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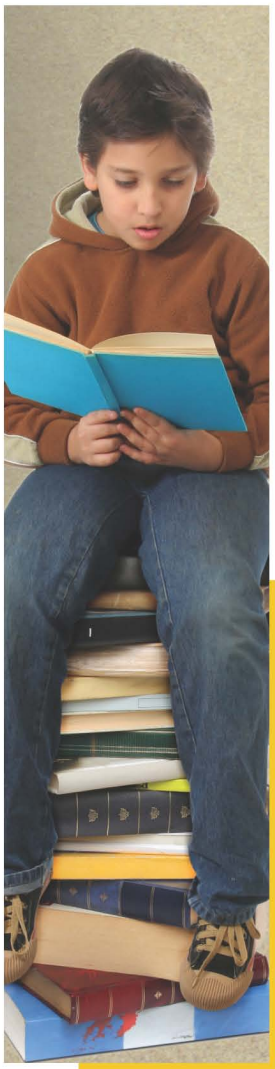

Agriculture and Rural Development

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IMPROVING THE PARTICIPATION IN THE ERASMUS PROGRAMME

STUDY

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2010

DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

POLICY DEPARTMENT B: STRUCTURAL AND COHESION POLICIES

CULTURE AND EDUCATION

IMPROVING THE PARTICIPATION IN THE ERASMUS PROGRAMME

STUDY

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CULTURE AND EDUCATION

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STUDY

Abstract

This study explores the extent to which European students experience financial and other barriers to participation in the ERASMUS programme. The evidence indicates that the main barriers to participation vary significantly between countries, with the exception of financial issues, which are an important concern for students everywhere. ERASMUS participation is associated with students' socio-economic background, primarily influenced by individual preferences and cost-benefit considerations rather than questions of affordability. Other barriers to ERASMUS participation include problems with study credit recognition, as well as insufficient language skills and existing personal commitments.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACA	Academic Cooperation Association (ACA)
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
EEA	European Economic Area
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EILC	Linguistic Preparation Courses
EC	European Commission
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
ES	Spain
EU	European Union
EU-27	27 Member States of the European Union
FI	Finland
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GB	Great Britain
HEI	Higher Education Institution(s)
IIE	Institute of International Education
OECD	Organisation fro Economic Cooperation and Development
PO	Poland
SE	Sweden
UAS	Universities of Applied Sciences
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	United States of America

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aim of the study

Since its inception in 1987 the EU's ERASMUS programme has enabled over 2.2 million students and 250,000 members of university staff to be mobile within Europe. Currently, over 180,000 students study and work abroad each year through the ERASMUS scheme. While the number of students who participate in the programme has been constantly increasing, the participation rate is still below 4% in most countries. Furthermore, in several countries the growth in participation numbers has stagnated or even declined.

The purpose of this study is to look into financial and other possible barriers that might hinder student participation in ERASMUS and to draw conclusions about ways to improve participation. The following main questions are answered in the study:

- What is the current state of affairs with respect to student mobility and particularly ERASMUS participation in different European countries?
- To what extent do financial barriers restrain students from participating in the ERASMUS programme?
- To what extent is the ERASMUS programme accessible to students from all socio-economic groups?
- What other factors, such as personal motivation, awareness, conditions of the ERASMUS grant, and compatibility between higher education systems, influence ERASMUS participation?
- What financial mechanisms and other initiatives would increase the number of ERASMUS students in the future?

The analysis is based on three sources of information: desk research, a student survey, and case studies. The *desk research* includes a synthesis of information from existing studies and data. We conducted a *survey* among ERASMUS and non-ERASMUS students to inquire about their motivation for and barriers encountered regarding their participation in ERASMUS. The survey was conducted in seven countries that represent the greatest variety in terms of perceived financial barriers (high/low) and the level of ERASMUS participation (high/low). The final sample includes 21,145 responses, from which 8,697 responses come from non-ERASMUS students and 12,448 responses from ERASMUS students. *In-depth case studies* were conducted in four countries: their purpose is to verify the results and to learn about potential good practices.

Many earlier studies have explored the obstacles to ERASMUS participation. This study brings together evidence from other studies and validates their conclusions with a new student survey. Furthermore, most studies on mobility examine the motivational factors and obstacles as perceived by mobile students. It is, however, as interesting to also examine students who have not participated in a mobility programme and to get insights into barriers perceived by these students. The current survey among non-ERASMUS students is therefore an important added value of this study to existing knowledge. Furthermore, the in-depth case studies show interesting national and institutional practices to further strengthen the ERASMUS programme.

Key findings about the participation in the programme

The number of ERASMUS students has continually increased since the end of the 1980s. In the last few years the increase has been particularly steep, even taking into account the increase in the size of the student pool as new member states have joined the EU. The overall proportion of students in the ERASMUS programme varies between 0.1% and 1.5% of all students enrolled, with an exception of Luxemburg where the participation rate exceeds 6%. The participation rate tends to be lower in the new member states, but the growth in enrolment tends to be the fastest in these countries and overall rates are thus equalising. In some older member states, the ERASMUS participation rate has stagnated or even declined.

Students' reasons for participation in the programme are primarily for personal development: for the opportunity to live abroad, meet new people, acquire "soft skills", but also to improve foreign language skills. The expected benefits to the future career rank lower in terms of individual priorities, but remain an important factor for most students.

ERASMUS students tend to come from higher socio-economic groups. Other indicative trends evident are that in most countries relatively more ERASMUS students come from traditional 'academic' universities rather than alternative higher education institutions (HEI), and more from capital regions and other cities. ERASMUS participation rates are the highest among students in the field of economics and social sciences, and lowest in sciences. ERASMUS students are more likely to be younger than average students.

Key findings on financial barriers

Financial constraints are the most important factor that restricts ERASMUS participation. 57% of non-ERASMUS students say that studying abroad is too expensive to consider and 29% of students reject ERASMUS after consideration because the grant provided is insufficient to cover incurred costs.

The extent to which students perceive financial barriers varies significantly across countries. Students in the majority of countries are highly concerned by financial barriers, although in a number of countries, notably Finland and Sweden, concern with financial barriers is relatively lower than for other issues. Nevertheless, in all countries financial constraints rate among the top three of students' concerns with relation to mobility.

Perceived barriers, however, do not seem to lower the national participation rate or to increase the proportion of students from higher-income families among mobile students. It is not only the availability of money that constrains students, but particularly the balance between expected costs and expected benefits: students invest more of their own resources into the ERASMUS experience where they expect direct labour market benefits. It is clear that the value of foreign higher education experience is higher in labour markets where fewer graduates have those experiences. Therefore, as the number of students with experience of studying abroad increases, so the relative labour market advantage of that foreign experience declines. In recent years, the individual financial advantage accrued in the labour market for ERASMUS participation has declined. Consequently, in some countries (notably those with the highest levels of foreign study), ERASMUS is not seen as a rational investment in a future career but rather a luxury best avoided by students with limited resources.

ERASMUS students tend to come from higher socio-economic groups. The tendency is particularly evident in wealthier countries compared to less wealthy countries in Europe. This is likely to reflect country-specific differences in the way that the ERASMUS programme is regarded, depending on its expected economic returns to students in the future, offering either "consumption benefits" or "investment benefits".

What is therefore the limiting factor in ERASMUS participation by students from lower socio-economic groups is not the availability of direct funding such as access to student loans or family resources. Rather it is their sensitivity towards additional expenditures associated with a period of study abroad.

Related to this, it is not only the gross level of the grant which affects students' willingness to participate in ERASMUS, but explicitly also the practicalities of being funded for a period of study in an unfamiliar environment, including uncertainty about the costs incurred, the final level of the ERASMUS grant to be paid and uncertainty about the match between the payment schedule and the point at which expenses are incurred.

Other specific findings include:

- The extent to which surveyed students perceive financial barriers varies significantly across countries. In 5 out of 7 countries it is the most important constraint preventing students considering studying abroad; in other 2 countries the problem is in the top 3.
- Although it is difficult to offer a reliable estimate on the number of potential mobile students who do not study abroad because of financial constraints, we estimate this number between 980,000 and 1.5 million students. However, financial constraints are not the only barriers to participation, and even if the financial issues were completely resolved, it is likely that a substantial proportion of these students would not study abroad because of issues related to family and personal relationships.
- Recognition of credits is also an important concern for students in almost all countries. An average of 34% of students identified that fears with credit recognition influenced their decision not to participate in ERASMUS, with the number reaching 60% in some countries. In several countries, this is compounded by the fear that problems with credit recognition will delay graduation and incur additional costs via accumulated student loans, tuition fees, and/or postponed earnings.
- Student financial support systems differ significantly in Europe with respect to the relative proportion of grants, loans and other types of subsidies and the absolute level of support. The evidence seems to suggest that where students have an independent income source (universal grants) they perceive lower financial barriers for ERASMUS participation. There is not a visible relationship between needs-based aid in national systems and the socio-economic distribution of ERASMUS students.
- Funds available for student mobility vary significantly across countries but appear to be positively related to ERASMUS participation. It is not clear whether it is the additional funding that encourages participation or whether that funding signals that internationalisation is an important element of the national agenda for higher education. Where internationalisation is seen as an important part of universities' activities, students may feel a greater "pressure" to become mobile.

Key findings on other potential barriers

Financial obstacles are not the only important aspect that affects ERASMUS participation. Four other sets of potential barriers to ERASMUS participation can be identified: the conditions of the ERASMUS programme, the compatibility of higher education systems, a lack of awareness of the programme, and personal factors.

Students appeared to be highly interested in the opportunity to study abroad. Only 24% of non-ERASMUS students reported not being interested in a study abroad programme. At the same time, there were three aspects that concerned students about participation in a study

abroad programme, namely recognition issues, foreign language skills, and personal relationships that constrain their wider mobility.

The specific findings concerning these other potential barriers were:

- Other than financial issues, the importance of other potential barriers shows a strong national pattern of variation.
- Students stated that recognition of credits is the most important factor that would motivate them to participate in a study abroad programme (66% agreed with this), whilst 62% suggested a higher level of the ERASMUS grant, and 62% indicated wanting to be able to choose a host university outside the listed institutions.
- 41% of students reported being at least partly discouraged from studying abroad because of limited foreign language skills. The percentage varies between 34% and 62% across countries.
- Among non-ERASMUS students, personal relationships and family reasons that restricted their wider mobility were a (very) important barrier to almost half of the students (46%), varying between 36% and 58% across countries. These factors were most significant for those who had not seriously considered participating in the ERASMUS programme, whilst ERASMUS students and students who had considered participating in ERASMUS reported the barrier as relatively low.
- Relatively few students mentioned high competition for grants as a barrier. At the same time 6% (3%-13% across countries) of students reported that they did not participate in the ERASMUS programme because their grant application had been unsuccessful, indicating clear demand for more grants.
- Information about the programme continues to be a problem for some students. 53% of the respondents indicated that more information would have convinced them to participate. Conversely, of the participating students, only 16% indicated that they encountered problems with the amount of programme information.
- About 35% of ERASMUS students found the administrative burden to be a considerable difficulty, but at the same time only 16% of students saw administrative requirements to be a (very) important reason influencing their non-participation.
- The image of the ERASMUS programme appears to be ‘social’ rather than ‘academic’. While this may attract some particular groups of students, the ERASMUS programme may be less attractive to students interested in a more intense academic experience.
- On average, about one third of students were concerned about the limited choice of host institutions. In some countries, however, the issue was one of the foremost concerns, with a total of 61% of students agreeing that more host institution choice would motivate them to participate in the programme.
- About one third of ERASMUS students experienced difficulties derived from uncertainty with the education system abroad (34%) and a lack of integration/continuity between study subjects at home and abroad (33%). Concern about the quality of education abroad was somewhat lower (23%).
- Some issues appeared to be relatively unimportant for students: very few students found the study programme either too long (3-11%) or too short (8-26%). Work responsibilities at home were the least important barrier; a lack of study programmes in English abroad and lack of support regarding student services was a minor problem.
- Most of the barriers are higher for Bachelor students than for Master students but their relative importance remains the same.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the study makes the following main recommendations.

A. Recommendations on financial barriers

- The ERASMUS programme is successful and the study found a significant unmet demand. In light of this, there is a serious need for more ERASMUS grants.
- There are important national differences regarding the most important barriers to ERASMUS participation: it is important to target the policy recommendations to country-specific situations and seek country-specific solutions to the domestic problems. As far as our study revealed (particularly the desk research) there are relatively few national-level analyses of ERASMUS participation rates. Such national research would yield important pointers for domestic policy instruments (e.g. national agencies and institutions specifically targeting those groups of students that participate the least).
- One particular problem arising from mechanisms currently in place is that "successful" countries (i.e. countries with high levels of participation) suffer from their success because of fixed ERASMUS budgets. The options for these countries are (a) to disappoint a large group of students; (b) to lower the grant amount per student; or (c) to allocate additional national funding. It is recommended that European-level measures are taken to avoid penalising success. Making more funds available for high-participation countries, or for countries where demand is significantly higher than the grant covers, would help to address this issue. An alternative policy approach would be the creation of an ERASMUS reserve fund, clawing back funding from countries that have underutilised their budget and re-allocating it to countries that had over-recruited.
- Asking greater student contributions is unfeasible. The economic benefits of ERASMUS participation have been declining whilst the individual economic costs of higher education (tuition fees, reliance on student loans) have risen. Given that rewards for studying abroad are falling, and the ERASMUS grant is not linked to the actual expenses incurred in a period of studying abroad, there is a limited willingness of students to invest their own resources in an activity with ill-defined and potentially open-ended costs that does not bring substantial labour market rewards and often recognition problems.
- ERASMUS students have identified a series of long-term benefits derived from their study abroad, including transferable skills, language acquisition and attitudinal development that could alter students' cost-benefit calculus, and in particular, increase willingness to study/work abroad to access these benefits. In promoting ERASMUS, more attention should be paid to these long-term benefits.
- The use of direct private student investments for the ERASMUS programme is not feasible, but contributions by receiving companies and other agencies involved in ERASMUS placements could be further encouraged. There is considerable scope for increasing placements within the framework of ERASMUS, given the clear benefits for students (despite some administrative issues) and participating companies.

- Previous research has highlighted that the socio-economic background is not the most important barrier impacting on participation in ERASMUS, although it does play a role. In considering which policies would be most effective, the needs of students from a disadvantaged background are best dealt with at the national levels (national student aid system), possibly drawing on resources from individual higher education institutions. Many student aid systems already have mechanisms in place for disadvantaged students, and so there must be concerns that ERASMUS-level policy mechanisms would replicate bureaucracy and reduce transparency.
- There are place-specific differences in participation rates; less developed regions and rural areas typically have lower participation rates than metropolitan and capital city regions. This is particularly the case for those less favoured regions which do not have large research universities, but small specialised institutions, colleges and universities of applied science. There is clearly scope to use European structural funds to increase participation in eligible regions. However, the dynamics of the inequality are not fully clear, and therefore more in-depth study of these problems and inequalities is required before decisive policy action.
- The study unearthed some financial/administrative barriers, particularly around payments procedures. There is a strong case for upfront payments given the problems which late payments can cause, and there needs to be greater transparency about the grant levels. Better information should be provided about the relative gross studying costs for a period of study abroad in relation to the available grants.
- One area of particular concern was in providing information with regard to co-funding opportunities within countries and institutions. Students indicated that this information was lacking and/or not sufficiently transparent. The same argument holds for the portability of national/institutional/other grants and loans. This is an important contribution to overcoming the financial constraints for participation in the ERASMUS programme, but not all students seem to be aware of these opportunities.
- Credit recognition and transfer remains a very important issue, and is generally the second most significant barrier after financial problems. The two issues are clearly connected given that a lack of recognition may lead to a longer study period which incurs additional costs. There are concerns that the Bologna process has not yet significantly addressed recognition issues facing both individual students studying abroad and the Examining Authorities tasked with recognising credits earned elsewhere by their own students.
- There is scope for increasing participation through the use of ERASMUS grants in the context of joint and double degree programmes (which addresses the recognition issue directly) involving an obligatory study abroad period. These schemes have the advantage of enhancing teacher mobility, reducing teaching misunderstandings and ignorance, and thereby contributing to improved student mobility.

B. Recommendation on other factors

- The study showed no significant problems with the average time of a study abroad period (6 months) with ERASMUS grants. There is much scope for mobility opportunities of a slightly different nature, particularly for short intensive programmes (1-3 weeks) involving students and teachers from multiple countries and institutions, targeted on those not (yet) sure of the benefits of a longer period.
- There is the opportunity to open up ERASMUS for longer periods abroad. However, financial envelopes mean that there is a cost trade-off, reducing overall participation (involving as fewer students for longer periods).
- The placements programme was perceived as being successful and appears ripe for further promotion amongst students and employers on the ERASMUS programme for placements. This will increase overall participation, notably at universities of applied sciences where placements are often integral to the curriculum.
- The study revealed potential to resolve some mobility problems outside the higher education system. For example it was shown that students exposed to information about opportunities for studying abroad at an earlier stage in their education career were keener to participate in mobility programmes. There is scope to disseminate more information about studying abroad, and its wider benefits including transferable skills and language skills, in the later stages of secondary education.
- ERASMUS is regarded overall as a success, although the level of that success differs between countries and stakeholders. There are two alternatives for improving the image of ERASMUS. One approach would be to ensure that ERASMUS retains a homogeneous identity for all parties concerned, e.g. through a European-wide information portal, containing inclusive information on European, national and institutional levels. This could include creating uniform “ERASMUS introduction” courses for students who go or intend to go on an exchange. A second approach would be to accept the variety of images and make use of the lived experiences of participants and alumni in promoting the programme, emphasising sharing experiences, practical information, “do’s and don’t’s”, buddy or mentoring systems, better integrating visiting students, and strengthening and professionalising student bodies such as the ERASMUS Student Network.

1. INTRODUCTION

For the last two decades, European higher education has gone through extensive transformation. The rate of change has accelerated since 1990s, as a result of the Sorbonne Declaration (1998), the Bologna Declaration (1999), and the Lisbon Strategy (2000). The first two have made study programmes more compatible across European systems with the latter seeking to reform the continent's still fragmented higher education systems into a more powerful and more integrated, knowledge-based economy. Subsequent communications from European policy makers have only strengthened the belief that higher education institutions will be crucial to Europe's future well-being, and that cooperation between countries and universities in this endeavour is a necessary condition for success.

The EU's ERASMUS programme has made a significant contribution to these goals and developments. Since its inception in 1987 it has become the European Union's "flagship" educational programme. It has enabled over 2.2 million students and 250,000 university staff to be mobile within Europe (EC, na). Currently, the ERASMUS programme enables over 180,000 students annually to study and work abroad. In addition, it supports close co-operation between higher education institutions across Europe. Around 90% of European higher education institutions (more than 4,000) in 33 European countries take part in ERASMUS. The current Lifelong Learning Programme's budget for the 33 participating countries exceeds €450 million per year.

Currently, the ERASMUS programme has set its target at reaching three million students by 2012. Although the programme has made a significant contribution to mobility in European higher education, there may be potential for further growth. In most countries, less than 4% of students actually participate in the ERASMUS programme. In several countries, numbers of participating students appear to have peaked and even to now be in decline. Several studies have suggested that the reasons for this underperformance are a set of financial barriers for students. This study seeks to take a wider view, and explore what factors hinder participation in ERASMUS, and from that to derive a set of conclusions on how to further boost student participation in the ERASMUS programme in Europe.

1.1. Overview of the ERASMUS programme

After a number of years of pilot phase in student exchanges the ERASMUS programme was proposed by the European Commission in 1986 and launched in June 1987. In the following 25 years the programme has continuously developed. In 1995 the programme, together with a number of other educational programmes, was incorporated into the Socrates Programme and since 2007 it is a part of the Lifelong Learning Programme. The content of the programme has also constantly developed since 1980s. It has grown from a student and staff mobility programme into a programme that supports cooperation between European higher education institutions in many different ways. Since 2007 the ERASMUS programme has again three new components: student placements in enterprises, university staff training, and teaching business staff.

An overriding aim of the ERASMUS programme is "to help create a 'European Higher Education Area (EHEA)' and foster innovation throughout Europe" (EC, na). The specific actions within the ERASMUS programme framework are divided into "decentralised" and "centralised" actions. Decentralised actions concern the mobility actions that are run by national agencies in the 33 participating countries. Centralised actions, such as networks, multilateral projects and the award of the ERASMUS University Charter, are managed by the Executive Agency for Education, Audiovisual and Culture based in Brussels. The ERASMUS actions under the Lifelong Learning programme include the following ones:

Decentralised actions:

- Student mobility for studying abroad (3 months up to 1 year);
- Student mobility for placements in enterprises, training centres or research centres abroad (3 months up to 1 year as a general rule);
- Higher education institution (HEI) staff mobility for teaching assignments through which teachers from foreign higher education institutions or enterprises can be attracted;
- HEI staff mobility for further training in foreign enterprises and higher education institutions;
- Linguistic preparation courses (EILC) with a maximum of 6 weeks and a minimum of 60 teaching hours;
- Intensive programmes to bring together students and staff from at least three participating countries to work or teach together in subject related work for a period of 2-6 weeks;
- Preparatory visits to help higher education institutions establish contacts with prospective partner institutions with a view to organising new mobility initiatives, inter-institutional agreements; ERASMUS intensive programmes; or ERASMUS student placements.

Centralised actions:

- *Multilateral projects* for the curriculum development, cooperation between universities and enterprises, modernisation of higher education and virtual campuses;
- *Academic networks* designed to promote innovation in a specific discipline, set of disciplines or multidisciplinary area;
- *Structural networks* designed to help improve and modernise a specific aspect of a higher education organisation, management, governance or funding (such as broadening access to higher education, promoting the "knowledge triangle" of education, research and innovation, improving university management, enhancing quality assurance); and
- *Accompanying measures* to promote the objectives of ERASMUS and to help ensure that the results of ERASMUS-supported activities are brought to the attention of the wider public, for example by information and communication, monitoring activities, development of databases and dissemination of results at conferences.

1.2. Purpose of this study

This study concentrates on one part of the ERASMUS programme – student mobility. Its main goal is to shed light on existing financial and social barriers to participating in the ERASMUS programme, and to suggest how the programme could be further improved in qualitative and quantitative terms. Previous studies have suggested that financial barriers might be the most important obstacle to ERASMUS mobility. Therefore, this study pays particular attention to financial barriers as potential obstacles to ERASMUS participation.

To answer the question about ways to improve ERASMUS participation, the following information is first collected and analysed:

- What are the statistics on student mobility and particularly on ERASMUS participation in different European countries?
- What factors influence students' decisions to participate or not participate in the ERASMUS programme?
- To what extent do financial barriers restrain students from participating in the ERASMUS programme?

- To what extent is the ERASMUS programme accessible for students from all socio-economic groups?
- To what extent do national student support policies facilitate or hinder studying abroad?
- What other factors influence ERASMUS participation, such as personal motivation, awareness, conditions of the ERASMUS grant and compatibility between higher education systems?

Answers to these questions will guide us to recommendations regarding what financial and other measures could improve ERASMUS participation.

1.3. Methodology

The study is based on three sources of information: desk research, a student survey and case study analysis.

1.3.1. Desk research

Many reports and articles have been written about the various aspects of the ERASMUS programme. Desk research synthesises information from these reports and identifies gaps that need to be filled with data from a survey and in-depth case studies. In 27 countries of the European Union information is collected about the national systems of financial support to students and its portability for study abroad. This information is summarized in Annex 4 in the form of country fiches and serves as a reference point to our analysis. We have also used ERASMUS mobility statistics that are either officially published or that we obtained directly from the European Commission. We also contacted national ERASMUS coordinators and asked for national analyses regarding ERASMUS participation. The few papers that were identified in this way are also incorporated in the analysis.

1.3.2. Survey

There are excellent studies about reasons why ERASMUS students participate in the ERASMUS programme and what difficulties they encounter. The most recent study was conducted by Souto-Otero and McCoshan (2006). There is much less information on the reasons why other students decide not to participate in the programme, which of these reasons are most important and what mechanisms are appropriate to overcome those barriers. The student survey aims to address this gap.

For reasons of time and resource availability, the survey does not cover the whole EU but only 6 countries chosen for their variety in perceived financial barriers (high / low),and of ERASMUS participation (high/low), the geographical spread (East/West, North/South) and their size (small/large). As a result of the analysis we selected cases that represent different combinations of the ERASMUS participation and barriers: the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. For reasons beyond our control the questionnaire could not be circulated in the Netherlands within in the timeframe of this project. The Dutch survey was thus cancelled.

The survey is based on two slightly different questionnaires - one for students who have participated in the ERASMUS programme and one for students who have not participated in ERASMUS. The survey was distributed among ERASMUS students who participated in the programme in 2008/2009 and 2009/2010. This enables us to gather the views of students who have participated in ERASMUS most recently and thus offer the most up-to-date picture. We decided not to select the reference year for non-ERASMUS students, in order to reach a wide range of respondents. The survey was distributed to both groups through ERASMUS coordinators in the higher education institutions, who were contacted via national ERASMUS coordinators.

To maximise the response rate we limited the questionnaire to around 10 closed questions with predefined drop-down answers. The survey was operated online and it was open for seven -weeks as of April 2010. The questionnaires were translated into eight languages. The final sample includes 21,145 responses, 8,697 of which are from non-ERASMUS students and 12,448 are from ERASMUS students. This provides a representative sample with low margins of error for both non-ERASMUS and ERASMUS student surveys (1.05[1] for the former and 0.81[2] for latter at confidence level of 95%). Importantly, the sample collected for each individual country also provides low margins of error. The number of responses and the margin of error for each country are presented in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: The number of responses and margin of error for the survey by country

	Non-ERASMUS students			ERASMUS students		
Country	Number of responses	Margin of error	Confidence level	Number of responses	Margin of error	Confidence level
Czech Republic	258	6.1	95%	1,622	1.69	95%
Finland	575	4.08	95%	845	3.12	95%
Germany	1,174	2.86	95%	2,883	1.66	95%
Poland	993	3.11	95%	1,832	1.55	95%
Spain	4,482	1.46	95%	4,442	1.35	95%
Sweden	724	3.64	95%	394	4.81	95%
UK	491	4.42	95%	430	4.66	95%

As shown on the table, the response rate among Spanish students, both ERASMUS and non-ERASMUS students, was higher than elsewhere.

1.3.3. Case studies

To gather additional in-depth information about national contexts and possible best practices, four case studies were conducted. Following the same principles as outlined above, we selected countries that are diverse in terms of perceived financial barriers and participation activity. Consequently, case studies were conducted in Finland, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain. All case studies include a document analysis and a site visit. During the visit a series of individual interviews and focus group meetings were conducted with various stakeholders, including ERASMUS and non-ERASMUS students, ERASMUS coordinators, representatives of the Ministry of Education and the business sector, and others. The case study visits were organized in May 2010. Case study reports are presented in the Annex 3.

The report is structured along the main themes that integrate the information from the various elements of this study. Chapter 2 analyses the trends and patterns of ERASMUS participation in the 27 European Union countries (EU-27). Chapter 3 presents a synthesis of previous studies on ERASMUS barriers and earlier suggestions on ways to improve the programme. Chapter 4 analyses the financial barriers to ERASMUS participation and Chapter 5 examines other possible obstacles to participate in the programme. Chapter 6 presents a set of recommendations for improving ERASMUS participation.

[1] The data on students' population is based on Eurostat statistics for 2007. The data is provided in Annex 1.
[2] The data on ERASMUS students' population is based on European Commission data on ERASMUS participation for the year 2007/2008. The data is provided in Annex 1.

2. STUDENT MOBILITY IN EUROPE

KEY FINDINGS

- The number of ERASMUS students has continually increased since the end of the 1980s. In the last few years the increase has been particularly steep and with the growth exceeding the relative increase in the student pool due brought by the new Member States.
- The proportion of students in the ERASMUS programme varies between 0.1% and 1.5% of all students enrolled, with an exception of Luxemburg where the participation rate exceeds 6%.
- The participation rate tends to be lower in the new Member States, but the growth in enrolment tends to be the fastest in these countries, suggesting a catching-up trend. In some long-standing Member States, ERASMUS participation rate has stagnated or declined in recent years.
- At a national level the relative wealth of the country does not seem to affect the ERASMUS participation rate. Countries with the highest GDP per capita can be found among the top ERASMUS performers as well as among the low performers. ERASMUS participation has particularly risen among low-GDP countries in the European context.
- When choosing a study location, students seem to be influenced by proximity of the host country and its cultural and social ties with the home country.

This chapter provides a quantitative overview of international student mobility across the EU-27 and participation in ERASMUS. Firstly, we describe the use and possible meanings of "international student mobility" as well as the phenomenon of the lack of complete and reliable data. Next, we provide a general typology of European student mobility, after which we move on to illustrate participation in the ERASMUS programme over the past years.

