To conclude on the matter, it can be said that short-term study and training periods abroad, bringing together representatives of multiple nationalities and educational systems, is a very effective internationalization tool for the higher education institutions. A very high percentage of activity participants have gained positive academic and personal outcomes, while facing very few obstacles.

The concluding questions in the survey inquired on student overall evaluation of the Intensive Programme and asked if the participants see this experience as an aid in their future studies and professional career. The result of data collection on the question *Do you think participation in the IP will help in your further studies/career* can be observed below in Picture No 16.



Picture No 16 “Benefits to further studies and career”

Source: Graph constructed based on statistical data collected at LU RMC

The results displayed in Picture No 16 implies conclusion, that students perceive such international activities as Intensive Programmes, as very beneficial to their future study and professional career prospects. Only two students or 6% of respondents evaluated the given statement with *average* and *low*, leaving 94% of participants certain and very certain that gained experience will be of good use in the future.

Taken together, it can be concluded from the survey results, that contemporary higher education institutions are going in the right direction, because the wish of the universities to internationalize goes hand-in-hand with student desire to gain international experiences and competences needed in their future careers. Internationalization activities carried out by higher education institutions are not one-sided, because students and teachers are contributing to the process.

The second survey, conducted by the author within the scope of this thesis, concerns the student knowledge and understanding of the internationalization processes in the higher education institution. The survey *Internationalization of Nursing Education* (See Annex 1) was electronically distributed among 25 nursing student mobility participants in the spring semester of 2014/2015. Total number of respondents who submitted fully completed questionnaire is 20, two of which are male and 18 are female. Average age of respondents is 23.6 years. The questions included statements, which respondents were asked to evaluate on the scale from 1 to 10. The survey comprised also open text questions, where students had to give their opinion on a given statement.

The first survey question inquired how clear the rationale for internationalization of the nursing curriculum is. The students were asked to evaluate on scale between 1 and 10, where 1 equals reasons for internationalization are never discussed at the university; and 10 equals reasons for internationalization are understood and agreed by the study program team. The calculated score is 7.85 out of 10, which implies the statement that students are aware of internationalization aims and strategical development directions of their university.

Further, students were asked to evaluate to what extent the learning arrangements encourage the development of their intercultural and international experience. The offered evaluation scale was from 1, where learning arrangements do not encourage intercultural and international interaction to 10, where learning arrangements actively encourage and reward students for engaging in international activities of their university. The calculated outcome reached 8.3 points out of 10, which means that students acknowledge and appreciate the learning arrangements, designed to facilitate the development of their international competences. The author notes that, based on student replies, the higher education institutions are on the right path towards internationalization of nursing education.

The author of this thesis was eager to inquire about the student view on how they behold the international aspects of nursing profession. On the question *what international, intercultural or global perspectives do graduates of the Nursing program need*, the students gave very profound answers, such as:

- skills how to communicate with people when you don't know the language. To know medical information in at least own language, Latin, English, better if more;
- information about international programs, and foreign contacts;
- acknowledgement of the diploma in other countries; courses or seminars about working in multicultural team, opportunities to work in such environment;
- ability to communicate with patients and colleagues from different countries;
- open minded to new ideas, always prepared to learn and transmit knowledge
- international and cultural engagement imply the need for students and staff to develop the perspectives necessary to adapt their ways of working to different cultures and contexts;
- a global/ international view of the nursing profession.

The following survey question was an open-text inquiry, which asked students to indicate what for them have been the most compelling reasons to participate in international activities of the nursing study programme. The students provided following answers:

- to see how nurses are working in different hospitals in different countries; to understand what needs to be improved in home country;
- see different cultures and have more experience in working with different mentalities;
- it's very beneficial for future career prospects and in students personal self-discovery; it is definitely very efficient and successful method to improve nursing skills to introduce oneself at other country;
- new skills, contacts and cooperation with other cultures;
- learn differences between nursing systems in different countries and learn something new;
- broaden students horizons, getting new, valuable experience;
- to see new places and cultures and meet new people;
- new practical experience;
- health is a global issue and we are a part of health care system;
- to increase of quality of care and share nursing information;
- to get different ideas and experience of different ways to treat the patient;

- to be adapted and study or work easily in internationalized and multicultural environment.

It can be concluded from the given answers that students already have the right mindset to be internationally and interculturally competent healthcare professionals, who will be adaptive in contemporary global settings.

