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**„The role of the European Educational Area in the development of
tourism”**

Summary of a doctoral dissertation written under the academic supervision of

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The doctoral dissertation discusses the issues of the relationship between education supported by EU funds and tourism. Educational tourism in Europe was initiated already in the Renaissance, thanks to journeys known as the Grand Tour. These were trips of young aristocrats, who went abroad to the best European universities. Their modern equivalent are educational trips carried out both as part of various projects, as well as individual trips financed entirely by people studying abroad. In Europe, since the 1980s, European Union (EU) funds have supported various initiatives, thanks to which European youth has the opportunity to learn about the education systems in other countries as well as they have a chance to integrate with the local community and learn about the culture of visited region. Creating a European Educational Area consisting of promoting mobility, brings benefits related both to the intellectual development of young people and increase in demand for tourist services in regions hosting participants of educational programs financed by EU funds.

The research and publications focusing on the European Educational Area mainly present its educational and integration aspect at the EU level. While the impact of educational mobility on tourism in countries hosting participants in educational programs financed by EU funds is investigated on a limited basis. The publications discussing these issues refer to the motives of participation in educational programs and the factors determining the choice of the destination of the scholarship, however, their spatial scope is limited to only one country or a specific university selected by the author of the research. Therefore, there is no comprehensive research on the motives for selecting specific tourist destinations and their differentiation according to the tourist regions of Europe. However, the motivations themselves do not affect the development of tourism, therefore it is important that these motivations coincide with the later tourist behavior of people going on foreign scholarships. In the literature on the subject, a lot of attention is paid to educational tourism in Asian countries and Australia. In contrast,

there are relatively few comprehensive studies on the tourism aspects of educational mobility in Europe. The dissertation attempts to fill the research gap in this field.

The main aim of the dissertation was to assess the impact of mobility programs implemented within the European Educational Area on the development of tourism. Additionally, specific objectives of a cognitive nature were defined:

- defining the concept of educational tourism,
- identification and systematization of motivational factors in educational tourism,
- identifying the factors determining the choice of a partner country within the framework of educational mobility,
- indication of the role of educational programs in the development of educational mobility,
- identification of tourist behavior of participants in educational programs,
- assessment of the impact of educational programs on tourist traffic.

The methodological aim of the doctoral thesis was to create a research tool – a questionnaire, with which data regarding the factors determining the destination choice of the scholarship and the tourist activity of students were collected. The application objective of this dissertation was to create a set of recommendations aimed at developing new instruments for educational mobility, which should also affect the development of tourism.

The defined aims allowed to derive the main hypothesis and auxiliary hypotheses. The main research hypothesis is that mobility programs financed by EU funds within the framework of the European Educational Area contribute to the development of tourism.

Five auxiliary hypotheses were also formulated:

H1. Tourist attractiveness is the second most important factor, after education, influencing international student destination choice.

H2. Students going on foreign scholarships under the educational programs exhibit consumption patterns similar to both the consumption patterns of residents and tourists.

H3. Activities promoting regional tourist attractions undertaken by educational institutions participating in the European Educational Area programs intensify the tourist behavior of students.

H4. Educational trips financed by EU funds imply additional tourist traffic.

H5. Educational trips financed by EU funds generate additional expenses for tourist purposes from the own funds of the scholarship holders.

Various research methods were used for empirical verification of the hypotheses and implementation of the assumed goals. A critical analysis of the literature on the subject was carried out on the basis of Polish and foreign publications, legal acts and reports on tourist traffic were also reviewed. In order to collect the data necessary to verify the hypotheses put forward in the study, a primary study was carried out. The survey method was used and the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) research technique was applied. The tool for collecting data was a questionnaire, while statistical data analysis and inference were used for their analysis. The study was conducted on a group of 1,223 Erasmus Plus scholarship students studying at selected academic centers in Poland, who went abroad in years 2014-2019 to continue their education in foreign universities.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, ending, bibliography, list of tables, figures and attachments.

The first chapter discusses the importance of tourism to the EU economy. The concept of tourism was defined, and then the volume of international tourist arrivals in the EU as well as tourism revenues and expenses in the EU Member States in 2014-2021 were presented. It also presents EU activities aimed at supporting development in the field of tourism and indicates the directions of changes in modern tourism, taking into account the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The second chapter reviews the definitions of educational tourism. The motivational factors in tourism were presented by classifying them, and the "push" and "pull" factors in the light of the research conducted so far are discussed. The role played by tourist destinations in selecting a foreign academic center by students through activities such as creating a positive image or marketing the region was also indicated. The socio-economic effects of the development of educational tourism and the evolution of European educational travel are presented.

The third chapter describes the process of shaping the European Educational Area and presents the Erasmus Plus program, which is a tool for the implementation of educational mobility in Europe. The evolution of educational programs financed by EU funds was presented. The structure of the Erasmus Plus program and the amount of its financing were discussed. Based on secondary sources of information, the main destinations of educational mobility implemented under the Erasmus Plus program in years 2015-2019 are also presented.