2.1. Student mobility

International student mobility is a multidimensional concept that can be defined in a number of ways. According to the OECD, international student mobility should be seen as "international students who travelled to a country different from their own, for the purpose of tertiary study" (OECD 2009, p. 308). In the 2006 EURODATA report, Kelo *et al*. label mobile students as "students who cross national borders for the purpose or in the context of their studies". UNESCO's *Global Education Digest* (2006) describes international (or internationally mobile) students as "students who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purposes of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin." Kuptsch (2003), on the other hand, distinguishes between two groups of international mobile students. The first group, called "educational inlanders", are those students who hold foreign passports but enjoyed secondary education in the host country. Their presence is based on legal grounds other than education, such as family ties; they are often immigrants who grew up in the country. The second group, defined 'educational foreigners", are students who entered the country for higher education, and whose legal stay in the country is linked to their student status.

Educational mobility may also differ according to study program, length of stay or cooperation between institutions. In general, we can conclude that student mobility may include (de Wit, 2010):

- *Credit or temporary mobility*, or that percentage of students who participate in exchange programs, (inter)national scholarship programmes or internships as part of their home degree. The ERASMUS programme can be classified as credit or temporary student mobility.
- *Degree mobility* refers to those students who partake in a full-degree study programme at a foreign host institution. These students encompass the majority of international student mobility statistics.
- *Joint or double degree mobility* entails the group of students who follow a study programme which is part of an international academic partnership for a home degree or a double degree. These students are generally defined in the mobility statistics as participating in credit or degree mobility.
- The group of students who participate in study programmes in their home country offered by foreign providers (i.e. "offshore providers") are typically excluded from international student mobility statistics are students who follow an internationalised curriculum at their national university, without moving at any time across borders and students who go abroad for short term, study related visits, such as group study tours, summer programmes or intensive language courses.

The lack of common definitions and the many different forms in which student mobility may take place complicates the construction of a universal method for measuring international student mobility. Since most of the data is obtained from national statistics offices, it cannot easily be compared. Richter and Teichler (2006) confirm this trend: "The problem of missing mobility data […] finds its way into the international statistics produced by UNESCO, OECD, as well as more recently by UNESCO, OECD and Eurostat. These organisations receive their data from national-level sources (national statistical offices and specialised agencies), whose limitations are therefore transported into international data publications."

Richter and Teichler (2006) also found that only 10 of the 32 countries studied, collected data on what they define as 'true mobility', namely students moving across country borders for the purpose of study. The other 22 countries reported on foreign students, using the foreign nationality of students as a measure of mobility. The latter classification does not cover the true nature of student mobility, due to differences in naturalisation policies across countries. Rather, the data will constitute an overestimation of international student mobility. For example, in Portugal the number of students from former colonies such as Angola (21.7%) and Cape Verde (19.4%) constitute a very large portion of all international students (UNESCO 2006, p50). The same goes for the Netherlands, where the percentage of students from the high-immigrant country Morocco (8.1%) and students from the former colonies of Suriname (4.6%) and Indonesia (3.4%) are relatively high (*Ibid*., p. 47).

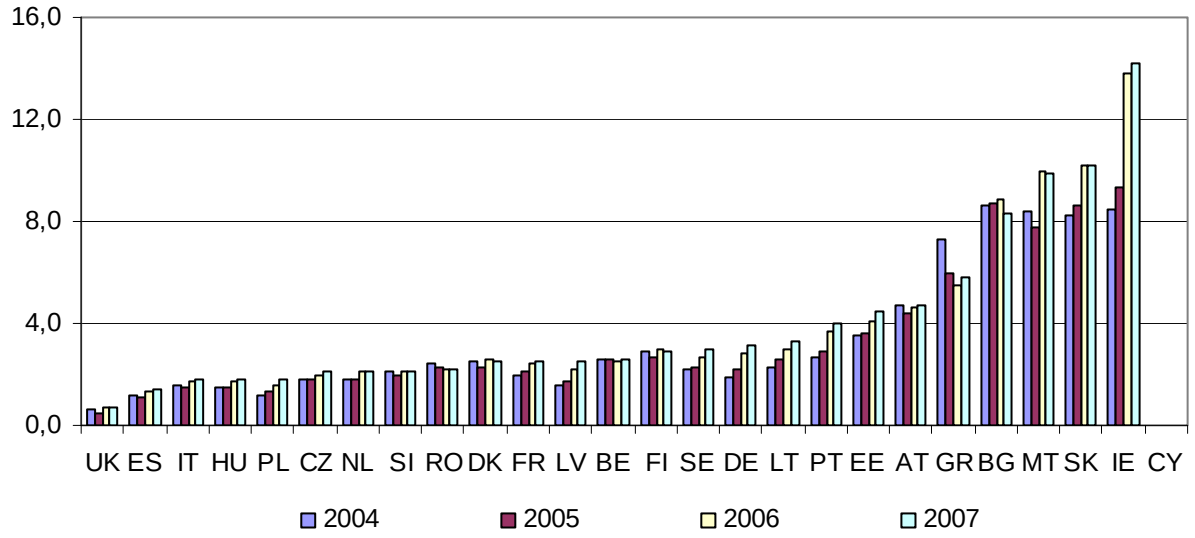
This problem is widely recognized amongst scholars. Due to the lack of reliable data and common definitions in Europe, the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) has started collecting data on student mobility in the region. The Institute for International Education (Davis 2003) published The Atlas of Student Mobility in an attempt to create a more coherent overview of international student mobility. Problems with data collection due to the lack of a common definition are also widely acknowledged by the institutions involved in collecting and analysing the data. In 2005, the OECD, Eurostat and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UNESCO 2009, p. 311) changed the use of the concept "student mobility" in an effort to improve the measurement and terminology. The term "international student" is to be used when referring to student mobility and the term "foreign student" when referring to non-citizens enrolled in a country (i.e. including some permanent residents and therefore an overestimate of actual student mobility).

As this report analyses potential improvements in participation in the ERASMUS programme, the focus will mainly be on credit or temporary mobility. Data are particularly collected at the refined level of universities, reporting on students of their own institution going abroad for part of their studies. In this way, ambiguities in definitions by OECD and UNESCO are circumvented automatically. However, this implies that we assume higher education institutions have a proper overview of incoming and outgoing credit mobility at their institution.

2.2. European student mobility: a general overview

The previous paragraphs have raised some concerns about the reliability of data on international student mobility. This may also affect data on European student mobility pivotal to this research project. Despite these limitations, the available data provide some insight into the main trends and issues regarding mobility.

Figure 1: International student mobility for EU-27 countries (2004-2007)



Source: Eurostat Students (ISCED 5-6) studying in another EU-27, EEA or candidate country as a % of the total number of students in the country of origin

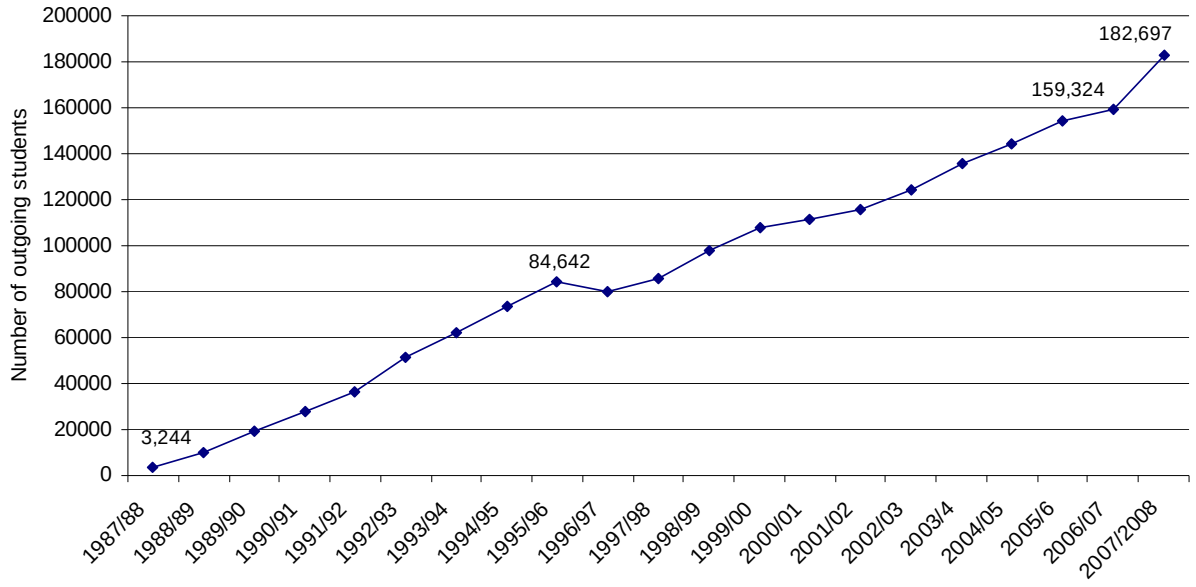
International student mobility within the EU-27 has steadily increased over the past years. Since 1998, the number of students studying in another member state each year has grown by over 200,000. Since the accession of the ten new Member States in 2004, international student mobility across the European Union has again increased by almost 100,000. Eurostat data show that whereas in 2004 only 390,500 students went to study in another EU-27 member state, EEA or candidate country, by 2007 the number had increased to 487,900. Some of this success may also be accounted for by the fact that an ever increasing number of students have access to tertiary education. As the OECD report 'Education at a Glance 2009' concludes: 'On average in OECD countries, the tertiary-type A graduation rate has risen by 18 percentage points over the last 12 years. In every country for which comparable data are available, tertiary-type A graduation rates increased between 1995 and 2007, often quite substantially' (p 63). However, the number of participants has also grown in relative terms. According to the same Eurostat data set, the total percentage of students studying in another EU-27 country as a percentage of the total number of students has grown from 2,2% in 2004 to 2,8% in 2007. These proportions differ by country, particularly due to differences in definitions as described above. Figure 1 shows these percentages per country.

2.3. Participation in ERASMUS

2.3.1. ERASMUS student mobility

ERASMUS student mobility has grown steadily from 1987/88 to 2007/08. Part of this success is a consequence of the EU's enlargement. However, even during periods where the number of Member States has remained constant, the number of participants has grown. For example this was the case for the period 1990-1995 (prior to Austria's, Sweden's en Finland's accession) or for the period 1997-2004(after which the ten countries Malta, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary joined).

Figure 2: ERASMUS student mobility (1987/88 – 2007/08)



Source: European Commission ERASMUS Statistics.

In 2007/2008 the total number of students in the EU-27 was 18.89 million and 182,697 of them were ERASMUS participants. This means that on average 0.85% of all students participated in the ERASMUS programme.[3] Since ERASMUS students on average participate only once in the ERASMUS programme during their whole studies and because the average study duration is approximately 4 to 5 years, it may be estimated that just below 4% of the students use the opportunity of the ERASMUS programme to study some time abroad.[4]

Table 2 compares the ERASMUS credit mobility to the total number of students abroad as recorded by the Eurostat.

[3] Source: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, Statistical overview of the implementation of the decentralised actions in the ERASMUS programme in 2007/2008.

[4] *Ibid.*

Table 2: Participation in the ERASMUS programme and total student mobility (2007/2008)

Country	Outgoing ERASMUS students	Total # students abroad	Ratio of ERASMUS students to students abroad
Belgium	4,980	9,100	55%
Bulgaria	1,061	22600	5%
Czech Republic	5,127	7,100	72%
Denmark	1,601	5,500	29%
Germany	22,342	65,400	34%
Estonia	580	3,200	18%
Ireland	1,490	28,800	5%
Greece	2,270	35,800	6%
Spain	22,696	23,500	97%
France	21,930	48,600	45%
Italy	17,270	36,500	47%
Cyprus	142	21,400	1%
Latvia	930	3,300	28%
Lithuania	2,226	6,800	33%
Luxembourg	365	6,800	5%
Hungary	3,185	7,400	43%
Malta	104	1,000	10%
Netherlands	4,365	12,000	36%
Austria	3,973	10,800	37%
Poland	11,394	38,100	30%
Portugal	4,406	14,600	30%
Romania	2,937	20,300	14%
Slovenia	998	2,400	42%
Slovakia	1,408	24,600	6%
Finland	3,200	8,900	36%
Sweden	2,306	11,400	20%
United Kingdom	7,382	11,800	63%
Total	**150,668**	**488,000**	**31%**

Source: European Commission (ERASMUS programme), Eurostat

It can be seen that the ratio of ERASMUS students to the total number of students abroad (mostly degree students) varies strongly over the EU-27. While in Spain the number of ERASMUS students is almost equal to the number of students abroad, in Cyprus or Ireland the ERASMUS students are a small group compared to total student mobility.

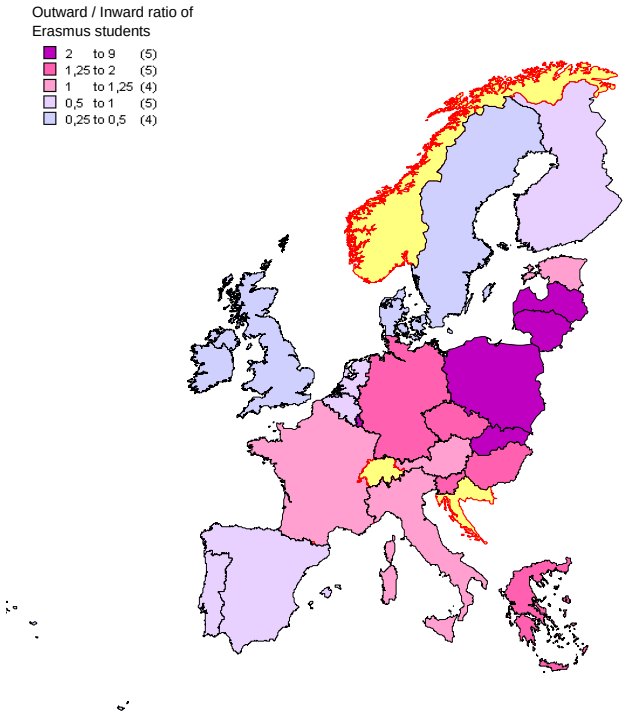
On a more general level, the Table 2 indicates that student mobility encompasses much more than the ERASMUS programme alone. This means that, looking at the possibilities for the ERASMUS programme, one should take other programmes and initiatives into account as well.

2.3.2. Outward/inward ratio of ERASMUS students

Map 1 shows the ratio of the 'outward' number of ERASMUS students vs. the inward ERASMUS students in the study year 2007/2008 per member state. It illustrates that the ratio is higher in new member states such as Poland, Slovakia or the Baltic countries, than in Member States who joined the European Union before 2004. These countries show a 'depletion' (high outward/inward ratio), whereas the Swedish and UK student population on the other hand show an 'attraction' (low outward/inward ratio). Hence, a closer look at the incentives for students from new EU countries to study abroad via the ERASMUS programme is necessary.

If new Member States display similar patterns to the old Member States, one might expect a decreasing trend in ERASMUS mobility over the next decade. However, if the fall in ERASMUS mobility in old Member States is simply a temporary change following the introduction of the bachelor-master structure, the reverse might be true.

Map 1: Outward/inward ratio of ERASMUS students across the EU-27 (2007/2008)

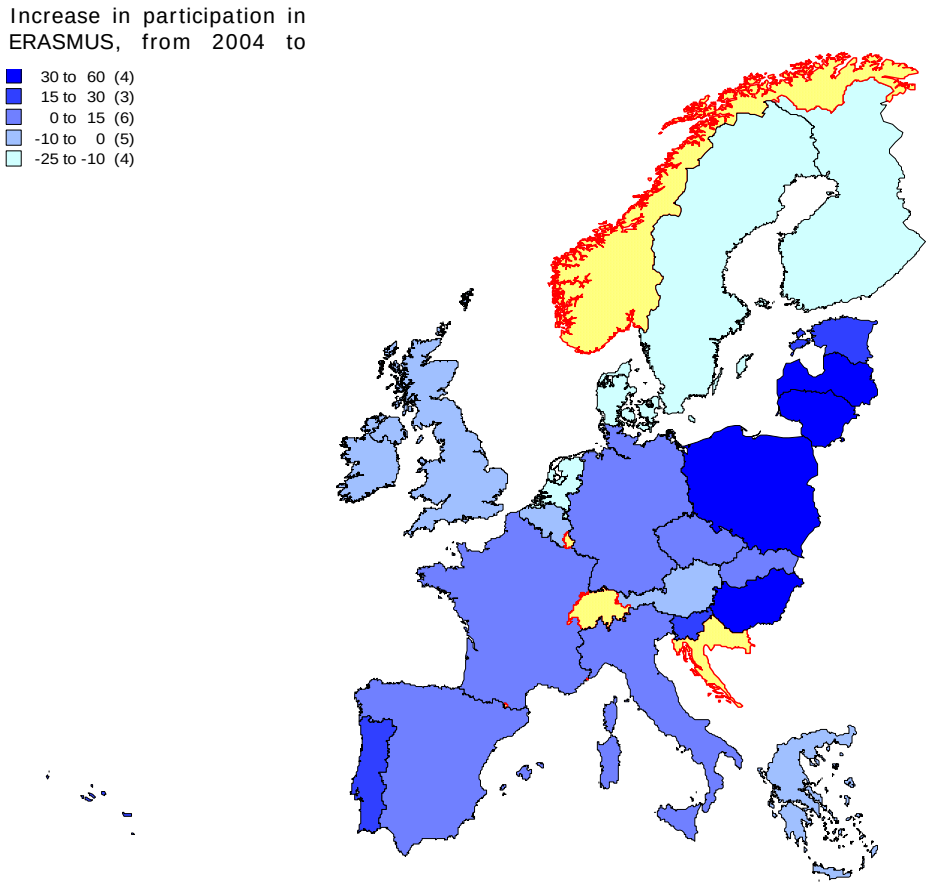


Source: European Commission ERASMUS Statistics
(Romania and Bulgaria are not included in this map)

2.3.3. Most recent participation trends (2004-2008)

In Map 2 the relative increase in participation measured in terms of outward ERASMUS students is shown for the period 2004/2005 to 2007/2008. The map shows that Poland and the Baltics witnessed a strong increase in students that participated in the ERASMUS programme, whereas the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands faced a strong decrease in participation.

Map 2: Increase in participation in ERASMUS across the EU-27 (2004-2008)

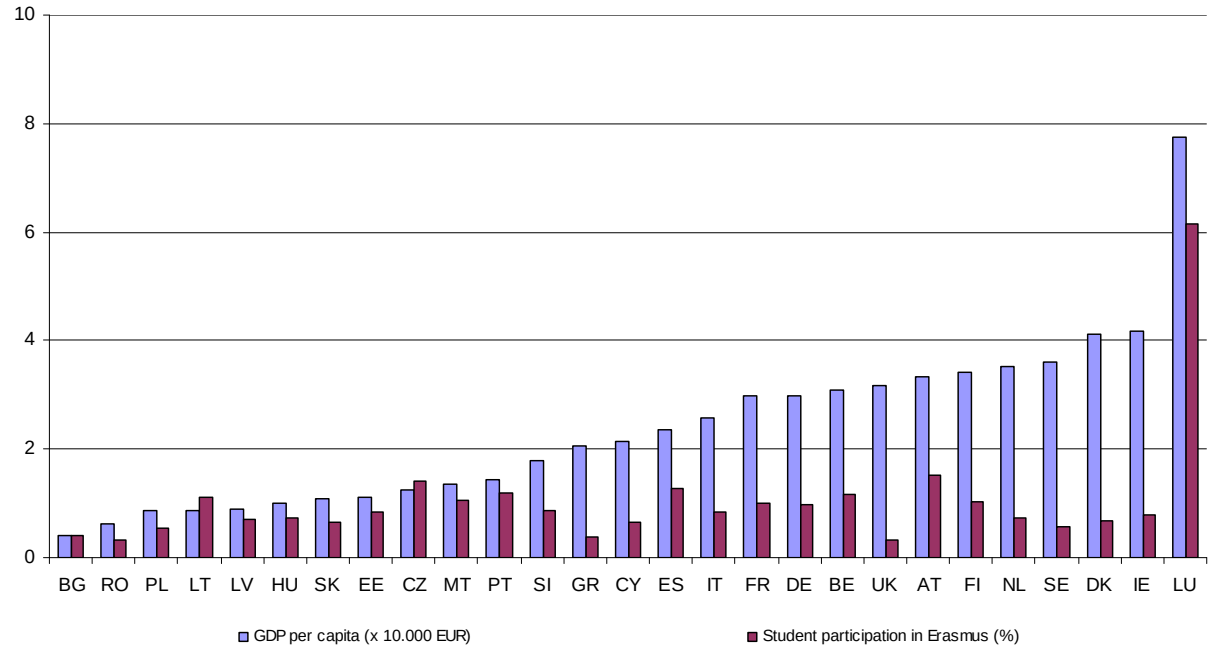


Source: European Commission ERASMUS Statistics
(Romania and Bulgaria are not included in this map)

2.3.4. GDP and participation

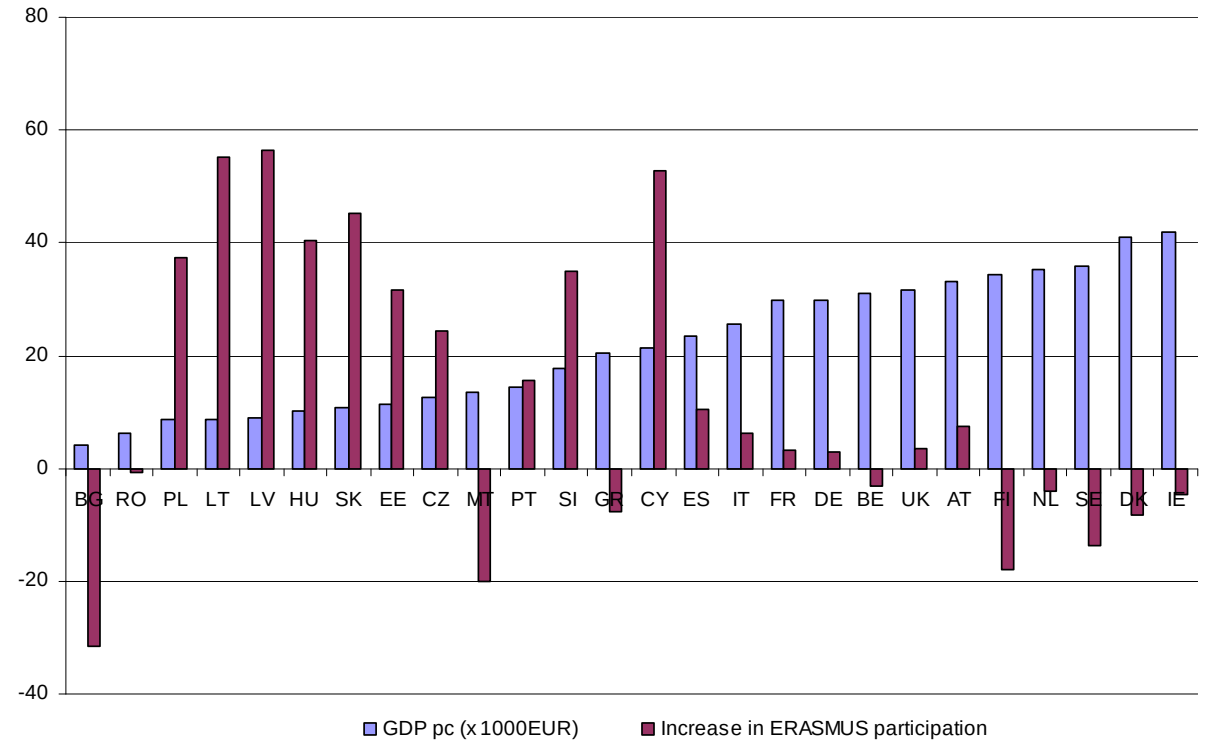
If one assumes that wealth and socio-economic status positively relates to student mobility, the first step is to focus on an aggregate level and examine whether (outward) participation in the ERASMUS programme is related to GDP per capita. Figure 3 shows data for the EU-27 countries sorted from low to high GDP per capita compared to the ERASMUS participation rate. It illustrates that GDP per capita does not have a direct correlation to participation in ERASMUS. The picture is rather mixed. Lithuania for example has a low GDP per capita but has a much higher ERASMUS participation rate than Denmark and Ireland, which have relatively high GDP per capita. On the other hand, Austria has a higher GDP per capita but also a high participation rate. Thus, the financial situation, at least at the national level, does not have a one-to-one impact on participation as such. On the other hand, the *growth* of participation in the ERASMUS programme is stronger in low-GDP countries as is shown in Figure 4. These national data, however, cannot indicate whether individual students from lower GDP countries experience less financial barriers to participate in the ERASMUS programme. This will be further explored in Chapters 3 and 4.

Figure 3: GDP per capita vs participation in the ERASMUS programme (2007/2008)



Source: European Commission ERASMUS Statistics and Eurostat.

Figure 4: GDP per capita vs. change in participation in the ERASMUS programme (2004/2005 - 2007/2008)



Source: European Commission ERASMUS Statistics and Eurostat.

From the above figure it is seen that in lower-GDP countries participation in ERASMUS has increased much more than in high-GDP countries.

2.3.5. Language and proximity

To gain more insight into reasons for non-participation it may also be of interest to investigate other factors such as the student 'flows' between countries. Such flows may offer a better insight into socio-cultural barriers, as well as practical reasons such as distance from the home-country. To this end, the total number of students for school years 2004/2005 until 2007/2008 is grouped into seven clusters according to socio-cultural factors such as language, regional cultural factors, heritage and proximity. The results are shown in the table below.

Table 3: Division of EU27 into socio-cultural classes

Socio-cultural Group	Countries	Students
Baltic	Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania	0.398 mln
Benelux	Belgium, Netherlands, Luxemburg	0.984 mln
German speaking	Germany, Austria	2.540 mln
Roman/Mediterranean	Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Spain	7.920 mln
Scandinavian	Denmark, Finland, Sweden	0.955 mln
Slavic (and Hungary)	Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia	3.534 mln
UK and Ireland	UK, Ireland	2.553 mln

Source: Authors

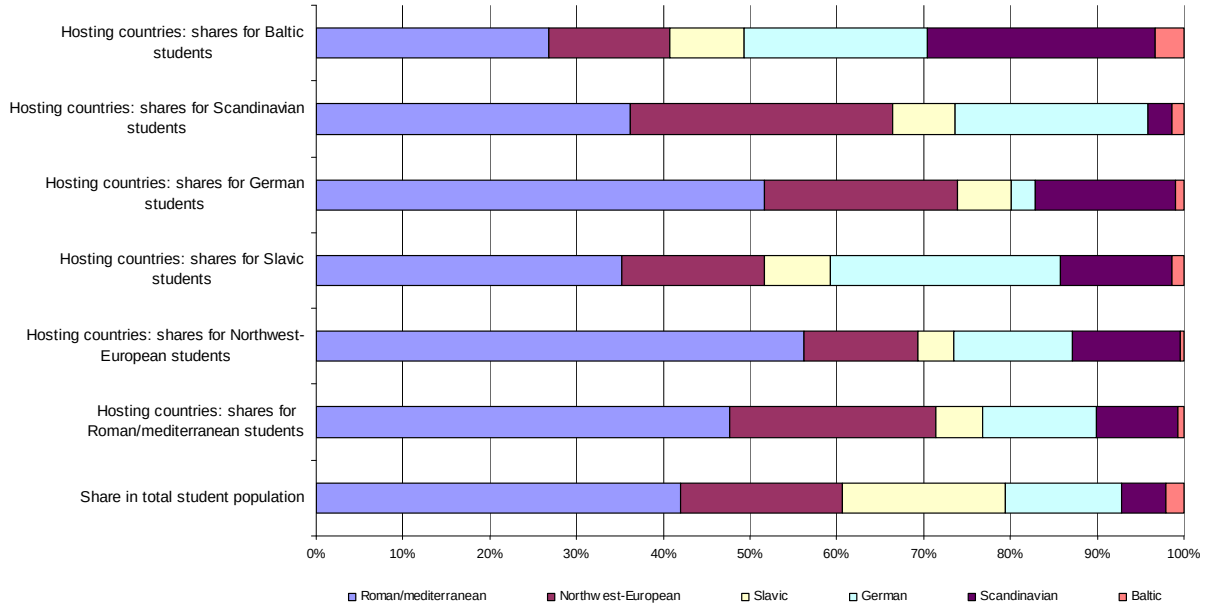
Figure 5 shows the distribution of outgoing ERASMUS students per socio-cultural group for the years 2004-2008. The Roman/Mediterranean, Northwest-European and Scandinavian countries are very popular, whereas the Slavic states attract fewer students. For example, about 37% of the Scandinavian ERASMUS students have visited Roman/Mediterranean countries in the period 2004-2008, whereas only 3% chose Slavic countries. The lowest bar shows the share of the total students per group in the total EU-27 student population.

The popularity of Mediterranean countries is in part to be attributed to the group's size. In this group there are also more students and therefore more institutions available that could accommodate incoming students. By this logic, there is, however, excess popularity of Scandinavian countries in various groups, relatively low attraction of Slavic group, and quite variation in the popularity of the German speaking countries.