The survey respondents were asked to indicate the main blockers of nursing education internationalisation. The answers provided by the students concern a wide variety of obstacles, such as:

- language barriers;
- lack of information, fears of unknown;
- lack of communication and cooperation between institutions;
- time management issues;
- governmental issues and different education levels;
- lack of funding to support the students and teachers in exchange programs. Lack of faculty members knowledge, skills or interest in internationalization
- bulk paperwork and documentation;
- not all teachers are open-minded enough to support such programs. In addition, there are also economic issues which do not allow financial support for internationalization programs.

It can be seen from the students' opinion, that they have a global perspective and views on what needs to be done and achieved to be internationally competent and what hindering factors have to be overcome.

Considering the above the final question of the survey asked the respondents to locate the nursing study programme curriculum on the scale where 1 is a localized curriculum and 10 is internationalized curriculum. The calculated score, provided by the questionnaire respondents is 7.4. It can be concluded that, despite several hampering factors and difficulties, internationalization initiatives and activities, applied by the professional higher education institutions are in place and students recognize the efforts of the university.

Not only the administration of higher education providers, but also students are contributing to common development goals to implement the internationalization strategies and raise the quality of education. The internationalization processes are quite homogeneous, when concerning the contribution of involved parties.

DISCUSSION BETWEEN THEORY AND FINDINGS

As can be concluded from the case studies conducted in higher education institutions of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, two of the observed institutions, Riga Medical College and Tallinn Healthcare College offer two entry-points. The first option for the potential students is to acquire professional higher education after the graduation of secondary school, and the second entry-point is offered for those healthcare professionals already having professional vocational education diploma. The second entry-point students study for two years in order to obtain 120 ECTS and upon graduation they are awarded higher education diploma. By applying the two entry-point systems, the higher education institutions remain open for all age groups and facilitate lifelong learning. Even though the strategy of Šiauliai State College implies the openness to students of all age groups, it does not further facilitate this objective. However, it is not only in the hands of higher education institution; such approach has to be a top-down initiative facilitated and supported on a State level.

The lower number of mobile nursing students in comparison to business and technology study programme students characterise peculiarities of healthcare faculties. The specifics for healthcare professions limit the student possibilities regarding university internationalization through student exchange; the training activities are more complicated to arrange than study mobilities abroad, as it is not always easy to find placements with mentors with good language competences, able to receive international nursing students.

As observed within the case study of Šiauliai State College, that, in comparison with Faculty of Technologies and Business Management, it can be remarked that healthcare, particularly nursing students are less active when it comes to participating in the student mobility programmes. However, as can be seen for the research conducted in the LU RMC, the low numbers of mobility participants does not necessarily imply that nursing study programmes are not internationalized.

Data collection disparities prevail between higher education institutions in the Baltic States. Each institution is collecting their mobility statistics in slightly different manner. However, as long as the records are kept, it does not interfere with data interpretation possibilities and comparative analysis conduction.

CONCLUSIONS

Internationalization has become a predominant trend in the Baltic higher education, accompanied by the rapid expansion of physical mobility of students and teachers. Just the same as global trade market, the competition for students is no longer a local issue among universities in a given county; it has grown to be a global phenomenon. The higher education initiative in Europe, known as the Bologna Process, implies harmonisation and integration of nursing study programmes into higher education system.

The central motif of post-Soviet higher education reforms in the Baltic States was seen as a return to Europe. The integration of the three Baltic States into the EU signalled a desire to contribute to the shared European values. From this perspective, educational policies in the Baltic States have been naturally pro-Western. During the past two decades the concept of nursing education in the Baltic States has changed rapidly and representatives of the profession have experienced not only regulatory, but also philosophical changes of the professional standards.

The statistical data and records on academic mobility in the Baltic States are collected by International Offices of higher education institutions. There is a slight data processing difference among the organizations; however it does not interfere with comparability. Inbound and outbound student mobility in all three Baltic nation states reveal regional, European, and global dimensions.

It is notable that there are more students leaving for study or training period abroad than there are inbound students who came to study in Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania from other countries. Thus, the Baltic States are losing in the global competition for international students, which poses a challenge to the higher education systems. The ability of local universities and colleges to attract more international students may be a key strategy for maintaining academic quality standards at tertiary educational institutions. Among the Baltic States only Estonia has set up a strategic goal to harmonize inbound and outbound mobility.

The reasons behind inability to attract more incoming exchange students is imbedded in the specifics of healthcare study disciplines and prevailing tendency for nursing students to undertake practical training instead of studies during the exchange period. Very often higher education institutions find it difficult to arrange clinical placements for the local students, not

to mention foreigners, who need a clinical supervisor with sufficient language competences. Therefore university colleges have to decline a certain number of incoming mobility applicants.