The fourth chapter presents the results of empirical research. The methodology was described based on the generally accepted principle of research procedure concerning quantitative research. Factors determining the tourist destination choice of educational mobility

were identified, as well as their differentiation in terms of tourist regions in Europe. The activities carried out within the European Educational Area, which influenced the tourist behavior of students, were identified and assessed, and the impact of educational programs on tourist traffic was assessed. Chapter four also proposes recommendations for cooperation between educational institutions and the tourism industry, as well as recommendations for regional authorities. Activities in the field of shaping mobility programs implemented within the European Educational Area, which may contribute to the improvement of the economic situation in the tourism industry, are also presented.

The doctoral thesis ended with a summary, which includes the most important conclusions resulting from the considerations.

The results of the conducted research indicate that the main aim set out in this dissertation has been achieved, and the hypothesis that mobility programs financed by EU funds in the frame of European Educational Area contribute to the development of tourism has been confirmed.

Research has shown that tourist attractiveness is the second most important factor, after education, in the choice of the location of the scholarship for all tourist regions in Europe, with the exception of the Mediterranean region. For students who go to study abroad in the Mediterranean countries, tourist motivations are more important than educational one. Previous studies of tourist motivation in the field of educational tourism usually concerned one destination or one university, therefore they covered a limited area and did not allow for comparisons. The empirical research carried out in the dissertation concerns all the geographical destinations of trips that are available under the Erasmus Plus program, thanks to which it was possible to examine the determinants of the choice of the location of the scholarship with regard to all tourist regions in Europe.

Students leaving for foreign scholarships as part of educational programs show consumption patterns similar to both the consumption patterns of residents and tourists, which was verified by identifying the tourist services that the students used and the determinants of their choice. The dissertation also checked whether the activities promoting tourism undertaken by universities have an impact on the frequency of traveling. However, the research results showed, that students who were not encouraged to visit tourist attractions by universities traveled more often than those students who declared that their host universities undertook activities promoting tourism.

Moreover, students' trips to study abroad carried out within the framework of the European Educational Area imply additional tourist traffic. During the foreign scholarship,

students not only visited the host country, but also traveled to other countries for tourist purposes and contributed to the generation of additional tourist traffic thanks to the visits of relatives and / or friends. Similar conclusions that educational tourism generates additional tourist traffic thanks to visits of relatives and friends have been presented primarily in studies on Australia or Asian countries, but there has been no research confirming this hypothesis in relation to educational programs financed by EU funds, which this dissertation complements. Students declare that thanks to educational trips financed by EU funds, their frequency of traveling around Europe has increased and many of them return to the country where they lived temporarily. More than half of the respondents were also visited by students from various countries participating in the Erasmus Plus program. This means that educational trips financed by EU funds have a positive impact not only on the tourism of the host country and neighboring countries, but also constitute an opportunity for an increase in tourist traffic in the sending country. Thus, education mobility financed by EU funds implies a kind of "Barcelona effect", consisting in an increase in international tourist arrivals to regions where academic centers are located.

The results of the conducted research show that educational trips financed by EU funds induce additional expenses incurred from the scholarship holders' own funds for tourist purposes. Spending one's own funds for tourism purposes proves that the host country receives additional revenues, apart from those coming from the EU budget.

The dissertation also proposed recommendations for regional authorities, which also undertake activities for the development of tourism. These recommendations focus on activities aimed at creating a strategy for the development of educational tourism in the region. The necessity to intensify marketing activities and cooperation with educational institutions was also emphasized. The tourism industry should also notice the benefits of developing this form of tourism to a greater extent and cooperate closely with entities on the educational services market. First of all, the needs and preferences of educational tourists need to be examined and learn about the barriers they encountered while studying and traveling in a host country. Such information would make it possible to better adapt the offer of travel companies to their needs. In addition to the recommendations for regional authorities and the tourism industry, proposals were also made for the development of mobility programs implemented within the European Educational Area, which could contribute to the development of tourism. The conducted research showed that mobility programs not only contribute to the development of intellectual assets of young people, but also benefit the tourism industry. It is therefore legitimate to promote mobility among Europeans and to constantly develop educational programs financed

by EU funds. Due to the fact that one of the goals of the Erasmus Plus program is integration and learning about the culture and traditions of the host country, it would be worth considering increasing the scholarship for this purpose. 'Organizational support' could allocate some of this appropriation to activities aimed at bringing Erasmus Plus participants closer to the history and culture of the country.

The limitation of the conducted research was the unrepresentative research sample. Only Polish students took part in the study, which narrows the subject to participants from one country that is the beneficiary of the Erasmus Plus program. In future research, it is advisable to extend the spatial scope by accepting students from other countries as the research subject, which would allow for a comparative analysis. Moreover, the mobility programs financed by EU funds are aimed not only at pupils and students, but also at teachers of all levels of education. The study conducted among this group of participants could bring interesting cognitive results and would allow to deepen the knowledge on the topic of educational tourism.