To gain more insight in the students' distribution, one has to correct for the number of students of the hosting group. This is done by introducing the 'distribution index':

$$\text{Distribution index of group X for group Y} = \frac{\text{share of students from X visiting Y}}{\text{share of group Y in EU-27 student population}}$$

Figure 5: Distribution of outgoing ERASMUS students per socio-cultural group (2004-2008)



Source: European Commission ERASMUS statistics.

For example, 15.7% percent of the Roman/Mediterranean students go to the UK and Ireland, whereas the students in the UK and Ireland comprise only 13.5% of the total EU-27 student population. Then the distribution index equals 15.7% / 13.5% = 1.16.[5] In Table 3 the distribution indices for all the seven groups are displayed. It has to be recognized that the distribution across countries is not entirely explained by student preferences. There may be excess of demand for some country groups that cannot be accommodated. Particularly the UK is a popular study location and there is more interest in studying in the UK than there are available opportunities.

[5] This analysis is reminiscent of the "index analysis" as performed by Kelo and Teichler (2006).

Table 4: Matrix of student distribution indices across countries

Origin	Destination						
Roman/mediterranean (ROM)	SCA	BEN	UKI	ROM	GER	BAL	SLA
distribution index	1,87	1,56	1,16	1,13	0,98	0,31	0,28
Slavic (SLA)	SCA	GER	BEN	ROM	BAL	UKI	SLA
distribution index	2,55	1,97	1,82	0,84	0,62	0,52	0,41
UK and Ireland (UKI)	SCA	ROM	BEN	GER	SLA	BAL	UKI
distribution index	1,74	1,52	1,33	1,21	0,18	0,12	0,06
German (GER)	SCA	UKI	ROM	BEN	BAL	SLA	GER
distribution index	3,20	1,24	1,23	1,07	0,47	0,33	0,20
Benelux (BEN)	SCA	ROM	BEN	UKI	GER	BAL	SLA
distribution index	3,13	1,18	1,07	0,91	0,82	0,30	0,27
Scandinavian (SCA)	BEN	GER	UKI	ROM	BAL	SCA	SLA
distribution index	2,15	1,65	1,41	0,86	0,63	0,56	0,38
Baltic (BAL)	SCA	BEN	GER	BAL	ROM	SLA	UKI
distribution index	5,19	1,73	1,57	1,56	0,64	0,46	0,37

Source: Authors.

The distribution index means the following:

- weight > 1: the proportion of incoming students exceeds the relative proportion of the group, indicating a strong preference to go to that country;
- weight around 1: no special preference, since the attractiveness is almost completely explained by the volume of students in the hosting country group;
- weight < 1: the hosting country group is not very attractive to the 'sending' group.

Table 4 indicates some significant trends:

- the 'volume' (number of students) of the hosting countries does not explain everything, since distribution indices differ significantly from 1;
- at the national level, countries with high GDP do not seem to be a barrier to low GDP countries (e.g., Baltic students in Scandinavian countries);
- different groups have different preferences. For example, Slavic students prefer Scandinavian and German countries, whereas British and Irish students prefer Scandinavian and Roman/Mediterranean countries.

This leads to the hypothesis that at the individual and institutional level, not only financial considerations play a role, but also social and cultural factors matter. For example, the high preference of Baltic students for Scandinavian countries, might partly be explained by language ties (e.g. between Estonia and Finland), distance, and historical, economic and personal ties. Since the various studies, study duration and curricula differ from country to country, the motivation to go abroad might also be impacted by educational (system) factors, which may differ according to the national, institutional and individual levels. For example, in those countries where the average study duration is longer and where students on average are older, reasons for participation may differ on a national level from students in countries where the total study duration is shorter. Furthermore, at the institutional

level, students may opt for those institutions that offer the best education or the best exchange programme in their field of studies. On the individual level, students who are in the Bachelor phase of their studies may make different choices with respect to career opportunities than those in their Master phase.

2.4. Conclusions

This section provided some insights into general patterns of ERASMUS participation in Europe. A few conclusions can be drawn from this analysis. Firstly, there is no clear picture of overall student mobility because of a lack of reliable and complete data and definitions on international student mobility. Secondly, for an effective internationalisation policy, one ought to take other programmes and initiatives, besides ERASMUS, into account as well. Thirdly, it incentives to study abroad via ERASMUS seem to stimulate particularly students from new EU Member States to become mobile. Statistics show that for lower-GDP countries the participation in the ERASMUS programme has increased much more than in the high-GDP countries. Fourth, the assumption that financial issues are the most important barrier to ERASMUS participation needs further investigation. Individual financial barriers may well be perceived as major obstacles, but no indication of a clear direct link between GDP and ERASMUS participation transpires from the data. . Finally, mobility patterns do not seem to relate coherently to socio-cultural aspects such as language or proximity. This all implies that to understand the dynamics of student mobility, data needs to be analysed at the individual level. These issues will be examined further in the next three chapters.

3. ERASMUS PARTICIPATION: A SYNTHESIS OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

KEY FINDINGS

- The benefits of an ERASMUS period for the participating student are both personal and professional. The main rationale for participating in the ERASMUS programme is related to language competencies, "soft skills", and personal skills such as adaptability and initiative. Students recognize the benefit of intellectual development only by the end of the programme.
- The lower the number of ERASMUS students (and other mobile students) in a national labour market, the higher tend to be the economic benefits from the ERASMUS experience. As a result, the economic benefit of the ERASMUS participation is declining in many countries as participation rates increase.
- ERASMUS students tend to come from higher socio-economic groups. The tendency is particularly strong in wealthier countries, whereas in lower GDP countries ERASMUS students are more equally spread across different income groups. This is likely to reflect a difference in the ERASMUS programme as a "consumption benefit" as against an "investment benefit".
- ERASMUS participation rates are highest among students in the field of economics and social sciences, and lowest in sciences, engineering and technology. ERASMUS students are more likely to be young (under 25 years of age).
- The top three problems that ERASMUS students encounter concern accommodation, financial problems, and the administrative burden associated with the programme.
- Five sets of potential barriers to ERASMUS participation can be identified: financial constraints, the conditions of the ERASMUS programme, the compatibility of higher education systems, a lack of awareness, and personal factors.

This section provides the results of a literature review on the factors that affect participation in the ERASMUS programme. The objective is to derive from previous studies a set of potentially viable strategies/policies that could help to increase participation in the ERASMUS programme. A distinction is made in this review between individual factors/rationales to study abroad, with a particular focus on ERASMUS periods, the student profile, and national/ international strategies and policies within which individuals operate, and thus potentially stimulate or hamper participation.

The literature review focuses on ERASMUS academic mobility. Given its recent introduction the literature has so far only paid marginal attention to ERASMUS placements and there is scarcity of evidence-based suggestions on how to increase participation in that strand of the programme. The remainder of the literature review is organised in relation to these three themes. The literature review has encompassed both academic papers as well as 'grey literature' such as evaluation reports.

3.1. Student rationale to study abroad

The benefits of a period abroad are multiple, encompassing personal as well as professional development aspects (Souto-Otero and McCoshan 2006; Findlay et al. 2006). While personal development aspects are important, the primary rationale identified in the literature for students to undertake periods of study or a whole degree abroad is economic (Rosenzweig 2006). Naidoo (2006) argues that students go abroad for a qualification that serves as to differentiate them from potential competitors in the labour market, either in their home, host or a third country (see also ADMIT 2002). Participation in ERASMUS, as well as in other international student mobility programmes or activities, is associated with an increase in language competences as well as soft skills, adaptability, initiative and ability to plan, which have a labour market value (Michel 2008; Teichler and Janson 2007; ADMIT 2002). It is only at the end of their period of studies abroad that students tend to value importantly also other benefits of their stay, such as the broadening of their intellectual scope (Papatsiba 2005).

Despite its importance, the professional value of ERASMUS is decreasing. Bratch et al. (2006) used data from the VALERA survey to report that 54% of the 2000/01 ERASMUS students believed – four years after their ERASMUS period – that the period abroad had been helpful in obtaining their first job. The respective figures were 66% among the 1994/95 ERASMUS students and 71% of the 1988/89 students. The proportion of those employed temporarily increased in the period 1988/89-2000/01 from 27% to 35%. In contrast, the proportion of those employed part-time remained stable at 10%. Only 16% of the 2000/01 ERASMUS students considered their income to be higher than that of their non-mobile peers. This proportion is clearly more limited than in previous generations (25% in 1988/89). The general trend is that the more ERASMUS students and the more international higher education provision in the home country becomes, the lower the "value" of the period abroad in the labour market.

If the economic rationale is important for participation, it would not be surprising that, with lower returns, interest in the programme could decrease. Having said that, ERASMUS students continue to be more likely than non-mobile students to work abroad, in a similar proportion as in the past, and in international activities, factors which can be related to job satisfaction (Harzing 2004). These differences, however, cannot be attributed only to participation in the programme, but also to the profile of participating students – often these students have been internationally mobile prior to ERASMUS and want an international career (Bratch et al. 2006). Benefits are not equally distributed across countries. King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003) reported a positive income result from ERASMUS participation for students from the University of Surrey in the UK. Perhaps as the number of ERASMUS students from the UK has actually decreased in recent years and has never been high, returns in this country are higher than in other Western European countries. Similarly, on average, Central and Eastern European countries benefit substantially more from their participation professionally than students from Western European countries (Rizva and Teichler 2007; Bratch et al. 2006). Differences by field, on the other hand, appear to be modest (Bratch et al. 2006).

3.2. Student profile

The literature identifies a number of individual/personal factors that affect the likelihood to participate in ERASMUS mobility, related to the socio-economic background of students, gender and age, and subject of study.

3.2.1. Socio-economic background

University students are a select group in most European countries (Eurostudent 2000; 2005). ERASMUS students are a select group within this select group. Even though the situation has improved over the last decade to see a widening in participation in the programme, ERASMUS students still come from privileged socio-economic backgrounds, in

particular regarding their parents' educational background . ERASMUS students' parents have pursued university studies significantly more often than the parents of non-ERASMUS students (Souto-Otero and McCoshan 2006; European Commission 2000). A recent UK study (Findlay and King 2010) confirms this pattern more broadly and reports in relation to intended mobility among secondary education pupils that class and parental educational background play an important role in determining education abroad.

Souto-Otero (2008) reports that in richer counties students from families in the highest national income levels more often participate in ERASMUS. Contrary to the expectation, it is in lower GDP countries that there are fewer people from higher socio-economic backgrounds participating in the programme. This may highlight two different motivations for mobility: the predominance of mobility for ''consumption'' from higher socio-economic groups in higher income countries versus mobility for ''investment'' from less well-off people from lower income countries, the other countries falling somewhere in between these two extremes. Moreover, data reveals that individuals from certain middle to low-income countries are those who suffer the greatest ''differential-cost'' (or the highest differential between the yearly costs of their studies before and during the ERASMUS period) as a result of the ERASMUS period. On the whole, it is worthwhile to notice that the relationship between country GDP and additional expense during the period abroad is, somewhat surprisingly, not too clear or pronounced. This apparently counter-intuitive finding is largely explained by the fact that students from lower income countries adopt strategies to reduce their expenses in their host country. The eight countries at the bottom in students 'average' monthly expenses in the host country in 2004/05 were low-income countries (Souto-Otero 2008).

3.2.2. Age, gender and study subject

Regarding age and gender, the majority of ERASMUS students are under 25 and female, although the gender balance is relatively equal (Souto-Otero and McCoshan 2006; European Commission 2000).

Traditionally most ERASMUS students have come from business studies (around 20% in the year 2006-20076), language and philological sciences (14%), social sciences (12%) and engineering and technology (11%).

3.3. How to increase participation? Institutional strategies and system policies

National and international rationales to encourage mobility are related to the creation of more effective European labour markets, primarily (Wielemans 1991), and citizenship aspects, such as the creation of a European consciousness (Papatsiba 2005). For universities, participation in ERASMUS has often been related to increasing their attractiveness and, in some cases, quality improvement (Vossensteyn et al. 2008). This section focuses on national/ international strategies and policies within which individuals operate, and which can stimulate or hamper participation. A full insight in national and institutional mechanisms to potentially enhance participation in ERASMUS is not available from the literature (cf. also Van Brakel et al. 2004, who report the difficulty in specifying which particular national policies are connected to specific elements of the ERASMUS programme). It is therefore not possible to identify clear-cut examples of good practice. Moreover, a key question is: good practice in which respect(s)? Many of the issues faced by 'spontaneous' international mobile students (such as visa requirements, the recognition of periods abroad, etc. –cf. OECD 2004) are somewhat less acute for ERASMUS students. The section therefore proceeds by, first, reviewing the aspects that ERASMUS students consider most problematic. The implication is that it is in these areas that further changes would be required to stimulate participation in the programme. Second, it proposes a series of policy alternatives to stimulate participation, as derived from the literature.

[6] http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/ERASMUS/statisti/table207.pdf

The main problems for ERASMUS students to be addressed by institutions and national policies were identified in Bratch et al. (2006).

Table 5: Main problems encountered by ERASMUS students

	% of students reporting to have experienced significant problems in this area	Difference btw 2000/01 and 1988/89
Accommodation	24	+ 2
Financial matters	22	+ 1
Administrative matters	19	- 2
Obtaining credits or credit transfer	16	n.a.
Different teaching or learning methods	15	- 2
Teacher meeting or helping students	13	- 2
Taking courses in foreign language	9	- 1
Too high academic level	5	- 3

Source: Bratch et al.(2006).

Addressing these problems may potentially make participation in the ERASMUS programme more attractive and the suggestions provided below refer to most of these areas. It is important to note, however, that a shortcoming of this list is that it does not look into the barriers to participation in ERASMUS of students who did not take part in the programme.

Below we outline a range of policy measures suggested in the literature, some of which are complementary, to help increase participation in the ERASMUS programme. The measures are divided into two types: those aimed specifically at increasing the proportion of mobile students under the ERASMUS umbrella and those aimed at increasing the number of mobile students as such. The latter also includes measures that can help to redirect some independent students into the programme. It is necessary to note beforehand that some universities may be unwilling to increase the volume of ERASMUS students as these students produce greater administrative costs and require more advice than 'home' students (Rizva and Teichler 2007). Most measures would require a change of budgetary allocations and/or a larger share of co-financing as it seems likely that reductions in the amount received by students as part of the ERASMUS grant would result in a reduction of students interested in participation in the programme. On the whole, finance and lack of language competences are seen as the most important barriers to participation in international student mobility.

3.3.1. Encompassing more mobile students into the programme

3.3.1.1. Making the grant personal instead of institutional

Although international student statistics are hampered by important shortcomings (Kelo et al. 2006a; 2006b), it is clear that many and increasing numbers of students move abroad to study without an ERASMUS grant. Rizva and Teichler (2007) conclude that other short-term mobility within Europe has grown substantially in recent times and has remained, until today, at least as frequent as mobility supported by ERASMUS (cf. also Eurostudent 2009). Some students move to study for a whole degree abroad, whereas others move for shorter periods. Some students may want to move to universities with which their home higher education institution does not have agreements. This means that ERASMUS reaches only a share of mobile students. Making the ERASMUS grant a personal grant (e.g. the grant is

awarded to an individual that has arranged a mobility period outside his/her country of residence and nationality regardless of the European institution to which (s)he goes, as long as some 'quality' criteria are met) instead of institutional, could help to increase participation in the programme (cf. also ADMIT 2002). The European Commission (2000) suggests that it should also be possible to award 'ERASMUS' status and associated benefits to students without awarding them a mobility grant.

3.3.2. Attracting new students

3.3.2.1. Increasing the number of potential beneficiaries

Part of the increase in participation in the programme could come from increasing the number of potential beneficiaries. This could come as a result of increasing numbers of higher education students in current ERASMUS countries or an extension in the number of institutions/ countries participating in the programme. The first option seems unlikely as the number of people in the age 18-25 (which account for the vast majority of university students) is set to decrease in most European countries (OECD 2008a), in particular in large countries such as Germany and Poland. It is also unlikely that this is offset by increases in the proportion of the population entering higher education. Extending participation to further countries outside the EU (e.g. Russia, USA), in particular those engaged in the Bologna process, could increase the number of beneficiaries, but it would probably be at the cost of ERASMUS being seen as a European brand programme.

3.3.2.2. Increase economic support for the period abroad

The cost of education has been proposed as a factor that increasingly guides decisions regarding international study (Verbik and Lasanowski 2007; Findlay et al. 2006). Students going abroad are particularly concerned about financial insecurity (Eurostudent 2009; ADMIT 2002), which is aggravated by the share of student now in part-time employment in their home country. As highlighted earlier in this chapter, around two thirds of ERASMUS students report the value of the grant as insufficient (Souto-Otero and McCoshan 2006; European Commission 2000). While the grant covers on average the additional expense of students who lived outside their parental home, it only covered 50% of the additional expenses of students who lived at home before the start of the period abroad (Souto-Otero and McCoshan 2006). Many students who have thought of studying abroad do not do so for financial reasons, which can be related both to the costs of the ERASMUS period and its decreasing labour market benefits – as outlined above. Souto-Otero and McCoshan (2006) report that over half of ERASMUS students they surveyed had friends who had looked into participating in the programme but had not done so (before or after applying), mainly for financial reasons. About 46% knew some students and 6% knew many students who had not participated in the programme for these reasons. Increasing the value of the ERASMUS grant would most likely increase demand for participation in the programme. Teichler (2001) and Souto-Otero (2008) suggest that the low take-up rate of available ERASMUS places in the past could have been at least partly due to the low financial value of the grant and Van Brakel et al. (2004) stress that there is a need to show that mobility is really a priority in funding terms. This expansion should in any case be accompanied by an expansion in the opportunities for the portability of national financial support such as grants, loans, family allowances, tax incentives etc. for study abroad (Vossensteyn et al. 2008; Van Brakel et al. 2004; Szarka 2003; ESIB 2003; ADMIT 2002). This is already operating in some countries. Similarly, some countries already have implemented co-funding schemes, thus increasing the number or value of ERASMUS grants (Szarka 2003).

3.3.2.3. More nuanced allocation of the grant

As yet, the ERASMUS grant does not differentiate sufficiently between 'cheap' and 'expensive destinations', which can make mobility to some areas difficult. Additional support for mobility to high-cost areas may therefore be required (ADMIT 2002). Similarly, only 14% of ERASMUS students consider their parental income being lower than average in their country (Souto-Otero and McCoshan 2006). Means-tested additional grants or loans

could be provided to attract people from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Eurostudent 2009; Vossensteyn et al. 2008; Souto-Otero and McCoshan 2006; ADMIT 2002; European Commission 2000). According to Messer and Wolter (2005) public funding for periods abroad can only be justified if a positive impact of the programme on productivity could be established and/or if some students were not mobile because of credit constraints. Yet, we have seen that the programme also offers important ''citizenship'' benefits to participants, which could justify public intervention. In this respect the key question would be how to distribute the limited public funds available amongst potential participants in the programme. But currently, existing public funds are largely directed towards students who already have the means to afford periods of study abroad. Some of these students, moreover, spend substantially more than the experience of other students – mainly those from poorer countries – suggests is needed to live abroad. These students would probably pay for their mobility periods from their private funds if no subsidy were available (Messer and Wolter 2005) as the increasing volume of ''spontaneous'' mobility suggests. It would follow from this that a more nuanced allocation of current funds would help to reach an alternative allocation of funds that could result in higher participation in the programme.

3.3.2.4. Improving information about the programme

Teichler (2004) has highlighted that the number of students who do not learn about ERASMUS is not known. Ways to disseminate the programme include ERASMUS days, music concerts, publications, conferences, seminars and workshops organised by various stakeholders such as national agencies, student unions, HEIs (international offices as well as individual departments) and European institutions (Kolanowska 2008). The importance of information campaigns, in particular related to the costs and benefits of ERASMUS periods and the portability of study grants, is crucial (Vossensteyn et al. 2008; Vaas 2007; European Commission 2000). Findlay et al. (2006) report that many non-mobile students are unaware that ERASMUS can reduce the cost of study abroad. Information campaigns can also help to partly address the lack of motivation for mobility on the part of students, which is an important factor for non-mobility (Eurostudent 2009; Eurostudent 2005; Van Brakel et al. 2004; ADMIT 2002). But lack of motivation is often related to personal factors such as existing personal relationships in the home country (Findlay et al. 2006) as well as other factors (finance, lack of language competences, etc. as reviewed in this section). Initiatives stressing the importance of sufficient availability of information have also been taken by major international competitors, such as the USA, with a view to increase their number of mobile students. Thus, in August 2006 the Institute of International Education (IIE) launched a new online directory of study abroad scholarships called StudyAbroadFunding.org, the first online source to focus on funding for such activities.

3.3.2.5. Improving student services

ERASMUS has had a strong impact on the improvement of services for international students (Vossensteyn et al. 2008). In particular accommodation is, as already mentioned, a key issue for ERASMUS students. It is important, therefore, to continue to improve these services, e.g. through the availability of online accommodation booking systems that enable advanced reservations, to put an example.

3.3.2.6. Stimulate language learning in secondary and higher education

A substantial proportion of HEIs organise special language programmes for their students to be able to participate in mobility periods abroad (Kolanowska 2008). Yet, lack of sufficient language skills is recognised as a major problem for mobility (Souto-Otero 2008; Varghese 2008; Findlay et al. 2006; Daly and Baker 2005; Szarka 2003; Gordon 1996); the choice of country to study is related to language proficiency (Eurostudent 2009). The number of UK ERASMUS students, for instance, has decreased markedly over the last decade as the number of language students in the country has decreased, whereas there has been a growth in the mobility of UK students to other destinations, particularly North America and Australia. The stimulation of language learning at the secondary and higher education level can help to address this problem (Vossensteyn et al. 2008; ADMIT 2002;

European Commission 2000) in particular if such learning is combined with the stimulation of the number of programmes in foreign languages – which in practice more often than not means in English - as outlined below. However, it is necessary to note that the effects of such measures will take years to materialise.

3.3.2.7. Stimulate the number of programmes in a foreign language

The offer of programmes in a foreign language, particularly in English, is on the increase in Europe (Lasanowski 2009; Wächter and Maiworm 2008), especially at the postgraduate level (engineering, business and management and social sciences taking the lead). Almost three quarters of institutions from countries where English is not the home language offer courses in English (Burger et al. 2006), although this kind of offer is still below 10% of the overall provision, leaving much room for expansion. It could be argued that such an increase may facilitate mobility and should be further supported within the context of ERASMUS. Some data, however, points towards the limitations that can come from such an increase. There is some evidence that students do not favour periods in a country where they cannot relate to other people outside the classroom easily. And, the argument that English has become the 'global language' ignores the important intercultural learning experience that a period of study abroad can bring (OBHE 2006). On the other hand, it has been argued that eventually the appeal of English-only degrees will weaken as opportunities to learn in more than one language become available and as global employers look for increasingly 'global graduates' (Lasanowski 2009; Becker et al. 2009; Graddol 2006).

3.3.2.8. Making a year abroad compulsory

Some US colleges such as Goucher College have made a period of study abroad or internship abroad at an accredited institution compulsory for graduation; periods range from 3 weeks to an academic year (OBHE 2006). Goucher College provides students with a voucher of at least 1,200 USD for travel. Reasons against this option include the administrative burden and unsuitability of periods of study abroad for some students (e.g. medical reasons). In Europe over a quarter of universities have at least one programme with mandatory study abroad periods (Burger et al. 2006). This option could therefore entail all or some subjects (e.g. in the UK most ERASMUS participants come from language learning studies). It is unlikely that agreement on such a measure is easily achieved.

3.3.2.9. Reducing the length of study periods abroad

Vossensteyn et al. (2008) and Van Brakel et al. (2004) suggest that a way to increase participation in ERASMUS could be to reduce the average study period, which is currently around six months according to survey data (Bratch 2006; Souto-Otero and McCoshan 2006), to three months to free up resources for grants and including short visits. The OBHE (2006) additionally reports that shorter periods abroad are gaining popularity amongst US students, which has gone together with a continued decline in the popularity of semester long and year long programmes. Shorter periods abroad thus now account for over half of the mobility experiences of American students. The main problem with this approach is that periods below three months have been shown to yield lower benefits than longer periods abroad in relation to skills development and global awareness (Koester 1985). In addition, introducing shorter periods may go against the trend of students increasingly looking for vertical mobility (e.g. doing an undergraduate in the home country and graduate studies – 12-18 months master – in another country – cf. Teichler, 2009).

3.3.2.10. Increase the comparability of courses and programmes

Lack of transparency and flexibility of courses can reduce mobility (Gordon 1996). Significant efforts are being made in this respect within the context of the Bologna process and before. But, ECTS still need to be applied more consistently than in the past (Vossensteyn et al. 2008; Brakel et al. 2004). It is important to note, however, that while the resulting greater uniformity of structure of HE programme within Europe may in some respects facilitate mobility, the move towards a three year first degree may reduce the

inclination of some students to undertake mobility periods during their Bachelor studies, given dense study programmes which are not flexible enough to allow the kind of optional subjects that students often read abroad (Eurostudent 2009; Teichler 2009; Burger et al. 2006). Traditionally most students think of mobility in their third or fourth year of study (Eurostudent 2009; Souto-Otero 2008). Now they may, instead, move abroad for a Master.

Limits, moreover, remain in the readiness of institutions to consider courses abroad to be equivalent in level and matching in substance to those at home. Kalanowska (2008) documents that at least some ERASMUS students from around a third of Polish HEIs still report recognition problems at their home institution. Differences in the modes of certifying and counting study achievements and a lower number of courses taken abroad than at home, amongst other factors, lead to incomplete recognition of periods abroad (Teichler 2009).

3.3.2.11. Increasing quality of mobility

Teichler (1996) argued that higher education institutions in Europe had not exhausted their possibilities of integrating study periods abroad into their home curricula and assessment principles and, more recently, Bratch et al. (2006) concluded that ERASMUS will have better chances in the future if it becomes more ambitious as far as the quality of the experience abroad is concerned. This would entail stronger curricular aims being intertwined with the financial support for mobile students. Vossensteyn et al. (2008) found a strong impact of ERASMUS on the internationalisation of teaching and learning. Yet more ambitious curricular approaches have to be disseminated so that students can learn more consciously from contrast (Teichler 2009; Michel 2008). It could also encompass greater emphasis on intercultural skills for ERASMUS students from different study areas in the host country.

3.3.2.12. Deal with increasing higher education stratification

There is an overall trend towards greater 'accountability' in higher education and the production of international rankings. This is expected to make Europe a more transparent higher education area, and also a more attractive area for third country students looking for 'vertical' mobility (Teichler 2009). Reputation can indeed attract more students to an institution (Bourke 2000). A recent finding by Findlay and King (2010) is telling: almost 90% of the mobile UK students they surveyed said attending a world-class institution was the dominant motivation for studying abroad. However, such moves may also restrict the number of universities that can reach mobility agreements, as institutions are likely to only want to team-up with universities in their 'league' or above. Wide "zones of mutual trust", however, can be expected only in relatively flat institutional hierarchies (Teichler 2009). Therefore it will be necessary to either stimulate somehow agreements between universities of different levels, decrease higher education stratification or make award personal rather than allocated through institutional agreements, given that institutions may always be willing to consider top students from lower ranked universities.

3.3.2.13. Approve surplus payments to institutions in high demand

One of the advantages of ERASMUS is that it helps to distribute mobility more evenly across European countries than would otherwise be the case (Teichler 1996). However, there is evidence that the demand to study in some countries is higher than for others. The ADMIT (2002) project reported how many students, if not able to achieve a place to study in a UK university, give up completely on their mobility ideas. Currently UK higher education institutions, to put the clearest example, because of their good reputation worldwide (Lasanowski 2009) and language reasons, receive many more ERASMUS students than they send abroad, which they see as economically disadvantageous. Indeed, greater income generation – in particular in times of tight public budgets - has been one the main incentives for universities' embracement of international students (Altbach and Knight 2007; Marginson 2006), but this is not always fitting the objectives of the current ERASMUS framework – although it is allowed in some regional mobility programmes, for

instance in the Nordic countries (ADMIT 2002). Stoen (2003) suggests to include the re-imbursement of costs where institutions experience adverse student flows as well as adequate recognition for staff of the additional teaching and administrative burden generated by incoming ERASMUS students. Providing such kind of financial compensation and thus expand ERASMUS places in universities where demand for ERASMUS places is much higher than supply may help to attract more students to the programme. This, however, is likely to reduce the diversity of students' destinations.