Higher education institutions in the Baltic States encourage the internationalisation of higher education through their steering documents, such as development plans and strategies. When observing the internationalization strategies of nursing education providers, it is notable, that professional higher education providers do not have separate planning document for internationalization. The concepts and visions concerning internationalization are usually included in general development plans and strategies. The internationalization processes, observed in selected higher education institutions are mostly project based.

Taking into account the empirical research results, author concludes that internationalization causes changes within professional higher education institutions, especially in study process and environment. For future development the higher education providers should aim to ensure transfer from project based internationalization to a sustainable process. The student survey indicates very positive aspects and reasons for nursing curriculum internationalization. Students are purposefully contributing to internationalization processes of the observed higher education providers. Nursing students are well aware of the hindering factors of full internationalization of their study programme, but they remain open-minded, acknowledging their resources, developing and discovering their professional *self* through learning arrangements, provided by the HEIs.

The author poses a suggestion for Baltic HEIs to work on recognition of study or training period abroad. Even though all of the observed Baltic higher education institutions have adopted ECTS system, there is a considerable uncertainty among students on how it is applied. As concluded from the student survey, there is a large percentage of mobile students, who are uncertain of how their accomplishments will be assessed, evaluated and recognized at home institution. The uncertainty can be a serious hindering factor in further internationalization steps.

The only higher education institution among observed organizations to have a mobility target in their strategic goals is Tallinn Healthcare College. The author suggests other institutions to consider this aspect, when developing strategies for the next planning period. Setting a mobility goal helps to visualize the desired target.

Considering the provided university statistics and student survey results, it can be concluded that research hypothesis has been confirmed – despite the low percentage of mobility participants among full time healthcare, particularly nursing, students in the Baltic States, university students and staff are increasingly contributing to the internationalization of nursing education. The conducted research shows the contribution of involved parties towards internationalization activities, thus increasing the quality of education.

The author has made a following observation during the writing process of this thesis – in few years' time, when present nursing students, who have had training or study period abroad, will be working professionals, the internationalization through student exchange will be a more fluent process. These students will have the necessary language, inter-cultural and international competences to become mentors and clinical supervisors of future mobile nursing students. Therefore it is of exceptional importance to provide the international component within contemporary nursing study programmes, as it will create a spin-off effect for next generations of students.

In terms of further research, firstly the author would like to investigate in-depth the philosophical changes that have transpired in the nursing education in the past two decades. The author sees a research potential in the philosophical and organizational transition process that affected a whole spectrum of healthcare professionals, teachers and students. Secondly, the development process of this thesis has brought a special attention to cross-cultural communication among exchange students, their clinical supervisors and patients. An investigation of trans-cultural processes and interactions unfolding during the student mobility period and its' effect on professional and self-development of local healthcare professionals would give an interesting turn in further research.

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AFFILIATIONS

The author expresses most respectful gratitude to prof. Dr. paed. Dainuvīte Blūma, for consultations, support and inspiration during the writing of the thesis.

A special gratitude goes to Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia for professional opportunities, ideas and vast information. Particular thanks to study methodologist Mg. paed. Inta Fedotova, the university college director Astra Bukulīte and other colleagues for professional insights, advice and continuous support.

Author would like to express a special gratitude to the International Office of Tallinn Healthcare College, in particular to Triin Jerlei, for beautifully selected information, statistical data and kind cooperation.

The author expresses sincere thanks to the International Office of Šiauliai State College and coordinator Gina Ožekauskaite, for friendship, swift cooperation, kindness and efforts to assist with information and data collection.

An earnest thanks to the Faculty of Healthcare of Vilnius Kolegija/University of Applied Sciences and the wonderful coordinator Viktorija Kielaitė.

The author is grateful to all the wonderful nursing students who have contributed their time and efforts to participate in the surveys and questionnaires.

And finally, the author of this thesis would like to thank her colleagues and friends from the Baltic Sea Region Studies programme. It has been a wonderful and inspiring two years.

ANNEX 1 Questionnaire on Nursing Education Internationalization in the Baltic States⁸

This questionnaire has been developed as an aid to the empirical part of Master thesis, identifying internationalisation of nursing curriculum. The purpose of this questionnaire is to stimulate reflection and discussion amongst teams of teaching staff, students and international coordinators about internationalisation of the university processes.

The questionnaire looks at the context, in which the program is taught, as well as individual elements of the curriculum such as content, assessment and teaching and learning arrangements. Respondents are asked to locate different aspects of their experience and opinion, using the descriptors provided as a guide.

Completing the Questionnaire:

There are 13 main questions in the questionnaire. It should take you no more than 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire, depending on the amount of detail you choose to include in explaining your answers.