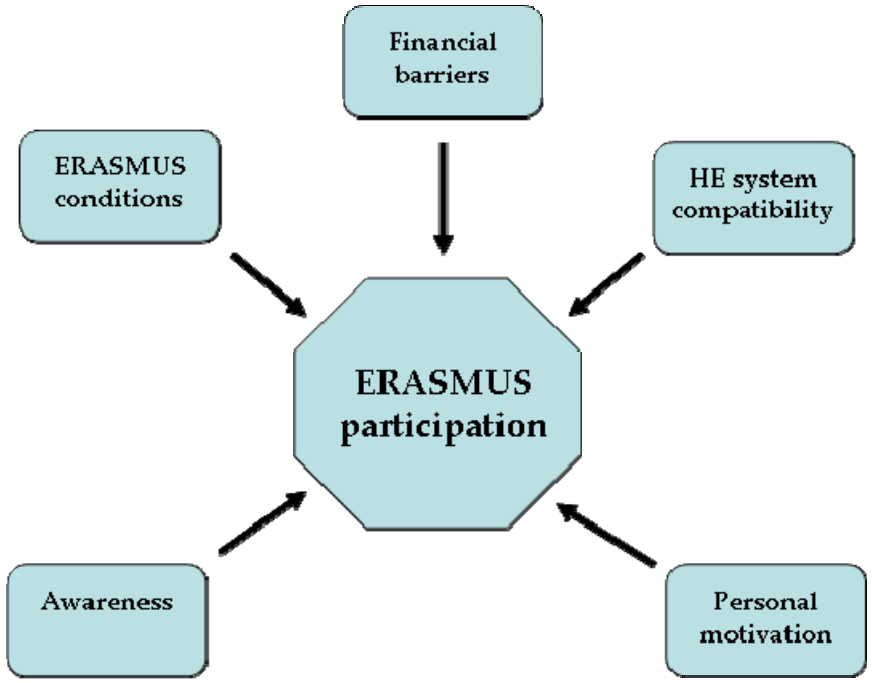
3.3.2.14. Allowing full duration of studies for master degrees

The ADMIT project (2002) suggested the possibility that ERASMUS grants could be awarded to students who take a full degree abroad. As already highlighted, the Bologna process can reduce incentives to undertake mobility periods at the undergraduate level. Mobility for postgraduate studies, however, is strongly on the increase. Allowing ERASMUS not only for exchange during part of a course but also for the duration of a master degree (possibly only for one-year master programmes) when this is taken outside the previous country of residence and nationality could increase demand for ERASMUS places. Assistance to study abroad for full programmes is already provided in some countries, e.g. Nordic countries, Luxembourg, Latvia and Slovakia.

3.4. Barriers to ERASMUS participation: A framework

From earlier studies discussed in this chapter we can see that there is a variety of potential factors that may hinder or facilitate students' choice to participate in the ERASMUS programme. Synthesising all the existing evidence, we identify five dimensions for potential barriers. The dimensions include financial issues, personal motivation, awareness about the programme, conditions of the ERASMUS grant, and incompatibility between Higher Education systems (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Factors affecting ERASMUS participation



Source: Authors.

- *Financial issues.* Financial reasons may be one obstacle why students decide not to participate in the programme. Although ERASMUS students receive a grant, the studies show that the grant does not cover fully the expenses that studying abroad causes. It is also important to see the financial issues not only from the cost-covering perspective but also as an issue of costs vs benefits for students. Furthermore, financial issues are particularly important for the access to ERASMUS for lower socio-economic groups.
- *ERASMUS conditions.* This dimension includes the administrative burden of the programme. The nature of the mobility under the ERASMUS programme may be too restrictive for some students. The choice of institutions is limited by ERASMUS agreements and the length of the study abroad programme may be not suitable to all students.
- *HE system compatibility.* The purpose of the Bologna reform has been the compatibility of higher education systems, which among other effects facilitates student mobility. Most students in EU-27 now follow a Bachelor-Master structure in their study programmes and they obtain ECTS credits. Potential obstacles emerge when the academic calendar does not match, if the study programme at home does not have flexibility to include courses from abroad, and the recognition of credits as part of the required is limited.
- *Awareness* about the ERASMUS programme is an important prerequisite for participating. One aspect is a general awareness about the ERASMUS programme and the support it offers to students in terms of finding an institution and application procedure. Another aspect is awareness about the financial support that is associated with the programme.
- *Personal motivation* is a starting point for participating in a study abroad programme. The motivation has several aspects.
    - Perceived benefits: Several studies have tried to estimate specific benefits of the ERASMUS programme to the nature of careers and salaries. Students have also other motivational factors, such as wish for a living experience in another culture, learn another language, develop new soft skills, and meet new people.
    - General pressure for a study abroad experience: Inclination towards a study abroad programme may differ because of peer pressure if studying abroad is a norm. It may be influenced by national internationalisation policies and institutional encouragement to participate in a study abroad programme.
    - Language barrier: students may be reluctant to go abroad if their foreign language skills are not sufficiently good. Availability of programmes in English is particularly important in these countries whose language is not among the commonly spoken foreign languages.
    - Personal aspects: personal factors such as a partner at home, care taking relationships (e.g. children, parents in need) may hold students back, particularly the students of mature age. Employment at home may be an obstacle.

The rest of the report will analyse these five dimensions to identify main obstacles to ERASMUS participation. We will integrate knowledge from existing studies, data from the student survey and information from case studies. Our recommendations for further improvement of the ERASMUS participation will also use this conceptual framework.

4. FINANCIAL BARRIERS AND ERASMUS PARTICIPATION

KEY FINDINGS

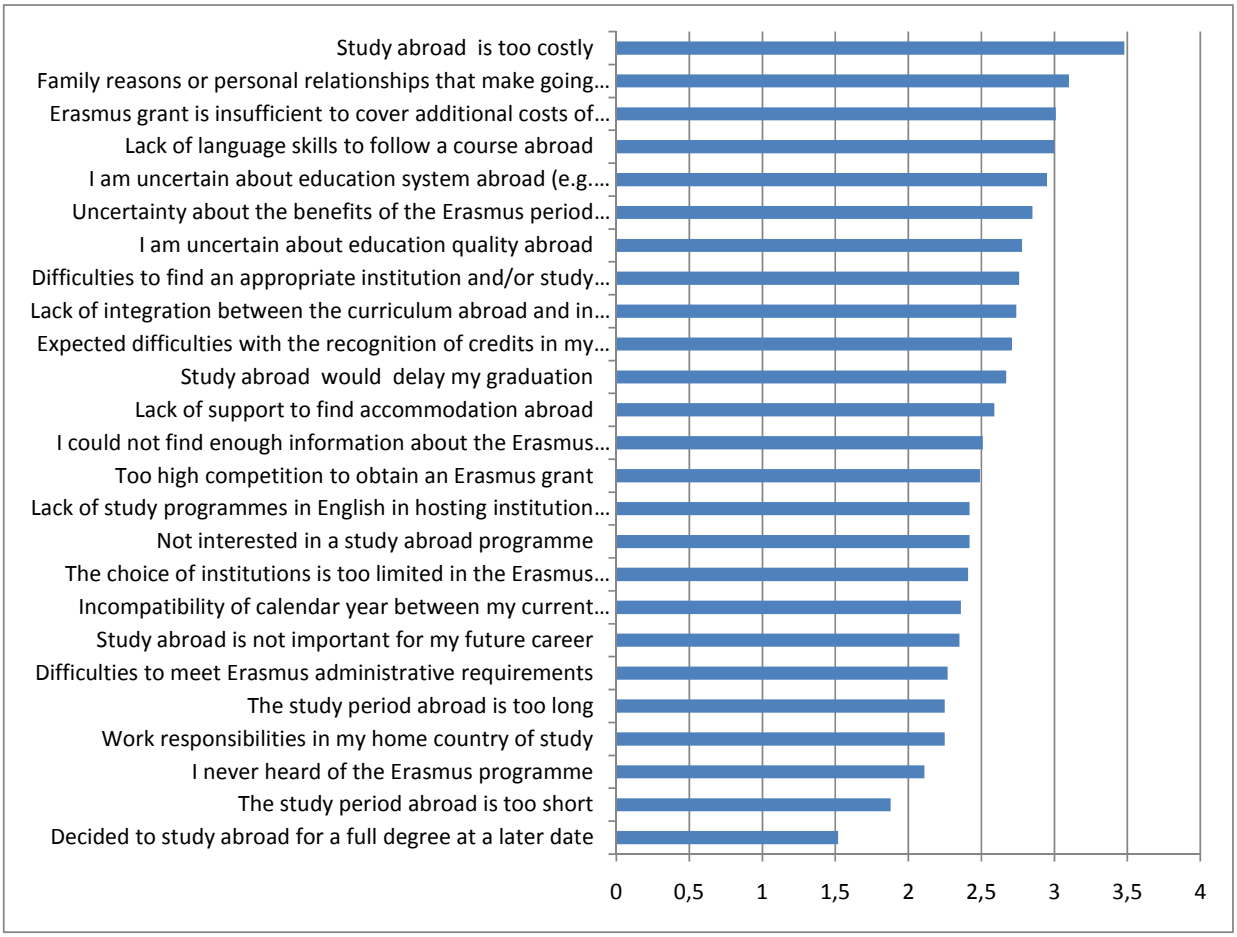
- The financial concerns are the most important reason for students not to participate in the ERASMUS programme.
- The extent to which students perceive financial barriers to participation in the ERASMUS programme varies significantly across countries.
- Perceived barriers, however, do not seem to lower the national participation rate or to increase the proportion of students from higher-income families among mobile students.
- Students seem to be more willing to invest their resources into the ERASMUS experience when they anticipate direct labour market benefits. As labour market benefits are declining, the willingness to spend one's own resources in the ERASMUS experience appears to be in decline.
- Student aid systems differ significantly in Europe with respect to the proportion of grant, loan and other types of funding. There is some preliminary evidence that when students have an independent income source (universal grants) they perceive lower financial barriers for ERASMUS participation.
- Funds available for student mobility vary significantly across countries. It is by all accounts not only additional funding but also the recognition of internationalisation as an important part of universities' activities that makes students more mobile in these countries.

Financial concerns seem to be a key factor restraining student participation in the ERASMUS programme. As described in the previous chapter, many ERASMUS students report having friends who cannot participate in the ERASMUS programme because of financial reasons. ERASMUS students also tend to come proportionally more from higher socio-economic groups. In this chapter we first examine the perceived financial barriers for students in the seven selected countries. Secondly, we try to estimate how many potentially mobile students within Europe do in fact not move because of financial constraints. In the following sections we analyse the relationship between perceived barriers and average participation rates, students' socio-economic backgrounds and the national financial support systems.

4.1. Perceived financial obstacles

Results of the student survey demonstrate clearly that financial concerns are very relevant for students. On average 56% of students find a study abroad programme too costly to even consider participating. This is identified as the most important barrier to mobility, followed by family reasons (46%), and lack of language skills (41%) (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Barriers to participating in the ERASMUS programme (mean scores)



Note: Question "Why have you not considered taking part in the ERASMUS programm".
Answers: 5=very relevant 4..., 3 ..., 2 ..., 1=not at all relevant.

There is some cross-country variation in the importance of financial barriers, from 36% in Sweden to 72% in Spain, but in all countries the concern over the costs of studying abroad is one out of top three reasons to not undertake studies abroad (Table 6).

Table 6: The extent to which students do not consider ERASMUS (partly) because studying abroad is too costly (% of students)

	Czech Republic	Finland	Germany	Poland	Spain	Sweden	UK	Mean
Not at all relevant	6	31	13	11	7	31	17	17
Not relevant	11	16	11	8	5	15	12	11
Neutral	17	11	21	11	16	18	16	16
Relevant	29	32	23	28	24	19	27	26
Very relevant	37	10	32	42	48	17	27	30

Among students who considered participating in the ERASMUS programme but for some reasons decided not to do so, financial concerns seem to be somewhat less important but still among the top three reasons, together with a fear that the study abroad will delay graduation and interfere with personal relationships. On average 29% of students who considered ERASMUS withdrew at least partially because the ERASMUS grant was insufficient to cover additional costs of the period abroad (see Table 18 in Annex 2).

Cross-country differences in financial barriers are quite consistent throughout different questions and different student groups. Financial concerns are particularly prevalent in Spain and Poland and significantly lower in Sweden and Finland. This result confirms also the results of a study from 2005, A Survey of Socio-Economic Background of ERASMUS Students (Souto Otero and McCoshan 2006). The survey found that many students admit that they have friends who do not participate in the ERASMUS programme because of financial barriers. According to the survey results, there is quite a variance in financial barriers across countries. While more than 80% of Portuguese and Spanish students have friends who face financial obstacles, this percentage is only 20% in Sweden and Norway (see Table 9 in Annex).

ERASMUS students also struggle with the low level of the ERASMUS grant. Overall, the low level of the ERASMUS grant is the most important difficulty challenging ERASMUS students. The problem is biggest again in Spain (69%) and Poland (68%) and the lowest in Sweden (19%) and Finland (19%) (see Table 11 in Annex 2).

The UK seems to be quite a unique case. A large proportion of students (55%) do not consider a study abroad because it is too costly, and 33% of ERASMUS students found the ERASMUS grant too low. However, only 17% of students who considered ERASMUS but decided not to participate decided so because of the insufficient grant level. In the UK the dominant reasons appear to be related to lack of information about ERASMUS, lack of language skills, difficulties with finding an appropriate school and uncertainty about the educational quality abroad (Table 20 in Annex 2).

When we look at what measures students suggest as ways to stimulate ERASMUS participation, increasing the level of the ERASMUS grant is one of the most important factors, but on par with other factors, such as credit recognition, flexibility in curriculum, and opportunity to choose a university (Table 23 in Annex 2). While financial concerns seem important, it seems to be only one of many obstacles that make students hesitate.

The case studies confirm the overall picture. In Poland in particular, financial concerns were nominated as the main obstacle to participating in the programme, whereas in other countries, such as Finland and the Netherlands the financial barriers were almost non-existent. The Spanish case is an interesting example demonstrating that not only the amount of money but also the distribution conditions matter. In Spain additional resources from the government and from the regions exceed the amount of the ERASMUS grant, which makes the grant relatively generous. However, this level of co-financing reduces the transparency and certainty about the grant level. Indeed, the survey results confirm that a great majority of Spanish ERASMUS students (66%) faced a problem of uncertainty about the level of the grant. Moreover, Spanish students receive the ERASMUS grant several months after starting the programme and students must find other resources to cover the costs before receiving the grant. It should be emphasized that the uncertainty and delay may affect particularly students from a lower socio-economic group because they have no resources of their own to cover unmet costs and upfront payments. This experience also shows that accurate and timely information about the final level of the grant as well as timely payment may be an important decision criterion for some students.

Another problem seems to be the variation in the costs depending on the study location. Some countries and some cities are clearly more expensive. It appears from the case studies that students tend to think that the grant level should better consider differences in expected expenses. On the other hand, one could argue that an equivalent grant may be a mechanism to influence students to choose for less expensive study locations. Students tend to prefer big (expensive) cities. There is no reason to believe that big cities offer a stronger intercultural experience or opportunities for better academic development and the preference seems to be driven primarily by the “consumption benefit”.

So in general one could state that financial considerations are important to mobile students, including the level of the ERASMUS grants, transparency about the financial facilities available (including national and institutional scholarships) and probably also the generosity of national student financial support. This latter expectation should be underpinned with an analysis of the national support systems (see section 4.5).

4.2. How many ERASMUS students are lost due to financial reasons?

Many students seem to miss a study abroad experience because they find it too expensive. Offering an exact number of "lost" students is of course quite controversial but we would like to present some estimates to trigger further thoughts about this "lost" opportunity.

Assuming that our sample is representative, a following rough calculation can be offered. In Europe about 4 million students annually graduate from a higher education institution (ISCED 5 and 6). If we subtract the 488,000 students that according to the Eurostat data study abroad annually, we are left with roughly 3.5 million non-mobile students.

- According to our survey, 29% of students withdrew from the idea to participate in an ERASMUS stay abroad because they think the level of the ERASMUS grants is insufficient. This leads to an estimate that roughly 980,000 students annually do not participate in the ERASMUS programme due to insufficient funds.
- This is a lower estimate as an additional 17% of students mentioned the level of the ERASMUS grant to be an important reason, which would make the total estimate 1.5 million students.
- Furthermore, 55% of students do not consider a study abroad at all because they believe it is too costly. This number would put the upper limit to 1.9 million students. This estimate is probably biased upwards. It is likely that many of these students are not aware of the level of financial assistance that they might be eligible for. This estimate may be a combination of the financial issue and awareness about available opportunities. There are indications that there still is unawareness about the ERASMUS programme. According to our survey, 18% of students have not heard of the programme. Because we assume that as soon as students explore opportunities to study abroad they will rapidly find out about ERASMUS we will not include this in our estimations. However, 24% of students identified that they are not interested in studying abroad. These are students that may be convinced otherwise, but it is a position that should be also respected. If we subtract 24% of non-mobile students as students not interested in studying abroad, our upper estimate would be again at 1.5 million.

We therefore can conclude that there may be a potential annual loss of mobile students ranging between 980.000 and 1.5 million students due to financial considerations.

When considering the numbers it is important to keep in mind that financial means is a necessary but not a sufficient factor for participating in a study abroad programme. There are other (very) important factors that also constrain students, such as, for example, family commitments and a fear that studying abroad will delay finishing one's studies. Particularly students who had not even considered ERASMUS participation were tied down by the alternative barriers. We must also keep in mind that not all mobile students are accounted by the Eurostat and the estimate of 3.5 million non-mobile students may be slightly overestimated.

4.3. Relationship between financial concerns and average participation rate

A relationship between perceived financial barriers and actual participation in the ERASMUS programme is, however, not as simple as one might expect.

As many studies have suggested before, ERASMUS participation is affected not only by costs, but by a balance between expected benefits and costs. This balance has multiple implications. Direct benefits from a study abroad programme tend to be higher in (relatively) low-GDP countries. At the same time financial barriers tend to be higher in these countries. These two opposite forces thus equal out each other. While students in high-GDP countries face low financial barriers, their students also have relatively low benefits from participating which restrains further growth. Students in low-GDP countries participate regardless of high financial barriers because they gain high benefits. Figure 8 divides countries into three groups according to national ERASMUS participation rates on one axis and perceived financial barriers on the other axis. No clear pattern between the two aspects seems to exist. In countries where perceived financial barriers are the lowest, also ERASMUS participation rates tend to be low: e.g. Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden. Finland is an exception with low perceived barriers and a high participation rate. On the other hand, countries where perceived barriers are the highest, participation tends to be high (Portugal, Spain) or medium (Ireland), with Poland being an exception with high barriers and low participation. If financial barriers are among the main factors for limited participation, their effect seems to be rather nuanced. But maybe money is not as important as the expectations to study abroad.

Figure 8: Relationship between national participation rates and perceived financial barriers

ERASMUS Participation rate	Financial barriers		
	High	**Medium**	**Low**
Low	BG GR PL RO	SK	DK SE UK
Medium	HU IT SI	EE IE	LV NL
High	BE PT ES	MT FR DE LT CZ	AU FI

Note: Participation groups: below 0,70% and above 0.90%. Financial barriers: above 55% students report many or some friends and below 40%.

It is important to keep in mind that many countries have faced a plateau or even a decline in ERASMUS participation. It is likely that also other countries that have experienced a high growth in last years will reach this plateau. This is likely to happen because direct private benefits from a study abroad programme seem to decline as the proportion of students with a study abroad experience increases among the population. As a result, it may be difficult to attract students considering the costs of the programme. The results also suggest that students are quite resourceful for finding opportunities to study abroad if they are motivated. As illustrated by the Polish case studies, if students have the ambition then they seem to find the resources to participate despite of the fact that the ERASMUS grant does not cover all the expenses.

4.4. ERASMUS participation and socio-economic background

The relationship between socio-economic background and ERASMUS participation is also nuanced. As mentioned above, a high proportion of ERASMUS students come from high income families. When interpreting the results we must keep in mind that students from low-income families are underrepresented in the higher education in general, not only in study abroad programmes (Suoto Otero and McCoshan 2006). Nevertheless, students from lower socio-economic group are even further underrepresented among ERASMUS students compared to their underrepresentation in the total student body. This may indicate that participation in ERASMUS takes additional family resources and students from less affluent families may be unable to participate in the programme. However, as the authors of the previous study point out, the "inequality gap" varies between lower-GDP and higher-GDP countries, and not in an expected direction. The ERASMUS participation rate is more equal across different socio-economic groups in those countries that are relatively poor and where perceived financial barriers are high. In countries where perceived financial barriers are low, paradoxically the distribution seems to be more unequal. This has been explained with the different types of personal benefits. As explained earlier, lower financial barriers tend to be associated with relatively low labour market benefits of the ERASMUS participation. The benefits seem to be rather on the "soft" side and students often participate in the programme because of the "consumption benefits". As a result, students from lower socio-economic group in these countries may be less willing to pay for the consumption benefit, i.e. for the enjoyment of the experience.

This result does not mean that the issue of socio-economic background should be taken lightly. It appears from these results that students from lower socio-economic group have harder time to justify (the additional costs of) a study abroad programme, when it is not associated with direct labour market benefits in the future. It looks that perhaps in many cases students could cover the additional expenses from loan money, parental resources and other ways, but without an expected "payback" in the future the sacrifice is not justified. If we believe that a study abroad experience is an important part of the educational experience of all students, perhaps a need-based assistance in some form should be considered.

ERASMUS time may be also relatively more expensive for students from lower socio-economic group. These students tend to prefer higher education institutions that are close to home, to minimize commuting costs and share accommodation with their parents. Moving abroad and living independently would increase study costs relatively more than for students who already live independently and study far from home. As explained earlier, students from a lower socio-economic group may be also most vulnerable to the uncertainty of the ERASMUS grant level and delayed payments.

According to the case study analyses, some countries indeed consider students' socio-economic background in distributing the grants. Particularly in Spain the total ERASMUS grant (including support by the government and regions) is partly means tested. On the other hand, in the Netherlands and Finland the grant is not means tested but students have access to other means-tested financial aid. Finally, in Poland the ERASMUS grant is not means tested and there are also quite limited resources for other means-tested student support.

Regional representation is another concern with respect to ERASMUS participation. We do not have statistical data about regional distribution, but case studies offer some evidence that students outside cities are misrepresented. The type of higher education institutions is another factor. In binary systems often students from "traditional" universities are considerably better represented in the ERASMUS programme than students from universities of applied sciences (UAS). This may have various reasons: the types of programmes offered, the (inter)national orientation of the professions, organisational culture, students' aspirations, etc. This gap also varies across countries. In the

Netherlands, for example, roughly 55% of ERASMUS students come from the university sector while only about 35% of all tertiary students study in universities. In Finland, on the other hand, a majority of the ERASMUS students come from the universities of applied science (ca 56%) while the sector accommodates slightly less than half of the all students (ca 44%). The prestige and financial resources of a university also seem to matter. In Poland, prestigious (traditional) universities are able to attract more fee-paying students and thus generate additional "free" resources. Due to these resources, also additional support can be offered to students in these universities which puts students in less prestigious universities in a disadvantaged position.

4.5. Financial aid systems and ERASMUS participation

A national student aid system is likely to affect ERASMUS participation as well as other types of student mobility. National student support systems can either facilitate or hinder ERASMUS mobility and the level and type of support can influence the extent to which students have alternative study abroad options.

The amount and type of student support may contribute to mobility. In countries where students have low level of support, the additional costs of studying abroad (e.g. moving out of parents' house; additional travel costs) make a study abroad relatively more difficult. In these countries one could expect that the ERASMUS grant is an important part for stimulating mobility. This may also have an effect on student mobility outside of the ERASMUS programme. A low level of support may make mobility without an ERASMUS grant harder. Furthermore, one could expect that the mobility is more difficult in countries where students rely primarily on student loans and especially if they are also required to pay significant tuition fees. A period abroad may postpone graduation and can thus contribute to the accumulating loan.

Portability of student funding is another important aspect. According to the ERASMUS contract, all main student support options must be available also during the ERASMUS period. Portability conditions in each country thus do not affect ERASMUS participation directly. A problem may emerge if a significant part of student aid is allocated as need-based through a welfare system (as e.g. housing subsidy), although in some countries (e.g. Finland) also such indirect subsidies can be portable.

Another effect of portability reveals itself through alternative study abroad opportunities. If students have a good financial support system that is easily portable they may need to rely relatively less on ERASMUS grants which has a "built-in" portability requirement. Students in countries with high portability of national student support (e.g. in Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands) may use other study abroad opportunities or prefer an entire degree programme abroad rather than an exchange period. Indirect support through parents, like tax subsidies and child allowances are often portable, also for full study abroad.

Mobility funding is a special type of student support and seems to be increasingly common. Mobility funding can either support ERASMUS participation through additional funds (e.g. for travel costs) or offer additional opportunities for studying abroad.

The "country fiches" in Annex 4 present the extent of the student aid package in each EU member state, its portability for studying abroad and, where possible, the number of beneficiaries.

Extent and type of support. While countries always differ to some extent, so far the country fiches show that in most cases some combination of grants and loans is provided to students albeit with varying relative importance, amounts and requirements (see Table 25 in Appendix 4). A group of countries has a grant available to all students: e.g. Austria, Denmark, Finland, Malta, the Netherlands, and Sweden. In another group of countries only a small proportion of students receives a grant, based primarily either on academic achievement (e.g. Estonia, Latvia) or financial needs (Italy, France) or both. With a few exceptions, students in all European countries have access to some form of student loan.

Portability. We can see from country fiches that some countries have their student support almost fully portable, both for degree and non-degree studies (e.g. Netherlands and Germany). In other countries the conditions for portability are strictly constrained (e.g. in Italy, Poland). In many countries the portability is restricted for full degree programmes but permitted for shorter study abroad programmes (e.g. UK).

Mobility funds. Several countries have allocated special funds to support student mobility. Austria has set up a generous package that depends on study and living costs abroad and additional funds are available for travel costs. Belgium-French has implemented a special support scheme that funds mobility within EHEA. France allocates grants for short term mobility on the basis of needs. In Spain, on the other hand, funds for mobility come not only from the Ministry of Education but also from local governments.

It is difficult to draw highly reliable conclusions based on this information regarding the impact of national funding schemes on ERASMUS participation. Some patterns may be suggested though. In the countries where a basic grant is available to all students – e.g. Finland, Netherlands, Denmark – students seem to perceive lower financial barriers. Other forms of support, such as loans, family allowances, and indirect subsidies do not seem to give the same kind of certainty for students. We can also see that countries that have many resources available for mobility grants tend to have high mobility, including ERASMUS mobility – such as Austria and Finland, for example. It is, however, unclear whether it is the additional money that stimulates students in these countries, or whether the money indicates the importance that the government assigns to internationalisation, which itself may "pressure" students to be mobile. The portability of funds is not particularly important for the ERASMUS programme since the main student support must follow a student also for the ERASMUS period abroad. It is also not evident in data that better portability conditions are associated with higher non-ERASMUS mobility.

4.6. Conclusions

In sum, financial constraints seem to be an important factor in ERASMUS participation. Many students decide not to go abroad because of the financial reasons and ERASMUS students find the grant to be insufficient to cover additional costs. It is, however, important to realize that it is not only the availability of money that constrains students, but it seems that students are averse towards additional expenses. The data shows a general trend that in wealthier countries ERASMUS students are relatively more likely to come amongst higher socio-economic groups than in relatively poorer countries. Based on behavioural evidence we see that in many countries ERASMUS participation is not seen as an investment, but a consumption item, which students with fewer resources may choose to decline. In other countries the ERASMUS experience is seen as an investment and regardless of fewer resources students are willing to invest their money and find additional funding sources. Since direct private benefits from study abroad seem to be declining, we need to think who gains from the study abroad experience, and consequently who should pay for the costs – the European level government, national governments, or individual students?

5. OTHER FACTORS AFFECTING ERASMUS PARTICIPATION

KEY FINDINGS

- Students are attracted to the ERASMUS programme primarily because of an opportunity to live abroad, improve a foreign language, meet new people and learn "soft" skills. Benefits to the future career are secondary after these more general factors.
- While overall results show that financial barriers are clearly the strongest obstacle for participation, some other factors also have an important discouraging effect. In a few countries, these other concerns outweigh those financial concerns.
- Recognition issues concern students in almost all countries and in some countries it is the most important barrier to participation. Many people do not participate in the programme because this would delay their graduation. Despite of the success of the Bologna process, ERASMUS's recognition system is built on the judgment of individual professors and study coordinators, which does not give students a feeling of certainty.
- Insufficient language skills continue to be an important barrier for ERASMUS participation in many countries.
- In some countries family reasons and personal relationships constitute the strongest reason why students do not participate in a study abroad programme. In most countries and among ERASMUS students this is a relatively weak concern.
- Awareness about the ERASMUS programme seems to be quite high but a great many students lack specific information about the programme. Some students may find the programme unattractive because the ERASMUS "brand" is associated more with a "social" programme" rather than with a demanding "academic" programme.
- The administrative burden continues to be a concern for students, but functions primarily as a nuisance for participants than a genuine barrier to participation.
- There are some countries where students feel that their choice of host institutions is limited.
- Aspects such as length of the study programmes, work obligations at home, high competition for ERASMUS grants, and availability of programmes in English are relatively marginal concerns.

Financial obstacles are not the only important aspect that affects ERASMUS participation. In this chapter we will discuss the importance of four other dimensions: personal motivation, awareness about the ERASMUS programme, conditions of the ERASMUS grant, and (in)compatibility between Higher Education systems.

5.1. Motivation and other personal reasons

Personal motivation is perhaps the most important starting point for getting interested in the ERASMUS programme. What drives students to participate in the programme is therefore important information to consider. There are also other factors of personal nature

that may either encourage or hinder ERASMUS participation, such as personal and family commitments at home, language skills and personal ambition.

5.1.1. Reasons for participation and considering participation in ERASMUS

The survey results show that the most important reason why students are interested in the ERASMUS programme concern their personal development. The five most important factors why students either participate or consider participating are the following (see Table 7):

- Opportunity to live abroad;
- Opportunity to learn/improve a foreign language;
- Opportunity to meet new people;
- Opportunity to develop soft skills i.e. adaptability, demonstrating initiative;
- Benefits for the future employment opportunities in the home country.

These factors are more or less consistent in all countries. An opportunity to live abroad and an opportunity to meet new people motivates at least 90% of students in all countries, with a few exceptions where the estimate is a few percentage points lower (Table 13 and Table 16 in Annex 2). Another important aspect is an opportunity to learn/improve foreign language skills. In most of the countries, over 90% of respondents indicate that this opportunity is either important or very important for them, with the exception of the UK (74%) and Sweden (80%). These results are confirmed also by the case studies. For example in Finland, students indicate that they made conscious decision to participate in ERASMUS due to social reasons and to develop "soft skills". Students in Spain similarly identify primarily such broad reasons. Poland, however, seems to be somewhat different and students seem to value more benefits to their future career.

Only after these personal and “soft” reasons students tend to consider benefits to their future career. Nevertheless, 77-79% of students consider their future career as an important or a very important reason for participating in the programme. In general, benefits to the career at home are estimated a few percentage points higher than the benefits to the career abroad. There is some difference across countries in the extent to which labour market benefits are considered important. It is most important for ERASMUS students in Poland (84%), as also shown by the case study, and Czech Republic (81%) and the UK (81%). Students in Finland, Spain, Germany and Sweden consider labour market benefits somewhat less important, with 70%, 72%, 74% and 76%, respectively. This confirms the suggestion made earlier that labour market benefits of ERASMUS participation tend to be higher in the “new” European countries and in countries where participation is relatively low.

The factors that motivated students to participate in ERASMUS seem to suggest that students are rather looking for a different experience, including, for example, different learning practices (73%), rather than seeking a better quality experience, such as a high quality institution (44%). The quality of the institution seems to be a somewhat more important factor for students in Czech Republic, Spain, but also in Poland and the UK. It is, however, clear from the survey results that most students are not expecting a “relaxed year” out of the ERASMUS period. This is one of the least important aspects of personal motivation, with only about 29% of students considering this as an important reason. There is some variance across countries though. While 52% of Finnish ERASMUS students indicated that it is important or very important for their decision, only 16% of Czech students and of Swedish students shared the opinion.

Table 7: Reasons for (considering) participating in the ERASMUS programme
(mean score and % of students who considered the factor important or very important).

	ERASMUS students		Considered ERASMUS	
	mean	%	mean	%
Opportunity to live abroad	4.71	93	4.52	89
Opportunity to learn/ improve a foreign language	4.70	90	4.68	90
Opportunity to meet new people	4.60	90	4.31	84
Opportunity to develop soft skills i.e. adaptability, demonstrating initiative	4.52	86	4.27	78
Benefits for my future employment opportunities in home country	4.14	77	4.22	79
Benefits for my future employment opportunities abroad	4.06	74	4.19	76
Opportunity to experience different learning practices and teaching methods	4.09	73	4.07	70
Possibility to choose a study programme in a foreign language	3.99	66	4.05	66
Opportunity to choose the institution abroad	3.33	52		78
The length of the study period abroad was appropriate		51	3.72	59
Opportunity to receive ERASMUS grant	3.53	47	3.78	57
Quality of the host institution	3.30	44	3.21	62
Guidance provided regarding the benefits of the ERASMUS programme was compelling	3.29	39	3.39	40
Opportunity to receive other financial support to study abroad	2.96	31	3.79	55
Expected a 'relaxed' academic year abroad	2.68	29	2.61	26
Good alignment between the curriculum at home institution	2.79	27	3.55	49
Available support to meet ERASMUS administrative requirements	2.77	25	3.21	39
Available support in finding accommodation	2.44	22	3.13	41

5.1.2. Barriers for participation

When examining issues that students encountered when considering the ERASMUS programme, it seems that the aspects of motivation and personal concerns are not very problematic. A general interest in studying abroad seems to be quite high. Only less than a quarter of students who have not even considered the ERASMUS programme claim that they are not interested in studying abroad. Other personal issues also seem to be quite marginal, such as work obligations at home, family reasons and personal relationships, and language skills. The latter two, however, need a more detailed explanation.

While students who participated in the ERASMUS programme, or who at least considered it, found personal relationships only a minor obstacle, the picture is very different for students who have not considered studying abroad. Among these students, family reasons or personal relationships are a (very) important barrier to almost half of the students – to 46% (Table 20 in Annex 2). Only financial barriers are slightly more important than this. Furthermore, there is quite a cross-country variance in the importance of the barrier. While 36% of British and 39% of Polish respondents consider the barrier important, in Sweden and Finland the number reaches up to 58% and 56%, respectively. In these two countries family reasons constitute the most important barrier. This is probably linked to the fact that students in Sweden and Finland tend to be somewhat older than in many other European countries.

The lack of language skills is another issue that is not perceived important among ERASMUS students, but it is important for those who have not considered ERASMUS (41%). In general, it is the fourth most important barrier to ERASMUS participation. The problem seems to be particularly strong in Spain and in the UK, where 61-62% of students do not consider studying abroad because of the language barrier. In Poland and Czech Republic the same estimates reaches 50% and 54%, respectively. The problem is perceived much lower among ERASMUS students (34% in Spain and 37% in the UK). Students that have decided to participate (or are considering) are of course those students who at least at some level are comfortable with a foreign language. Nevertheless, the language barrier is a concern also among ERASMUS students. On the other hand, in countries like Finland, Sweden and Germany language seems to be quite a marginal problem.

Above we saw that the main reason for participating in the ERASMUS programme relates to personal and professional development. The survey shows that uncertainty about the benefits of the programme is not among the most important problems but still one third of non-ERASMUS students (34%) struggle with this concern. This is particularly high in Spain (44%) and the lowest in Finland and Sweden (26%). Work obligations at home, however, are quite a marginal problem in most countries.

In sum, it appears from the survey that the main reasons why students are attracted to the ERASMUS programme are related to personal development: opportunity to live abroad, improve a foreign language, meet new people, and develop soft skills. Students value these reasons higher than the benefits to their future career at home or abroad. These results are quite consistent in all countries.

As a general outcome, factors that relate to motivation and other personal issues do not seem to be a very important barrier to ERASMUS participation, particularly compared to financial reasons and some other issues. However, in some countries some of these issues are in the top of the list. Family reasons and personal relationships are the most important barrier for students' participation in some countries. In other countries, students seem to be tied down by limited language capabilities. Uncertainty about the benefits of the ERASMUS programme is not a top concern, but one third of non-ERASMUS students relate to the problem. Overall, however, ERASMUS and non-ERASMUS students alike do not perceive the issues related to personal motivation very important. The least important barrier for both ERASMUS and non-ERASMUS students are work responsibilities in their home country.

5.2. Awareness and image

Knowledge about ERASMUS is one of the factors that might hinder participation in the programme. Knowledge can be subdivided into two categories: awareness about the programme and the “brand” of the programme. The first category encompasses those students who are not aware of the programme because they havenot heard of it or are not sufficiently familiar with it. The results of the survey indicate that students are quite well informed about the ERASMUS. During the case studies, however, we found that although awareness of the programme is high, students’ perception of ERASMUS may still differ from the factual situation. This has led to an extra category of knowledge to be included in the analysis – the “brand” of the programme. The image is not necessarily objectively true but it can influence students’ decision to either participate or not participate.

5.2.1. Awareness

According to the survey results, awareness of the ERASMUS programme is generally quite high among all students. The survey generated a response of 21,589 students, of which 8,114 students did not participate in the programme. Out of this group, 77% or 6,282 students indicated that they had considered participation in the programme. From the students who had not considered participating only 18% said that they had not heard about the programme.

Knowledge about the programme seems to be effectively disseminated through word of mouth, as all case studies demonstrated. In Spain, for example, a large amount of students participate in the programme, creating the necessary critical mass to keep the information cycle spinning. This mechanism may operate through three different types of messengers: (1) ERASMUS alumni, (2) incoming ERASMUS students, and (3) Higher Education staff. The higher education institutions, and the national agencies to a lesser extent, play an important role in providing information about ERASMUS. Through more general marketing activities, such as hanging up posters, handing out flyers and providing information at guidance sessions and exchange markets they may reach those students that otherwise could not be reached through more informal networks. The international offices at the HEIs play a large role in informing students about the programme on a more regular basis. Furthermore, the information the HEIs offer on their websites, including lists of those institutions with which they have agreements, may offer useful help and guidance to those students wishing to participate.

In the Netherlands, where the awareness has especially increased over the past year, the national agency NUFFIC and the HEIs have generated awareness through a marketing campaign. NUFFIC has approached all institutional coordinators and requested their help to promote ERASMUS among students. NUFFIC has also developed brochures about ERASMUS and updated the website www.wilweg.nl.

During the case studies, however, students and their representatives indicated that the amount and type of information provided vary, implying a need for more standardized information. The amount and type of information may for example differ according to the type of institution. In the Netherlands, students in the academic universities generally have access to a wider range of information (services) than those in the universities of applied sciences. The amount of information may also vary according to region. In Finland, for example, students in the capital region are more aware of ERASMUS and its possibilities, compared to the students in the more rural regions. Lastly, the richness of the information on different programmes may also fluctuate: student representatives in Spain highlighted the need for more information regarding HEIs in Eastern European countries. While relatively few students show an interest in studying in these countries, those who go there report a high degree of satisfaction.

Next to the need for more information, students also spoke about the pressure to internationalize, indicating that the marketing dimension may have an upper limit to which it is effective. At one point all students are aware of the programme and its possibilities and further marketing may only create negative feelings. As one student in Finland commented: “I felt almost too much pressure to become internationally mobile”.

Alumni, through word of mouth, also play an important role in remitting information on ERASMUS and thereby stimulating other students to participate in the programme in the future. The help and information provided in the host countries may therefore also be of importance. In all case study countries, most student representatives reported generally high quality student services in host institution. As one Spanish ERASMUS student commented, “*The quality of student services was high. They had an ERASMUS bureau that for instance helped you to find accommodation and even went with you to inspect properties. But this varies highly across institutions.”*

Another issue is the awareness and information on the ERASMUS placement programme. In all case study countries, ERASMUS is well-known, but student representatives highlighted a strong lack of information in relation to ERASMUS placements. In Spain, employer representatives acknowledged that the ERASMUS “brand” is well known, but the details of the placement option are not. Thus the main problem in relation to this strand of the programme is that it is yet unknown amongst companies.

While students are quite well aware of the ERASMUS programme, some problems with the information still exist. 27% of non-ERASMUS students said that they were not able to find enough information about the programme and how it works (Table 20 in Annex 2). 46% of students in Germany and 43% in Sweden mentioned the lack of information as a (very) important barrier for participating in the programme.

When asked what measures would have had stimulated the students to participate in the ERASMUS programme, 53% of the respondents indicated that more information would have compelled them to participate (Table 22 in Annex 2). Moreover, of the students who did participate, 16% indicated that they encountered problems with the amount of information about the programme (Table 11 in Annex 2).

5.2.2. Brand

A lack of more specific information about ERASMUS may also impact the image of the programme. The image of ERASMUS seems to be more of a 'social' nature than of 'academic' nature. As discussed above, the survey results indicate that the primary motivation for participating is related to an opportunity to live abroad, to learn/ improve a foreign language, to meet new people and develop soft skills. While the proportion of students who expect a "relaxed" academic year varies between 52% and 14% across countries, the case studies confirmed the importance of the 'social' image of the programme. All case studies demonstrated that the so-called 'fun factor' was a clear reason for participating. One student who went to Braga, Portugal explained: "*I participated in ERASMUS, because it is a fun program: you meet new people and have fun with other exchange students. I just used the time abroad as some time off from normal life.*"

The 'social image' of the programme seems to have a contradictory impact on students' decisions. On the one hand, it may attract some students who wish to undertake 'a fun year abroad'. On the other hand, it may also hinder participation for those students who seek a more serious exchange experience. Some students who wish to undertake an exchange to strengthen their future employment possibilities may refrain from the programme, and/or choose to participate in a more formal programme with a stronger academic focus. As one student who applied for an exchange to Japan commented, "*I am going to Japan because it will benefit my career in tourism. I will live with a Japanese family and mingle with Japanese students. I will specifically try to avoid other exchange students who are there just for the fun of an exchange.*"

Another important impact of this 'social image' is the representation of the programme by incoming students, as for example the Finnish case study demonstrated. As these students participate in the student life, they have an effect not only on a general awareness about the programme but also on how the programme is perceived by Finnish students. Representatives from the HEIs indicated that ERASMUS students sometimes create the image of a 'fun year abroad', as the ERASMUS students act as 'a uniform group of students'. Student organizations, such as the ERASMUS Student Network, also play an important role in this respect by organising ERASMUS students meetings and social activities. This may again impact the image that the ERASMUS institutional coordinators have about the programme and this may affect their actions. In Finland, many coordinators seem to dislike the image of ERASMUS as a 'social programme' and prefer to promote it as an academic programme of substance. According to the respondents, the social image created by incoming students may eventually also impact the willingness of coordinators and professors to recognize credits obtained abroad.

It is important to note that the image of ERASMUS is thus not only remitted via students and alumni. Institutions and coordinators also play an important role in constructing the image through the information they provide and the conditions they set. Lastly, awareness is of course also impacted by more specific characteristics of available options within the programme, such as the image of available countries, institutions and study programmes.

As many respondents indicated, the choice to participate is mainly based on a combination of these factors, again stressing the importance of complete information.

In sum, all parties agree that ERASMUS is a "strong brand" and general awareness and knowledge about the programme is very high among students, institutions and national stakeholders. More general awareness of the programme is thus not an important factor hindering participation. However, more specific information on the programme may still be needed. Several scholars have already highlighted the importance of comprehensive information, in particular related to the costs and benefits of ERASMUS periods and the portability of study grants (Vossensteyn et al. 2008; Vaas 2007; European Commission 2000).

The results indicate that the perception of ERASMUS as a "social" programme may influence students' decisions about going abroad. On the one hand, this image may attract students who wish to have a break in their study routine, but it may also hold back students who seek a more serious academic experience. Institutions play an important role in constructing an image through the information they provide; incoming students are 'living examples' of the image; and alumni can provide first-hand practical information. When considering possibilities for improvement of participation, one has to be aware of the different ways and the different levels at which the image of the programme is loaded. At a national and European level, parties should either agree to the fact that different institutions may create different images, or rethink the purpose, goals and set-up of the ERASMUS programme and then decide upon the corresponding image. Based upon this strategic choice, more practical and streamlined information about possibilities for exchange can help to load or reload the image. Both student representatives and institutional coordinators considered that some standard minimum requirements should be ensured, to provide prospective students with more confidence about the ERASMUS period. Furthermore, as the image of the ERASMUS exchange is also greatly influenced by the visiting students, a policy for a better integration of visiting students may also help to transform the image.

5.3. ERASMUS conditions

The particular conditions of the ERASMUS grant is another dimension that may make the programme inaccessible or unattractive to some students. Particularly we consider here the institutionalised elements programme, such as administrative requirements, the length of the period abroad, the (relatively) limited choice of higher education institutions, and (potential) high competition for grants.

The survey findings demonstrate that ERASMUS conditions are not a very important constraint either for ERASMUS students or non-ERASMUS students. Very few students found that the study programme is either too long (3-11%) or too short (8-26%) (see Figure 7 in section 4.1.). Interestingly, ERASMUS students found that the programme is rather too short and non-ERASMUS students found it too long. The Spanish case study illustrates that a (further) reduction of the length of the period abroad would put too much pressure on the learning process, e.g. for learning or improving a language. While the length of the study was found rather appropriate, the interviews revealed that students favour the possibility to use an ERASMUS grant for a full programme abroad.

Another issue that seems to be relatively small concerns the competition for grants. On average, 6% of respondents who had considered ERASMUS mentioned that they had applied but were not selected for the grant (Table 18 in Annex 2). On the European scale, however, this is a significant number of students who were committed to going but could not do so because of limited number of ERASMUS grants. This number varies from 3% in Finland and Germany to 13% in Spain. On average, 13% of ERASMUS students state the high competition as one of the difficulties. Competition may be also more nuanced than simply receiving a grant or not. While Finnish students perceive the competition only as a

minor problem, it was an issue that came to the fore in the case study. It was observed in Finland that there was much more competition for places in capital areas than for places in rural areas.

The most relevant barrier related to ERASMUS conditions has to do with the administrative burden. It is the fourth *most* important difficulty that ERASMUS students faced, following only factors related to financial situation. About 35% of ERASMUS students found it either an important or a very important difficulty, but only 16% of students said that administrative requirements was a (very) important reason why they decided not to participate in the programme. It seems to be thus more of a nuisance than a significant barrier to participation. There is also some cross-country variance in the perceived burden. The administrative burden in perceived highest among Spanish ERASMUS students, which was demonstrated both by the survey and the case study. 46% of Spanish ERASMUS students faced difficulties with the administration. The case study findings confirm that many – particularly students – criticise the high level of bureaucracy. This is further exacerbated if institutional coordinators were not active. This is not necessarily a negative comment on these coordinators as it was acknowledged that many of the coordinators were not properly compensated for their additional workload. At the same time, it was also admitted that the bureaucracy not only stemmed from the EU but also the Spanish administrative law played a role. Employers particularly struggled with the administrative requirements: they are not that familiar with the placement programme and some argued that the ERASMUS administrative costs were not compensated by the grant amounts.

In Finland, the focus group with students and interviews with institutional coordinators (especially addressing learning agreements) also indicated that the administrative requirements were a hassle, but it was found not very different from the burden to become mobile through other programmes. The Finnish case study highlights that there are different selection criteria across institutions, departments and individuals. This was, however, not seen as inhibiting mobility, for institutional coordinators provided relevant information, and thus clarified the differences. In Sweden, for example, administrative burden was perceived somewhat lower than in other countries (40%) but it was still number one difficulty that Swedish ERASMUS students pointed to.

Additional set of factors that were not found particularly problematic is the lack of study programmes in English abroad, lack of support regarding student services (although 42% of the UK ERASMUS students struggle with this), and a limited selection of higher education institutions. Concerning the latter, on average only 28% of ERASMUS students perceive the problem of a limited choice of institutions. German students in particular perceive a constrained choice (48%) and this restriction is the second most important difficulty after the low level of the ERASMUS grant. While most Spanish student did not perceive the choice restricting (31%), the case study revealed that the selection itself was sometimes difficult. It was mentioned that many Eastern European higher education institutions did not provide programme and subject information on-line and/or in English, which made it hard to decide whether a choice for those institutions would be right. The case study also revealed that Spanish higher education institutions apply different and additional selection rules – in light of the high number of applicants – for ERASMUS students, which was considered problematic in the eyes of the students because of equity and transparency reasons.

Among the measures to improve participation, students particularly pointed to more choice in institutions – i.e. including institutions that do not yet have agreements with the home institution (Table 22). 61% of students agreed that this would motivate them to participate in the programme. For students in Czech Republic (76%) this appears to be the most important factor and for German students (63%) it is second only to recognition issues.

In sum, ERASMUS conditions do not seem to stop students from engaging with the programme. The length of the period abroad or the availability of programmes in English was considered unproblematic. Available support to overcome some of the potential barriers, such as support in finding accommodation and meeting ERASMUS administrative requirements did not play a role in the decisions to participate. These patterns did not differ much by country. It seems to suggest that ERASMUS students were willing to cope with some of the conditional challenges in light of the strong motivation.

The struggle with administrative requirements, however, was quite important in some countries. Also a restricted choice of host HEIs seem to play some role. When eventually deciding not to participate, students pointed at taking part at a later date as the *most* important reason (42%). This is a very strong indicator that students are not put off lightly by the potential conditional barriers. It seems they have oriented themselves and decided – for the moment – not to participate. This pattern is visible in most of the countries, but there are some noteworthy exceptions. Potential German students pointed at a delay of studies as the most important reason not to participate (38%). This issue also played a role for Czech (37%, second most important reason) and Finnish (31%, second most important reason) students. The issues related to recognition will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

5.4. Compatibility of higher education systems

The final dimension in our model pertains to the level of compatibility – in the broadest sense - between the education at home and abroad. There may be mismatches in several respects, such as uncertainty about the educational quality abroad or, more generally, the higher education system abroad. It may also be that credits earned abroad are not recognised by the home institution, or that a study period abroad would otherwise delay the studies in the home country. Another element is the lack of integration between study subjects at home and abroad and potential clashes between different academic calendars.

According to our survey results, compatibility issues were not among the top barriers to participating in the programme, but some of them seem to be a significant problem. About one third of ERASMUS students experienced difficulties with uncertainty with the education system abroad (34%) and recognition of credits (33%) (Table 11 in Annex 2). Lack of integration/continuity between study subjects at home and abroad was a problem of the similar magnitude. 33% of ERASMUS students and 31% of non-ERASMUS students perceived this as a (very) important problem.

Expected difficulties with getting credits recognised and a fear of delaying graduation is, however, a more important problem. Recognition seems to be particularly an issue in Spain and Czech Republic where 50% and 46% of ERASMUS students, respectively, perceive this as a (very) important difficulty. Furthermore, 60% of Czech students and 39% of Spanish students say that recognition issues are a (very) important factor why they have not considered participating in the programme. In other countries the concern is somewhat milder but still present. Over 30% of students in Germany and Finland said that a (very) important reason why they did not participate in the ERASMUS is the fear that they might need to postpone their graduation. In Germany, the most important reason why some interested students decided not to participate in ERASMUS is the need to delay graduation. 38% of students mentioned this as a (very) important reason after considering the opportunity. For Finnish students the fear of postponing studies is the second most important concern after family commitments.

The recognition and compatibility issues came up also in case studies. In Finland interviewees mentioned that the Bologna process may have alleviated the situation, but pointed out that the decision about recognition is ultimately being taken by individual lecturers and curriculum coordinators. While Finnish students in the focus groups generally did not experience many problems with the recognition their Polish counterparts perceived

the problems much stronger. Polish students pointed to the same problem: the recognition depends on individual professors and study coordinator.

The issue of recognition came up also in Spain. It was suggested that credits earned through ERASMUS should be automatically recognised. The Spanish case study was illuminating in the sense that also the downsides of "too easy recognition" were mentioned. Some home institutions too easily recognised credits earned abroad and critical notes were made about lack of control over academic quality abroad. A tough line was proposed for poorly performing ERASMUS students: returning the grant. There was some hope that the Bologna process would improve the recognition issue. Also, because of the new Bachelor-Master structure it was questioned whether students in a one-year Master would (still) consider going abroad. A technical difficulty of this option is that choices for a study abroad need to be made some time in advance, even before some Spanish Bachelor students have made their choice for a Master programme. The case study also mentioned a problem of different academic calendars, not so much for participating students, but for institutional coordinators trying to contact higher education institutions abroad. The coordinators also mentioned different calendars affecting (negatively) progress. In Finland, students and coordinators mentioned the problem of differences in academic programmes and calendar and also pointed at having seen examples of things abroad being different in practice from what was promised. Coordinators mentioned that rules applied differed by institution, leading to some problems.

Next to recognition and integration issues, a relatively big proportion of students is also uncertain about the education system abroad, which varies from 52% in Poland to 24% in Finland. To a lesser extent students are concerned about the quality of education abroad (43% in Spain – 20% in Poland).

When students were asked to suggest ways to improve ERASMUS participation, not surprisingly in light of the findings recognition issues received a lot of attention. In all countries this issue was very important, appearing in the top three of most important factors (Table 22). In Germany and Spain it was the most important issue, and in Sweden and the UK the second most important issue. Also more flexibility in curricula (61%) was an important suggestion. Again, in all countries this was an issue in the top five and the second most important factor in Finland and Poland.

In sum, the key compatibility "problems" relate to the recognition of credits at the home institution and uncertainty about the higher education system abroad, even though financial issues tend to overshadow most of the compatibility issues. In some countries recognition issues and lack of integration were considered very important (Czech Republic) and in others uncertainty about the educational system abroad was rather important (Poland). Compatibility issues did play a considerable role when initially interested students eventually decided not to take part. There were major concerns about the expected difficulties with the recognition of credits and a need to delay studies in the home country. But it must be stressed that despite these compatibility problems the large percentage of students only postponed their participation rather than cancelled the plan altogether.

5.5. Other observations

There is a reason to believe that students in different disciplines may encounter different problems and also their motivation for participating in the programme may be different. We took a closer look at two discipline groups: business, management, and social sciences where students are usually most active ERASMUS participants, and sciences, engineering and technology where students tend to be least involved in the programme. Interestingly, we did not see any significant differences between the two discipline groups. Students in both groups link their motivation to personal experiences and a wish to improve their career prospects. Also the problems that the two groups encounter are virtually identical. There is no greater fear about the need to delay studies or about recognition issues among

science and engineering students, as one could hypothesise because of the nature of the curriculum. Students in science and technology are not less concerned about their language skills, neither have students different awareness about ERASMUS as one could expect because of different average participation rates in the disciplines. The only difference that we observed has to do with the additional financial resources. For all students one relatively modest reason for undertaking the ERASMUS experience regardless of encountered problems concerned the opportunity to receive other financial support. While only 38% of business and social sciences students found this to be a (very) important factor, 46% of students in sciences and engineering had the same opinion.

We also analysed separately students at the Bachelor and Master level. It is likely that students in a different stage of their academic career experience different barriers to ERASMUS participation. We did not observe any great discrepancies between the views of the Master students and Bachelor students. As a general rule, Bachelor students seemed to feel most of the barriers more strongly than Master students, but their relative importance stayed the same. Bachelor students who participated in the ERASMUS were more affected by the uncertainty about ERASMUS grant level (50% vs 37%), uncertainty about education system abroad (36% vs 29%), and expected difficulties with the recognition of credits in home institution (43% vs 33%) than the Master level students. A similar pattern characterises also information about the programme and personal reasons. While 59% of Master students do not experience a problem with a lack of information, 71.9% of Bachelor students do not see this problem; while 80% of Master students are not facing uncertainty about the benefits of the ERASMUS, 69% of Bachelor students do not face the uncertainty. Also difficulties with finding an appropriate institution and accommodation are somewhat bigger for Bachelor than for Mater students. Also the financial aspects concern Bachelor students somewhat more than Master students. More Bachelor students indicated that insufficient grant level is an important or a very important reason why they decided not to participate in the programme (45% vs 33%).

There is also not much difference in reasons why Bachelor and Master students have not considered participating in the ERASMUS programme. Again Bachelor students are somewhat more concerned about the possible barriers: study abroad is too costly (60.5% vs 49.0%); uncertainty about education system abroad (37% vs 29%), limited language skills (47% vs 32%), and a low level of the ERASMUS grant (40% vs 35%).

In sum, our survey results are consistent for both levels of studies and for different disciplinary groups. Although we might hypothesise that students at the different stage of their academic career or in different disciplinary groups may have different priorities and concerns, in reality the ERASMUS programme seems to generate quite a homogenous reaction.

5.6. Conclusions

Although financial reasons seem to be the greatest barrier to ERASMUS participation, several other factors seem to have an important effect as well. In general, there is quite a strong interest in studying abroad. Students are attracted to the programme primarily because of the opportunity to live abroad, improve a foreign language, meet new people and learn “soft” skills. An importance associated with a future career is secondary, after these “softer” factors. In this chapter we analysed five dimensions that may affect student participation: personal reasons, awareness, ERASMUS conditions and compatibility. The following main outcomes should be mentioned.

Recognition issues still seem to concern students in almost all countries. In all countries students are worried that a study abroad period may mean a delay in their studies. This is also a reason why many students decide not to take part in the ERASMUS programme. It was pointed out critically in a few countries that recognition of credits depends entirely on the judgment of individual professors and study coordinators.

Family reasons and personal relationships is the most important reason in some countries why students do not consider a study abroad programme. This result varies quite a lot across countries and different student groups.

According to our results, awareness about the ERASMUS programme seems to be quite high among students. However, there seems to be a need for more specific information about what the programme offers and how it works. There may be also an issue of how the programme is perceived. It is often known as a “social” rather than an academically demanding programme.

Administrative burden is recognized by many students as a problem. Yet it seems to be more a nuisance than a barrier to participating. The limited selection of institutions that students can choose from was perceived as a constraining factor in several countries.