In the comments section associated with some of the questions you should highlight any issues that have influenced your answer and/or describe any changing circumstances.

Thank you in advance for your participation!

1. How clear is the rationale for internationalization of the nursing curriculum in your home university?

Please evaluate on scale, where:

1- Reasons for internationalization of the curriculum *are never discussed at the university*

10- Reasons for internationalization of the curriculum *are understood and agreed by the study program team*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

2. How clearly defined and articulated are any international/intercultural learning goals, aims and outcomes at your university?

Please evaluate on scale, where:

1-No specific international/intercultural goals, aims and learning outcomes are defined

10- There are clearly defined and articulated learning outcomes related to the development of international/intercultural perspectives within the context of the discipline *and these are systematically developed and assessed*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

3. To what extent do the teaching and learning arrangements in your study experience have supported students to work effectively in cross-cultural groups and teams?

Please evaluate on scale, where:

1-The teaching and learning arrangements *do not support* students to work in cross-cultural groups

⁸ Adopted from Leask, B. (2011) QIC1

10-Students are *given extensive training and support* so that by the time they graduate they will be able to work effectively in a variety of cross-cultural group work situations

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

4. To what extent do the teaching and learning arrangements encourage intercultural interaction and international experience?

Please evaluate on scale, where:

1-The teaching and learning arrangements *do not* encourage intercultural interaction

10-The teaching and learning arrangements *actively encourage and reward* student engagement in intercultural interaction

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

5. To what extent do the learning arrangements assist students to develop international and intercultural skills and knowledge?

Please evaluate on scale, where:

1-The teaching and learning arrangements *do not include* any activities designed to assist students to develop international or intercultural skills/knowledge

10-The teaching and learning arrangements *include a range* of activities designed to assist students to develop international and intercultural skills and knowledge, *these are integrated into the study program*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

6. To what extent do assessment tasks require you to consider issues from a variety of cultural perspectives?

Please evaluate on scale, where:

1-Students are never required to consider issues from *more than one cultural perspective* in an assessment task

10-Students are *always required* to consider issues from *more than one cultural perspective* in an assessment task

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

7. To what extent do assessment tasks require students to recognize intercultural issues relevant to the professional practice?

Please evaluate on scale, where:

1-Students are *never* assessed on their ability to recognize or discuss intercultural issues relevant to their professional practice

10-Students are *always required* to discuss and analyze intercultural issues relevant to their professional practice as part of an assessment task

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

8. To what extent are assessment tasks culturally sensitive?

Please evaluate on scale, where:

1-Assessment tasks are *never* analyzed for signs of any difficulties for particular groups of students

10-Assessment task completions and results are *systematically* analysed for signs of any difficulties for particular groups of students

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

9. How clearly defined and articulated are the international/intercultural learning goals, aims and outcomes of your study program?

Please evaluate on scale, where:

1-No specific international/intercultural goals, aims and learning outcomes or graduate attributes are defined

10-There are clearly defined learning outcomes and/or graduate attributes related to the development of international/intercultural perspectives within the context of the Nursing program

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<p><i>What international, intercultural or global perspectives do graduates of the Nursing program need?</i></p>									

10. To what extent is the content of your study program internationalized?

NOTE: When considering ‘content’ you should think not only about the nature of the subjects or topics covered in text books but also about the substantive information contained in your lecture slides and notes, etc.

Please evaluate on scale, where:

1-The content of the program is *only informed* by research and practice from *within the national or regional context*

10-The content of the study program is predominantly informed by research and practice from an international context, and *a broad range of viewpoints and ways of thinking in the discipline are presented, invited and rewarded*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<p><i>What are the main blockers to internationalisation of the content in the study program?</i></p>									

11. To what extent are students required to apply knowledge and skills in different national and cultural contexts?

Please evaluate on scale, where:

1-The study program focuses *only* on the application of knowledge and skills within local contexts in ways that *do not require engagement* with the perspectives of other national and cultural backgrounds

10-The program focuses on the application of knowledge and skills *within a range of different national and cultural contexts and requires students to engage* with multiple perspectives and points of view

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

12. How would you rate the teaching staff of your university - to what extent are teaching staff in your study program internationally competent?

Please evaluate on scale, where:

1-Teaching staff are *not encouraged or required* to be internationally competent

10-All teaching staff are *encouraged and required to continually develop* their professional skills internationally

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

How teaching staff should rewarded students for developing their understanding of the international context of the discipline and related profession?

13. Considering the above, overall where would you locate the curriculum of your study program on this scale?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A localised curriculum							An internationalised curriculum		

Thank you for your participation!