A series of potential barriers identified by earlier studies seem to be quite marginal according to our results, such as work obligations at home, length of the study programmes, high competition, and availability of programmes in English.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations relate to the main objectives of this study: to shed light on existing financial and social barriers to participating in the ERASMUS programme, as well as considering how the programme can be improved in qualitative and quantitative terms. Previous studies have suggested that financial barriers are among the most important obstacles to ERASMUS mobility, but the literature has also pointed in the direction of other potential barriers. The recommendations are therefore organised under these two headings. Before recommendations we summarise the main conclusions of the analysis.

6.1. Conclusions

Our analysis revealed that students in all countries are concerned about the costs of studying abroad. While the level of perceived financial barriers varies significantly across countries, financial issues are among the top-three most important barriers to ERASMUS participation in all countries. We saw that a generous student aid system, for example, especially reliance on basic grants, seems to make the perceived financial barriers lower. Interestingly, however, the perceived barriers are not related to the national ERASMUS participation rate or to the proportion of students from lower socio-economic groups in the programme. The behaviour of students seems to follow the logic of a cost-benefit analysis. In those countries where the economic benefits of the programme are relatively high, students are eager to participate regardless of limited funds. It seems that in those countries students are willing to bear extra costs and find ways to fund the expenses. In those countries where economic benefits from ERASMUS participation are low, students are not as eager to participate despite low financial barriers. In those countries ERASMUS seems to be rather a “consumption benefit” that some students, especially students with more limited means, choose to skip.

Students from lower socio-economic groups are underrepresented in the ERASMUS programme. Yet the issue seems to be more complex than access to money (e.g. loans). An important part of the decisions-making seems to be related to expected benefits and whether the additional costs of participation will be directly compensated by the benefits.

In addition to the financial issues, a number of other issues restrain students from participating in the ERASMUS programme. First of all, all issues (including financial issues) vary significantly across countries and any generalization misrepresents some countries. The problems that are common to many countries relate to recognition issues, language skills, the perception of the ERASMUS ”brand” and, to a lesser extent, to the limited choice of host institutions.

6.2. Recommendations related to financial barriers

6.2.1. Public and private contributions

- The ERASMUS programme is successful and the study found out that there is a significant unmet demand (see chapter 4.2). In light of this, there is a need for more ERASMUS grants .
- One particular element of the current mechanisms in place is that “successful” countries (i.e. countries with high levels of participation) do not have much policy scope because of the negative financial incentive this success brings along. The options for these countries are (a) to disappoint a large group of students; (b) to lower the grant amount per student; or (c) to allocate additional national funding. It is recommended that European-level measures are taken. One policy direction could be making more funds available for high-participation countries or for

countries where demand is significantly higher than the grant can meet. Another policy direction could be setting up an ERASMUS reserve fund: countries that do not fully use their available budgets transfer these monies to the fund and annually this fund is reallocated to the neediest countries.

- Asking greater contributions from students is deemed unfeasible. As the economic benefits of the ERASMUS participation have been declining and the individual economic costs of higher education rise (tuition fees, reliance on student loans), students seem to be pragmatic about the (short-term) benefits of their experience. The problem does not seem to be access to money (e.g. student loans), but the fact that the ERASMUS expenses will not be compensated more or less directly. This imbalance makes students perceive financial barriers to participation.
- That said, stressing the longer-term benefits of the ERASMUS experience (in terms of skills, language acquisition, and attitudes, and – consequently - employability), may convince students to look at the costs and benefits from a different angle and, as a result, they may be more inclined to invest in longer-term benefits. In promoting ERASMUS, more attention should be paid to these longer-term benefits.
- The use of direct private student investments for the ERASMUS programme is not deemed feasible, but contributions by receiving companies and other agencies involved in ERASMUS placements should be encouraged. There is quite some scope for ERASMUS placements, given it is still relatively unknown and the clear benefits for students (despite some administrative concerns).

6.2.2. Socio-economic background

- Previous research has pointed to the fact that students from lower socio-economic groups are underrepresented in the ERASMUS programme. It is still unclear what exactly causes the bias. In considering which policies would be most effective, it seems that needs of students from a disadvantaged background can be dealt with best at the national levels (national student aid system), possibly with support of resources at the level of individual higher education institutions. Many student aid systems already have mechanisms in place for disadvantaged students, and it seems that ERASMUS-level policy mechanisms would imply larger levels of bureaucracy and a risk of reducing transparency.
- There are indications that in some economically less developed regions, participation of students, in particular in the universities of applied sciences, is lower than in research universities. The same goes for participation in big cities, being relatively higher than in rural areas. The use of the structural funds to increase participation in low-participation regions and less-involved higher education institutions might be considered. However, the magnitude of the inequality is not completely clear; hence the recommendation to study these inequalities in more depth.

6.2.3. Administration

- The study pointed at financial-administrative barriers. Payments procedures should, thus, be rendered more efficient. Payments should be made upfront (hence addressing the concerns of those students indicating problems posed by delayed payments) and the grant amount to be received should be known well in advance. Also, better information is needed about the expected level of costs, and the available money in a study abroad programme.
- Improvements can be realised regarding the awareness of co-funding opportunities that exist within countries and institutions. Students indicated that this information was lacking and/or not sufficiently transparent. The same argument holds for the portability of national/institutional/other grants and loans. This is an important contribution to overcoming the financial constraints for participation in the ERASMUS programme, but not all students seem to be aware of these opportunities.

6.3. Recommendations on other factors

As mentioned before, financial obstacles are not the only important aspect that affects ERASMUS participation. In the study, four other sets of potential barriers to ERASMUS participation were identified: the conditions of the ERASMUS programme, the compatibility of higher education systems, awareness, and personal factors. The recommendations on these factors are:

6.3.1. Differences across and within countries

- There are important differences among the countries and it is important to target the policy recommendations to the situation in the country. This leads to the recommendation to look for country-specific solutions to domestic problems. As far as our study revealed (particularly the desk research) there are not yet that many national-level analyses of ERASMUS participation and non-participation. Such research would yield important pointers for domestic policy instruments (e.g. national agencies and institutions specifically targeting those groups of students that participate the least).
- Given the unequal participation in ERASMUS across the disciplines, more efforts can be put in attracting students in the fields of sciences, engineering and technology.

6.3.2. Length and nature of study abroad

- The study showed that there were no significant problems with the average time of study (6 months) under the ERASMUS grants. Shortening the period might increase the participation, but reduces the impact of the experience. There is scope, however, for more flexibility. The length of the trimester/semester and related earning of credits could become the minimum requirement.
- Despite the recommendation to maintain the average length, there is much scope for mobility opportunities of a slightly different nature. Short intensive (1-3 weeks) programmes with participation from students and teachers from multiple countries and institutions could be very attractive to those not (yet) sure of the benefits of a longer period. This would certainly stimulate mobility in the first two years of bachelor studies and it increases the chances that students will go for another study abroad. Alternative opportunities would also cater part-time students, a group that is nearly not present in the current programme.
- Opening up ERASMUS for longer periods abroad may be considered. However, it would likely go at the expense of overall participation (i.e. fewer students for longer periods). Additionally, the idea of a full Master's degree (e.g. one or two years abroad, not as part of one's home degree) within the ERASMUS programme runs counter to the general idea that such vertical mobility should operate smoothly in the context of the Bologna process.
- The placements programme was perceived as being successful and it is therefore recommended to create more awareness among students and employers on the ERASMUS programme for placements. This will increase the participation overall and in particular at universities of applied sciences where placements are often an essential part of the curriculum.

6.3.3. Recognition

- Recognition remains a very important issue. It is largely considered the second key barrier (after financial problems). And the two issues are connected, for a lack of recognition may lead to a longer study, which has financial impacts. The Bologna process has apparently not led to a significant improvement of recognition issues at the level of individual students and those (academics, institutional coordinators) that are to recognize credits earned elsewhere.

- In light of the previous point, there is scope for increasing participation by stimulating the use of ERASMUS grants in the context of joint and double degree programmes (recognition not really being an issue) with an obligatory study abroad period. Furthermore, more teacher mobility is likely to take away ignorance and misunderstandings and will enhance student mobility.

6.3.4. Other

- The study revealed that there is potential to resolve some of the problems around mobility outside the higher education system. The survey revealed that students might have been keener to participate in mobility programmes if they had been exposed to mobility opportunities (or at least information about this) at an earlier stage in their education career. In developing their internationalisation policies, countries should consider targeting more intensely other levels of education. Measures could for example pertain to acquiring other modern languages, and to disseminating more information on study abroad in the later stages of secondary education.
- Despite its overall success, ERASMUS seems to be conceived rather differently in different countries and by different stakeholders. Recommendations on the image or brand of the programme point to two different directions. The first is to take care that the identity of ERASMUS is shared in a homogeneous way to all parties concerned, for instance through a European-wide information portal, containing inclusive information on European, national and institutional levels. Creating (rather) uniform “ERASMUS introduction” courses for students who go or intend to go on an exchange might be another way to share the “ERASMUS identity” homogeneously. The second direction is to accept the variety of images and make use of participants’ and alumni’s lived experiences (sharing experiences, practical information, dos and don'ts, buddy or mentoring systems, integrate visiting students more, strengthen and professionalise student bodies such as the ERASMUS Student Network) in promoting the programme.

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ANNEX 1: BACKGROUND DATA

Table 8: Participation in the ERASMUS programme

	Outgoing ERASMUS students				Incoming ERASMUS students			
	2004 / 2005	2005 / 2006	2006 / 2007	2007 / 2008	2004 / 2005	2005 / 2006	2006 / 2007	2007 / 2008
Belgium	4.777	4.846	4.980	4.633	4.678	4.887	5.021	4.960
Bulgaria	1.549	882	938	1.061	179	250	296	328
Czech Republic	4.122	4.598	4.911	5.127	1.900	2.459	2.812	3.116
Denmark	1.744	1.619	1.510	1.601	3.849	4.116	4.278	4.641
Germany	21.720	22.904	22.728	22.342	16.947	16.954	16.766	16.404
Estonia	441	497	550	580	276	360	460	506
Ireland	1.562	1.553	1.501	1.490	3.644	3.847	3.972	3.834
Greece	2.458	2.677	2.414	2.270	1.614	1.810	1.726	1.691
Spain	20.568	22.591	21.920	22.696	25.479	26.248	27.008	27.204
France	21.218	22.053	22.425	21.930	20.415	20.956	20.155	19.970
Italy	16.243	16.168	16.928	17.270	13.287	14.298	14.319	14.341
Cyprus	93	130	122	142	95	124	209	228
Latvia	594	656	773	930	163	236	330	316
Lithuania	1.435	1.850	1.971	2.226	383	575	692	825
Luxembourg	113	145	166	365	16	15	24	45
Hungary	2.269	2.583	2.943	3.185	1.281	1.471	1.569	1.739
Malta	130	149	125	104	313	291	325	359
Netherlands	4.549	4.247	4.209	4.365	6.707	6.587	6.446	6.491
Austria	3.695	3.809	3.875	3.973	3.479	3.564	3.565	3.727
Poland	8.294	9.764	10.860	11.394	2.249	2.829	3.274	3.390
Portugal	3.807	4.253	4.368	4.406	4.134	4.376	4.586	4.978
Romania	2.960	3.261	3.350	2.937	602	653	792	863
Slovenia	740	855	949	998	1.145	559	700	772
Slovakia	970	1.141	1.319	1.408	252	477	610	626
Finland	3.894	3.808	3.713	3.200	5.334	5.619	5.860	5.867
Sweden	2.669	2.494	2.475	2.306	6.593	6.891	7.194	7.463
United Kingdom	7.130	7.015	7.115	7.382	16.239	16.106	16.153	15.637

Source: European Commission ERASMUS statistics

Table 9: Proportion of students with none, some or many friends who have not participated in the programme for financial reasons by home country

	Many	Some	None	Total
Austria	1.3%	34.3%	64.4%	100%
Belgium	5.0%	53.0%	42.0%	100%
Bulgaria	6.4%	59.8%	33.8%	100%
Czech Republic	2.3%	40.4%	57.3%	100%
Denmark	.6%	24.7%	74.7%	100%
Finland	.8%	30.5%	68.6%	100%
France	4.8%	41.9%	53.2%	100%
Germany	1.9%	39.6%	58.5%	100%
Greece	6.8%	55.6%	37.6%	100%
Hungary	7.1%	52.4%	40.5%	100%
Iceland	3.1%	23.4%	73.4%	100%
Ireland	8.6%	43.5%	47.8%	100%
Italy	5.8%	51.4%	42.8%	100%
Latvia	1.2%	26.4%	72.3%	100%
Lithuania	3.1%	44.6%	52.3%	100%
Netherlands	.3%	26.0%	73.6%	100%
Norway	.5%	16.0%	83.5%	100%
Poland	11.2%	56.7%	32.1%	100%
Portugal	23.1%	67.1%	9.8%	100%
Romania	14.0%	64.6%	21.4%	100%
Slovakia	2.0%	48.8%	49.2%	100%
Slovenia	3.8%	62.4%	33.8%	100%
Spain	21.3%	58.9%	19.8%	100%
Sweden	1.2%	15.5%	83.3%	100%
Turkey	13.1%	56.8%	30.1%	100%
United Kingdom	3.5%	30.5%	66.0%	100%
Total	6.4%	46.2%	47.4%	100%

Source: Souto Otero and McCoshan (2006), Table 96.

ANNEX 2: SURVEY RESULTS

A2.1. ERASMUS students

Table 10: Overview table (disciplinary background; academic year of ERASMUS period abroad; degree)

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB
Disciplinary background							
Agricultural Sciences	13	3	16	10	47	4	0
	0.8%	0.4%	0.6%	0.6%	1.1%	1.0%	0.0%
Architecture, urban and regional planning	49	12	91	98	225	7	11
	3.1%	1.5%	3.2%	5.4%	5.1%	1.8%	2.6%
Art and design	109	31	74	27	149	7	19
	6.8%	3.8%	2.6%	1.5%	3.4%	1.8%	4.5%
Business studies and management sciences	289	122	491	288	660	118	49
	18.1%	14.8%	17.3%	15.9%	15.1%	30.3%	11.5%
Communication and information sciences	40	25	75	31	246	5	5
	2.5%	3.0%	2.6%	1.7%	5.6%	1.3%	1.2%
Education teacher training	68	36	226	32	178	9	1
	4.3%	4.4%	7.9%	1.8%	4.1%	2.3%	0.2%
Engineering, technology	100	42	203	174	743	47	15
	6.3%	5.1%	7.1%	9.6%	17.0%	12.1%	3.5%
Geography, geology	51	12	51	34	31	2	5
	3.2%	1.5%	1.8%	1.9%	0.7%	0.5%	1.2%
Humanities	139	149	292	162	107	6	45
	8.7%	18.1%	10.3%	9.0%	2.4%	1.5%	10.6%
Languages and philosophical sciences	124	80	253	200	489	7	129
	7.8%	9.7%	8.9%	11.1%	11.2%	1.8%	30.3%
Law	93	4	144	131	204	15	51
	5.8%	0.5%	5.1%	7.3%	4.7%	3.9%	12.0%
Mathematics, informatics	70	21	97	134	145	3	5
	4.4%	2.5%	3.4%	7.4%	3.3%	0.8%	1.2%
Medical sciences	115	31	159	38	313	63	24
	7.2%	3.8%	5.6%	2.1%	7.1%	16.2%	5.6%
Natural sciences	47	52	173	66	230	12	14
	2.9%	6.3%	6.1%	3.7%	5.2%	3.1%	3.3%
Social sciences	104	103	276	185	232	38	27
	6.5%	12.5%	9.7%	10.2%	5.3%	9.8%	6.3%
Other	187	102	225	196	383	46	26
	11.7%	12.4%	7.9%	10.9%	8.7%	11.8%	6.1%
Total	**1,598**	**825**	**2,846**	**1,806**	**4,382**	**389**	**426**
	100%	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Academic year of ERASMUS period abroad							
2005/06	9	17	6	14	8	1	0
	0.6%	2.0%	0.2%	0.8%	0.2%	0.3%	
2006/07	15	27	5	20	10	0	0
	0.9%	3.2%	0.2%	1.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
2007/08	147	80	418	203	177	1	23
	9.1%	9.5%	14.5%	11.1%	4.0%	0.3%	5.3%
2008/09	475	291	1,413	562	1,783	130	216
	29.3%	34.4%	49.0%	30.7%	40.1%	33.0%	50.2%
2009/10	949	367	946	968	2,443	243	186
	58.5%	43.4%	32.8%	52.8%	55.0%	61.7%	43.3%
2010/11	4	3	3	28	2	3	0
	0.2%	0.4%	0.1%	1.5%	0.0%	0.8%	
Other	23	60	92	37	19	16	5
	1.4%	7.1%	3.2%	2.0%	0.4%	4.1%	1.2%
Total	**1,622**	**845**	**2,883**	**1,832**	**4,442**	**394**	**430**
	100%	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Degree							
A Bachelor degree	632	458	1,034	441	3,329	190	368
	39.0%	54.2%	35.9%	24.1%	74.9%	48.2%	85.6%
A Masters degree	882	243	471	1,242	205	151	40
	54.4%	28.8%	16.3%	67.8%	4.6%	38.3%	9.3%
A Doctoral degree	52	6	49	27	8	4	3
	3.2%	0.7%	1.7%	1.5%	0.2%	1.0%	0.7%
Other	56	138	1,329	122	900	49	19
	3.5%	16.3%	46.1%	6.7%	20.3%	12.4%	4.4%
Total	**1,622**	**845**	**2,883**	**1,832**	**4,442**	**394**	**430**
	100%	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Duration of degree							
Up to 2 years	107	13	78	85	163	14	9
	6.7%	1.6%	2.7%	4.7%	3.7%	3.6%	2.1%
3 years	539	60	692	325	842	109	122
	33.8%	7.3%	24.3%	18.0%	19.2%	28.0%	28.6%
4 years	92	92	457	50	986	127	266
	5.8%	11.2%	16.1%	2.8%	22.5%	32.6%	62.4%
5 years	603	497	1,283	1,274	2,082	95	27
	37.8%	60.3%	45.1%	70.5%	47.5%	24.4%	6.3%
6 years or more	192	106	264	35	277	2	2
	12.0%	12.9%	9.3%	1.9%	6.3%	0.5%	0.5%
Other	63	56	72	37	31	42	0
	3.9%	6.8%	2.5%	2.0%	0.7%	10.8%	0.0%
Total	**1,596**	**824**	**2,846**	**1,806**	**4,381**	**389**	**426**
	100%	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Age							
Up to 20	82	29	71	36	701	19	196
	5.5%	3.8%	2.6%	2.2%	17.7%	5.3%	53.3%
21	225	154	364	352	799	42	89
	15.2%	20.2%	13.5%	21.1%	20.1%	11.7%	24.2%
22	320	170	633	515	884	54	28
	21.6%	22.3%	23.5%	30.9%	22.3%	15.0%	7.6%
23	373	148	680	459	649	81	16
	25.2%	19.4%	25.3%	27.5%	16.4%	22.5%	4.3%
24	258	96	451	198	384	60	10
	17.4%	12.6%	16.8%	11.9%	9.7%	16.7%	2.7%
25	124	67	238	62	243	49	15
	8.4%	8.8%	8.8%	3.7%	6.1%	13.6%	4.1%
26	51	38	114	23	135	17	3
	3.4%	5.0%	4.2%	1.4%	3.4%	4.7%	0.8%
27 and over	47	61	140	23	173	38	11
	3.2%	8.0%	5.2%	1.4%	4.4%	10.6%	3.0%
Total	**1,480**	**763**	**2,691**	**1,668**	**3,968**	**360**	**368**
	100%	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Table 11: Difficulties encountered when preparing for the ERASMUS study period abroad

(% of students considering the factor important or very important)

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB	Average
Uncertainty about the benefits of the ERASMUS period abroad	11	7	5	5	18	12	9	**10**
Lack of information about ERASMUS programme and how it works	15	8	8	8	27	17	21	**15**
Difficulties with any other administrative requirements (in home institution or abroad)	43	23	28	26	46	40	42	**35**
High competition to obtain an ERASMUS grant	12	2	18	17	28	8	9	**13**
Uncertainty about the costs of the study abroad	47	17	38	54	61	13	37	**38**
Uncertainty about the ERASMUS grant level	32	6	40	44	66	16	42	**35**
ERASMUS grant levels are low	41	15	57	68	69	19	33	**43**
Lack of other financial resources needed to study abroad (e.g. because I needed to leave a job, difference in costs between city where I was living and abroad, need take-up accommodation outside parental home, etc.)	37	22	40	53	44	19	39	**36**
I could not select a higher education institution of my choosing to study abroad (only one with which my higher education institution had an ERASMUS agreement)	32	15	48	17	31	28	22	**28**
Difficulties to find appropriate institution and/or study programme abroad	19	15	10	11	28	18	13	**16**
Uncertainty about education quality abroad	15	15	33	10	30	32	24	**23**
Uncertainty about education system abroad (e.g. examinations)	31	28	36	22	47	38	39	**34**
The study period abroad was too long	3	1	1	2	4	2	7	**3**
The study period abroad was too short	27	18	35	30	26	25	21	**26**
Expected difficulties with the recognition of credits in my home institution	46	22	30	30	50	22	29	**33**
Lack of integration/continuity between study subjects at home and abroad	45	25	34	36	38	27	33	**34**
Incompatibility of academic calendar year between my home country of study and abroad	21	22	24	13	26	24	15	**21**
Insufficient knowledge of the language of tuition abroad (in	18	11	16	12	26	14	17	**16**

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB	Average
your country of destination)								
Lack of study programmes in English in hosting institution (abroad)	21	18	18	18	22	13	10	**17**
Plan to study for a full qualification abroad in the future anyway	21	3	14	19	26	12	16	**16**
Lack of support to find accommodation or in other student services abroad	28	24	28	25	43	26	42	**31**
Family reasons or personal relationships	19	17	10	10	15	9	27	**15**
Work responsibilities in my home country of study	11	5	5	9	10	6	10	**8**

Table 12: Difficulties encountered when preparing for the ERASMUS study period abroad

(mean scores)

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB	Total
Uncertainty about the benefits of the ERASMUS period abroad	1.94	1.72	1.56	1.52	2.32	2.02	1.89	**1.91**
Lack of information about ERASMUS programme and how it works	2.22	1.96	2.04	1.82	2.71	2.38	2.44	**2.28**
Difficulties with any other administrative requirements (in home institution or abroad)	3.15	2.57	2.67	2.66	3.28	3.05	3.18	**2.97**
High competition to obtain an ERASMUS grant	2.04	1.31	2.24	2.28	2.72	1.79	1.81	**2.30**
Uncertainty about the costs of the study abroad	3.34	2.30	3.03	3.51	3.68	2.14	2.98	**3.29**
Uncertainty about the ERASMUS grant level	2.79	1.72	3.04	3.15	3.84	2.25	3.10	**3.20**
ERASMUS grant levels are low	3.19	2.19	3.62	3.91	3.97	2.40	2.90	**3.57**
Lack of other financial resources needed to study abroad (e.g. because I needed to leave a job, difference in costs between city where I was living and abroad, need take-up accommodation outside parental home, etc.)	2.97	2.41	3.03	3.43	3.19	2.16	2.95	**3.07**
I could not select a higher education institution of my choosing to study abroad (only one with which my higher education institution had an ERASMUS agreement)	2.67	2.00	3.18	2.18	2.64	2.53	2.33	**2.65**
Difficulties to find appropriate institution and/or study programme abroad	2.25	2.08	1.87	1.96	2.66	2.15	2.04	**2.24**
Uncertainty about education quality abroad	2.20	2.25	2.84	1.97	2.78	2.86	2.50	**2.56**
Uncertainty about education system abroad (e.g. examinations)	2.80	2.72	2.94	2.50	3.27	3.10	2.92	**2.96**
The study period abroad was too long	1.41	1.35	1.28	1.25	1.55	1.47	1.72	**1.41**
The study period abroad was too short	2.46	2.08	2.76	2.48	2.49	2.38	2.35	**2.51**
Expected difficulties with the recognition of credits in my home institution	3.19	2.42	2.61	2.59	3.35	2.43	2.53	**2.92**
Lack of integration/continuity between study subjects at home and abroad	3.19	2.51	2.85	2.87	3.04	2.69	2.81	**2.94**
Incompatibility of academic calendar year between my home country of study and abroad	2.22	2.28	2.34	1.94	2.51	2.35	2.02	**2.31**
Insufficient knowledge of the language of tuition abroad (in	2.21	1.74	2.15	1.95	2.55	2.02	2.16	**2.24**

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB	Total
your country of destination)								
Lack of study programmes in English in hosting institution (abroad)	2.14	1.94	2.03	1.90	2.25	1.85	1.71	**2.08**
Plan to study for a full qualification abroad in the future anyway	2.37	1.38	2.16	2.26	2.58	2.11	2.06	**2.29**
Lack of support to find accommodation or in other student services abroad	2.52	2.40	2.48	2.30	3.05	2.48	2.92	**2.67**
Family reasons or personal relationships	2.34	2.12	1.97	1.81	2.12	1.83	2.49	**2.07**
Work responsibilities in my home country of study	1.85	1.52	1.57	1.64	1.85	1.67	1.92	**1.73**

Table 13: Reasons for undertaking the ERASMUS study period abroad

(% of students considering the factor important or very important)

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB	Average
Opportunity to receive ERASMUS grant	52	51	47	60	69	23	27	**47**
Opportunity to receive other financial support to study abroad	30	37	29	19	66	17	20	**31**
Guidance provided regarding the benefits of the ERASMUS programme was compelling	21	26	56	55	57	21	39	**39**
Available support in finding accommodation	31	24	20	25	26	8	21	**22**
Available support to meet ERASMUS administrative requirements	32	21	40	23	30	10	20	**25**
Quality of the host institution	59	35	28	48	55	38	46	**44**
Opportunity to choose the institution abroad	62	60	31	60	52	54	48	**52**
Good alignment between the curriculum at home institution	30	24	17	27	41	23	29	**27**
The length of the study period abroad was appropriate	48	55	57	44	60	42	53	**51**
Possibility to choose a study programme in a foreign language	68	55	75	72	79	57	56	**66**
Opportunity to experience different learning practices and teaching methods	87	65	61	83	81	67	64	**73**
Benefits for my future employment opportunities in home country	81	70	74	84	72	77	81	**77**
Benefits for my future employment opportunities abroad	73	71	68	72	76	78	80	**74**
Opportunity to learn/ improve a foreign language	93	92	93	95	94	84	81	**90**
Opportunity to live abroad	89	96	93	94	95	94	90	**93**
Opportunity to meet new people	87	93	90	92	91	90	88	**90**
Opportunity to develop soft skills i.e. adaptability, demonstrating initiative	82	89	88	87	93	76	85	**86**
Expected a 'relaxed' academic year abroad	16	52	33	32	23	14	34	**29**

Table 14: Reasons for undertaking the ERASMUS study period abroad

(mean scores)

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB	Total
Opportunity to receive ERASMUS grant	3.45	3.38	3.18	3.71	3.94	2.26	2.60	**3.53**
Opportunity to receive other financial support to study abroad	2.69	2.92	2.51	2.19	3.84	2.03	2.21	**2.96**
Guidance provided regarding the benefits of the ERASMUS programme was compelling	2.45	2.67	3.51	3.55	3.59	2.35	2.99	**3.29**
Available support in finding accommodation	2.72	2.42	2.14	2.48	2.59	1.68	2.39	**2.44**
Available support to meet ERASMUS administrative requirements	2.87	2.50	3.00	2.46	2.89	1.81	2.45	**2.77**
Quality of the host institution	3.68	3.02	2.75	3.40	3.57	3.02	3.28	**3.30**
Opportunity to choose the institution abroad	3.72	3.61	2.67	3.67	3.44	3.43	3.23	**3.33**
Good alignment between the curriculum at home institution	2.80	2.64	2.35	2.73	3.16	2.51	2.68	**2.79**
The length of the study period abroad was appropriate	3.39	3.51	3.61	3.26	3.66	3.05	3.41	**3.52**
Possibility to choose a study programme in a foreign language	3.94	3.46	4.04	3.97	4.19	3.46	3.40	**3.99**
Opportunity to experience different learning practices and teaching methods	4.47	3.82	3.61	4.34	4.28	3.76	3.72	**4.09**
Benefits for my future employment opportunities in home country	4.35	3.93	4.03	4.42	4.05	4.14	4.29	**4.14**
Benefits for my future employment opportunities abroad	4.09	3.99	3.86	4.07	4.17	4.20	4.25	**4.06**
Opportunity to learn/ improve a foreign language	4.72	4.62	4.67	4.80	4.75	4.37	4.33	**4.70**
Opportunity to live abroad	4.60	4.78	4.69	4.72	4.78	4.67	4.60	**4.71**
Opportunity to meet new people	4.51	4.64	4.54	4.66	4.65	4.53	4.53	**4.60**
Opportunity to develop soft skills i.e. adaptability, demonstrating initiative	4.32	4.52	4.48	4.48	4.69	4.09	4.40	**4.52**
Expected a 'relaxed' academic year abroad	2.25	3.46	2.85	2.80	2.56	2.19	2.82	**2.68**

A2.2. Non-ERASMUS students

Table 15: Overview table (disciplinary background; year of study; degree; ERASMUS consideration)

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB
Disciplinary background							
Agricultural Sciences	6	0	18	1	32	1	1
	2.7%	0.0%	1.6%	0.1%	0.8%	0.1%	0.2%
Architecture, urban and regional planning	4	8	49	25	125	0	2
	1.8%	1.5%	4.5%	2.6%	2.9%	0.0%	0.4%
Art and design	11	8	64	29	62	6	16
	5.0%	1.5%	5.9%	3.1%	1.5%	0.9%	3.4%
Business studies and management sciences	48	66	196	66	575	49	32
	21.7%	12.2%	17.9%	7.0%	13.5%	7.1%	6.9%
Communication and information sciences	4	35	14	9	268	8	6
	1.8%	6.5%	1.3%	0.9%	6.3%	1.2%	1.3%
Education teacher training	4	5	67	52	312	15	4
	1.8%	0.9%	6.1%	5.5%	7.3%	2.2%	0.9%
Engineering, technology	18	65	70	35	918	16	60
	8.1%	12.0%	6.4%	3.7%	21.6%	2.3%	12.9%
Geography, geology	12	12	3	45	23	2	2
	5.4%	2.2%	0.3%	4.7%	0.5%	0.3%	0.4%
Humanities	10	77	110	75	105	17	51
	4.5%	14.3%	10.1%	7.9%	2.5%	2.5%	11.0%
Languages and philosophical sciences	6	43	63	50	109	16	12
	2.7%	8.0%	5.8%	5.3%	2.6%	2.3%	2.6%
Law	4	3	69	181	288	1	49
	1.8%	0.6%	6.3%	19.1%	6.8%	0.1%	10.5%
Mathematics, informatics	12	38	39	122	173	1	5
	5.4%	7.0%	3.6%	12.9%	4.1%	0.1%	1.1%
Medical sciences	2	37	60	18	266	406	36
	0.9%	6.9%	5.5%	1.9%	6.3%	59.1%	7.7%
Natural sciences	15	36	116	48	346	23	25
	6.8%	6.7%	10.6%	5.1%	8.1%	3.3%	5.4%
Social sciences	35	51	86	99	221	33	110
	15.8%	9.4%	7.9%	10.4%	5.2%	4.8%	23.7%
Other	30	56	69	93	426	93	54
	13.6%	10.4%	6.3%	9.8%	10.0%	13.5%	11.6%
Total	**221**	**540**	**1,093**	**948**	**4,249**	**687**	**465**
	100%	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Duration of degree							
Up to 2 years	23	15	63	45	204	83	26
	10.4%	2.8%	5.8%	4.7%	4.8%	12.1%	5.6%
3 years	115	75	486	265	962	249	275
	52.0%	13.9%	44.5%	28.0%	22.6%	36.2%	59.1%

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB
4 years	10	49	172	27	1,137	73	152
	4.5%	9.1%	15.7%	2.8%	26.8%	10.6%	32.7%
5 years	60	264	234	557	1,670	125	10
	27.1%	48.9%	21.4%	58.8%	39.3%	18.2%	2.2%
6 years or more	10	115	117	22	245	37	1
	4.5%	21.3%	10.7%	2.3%	5.8%	5.4%	0.2%
Other	3	22	21	32	30	120	1
	1.4%	4.1%	1.9%	3.4%	0.7%	17.5%	0.2%
Total	**221**	**540**	**1,093**	**948**	**4,248**	**687**	**465**
	100%	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Degree							
A Bachelor degree	150	210	587	480	2,507	268	372
	67.9%	38.9%	53.7%	50.6%	59.0%	39.0%	80.0%
A Doctoral degree	3	5	50	22	38	36	13
	1.4%	0.9%	4.6%	2.3%	0.9%	5.2%	2.8%
A Masters degree	66	250	110	380	113	213	64
	29.9%	46.3%	10.1%	40.1%	2.7%	31.0%	13.8%
Other	2	75	346	66	1,591	170	16
	0.9%	13.9%	31.7%	7.0%	37.4%	24.7%	3.4%
Total	**221**	**540**	**1,093**	**948**	**4,249**	**687**	**465**
	100%	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
ERASMUS consideration							
No	51	163	279	188	584	352	212
	24.4%	30.4%	26.0%	20.1%	13.9%	51.7%	46.8%
Yes	158	373	793	749	3,628	329	241
	75.6%	69.6%	74.0%	79.9%	86.1%	48.3%	53.2%
Total	**209**	**536**	**1,072**	**937**	**4,212**	**681**	**453**
	100%	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Age							
Up to 18	0	1	1	0	131	0	16
	0.0%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	4.9%	0.0%	5.4%
19	0	22	13	20	346	14	39
	0.0%	6.1%	1.9%	3.1%	12.8%	2.9%	13.1%
20	8	28	50	102	378	23	78
	8.0%	7.8%	7.3%	15.8%	14.0%	4.8%	26.3%
21	19	45	81	126	417	24	66
	19.0%	12.5%	11.9%	19.6%	15.5%	5.0%	22.2%
22	26	49	111	132	376	41	32
	26.0%	13.6%	16.3%	20.5%	13.9%	8.6%	10.8%
23	20	48	112	116	332	48	18
	20.0%	13.3%	16.4%	18.0%	12.3%	10.1%	6.1%
24	13	37	91	69	220	46	9
	13.0%	10.3%	13.4%	10.7%	8.2%	9.7%	3.0%
25	5	38	69	33	156	47	9
	5.0%	10.6%	10.1%	5.1%	5.8%	9.9%	3.0%

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB
26	1	30	46	18	100	32	11
	1.0%	8.3%	6.8%	2.8%	3.7%	6.7%	3.7%
27 and over	8	62	107	28	243	201	19
	8.0%	17.2%	15.7%	4.3%	9.0%	42.2%	6.4%
Total	**100**	**360**	**681**	**644**	**2,699**	**476**	**297**
	100%	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Table 16: Reasons for being interested in the ERASMUS programme

(% of students considering the factor important or very important)

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB	Average
Opportunity to receive ERASMUS grant	67	76	48	51	71	41	48	**57**
Opportunity to receive other financial support to study abroad	69	67	43	36	79	43	48	**55**
Guidance provided regarding the benefits of the ERASMUS programme was compelling	30	28	48	62	52	17	46	**40**
Available support in finding accommodation	45	51	36	44	40	22	46	**41**
Available support to meet ERASMUS administrative requirements	48	40	44	43	44	16	39	**39**
Quality of the host institution	69	66	49	73	62	44	71	**62**
Opportunity to choose the institution abroad	81	87	68	84	71	73	83	**78**
Good alignment with the curriculum at home institution	42	47	30	59	61	39	63	**49**
The length of the study period abroad was appropriate	57	67	50	55	68	51	66	**59**
Possibility to choose a study programme in a foreign language	77	61	72	72	80	53	46	**66**
Opportunity to experience different learning practices and teaching methods	87	59	52	80	82	55	72	**70**
Benefits for my future employment opportunities in home country	87	74	76	87	81	60	85	**79**
Benefits for my future employment opportunities abroad	75	78	71	74	82	72	81	**76**
Opportunity to learn/ improve a foreign language	99	95	93	96	95	80	74	**90**
Opportunity to live abroad	86	89	89	89	89	90	88	**89**
Opportunity to meet new people	84	87	82	83	81	86	88	**84**
Opportunity to develop soft skills i.e. adaptability, demonstrating initiative	71	84	79	76	85	67	83	**78**
Expected a 'relaxed' academic year abroad	14	44	34	27	21	17	28	**26**

Table 17: Reasons for being interested in the ERASMUS programme

(mean scores)

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB	Total
Opportunity to receive ERASMUS grant	3.88	4.04	3.21	3.46	4.06	2.93	3.32	**3.78**
Opportunity to receive other financial support to study abroad	3.82	3.86	3.05	2.97	4.23	3.02	3.27	**3.79**
Guidance provided regarding the benefits of the ERASMUS programme was compelling	2.89	2.85	3.31	3.71	3.51	2.30	3.27	**3.39**
Available support in finding accommodation	3.19	3.45	2.86	3.19	3.19	2.36	3.35	**3.13**
Available support to meet ERASMUS administrative requirements	3.24	3.14	3.13	3.19	3.33	2.22	3.14	**3.21**
Quality of the host institution	3.96	3.77	3.34	4.00	3.75	3.10	3.98	**3.71**
Opportunity to choose the institution abroad	4.20	4.36	3.79	4.27	3.97	4.00	4.21	**4.03**
Good alignment with the curriculum at home institution	3.30	3.34	2.82	3.68	3.75	3.02	3.69	**3.55**
The length of the study period abroad was appropriate	3.59	3.78	3.45	3.53	3.85	3.40	3.76	**3.72**
Possibility to choose a study programme in a foreign language	4.18	3.65	3.97	4.01	4.22	3.38	3.18	**4.05**
Opportunity to experience different learning practices and teaching methods	4.43	3.67	3.42	4.19	4.26	3.59	3.91	**4.07**
Benefits for my future employment opportunities in home country	4.45	4.05	4.05	4.44	4.26	3.68	4.35	**4.22**
Benefits for my future employment opportunities abroad	4.16	4.13	3.92	4.08	4.29	4.00	4.24	**4.19**
Opportunity to learn/ improve a foreign language	4.90	4.71	4.69	4.77	4.72	4.30	4.12	**4.68**
Opportunity to live abroad	4.42	4.52	4.50	4.50	4.52	4.58	4.46	**4.52**
Opportunity to meet new people	4.34	4.39	4.28	4.36	4.28	4.48	4.42	**4.31**
Opportunity to develop soft skills i.e. adaptability, demonstrating initiative	4.02	4.27	4.18	4.08	4.37	3.93	4.26	**4.27**
Expected a 'relaxed' academic year abroad	2.19	3.17	2.91	2.73	2.51	2.23	2.71	**2.61**

Table 18: Reasons for not taking part in ERASMUS

(% of students considering the factor important or very important)

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB	Average
Will take part at a later date	48	59	32	51	57	30	21	**42**
Applied but was not selected	7	3	3	5	13	5	4	**6**
Uncertainty about the benefits of the ERASMUS period abroad	17	13	14	18	29	21	19	**19**
Lack of information about ERASMUS programme and how it works	18	14	21	16	37	34	39	**26**
Difficulties to meet ERASMUS administrative requirements	11	7	16	14	28	19	16	**16**
High competition to obtain an ERASMUS grant	21	10	20	25	40	18	17	**22**
ERASMUS grant was insufficient to cover additional costs of period abroad	25	14	29	43	56	20	17	**29**
I would lose part of my income in home country (due to job, lack of flexibility of student financing system in my country of study, etc.)	21	16	21	22	29	16	15	**20**
Was not offered my preferred institution abroad	27	12	16	24	21	13	21	**19**
It was not possible to choose the institution abroad myself	17	9	11	21	19	11	17	**15**
Difficulties to find appropriate institution and/or study programme abroad	20	24	20	23	28	24	39	**25**
Uncertainty about education quality abroad	13	14	18	18	29	24	32	**21**
Uncertainty about education system abroad (e.g. examinations)	20	14	21	28	35	24	30	**25**
The study period abroad is too long	10	14	7	12	11	11	11	**11**
The study period abroad is too short	13	6	6	5	13	5	6	**8**
Expected difficulties with the recognition of credits in my home institution	30	19	37	33	44	27	26	**31**
Lack of integration/ continuity between study subjects at home and abroad	27	19	30	30	35	24	36	**32**
Incompatibility of academic calendar year between my home country of study and abroad	13	16	23	15	22	16	21	**18**
Need to delay studies due to the study period abroad	37	31	38	27	32	15	23	**29**
Lack of language skills to follow a course abroad	28	10	14	29	34	16	37	**24**
Lack of study programmes in English in hosting institution (abroad)	24	19	14	37	30	20	29	**25**
Decided to study abroad for a full degree at a later date	20	5	10	17	8	10	17	**12**
Lack of support to find accommodation or in other student services abroad	11	13	10	19	30	12	15	**16**
Family reasons or personal relationships	34	33	25	29	27	32	25	**29**
Work responsibilities in my home country of study	13	15	15	17	16	11	14	**14**

Table 19: Reasons for not taking part in ERASMUS

(mean scores)

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB	Total
Will take part at a later date	3.34	3.59	2.56	3.18	3.48	2.54	2.17	**3.24**
Applied but was not selected	1.51	1.28	1.20	1.27	1.65	1.28	1.41	**1.49**
Uncertainty about the benefits of the ERASMUS period abroad	2.01	1.81	1.91	2.08	2.57	2.23	2.22	**2.34**
Lack of information about ERASMUS programme and how it works	2.28	1.98	2.19	2.03	2.89	2.65	2.91	**2.61**
Difficulties to meet ERASMUS administrative requirements	2.13	1.67	1.98	2.00	2.63	2.14	2.16	**2.36**
High competition to obtain an ERASMUS grant	2.48	1.85	2.20	2.39	2.99	2.15	2.14	**2.66**
ERASMUS grant was insufficient to cover additional costs of period abroad	2.55	1.99	2.59	3.06	3.50	2.18	2.22	**3.10**
I would lose part of my income in home country (due to job, lack of flexibility of student financing system in my country of study, etc.)	2.21	1.98	2.06	2.24	2.53	1.89	2.06	**2.34**
Was not offered my preferred institution abroad	2.38	1.83	1.97	2.32	2.33	1.77	2.21	**2.22**
It was not possible to choose the institution abroad myself	2.20	1.73	1.81	2.17	2.23	1.72	2.21	**2.11**
Difficulties to find appropriate institution and/or study programme abroad	2.30	2.33	2.18	2.35	2.60	2.28	2.88	**2.49**
Uncertainty about education quality abroad	2.11	2.00	2.22	2.22	2.65	2.32	2.53	**2.47**
Uncertainty about education system abroad (e.g. examinations)	2.28	1.95	2.27	2.53	2.83	2.38	2.59	**2.62**
The study period abroad is too long	1.80	1.89	1.62	1.84	1.97	1.76	1.91	**1.89**
The study period abroad is too short	1.93	1.65	1.57	1.60	2.12	1.58	1.79	**1.91**
Expected difficulties with the recognition of credits in my home institution	2.65	2.14	2.70	2.64	3.14	2.37	2.46	**2.88**
Lack of integration/ continuity between study subjects at home and abroad	2.69	2.15	2.60	2.56	2.87	2.39	2.86	**2.73**
Incompatibility of academic calendar year between my home country of study and abroad	2.31	2.01	2.27	2.10	2.43	2.04	2.35	**2.32**
Need to delay studies due to the study period abroad	2.82	2.53	2.71	2.41	2.70	1.88	2.30	**2.60**
Lack of language skills to follow a course abroad	2.62	1.81	1.93	2.52	2.79	2.00	2.80	**2.54**
Lack of study programmes in English in hosting institution (abroad)	2.49	2.12	1.90	2.67	2.68	2.09	2.64	**2.51**
Decided to study abroad for a full degree at a later date	2.34	1.44	1.80	1.99	1.67	1.80	2.12	**1.75**
Lack of support to find accommodation or in other student services abroad	2.28	1.90	1.79	2.19	2.75	1.82	2.09	**2.43**
Family reasons or personal relationships	2.80	2.62	2.26	2.49	2.50	2.48	2.25	**2.47**
Work responsibilities in my home country of study	2.18	1.86	1.84	2.00	2.04	1.76	1.96	**1.98**

Table 20: Reasons for having not considered taking part in ERASMUS

(% of students considering the factor important or very important)

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB	Average
Not interested in a study abroad programme	17	28	18	29	18	28	28	**24**
Study abroad is not important for my future career	20	13	15	25	24	20	31	**21**
Study abroad would delay my graduation	46	48	41	28	38	19	33	**36**
Study abroad is too costly	66	43	56	70	72	36	55	**57**
I am uncertain about education quality abroad	31	20	32	33	43	25	38	**32**
I am uncertain about education system abroad (e.g. examinations)	40	24	33	52	49	26	44	**38**
Difficulties to find an appropriate institution and/or study programme abroad	43	31	28	28	41	21	32	**32**
Lack of language skills to follow a course abroad	54	19	28	50	61	17	62	**41**
Family reasons or personal relationships that make going abroad difficult	46	56	40	39	46	58	36	**46**
Work responsibilities in my home country of study	46	20	26	34	20	19	18	**26**
Decided to study abroad for a full degree at a later date	20	0	11	4	3	7	6	**7**
I never heard of the ERASMUS programme	3	14	39	4	11	27	29	**18**
I could not find enough information about the ERASMUS programme and how it works	20	30	46	10	15	43	24	**27**
Too high competition to obtain an ERASMUS grant	34	12	26	35	31	10	17	**24**
Difficulties to meet ERASMUS administrative requirements	34	8	14	22	20	9	8	**16**
ERASMUS grant is insufficient to cover additional costs of period abroad	57	34	27	48	63	15	17	**37**
Uncertainty about the benefits of the ERASMUS period abroad	43	26	28	35	44	26	34	**34**
The choice of institutions is too limited in the ERASMUS programme	23	12	16	28	23	7	11	**17**
The study period abroad is too long	6	16	10	24	21	8	8	**13**
The study period abroad is too short	0	1	5	4	6	2	4	**3**
Expected difficulties with the recognition of credits in my home institution	60	25	42	36	39	14	19	**34**
Lack of integration between the curriculum abroad and in current country of study	49	25	26	39	40	15	24	**31**
Incompatibility of calendar year between my current institution and institutions abroad	17	13	13	24	25	9	16	**17**
Lack of study programmes in English in hosting institution (abroad)	20	17	12	34	26	8	23	**20**
Lack of support to find accommodation abroad	17	24	16	36	35	12	17	**22**

Table 21: Reasons for having not considered taking part in ERASMUS
(mean scores)

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB	Total
Not interested in a study abroad programme	2.46	2.39	2.17	2.72	2.35	2.51	2.51	**2.42**
Study abroad is not important for my future career	2.49	2.10	2.05	2.53	2.45	2.24	2.64	**2.35**
Study abroad would delay my graduation	3.09	3.04	2.94	2.43	2.83	2.12	2.68	**2.67**
Study abroad is too costly	3.80	2.76	3.52	3.82	4.01	2.75	3.36	**3.48**
I am uncertain about education quality abroad	2.80	2.37	2.67	2.82	3.11	2.44	2.88	**2.78**
I am uncertain about education system abroad (e.g. examinations)	3.09	2.34	2.75	3.35	3.30	2.47	3.14	**2.95**
Difficulties to find an appropriate institution and/or study programme abroad	3.31	2.61	2.70	2.71	3.05	2.33	2.79	**2.76**
Lack of language skills to follow a course abroad	3.31	2.11	2.57	3.33	3.68	2.04	3.68	**3.00**
Family reasons or personal relationships that make going abroad difficult	3.26	3.35	2.78	3.04	3.14	3.46	2.65	**3.10**
Work responsibilities in my home country of study	3.17	1.97	2.26	2.61	2.26	2.12	2.07	**2.25**
Decided to study abroad for a full degree at a later date	1.94	1.16	1.82	1.73	1.39	1.51	1.47	**1.52**
I never heard of the ERASMUS programme	1.43	1.94	3.06	1.39	1.67	2.43	2.37	**2.11**
I could not find enough information about the ERASMUS programme and how it works	2.20	2.49	3.25	1.94	2.09	3.04	2.36	**2.51**
Too high competition to obtain an ERASMUS grant	2.71	2.16	2.74	2.86	2.70	2.00	2.27	**2.49**
Difficulties to meet ERASMUS administrative requirements	2.86	2.05	2.43	2.52	2.40	1.98	2.03	**2.27**
ERASMUS grant is insufficient to cover additional costs of period abroad	3.43	2.69	2.93	3.29	3.79	2.16	2.36	**3.01**
Uncertainty about the benefits of the ERASMUS period abroad	3.17	2.49	2.81	2.89	3.14	2.56	2.80	**2.85**
The choice of institutions is too limited in the ERASMUS programme	2.69	2.12	2.63	2.66	2.65	1.85	2.33	**2.41**
The study period abroad is too long	1.97	2.31	2.28	2.35	2.49	1.91	2.09	**2.25**
The study period abroad is too short	2.00	1.76	2.10	1.73	2.00	1.62	1.92	**1.88**
Expected difficulties with the recognition of credits in my home institution	3.63	2.35	3.09	2.86	3.09	1.98	2.36	**2.71**
Lack of integration between the curriculum abroad and in current country of study	3.37	2.42	2.77	3.00	3.12	2.14	2.53	**2.74**
Incompatibility of calendar year between my current institution and institutions abroad	2.20	1.98	2.43	2.58	2.71	1.87	2.24	**2.36**
Lack of study programmes in English in hosting institution (abroad)	2.57	2.31	2.33	2.78	2.71	1.76	2.58	**2.42**
Lack of support to find accommodation abroad	3.00	2.59	2.50	2.93	2.99	1.94	2.34	**2.59**

Table 22: Measures that would have stimulated students to participate

(% of students considering the factor important or very important)

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB	Average
Increased value of ERASMUS grant	66	57	56	77	81	44	55	**62**
Increasing flexibility in student financing system	64	49	51	71	78	42	53	**58**
Information on ERASMUS programme	53	40	47	45	67	52	67	**53**
Information on the benefits of mobility	46	32	37	44	65	44	46	**45**
Recognition of credits	75	51	70	74	81	51	60	**66**
Flexibility in curriculum	67	52	51	75	75	47	59	**61**
Compatibility of calendar year	42	42	50	53	64	43	51	**49**
Making the period of studying abroad compulsory	35	33	41	33	42	35	36	**36**
Language learning at secondary education	62	25	34	63	73	22	49	**47**
Language learning at higher education	73	34	41	72	76	24	56	**54**
Provide study periods in foreign languages	75	41	50	59	75	24	48	**53**
Possibility to participate in the full degree study programme	52	21	34	53	57	31	37	**41**
Possibility to undertake ERASMUS study period in one year master programmes	60	27	37	58	64	36	50	**47**
Possibility to undertake shorter mobility periods	36	43	47	51	39	47	42	**44**
Possibility to choose the university including the ones which do not have agreements with the home institution	76	49	63	69	67	48	55	**61**
Increasing attractiveness of the hosting higher education institutions	51	39	39	56	61	32	46	**46**
Increase the quality of experiences abroad	54	27	45	55	65	31	52	**47**

Table 23: Measures that would have stimulated students to participate

(mean scores)

	CZ	FI	DE	PO	ES	SE	GB	Total
Increased value of ERASMUS grant	3.96	3.53	3.51	4.18	4.31	3.10	3.44	**3.97**
Increasing flexibility in student financing system	3.85	3.29	3.30	3.92	4.19	3.01	3.37	**3.82**
Information on ERASMUS programme	3.65	3.05	3.27	3.32	3.89	3.34	3.80	**3.62**
Information on the benefits of mobility	3.45	2.75	2.94	3.24	3.84	3.11	3.24	**3.47**
Recognition of credits	4.17	3.29	3.92	4.05	4.28	3.31	3.62	**4.01**
Flexibility in curriculum	3.84	3.31	3.40	4.03	4.11	3.22	3.54	**3.83**
Compatibility of calendar year	3.35	3.03	3.32	3.49	3.81	3.02	3.37	**3.55**
Making the period of studying abroad compulsory	3.04	2.60	2.94	2.84	3.20	2.75	2.78	**3.01**
Language learning at secondary education	3.75	2.49	2.83	3.68	4.04	2.29	3.29	**3.53**
Language learning at higher education	4.02	2.75	3.02	3.97	4.14	2.38	3.45	**3.68**
Provide study periods in foreign languages	4.17	2.98	3.29	3.71	4.10	2.36	3.23	**3.66**
Possibility to participate in the full degree study programme	3.56	2.36	2.75	3.43	3.61	2.62	2.99	**3.27**
Possibility to undertake ERASMUS study period in one year master programmes	3.71	2.52	2.83	3.57	3.80	2.72	3.23	**3.43**
Possibility to undertake shorter mobility periods	3.03	3.04	3.11	3.31	3.05	3.10	3.08	**3.09**
Possibility to choose the university including the ones which do not have agreements with the home institution	4.04	3.20	3.69	3.91	3.89	3.21	3.51	**3.74**
Increasing attractiveness of the hosting higher education institutions	3.46	2.89	3.02	3.55	3.71	2.70	3.25	**3.42**
Increase the quality of experiences abroad	3.59	2.62	3.12	3.54	3.83	2.67	3.46	**3.49**

ANNEX 3: CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1: Finland

Finland was selected as one of the case studies, as it has a relatively high participation rate in ERASMUS and the perceived financial barriers were very low in Finland. For example, only 0.8% of Finnish ERASMUS students reported that they have many friends who cannot participate due to financial reasons, compared to 6% in Italy and 11% in Poland. This may be a result of the fact that most students in Finland, unlike in Italy and Poland, receive government aid.

The case study is based on a documentary review and three focus groups meetings with (1) national representatives from the most relevant stakeholders; (2) students that participated in ERASMUS, students that went abroad via another programme and students that chose not to go abroad, and (3) institutional ERASMUS or international coordinators. Results of the documentary review and the resulting issues and/or questions to be discussed were sent to all participants before the focus group meetings, in order to ensure an efficient process of data gathering.

General findings

Finnish participation in ERASMUS is very high, as so is Finnish mobility in general. According to the official statistics, 9,000 Finnish students went abroad last year, and the estimate does not include short-term exchanges. The Finnish government is specifically promoting international student mobility as part of its internationalisation strategy. The ERASMUS programme is an important instrument to reach these internationalisation goals. The Finnish Ministry of Education is now even in the process of setting targets for internationalisation as part of the financing scheme of its higher education institutions. The set of indicators are currently being discussed in the final consultation round with all stakeholders.

Although participation in ERASMUS is high in Finland, possibilities to increase participation in ERASMUS and mobility in general may still be found. The available positions are not completely filled on a yearly basis, nor is the budget for scholarships fully exhausted.

Personal motivation

According to all stakeholders, personal motivation is highly relevant to the decision to participate in ERASMUS, if not the most important reason. Reasons seem to vary according to a type of students and a field of studies. Students in Finland make pragmatic choices to participate, based on their specific personal situation.

Participants of the three focus group meetings indicated that decisions to participate in ERASMUS are mainly a choice for a specific university, the content of a specific exchange programme and available courses, rather than the specific characteristics of the ERASMUS programme. For example, one of the students who was undertaking a degree in advertising chose to participate in an exchange programme at the University of Pennsylvania, USA, as it is a well-known location for its expertise in the field of advertising. She commented:

> *"I did not pay attention to the specific exchange program. I just wanted to go to the university that offers the best programme in advertising. My first choice was Pennsylvania, the second best was Germany. Had I not been accepted to Pennsylvania, I would have gone to Germany, which then automatically would have been part of the ERASMUS program."*

For her the decision to participate in ERASMUS was an academic one, as it could benefit her future career. Other students indicated that they made a very conscious decision to participate in ERASMUS due to social reasons and 'soft skills' such as the desire for new life

experiences, learning a new language and culture. One student specifically participated in an ERASMUS exchange programme to the University of Lille, France, to learn a new language and culture.

Other personal reasons for participation may also include family ties and group-decision making. Students who did not participate indicated they did not do so mainly due to family reasons, which was confirmed in the focus group meeting with both institutional and national representatives. Students in Finland are older on average than students elsewhere in Europe, with the exception of other Scandinavian countries. As a result, the amount of adult students is also significantly higher in Finland. Besides family motives, participation in an exchange programme may also lead to a 'double housing' problem and associated expenses for these students. One student in his mid-thirties did not participate in ERASMUS exactly for this reason: he chose to stay at home due to family reasons. Another student managed to organise around this: she wanted to go on an exchange program, but only with her boyfriend. As Warsaw university was the only university offering two places, she chose to participate in an exchange programme in Warsaw.

The institutional coordinators also commented on the fact that students seem to opt for specific destinations based on the image of the city or country. This may be an exchange that is part of ERASMUS, or another type of exchange. In general, students seem to be looking more for "exotic" countries than for an academic programme of substance advancing their careers. As one of the coordinators commented, "*sometimes I feel more like a travel agency*".

Another factor of personal motivation influencing participation is the field of study of the particular student. The national stakeholders agreed that participation may be higher amongst students who undertake studies in the fields of social sciences and humanities. The institutional coordinators confirmed this view. In addition, both parties agreed that different participation rates exist between different *types* of universities. Finland has a dual university system, with academic universities on the one hand and universities of applied science on the other hand. Students in academic universities seem to participate more in ERASMUS than those in the applied science universities. Especially Master students in the applied science universities seem to participate less, as they need to have at least 3 years of working experience before being accepted into a Masters program. These students are thus older when the ability to participate in ERASMUS arises, which may cause problems in the family area.

Awareness

Awareness of the ERASMUS programme is high in Finland. The programme is seen as a "solid brand" by national representatives, institutional coordinators and students.