ANNEX 2 IP RAINBOW SURVEY

Erasmus Intensive Programme 2014

Please complete this form the last day of the Intensive Programme and give it to the course organiser.

It is recommended to fill it in electronically in order to be able to send it to your **home institution in electronic format only** at the end of your Intensive Programme

1. Student details

Name:

Home higher education institution:

Email address:

2. Identification of IP and motivation

Title of the IP: A transcultural nursing approach in order to deliver integrated care for mental health patients.

Location of the IP: Riga, Latvia

Host institution: Riga Medical College of the University of Latvia

Dates of the: 01/03/2014-15/03/2014

How satisfied were you with the duration of the IP:

scale 1-5: 1=not at all, 5=very much

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

How satisfied were you with the dates of the IP?

scale 1-5: 1=not at all, 5=very much

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

Which were the factors which motivated you to participate?

scale 1-5: 1=not at all, 5=very much

Academic 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

Cultural 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

Practice of foreign language 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

Friends living abroad 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

Career plans 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

European experience 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

Other (please specify):

3. Information and support

Where did you hear about the IP?

Home institution Yes / No

Host institution Yes / No

Other students Yes / No

Former participants Yes / No
Internet Yes / No Other (please specify):

Did you receive adequate support from your home institution and from the host institution before and during the IP?

scale 1-5: 1=poor/negative, 5=excellent

Home institution 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
Host institution 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

4. Accommodation and infrastructure

Type of your accommodation in the host country:

University accommodation Yes / No
Apartment or house together with other students Yes / No
Private housing Yes / No
Youth hostel Yes / No

Were you satisfied with your accommodation?

scale 1-5: 1=not at all, 5=very much

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

5. Recognition

Will you gain recognition for your IP by your home institution?

Yes / No / I don't know yet

If yes, How will it be recognised?

ECTS – Diploma supplement – other (please specify):

Did you encounter any problems concerning recognition of your IP?

scale 1-5: 1=not at all, 5=very much

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

Please specify:

6. Costs

Total approximate personal contribution to the costs of the IP (EUR):

What kind of costs did you need to contribute to?

Travel to host institution Yes / No
Accommodation Yes / No
Field visits Yes / No
Materials used during the IP Yes / No
Social programmes Yes / No
Other (please specify):

7. Your personal experience – evaluation of the IP

Judgement of academic/learning outcomes of the IP:

scale 1-5: 1=poor/negative, 5=excellent

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

Judgement of personal outcomes of the IP:

scale 1-5: 1=poor/negative, 5=excellent

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

Did you encounter any serious problems during the IP?

scale 1-5: 1=not at all, 5=very much

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

If yes, please specify:

How satisfied were you with the academic activities and the pedagogical aspects of the IP in terms of the following aspects?

scale 1-5: 1=not at all, 5=very much

The number of hours taught	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
The equipment used	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
The capabilities and expertise of the professors	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
The overall quality of teaching	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
The expected learning outcomes	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
The activities besides the general course	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

How satisfied were you with the study visits?

scale 1-5: 1=not at all, 5=very much

Medicine Museum	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
Clinic “Pardaugava”	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
NGO “Ray of Light”	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

Do you think participation in the IP will help you in your further studies/career?

scale 1-5: 1=not at all, 5=very much

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

Do you think participation in the IP will help you in finding a job?

scale 1-5: 1=not at all, 5=very much

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

Overall evaluation of the IP:

scale 1-5: 1=poor/negative, 5=excellent

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

Recommendations and ideas for the IP organisers:

DOKUMENTĀRĀ LAPA

Maģistra darbs “Māsu izglītības internacionalizācija Baltijas jūras reģionā” izstrādāts LU Humanitāro zinātņu fakultātē.

Ar savu parakstu apliecinu, ka pētījums veikts patstāvīgi, izmantoti tikai tajā norādītie informācijas avoti un iesniegtā darba elektroniskā kopija atbilst izdrukai.

Autors: Renāte Rumaka _____

/paraksts un datums/

Rekomendēju darbu aizstāvēšanai

Vadītājs: profesore Dr. paed., Dainuvīte Blūma _____

/paraksts un datums/

Recenzents:

profesore Dr. ekon., Biruta Sloka _____

/paraksts un datums/

Darbs iesniegts Latvistikas un baltistikas nodaļā _____

Dekāna pilnvarota persona: Dr. hist. Inese Runce _____

/paraksts/

Darbs aizstāvēts maģistra gala pārbaudījuma komisijas sēdē _____

protokols nr. _____, vērtējums _____

Komisijas sekretārs: Dr. hist. Inese Runce _____

/paraksts/