The HEIs actively market all exchange programs, including ERASMUS, by providing information in the international offices, organising information sessions and more general marketing activities through the use of promotional materials, such as posters and flyers. Moreover, the fact that internationalisation is at the core of Finnish educational policy also stimulates student mobility. As one student commented, "*I felt great pressure to become internationally mobile*". On the other hand, a factor in this internationalisation policy that may work against the promotion of the ERASMUS programme, is the fact that the Finnish government is putting a lot of emphasis on economical cooperation between Finland and the so-called emerging markets (e.g. China, India). Both students and national representatives stressed this point.

The "brand" of the ERASMUS programme is perceived mainly as a 'social' programme, i.e. the programme offers a nice break from daily life, a chance for a fun time abroad. For many students, this so-called "fun factor", was a specific reason to participate in the programme. One student who went to Braga, Portugal explained: "I participated in

ERASMUS because it is a fun program: you meet new people and have fun with other exchange students. I just used the time abroad as some time off from normal life."

Yet, this image also hinders participation in the programme. Some students who wish to undertake an exchange to strengthen their future employment possibilities, make a very conscious decision to refrain from participating in the programme, or choose to participate in a more formal programme with an academic focus. As one student who applied for an exchange to Japan commented, "*I am going to Japan, because it will benefit my career in tourism. I will live with a Japanese family and mingle with Japanese students. I will specifically try to avoid other exchange students who are just there for the fun of an exchange* ".

Although the coordinators emphasized that gathering social skills is also useful, universities have adopted a new policy that specifies a minimum of credits as a requirement of the ERASMUS grant.

An important insight form Finland is the impact of incoming students on the overall awareness about the programme and on the personal motivation to participate, or not participate, in the programme. Also the opinion that professors hold about the ERASMUS programme is to a large extent based on experiences with incoming students. The image of the ERASMUS exchange is thus greatly influenced by the visiting students. Most exchange students seem to stick together and do not fully integrate into Finnish student life. In addition, many of the students that visit the Finnish institutions are mainly there for social reasons. This strengthens the image of the ERASMUS programme as a "fun year abroad". By putting more focus on integration of the incoming students through a buddy or mentoring system, institutions may permeate this image of the ERASMUS students as one coherent group of students seeking fun. Another option is to put greater emphasis on integrating students in the local community by doing community work.

Financial issues

Financial barriers as such are generally low in Finland. Almost all students receive financial aid through the national funding scheme. However, regional differences within the country may affect the personal financial situation of students. All stakeholders indicated that students in the capital area generally have a job to pay for their studies and expenses. In the rural areas a few students work because living expenses are significantly lower in these areas and opportunities for employment are low. For students in the city, financial barriers may therefore exist. The fact that they may lose their job while they go away influences their participation. On the other hand, participation in the city is higher than in the regional areas so this barrier is very relative.

According to the students, the ERASMUS grant covers only a small amount of the expenses. Representatives from the national internationalisation agency CIMO confirmed this: the amount of the scholarship is set at the absolute base-line of 200 euros, as indicated by the European Commission. Should less students participate in a given year, the amount will be raised up to a maximum level of 350 euros.

One student that went on an exchange to Sweden indicated he specially chose to participate in the Nordplus programme instead of ERASMUS because of a higher grant. The decision was primarily based on academic reasons however: he had already decided he wanted to go to a business school in Sweden and then decided which programme to choose to facilitate the exchange.

The students did question the fairness of the distribution of the grant, as the difference in living expenses between certain host countries is very large. This was however not a reason for any of the students to opt for a cheaper destination. The institutional coordinators confirmed this trend: students did not seem to base their decision on financial

barriers, but choose destinations that match their personal motivation. For example, the costs of living may indeed be a factor for students that decide to go to Southern Europe. Yet, the "exotic" nature of these countries, the culture and the language, the more personal factors are of more importance.

ERASMUS conditions

Two types of ERASMUS conditions were discussed during the focus groups: the institutional conditions, which may differ according to university, faculty, professor or subject, and the more general ERASMUS conditions as set by the European Commission.

The fact that the institutional conditions differ according to programme did not influence the decision to participate. Students felt that the institutional coordinators provided sound information and help during the application process.

There seemed to be higher competition for available places at universities in the capital area than at universities in the rural areas, especially for popular destinations. One student smartly managed around the competition by opting for a destination no students had gone to before, *"I specifically choose a destination I knew would not be popular amongst the other students, so I would maximize the chance to get accepted into the programme"*.

The administrative burden was no more than a hassle for those students participating. Students who participated in other programmes, experienced the same burden, whereas for students who did not participate the ERASMUS conditions and the administration had not influenced their decision not to participate.

The institutional coordinators did comment on the high level of bureaucracy for the more general conditions, especially with regards to the learning agreements, which involves a process of faxing and mailing papers back and forth. They proposed a more streamlined European-wide information system.

System compatibility

Although universities, as part of the Bologna process, are working hard to create more system compatibility, the recognition of international credits is also dependent on individual professors and curriculum coordinators. According to the institutional coordinators, this may pose problems at times. They therefore stress the importance of teaching staff mobility, so that teaching staff could have a first-hand experience with the importance of mobility and the level of education elsewhere.

Students did not experience any problems with the recognition of credits upon return, as the Finnish universities seemed to be really flexible. One student who was not able to take the courses she applied for, due to changes in the schedule at the host institution, had her credits recognised as a minor. Another student who took different courses than she applied for, immediately had her courses recognised upon return, without any difficulties.

Students did however feel that the differences in academic programmes and calendars were a problem, especially during the application process. The institutional coordinators recognised this problem. Upon arrival, many students were no longer able to take those classes they registered for, due to changes at the host institutions. Some of them were informed at a very late stage that they would not be able to take those classes they applied for. Although the Finnish home institutions were in general very flexible with the recognition, this did create problems for those students who opted for a particular programme or university for academic reasons. The institutional coordinators did argue that there seems to be a significant difference between the recognition policy of the Finnish universities and for example the southern universities.

According to the institutional coordinators bilateral ERASMUS agreements between universities also have an effect. Some institutions set different rules for the recognition of credits and for the acceptance of students into specific courses.

The institutional coordinators noted that great differences exist in the information and guidance that host institutions offer to visiting students. One way to improve this may be to design European-wide uniform orientation courses, which include guidance on language, culture and more practical issues regarding the specific institution. One common standard will ensure that all ERASMUS students are treated equally.

Conclusions and recommendations

Mobility seems to be spread unevenly across Finnish students: while participation rates are high, the programme mainly targets academic students in the fields of social sciences and arts. In addition, regional differences impact the decision to participate. The challenge is to find new ways to adapt the programme so that participation rates can be more evenly spread between types of universities and locations of students. It may therefore be wise to create more flexibility in the ERASMUS program. Incorporating more short-term activities would perhaps attract those students that now refrain from participating due to family reasons. Moreover, it will create new possibilities for those students afraid to loose their jobs when leaving the country for a longer time and for students in the field of sciences to participate without losing credits or increasing the total study duration. Other methods to increase flexibility may include summer schools and intensive (language) programmes.

More flexibility may also be created through virtual mobility, which may further foster a sense of European citizenship amongst students, and thereby decrease regional differences. Courses that include short-term international visits and virtual cooperation between people from different nationalities may raise the level of participants. The promotion of teacher and staff mobility should be further enhanced. Teachers play an important part in the stimulation of students to participate in ERASMUS. By enhancing teaching staff mobility, student mobility will therefore be enhanced at the same time. More teaching staff mobility may also create less problems in recognition of credits, as mutual trust and understanding between two partner institutions can grow through direct experience.

All participants of the focus groups were exited about the new placement possibilities of the ERASMUS programme. The national representatives believed that work experience abroad would be especially valued by Finnish employers. Moreover, the placements have increased participation in ERASMUS of the universities of applied sciences, creating a more even distribution of participation. Both the national representatives and the institutional coordinators believed there were still possibilities for the number of placements to grow by increasing the budget for the placements.

Students suggested that further information on ERASMUS during their first year of studies would especially stimulate those students that choose not to go abroad due to academic reasons. If students know well in advance that the possibility to go abroad may arise at a certain point during the degree, they can better ‘plan’ the ideal moment to participate in ERASMUS.

Students also indicated they would prefer a more integrated European academic calendar, so that the courses they elect before going on exchange can be planned well in advance. At the institutional level, universities may focus on decreasing the amount of bilateral agreements, while at the same time deepening the existing agreements, so that matches between different curricula can be made more easily.

CASE STUDY 2: The Netherlands

We have selected the Netherlands as one of our case studies, as it demonstrates very contradictive results: on the one hand, it has a relatively average participation rate in ERASMUS, on the other hand, perceived financial barriers for participation are very low, indicating no relationship between financial barriers and ERASMUS participation. The Socio-economic Survey of ERASMUS students (Souto Otero and McCoshan 2006) indicated that ERASMUS students tend to come from wealthier families, which would then indicate some participation barrier for some types of students. Another striking factor is that participation seems to have decreased in the Netherlands over the 5 years. Yet, the past year, participation rates have grown to such an extent that the budget was fully exhausted.

The case study is based on a documentary review and three focus groups meetings with national representatives from the most relevant stakeholders, student representatives and institutional ERASMUS or international coordinators.

General characteristics

Dutch participation in ERASMUS has increased in the past years and the available budget for ERASMUS scholarships was fully exhausted this year. As a result of the high participation rate, the Dutch ERASMUS budget was exhausted in an earlier stage than in previous years. NUFFIC is considering lowering the amount of the scholarship per student (currently 250 euros) so that more students would be able to participate.

Personal motivation

The decision to participate in ERASMUS seems to be more related to individual aspirations and decisions than employability concerns, according to student representatives. They note that the ERASMUS programme is increasingly losing value for the labour market and companies do not seem to value an ERASMUS experience as before. According to one representative: "*I know students that now exclude their ERASMUS experience from their resumes, as they believe it may have a negative impact on their employment possibilities.*" Moreover, ERASMUS is no longer a necessary factor to distinguish oneself on the labour market. If given the choice between a person who went on an ERASMUS exchange and someone who did not, the employer may still choose the former. But the experience of an ERASMUS exchange will not help a student to find a job more easily or quicker.

Language and geography are important factors that impact the personal motivation to participate. These factors may be restrictive factors to participation: Dutch students generally look for education in English, which limits the amount of choices students can make, as education in English is not available everywhere. Moreover, the 'experience' of Europe may be stronger for Dutch students, due to the central location of the Netherlands. Students are used to travelling in Europe and have learned about other European cultures. Europe is therefore not always 'exciting' or perceived by students as 'going abroad'.

ERASMUS in the Netherlands especially competes with other possibilities for broadening one's horizon, such as a year in the board of several student organizations. The rules and regulations for total degree time have become stricter over the years in the Netherlands: students who finish their degrees with a delay, often have to finance the delay themselves. As a result, students are forced to choose between an experience abroad, and other options, such as a function in the board of different types of student unions or other student communities. For some students, the ERASMUS experience may cause an (unwanted) extension of the total degree time.

In addition, other personal factors of motivation, such as pull-factors in other countries: for example the 'quality' of the programmes in other countries, may also impact. These are not very strong for Dutch students in European countries, except for the UK. The choice to

participate may therefore not be based on the programme, but the quality of the university, regardless if the university lies in Europe or elsewhere.

Institutional coordinators confirm that personal motivation may vary according to type of students. According to them, soft skills are not the main reasons for leaving, but students do indicate in their evaluation that gaining more 'soft skills' during the exchange period was indeed very valuable. Students often choose a country due to reasons of personal motivation: they already have connection with the country, know people, or have interest in it. Students however, also go to host universities because of a 'good reputation' of the institution. It is however, in some cases also common for students to participate because of the specific financial support for the ERASMUS exchange.

Lastly, motivation for ERASMUS placements and ERASMUS studies differ greatly according to student coordinators. ERASMUS study is more about the academic content / skills. ERASMUS placement is more about learning for the job.

Awareness

All parties agree that Dutch students are generally very aware of the existence of the ERASMUS programme and the possibility to receive a scholarship. According to the institutional coordinators, the group of students who sign up for ERAMUS is especially aware that grants are available for ERASMUS exchange. The awareness has increased over the past years. The increase may be a consequence of NUFFIC's campaign to increase awareness of the ERASMUS programme, after the European Commission encourage this. NUFFIC has approached all institutional coordinators and requested them to promote ERASMUS amongst students. NUFFIC has also developed brochures about ERASMUS and update the website www.wilweg.nl.

However, the ERASMUS programme seems to be only one of the many options for going abroad. The image of ERASMUS is also very dependent on the image of the available countries, institutions and programmes: the choice to go abroad does not so much depend on the characteristics of the ERASMUS programme, but rather on the choice of country: Is the country 'exciting' – 'exotic' –'new'? Other facilities within the ERASMUS programme are less known or relevant to / for students. This is especially so for ERASMUS placements. These are less (but still well) known.

Financial issues

All parties agree that financial barriers do not have a large impact on possibilities for Dutch students to go on ERASMUS. According to the student representatives, the amount of the scholarship is less relevant for a student than the idea that he/she can receive a scholarship or even participate. Institutional coordinators confirm this. Many universities are headed towards a deficit in the budget for 2010-2011. Consequently, there is a plan to lower the grant size. Whether this will influence students' decision to participate is not yet known. According to the universities, however, the responses to the lowering of the scholarship for 2010-2011 are considerably milder than the reaction on the waiting list (= probability of no exchange) in 2009-2010. The national stakeholders note that this may be due to the fact that students in the Netherlands receive a basic student loan that is portable when participating in ERASMUS. Dutch students may therefore have more possibilities to study abroad than students in other countries.

The ERASMUS programme also competes with other grants: sometimes institutions or countries also reward grants for students who participate in other exchange programs, such as the Nordplus programme or partnership exchanges. This is a possible pull-factor. Moreover, some institutions grant additional funding on top of the ERASMUS grant based on study results, country/institution of origin (partner funding). This may stimulate students to chose particular countries. For many destinations, such as is the case in the University of Utrecht, there are also other scholarship options. For many students it is

therefore an extra motivation that when participating in ERASMUS they get a nice extra amount in comparison to other programmes. This is still a substantial amount per month.

ERASMUS conditions

The student representatives believe that the rules, regulations and procedures of the ERASMUS programme are complex: often rules differ per institution and/or faculty. Moreover, students have to gather information from different people and/or institutions (faculty/international offices/NUFFIC), which can be confusing at times. NUFFIC confirms this by noting that it is not the only partner that can set conditions: institutions may also set specific requirements – this can also be confusing for students at times. In general, these institutional conditions are more dominant than the ERASMUS conditions. According to the student coordinators, however, most students believe (especially in hindsight) that providing 4-5 documents is not too much work in order to be able to obtain a grant.

At the same time, it is difficult to generalize about the possible barriers a student may encounter with regards to ERASMUS conditions, as the rules and regulations to go abroad differ per degree/institution/faculty or even subject. Moreover, for the universities the rules and regulation with regard to payments of the scholarships are problematic. The selection of students for exchange (within and outside Europe) is made before the total budget becomes clear (Jan / Feb). This group is then counting on the possibility to go abroad. Yet, this opportunity may get cancelled because of the budget deficit. The ERASMUS grant is thus always too late for a decision / notification / selection decision to be taken in time. The group of students that participate in ERASMUS placements is much more heterogeneous, also in preparation and supervision. The procedures within departments at universities are therefore very different, according to student coordinators.

System compatibility

Discussions on system compatibility mainly refer to recognition issues and the impact of the Bologna process. Student representatives agreed that there were still problems in the recognition of credits upon return. This does not seem to be a problem as much in the Netherlands as it is in many other countries. The ESN International Board has conducted a research on this: PRIME (Problems in Recognition of ERASMUS). The results indicated that there are still problems with recognition of credits. These were mainly caused by incompatibility of study programmes and problems with the calculation of and recognition of certain courses. The national partners corroborated this: especially the calculation of credits does indeed still cause problems. Although all EU countries now use the EC system and thus the same measure unit for credits, the exact demands and description of what constitutes one EC seem to differ according to country and/or institution. For example, when a mediocre student obtains higher grades at the exchange university, this may lead to distrust at the home university. Yet, according to student representatives such results do not necessarily have to be a consequence of lower quality at the host university. Studies have shown that students do indeed seem to get better results when studying abroad. But the assumption that mediocre students may not truly improve their results is wrong: social life is different when studying abroad. As a student does not have the same social network to spend time on, he/she is inclined to study harder.

The student representatives also noted that barriers for mobility in general are increasingly diminishing, possibilities to study a whole degree programme abroad increase. This leads to less problems with recognition and may therefore also compete with participation in he ERASMUS programme.

Conclusions

The case studies demonstrate how participation in ERASMUS is mainly based on pragmatic, individual choices. As students are increasingly forced to make decisions and rules and regulations for total degree time have become stricter, they are increasingly forced to choose between an experience abroad, and other options, such as a function in the board of different types of student unions or other student communities. In the Netherlands especially, ERASMUS competes with other possibilities for broadening one's horizon. The programme seems to be only one of the many options for going abroad. In this sense, ERASMUS also competes with full degree mobility. Since barriers for mobility are increasingly diminishing, it is easier to study a whole degree programme abroad and this again competes with the ERASMUS programme. The programme also competes with other grants, which may be a possible pull-factor.

Other possible barriers may be language and geography. The "experience" of Europe may be stronger for Dutch students because of the central location of the Netherlands in Europe. Students are used to travelling in Europe and have learned about other European cultures. Europe is therefore not always "exciting" or perceived by students as "going abroad".

Language and culture are also restrictive factors to participation: Dutch students generally look for education in English, which is not available everywhere. In addition, the ERASMUS programme is increasingly losing value as a programme of substance – students focus seems to lie more on the 'social experience'. Moreover, ERASMUS is no longer a necessary factor to distinguish oneself on the labour market.

The case study demonstrates that the possibilities for increasing participation in ERASMUS within the boundaries of the current rules and regulations are restricted. The budget for ERASMUS scholarships is already fully exhausted. It does not seem to make sense to increase participation, if budget for scholarships does not increase. If ERASMUS can grow into a tool to promote European citizenship, it can better contribute to more general EU goals. One of the recommendations student representatives made was that every university should be forced to create a part of the curriculum in which courses about Europe/European citizenship are offered. The national representatives believed that the stimulation of improved cooperation between universities would stimulate the knowledge economy.

Another possible way to manage this is to shift from a more direct focus on ERASMUS mobility to mobility in general. By focussing on a broader spectrum of mobility in general, ERASMUS could grow into a self-sustaining system of student mobility. As there seems to be confusion amongst students about the ERASMUS conditions and/or the institutional conditions, clarity or a reduced amount of rules and regulations may also help improve participation. Improvement of HE system compatibility will decrease difficulties in credit transfer and thereby diminish total study duration.

CASE STUDY 3: Poland

Poland was selected for this case study because of its combination of low participation rate of Polish students in the ERASMUS programme with high financial barriers preventing Polish students from engaging with the programme. This case study is based on the perceptions of the ERASMUS' coordinators or administrators and international officers of universities that are members of the ERASMUS charter, and on the perceptions of the representatives of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MoSHE) and the Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRES). It does not represent the perceptions of students.

Personal motivation of student

According to the participants students' personal motivation to participate in ERASMUS seems to be related more to students' perception of the impact that their participation in the ERASMUS programme will have on their own market value, i.e., their human and cultural capital, than the desire for having new life experiences, knowing a different culture and learning a new language. Some of the participants perceive the personal motivation of students as one of the barriers affecting students' participation in the ERASMUS programme. But, a participant mentioned that,

> *"Students that come back from ERASMUS show their added value due to the ERASMUS programme. In the last few years we have seen an increase of interest in the ERASMUS programme because when other students see that the students who took part in the ERASMUS have something extra than they do, they start to search for different programmes in the ERASMUS to take part, too."*

These "X Factors" are also perceived as an 'investment', as another participant put it,

> *"Students that are motivated to take part in the ERASMUS programme know that they are investing in their careers and that is the great drive and incentive for them to go to study abroad. They are aware of the fact that they are investing in themselves."*

The relationship between participation in the ERASMUS and the financial benefits acquired is stressed by a participant who claimed that:

> *"We have noticed an increase in the number of students applying to go abroad to gain skills and to practice and get experience in order to get more money, i.e., better salaries. These seem to be the reasons why students find ERASMUS beneficial more than going abroad to study and have fun.*

Another participant suggested opening up the scope of the ERASMUS to include the opportunities that the ERASMUS offers students of internships/placements abroad. He said:

> *We found that internships of all kinds are highly valued by potential employers, and an internship abroad is definitely an 'added value' to a graduate's diploma.*

These perceptions are supported by the findings of the internal evaluations of the ERASMUS participation questionnaire. According to the FRES, the Polish National Agency, around three-quarters of the students who took part in an internship/placement through the ERASMUS felt that their internships/placements had a positive influence on their future careers. According to them, around three-quarters of the students who took studies abroad through the ERASMUS also felt that their studies abroad have a positive influence on their future careers. These views are also represented in the MoSHE, a participant concurred that,

> *"Of course, employers prefer graduates that have some international experience, by the fact that these graduates had been impacted by different world cultures and were exposed to different working practices and culture."*

One can observe in these examples that working, studying or travelling toward developing a "marketable CV" is the overall motivation of students taking part in the ERASMUS, mainly when the institution of higher education they are going to have a considerable 'reputation'.

The possible financial benefits are not the only factors influencing the motivation of students. 'Academic tourism' or 'ERASMUS tourism' is a reality. As a participant argued,

> *"We all know and agree that students get value added from participating in the ERASMUS . However, the ERASMUS tourism is still an issue."*

All participants, in this study, agreed that student participation in the ERASMUS proramme has a huge impact on the progress of students when they come back to their home universities. Not only the fact that students who took part in the ERASMUS learned different things, acquired different skills and competencies, but they also acquired new life skills and experiences. A participant argued that,

> *"When student go abroad they depend on themselves only. They have to take care of themselves. So, when they come back they feel more self-confident. They know that they can do anything. That is a very good experience. Also, they know what other methods of teaching abroad are. They have access to libraries with foreign literature. And sometimes, when they are specialising in a particular field, they can go and work with equipments that are just not available in our universities."*

In sum, although taking part in the ERASMUS in order to 'gain skills', 'practice a language', 'acquire competences in order to improve their employability', 'develop the ability to work in a team' and 'develop the ability to communicate with different cultures' were perceived as some of main motivations for students to take part in the ERASMUS , 'ERASMUS tourism' is still a strong motivator for some students to take part in the ERASMUS . Positive experiences in the ERASMUS programme confirm findings from earlier reports (FRSE Report, 2008; Souto-Otero and McCoshan, 2006).

Awareness

All the participants agreed that in Poland, to a great extent, all students are aware of the ERASMUS programme. Even those students from poorer socio-economic background are aware that there is such a programme and that it offers them the possibility to study abroad. The activities to increase the level of awareness in institutions vary from: (1) meetings once or twice a year to divulgate the ERASMUS ; (2) word of mouth, where teachers talk to students about the benefits of taking part in the ERASMUS and students who took part in the ERASMUS talk to other students about their experiences and learning opportunities; (3) the ERASMUS' webpage; (4) the universities' webpage; (5) delivery of lectures on the ERASMUS programme for first-year students; (6) students' organisations spreading the information about the ERASMUS; (7) other electronic networks such as YouTube and Facebook to promote the ERASMUS; to (8) those involved working in collaboration in order to help students understand the importance that the ERASMUS plays in their career prospects. However, it appears that the level of awareness varies according to the size of the academic cities, i.e., the size of the city where the universities are located. A participant mentioned that,

> *"In the bigger cities students are more aware of the ERASMUS because of the publicity that universities create around the ERASMUS disseminating it amongst students. It is self-supporting in a sense. In smaller cities, students are not so aware of the ERASMUS. They are not motivated to take part in the ERASMUS."*

Another participant begged to disagree. She stated,

> *"I disagree that students from smaller cities are not aware and are not as motivated as students from bigger cities. The majority of applications we get are from students of smaller cities and villages. That means that students from smaller cities and villages are more aware and motivated than students from bigger cities. They dream more about going to study abroad than students from bigger academic cities. It is really the opposite."*

A participant indicated that there are two levels of awareness, as students can be made aware that the ERASMUS programme exists, but that students also have to be made aware of the potential financial benefits they will get if they take part in the programme. He maintained that,

> *I think that the level of awareness means letting students understand the advantages of studying abroad. When students are aware that they are investing in themselves, they are willing to find the sources of extra funding to pay for their subsistence and their staying abroad. Once they know that they are investing in themselves and that they never lose, they are more willing to make the extra effort. What we have to do is to make students more aware of the fact that they are investing in themselves by taking part in the ERASMUS programme.*

This second level of awareness seems to be established in Poland, as the majority of the institutions supported the statement of another participant, "*We do make students aware of the benefits of taking part in the ERASMUS when they come to us*".

Regarding the effectiveness of these policies and practices, the overall majority of the institutions believe that they are effective and that they are working well, as many more students are coming every day to their offices and enquiring about the ERASMUS programme.

In sum, there are various means of divulgating and promoting the ERASMUS which are supported by the FRSE Report (2008). According to this report, the great majority of universities (76 per cent) promoted mobility among their students and/or teachers in many ways, and that the largest proportion of universities produced various publications (48 per cent) or organised conferences, seminars or workshops (44.1 per cent) and/or organised ERASMUS Days (41.6 per cent) (FRSE, 2008: 35). One can observe that there are two levels of awareness and that more and more institutions are making their students aware of the possible impact that their participation in the ERASMUS will have on their professional careers. Souto-Otero and McCoshan (2006: 11) found that over 40 per cent of their participants reported that the ERASMUS had changed their career-related attitudes and aspirations.

Financial issues

In relation to financial issues, all participants agreed that the level of the grant paid to ERASMUS students is not sufficient. The level of the grant paid to students has decreased as the number of students taking part in the ERASMUS has increased. Some institutions have to complement the grants from their funding resources. Some students have to acquire funds from their Local or Regional Authorities and from representatives of local businesses and industries, as their grants barely cover their expenses and costs of living. Some participants stressed that ERASMUS does not adapt to the individual needs of their institutions and their regions, as there is no scope for a special treatment in the ERASMUS, it is not flexible.

All participants also agreed that there should be more financial support available to students. However, another participant stated that "*it is up to the institutions if they decide to give higher grants to their students and reduce their mobility or the other way around. They have flexibility in this sense"*. A participant stressed the availability of other sources of funding. She said that:

> *"In Warsaw, there are also grants in the bigger cities which help students going to study abroad. They are not related to the ERASMUS, but we are also applying to these grants for our ERASMUS students. It is a kind of support of the government of the cities, i.e., their Local Authorities and Regional Governments."*

Another participant argued that the scholarships that students receive in their universities are portable. He described that:

> *"Since early 90s, our scholarships in our universities are portable and they still operate in this sense. So, students can take them wherever they go to study abroad. So, they can use it to additionally support the ERASMUS grant. Some of our universities also give some extra money as a grant or as a special grant in order to support students taking part in the ERASMUS. For example, my university gives some extra money to students for their travelling tickets and it does not matter the price of the tickets.*

The views above are supported by representatives of the MoSHE. However, a participant pointed out that there are other sources of funding available to students such as: (1) maintenance grants; (2) special grant for disabled persons; (3) scholarships for learning or sporting achievements; (4) scholarship for learning achievements awarded by the Minister of Science and Higher Education; (5) scholarship for outstanding sporting achievements awarded by the Minister of Science and Higher Education; (6) meals grant; (7) accommodation grant; (8) aid payment, i.e., student loan. Although, she recognises that the level of these grants are not sufficient to support students from poorest backgrounds.

In sum, all participants agreed that financial support is the biggest barrier to student participation in the ERASMUS programme, as the number of student participation increased, the ERASMUS grant has decreased. According to the FRSE Report (2008: 58) the average monthly grant awarded to students in the ERASMUS decreased steadily from 375 Euros in 1998/99 to 148 Euros in 2003/04, then rose substantially and continued to rise to 323 Euros in 2006/07. They all contend that the grants for ERASMUS students should cover their expenses and cost of living abroad. They argued that the ERASMUS should support students from poor backgrounds, should offer scholarships for those with best grades and that more financial support should be available to support foreign internships. However, some participants stressed that when students are motivated to take part in the ERASMUS programme, they overcome these financial difficulties. The FRSE Report (2008: 86) found that 20 per cent of the ERASMUS students stated that their grants satisfied their financial needs, for 30 per cent of the ERASMUS students stated that their grants did not satisfy their financial needs, and for 50 per cent the ERASMUS students the level of satisfaction is not clear, as they could be 'more-or-less satisfied', 'fair' or 'indifferent'. The FRSE findings contradict the findings from Souto Otero and McCoshan (2006: 9) that 37 per cent of students considered their financial situation to be good or very good during their ERASMUS period, 44 per cent considered it to be fair, and 19 per cent considered it to be poor or very poor. However, the FRSE Report (2008: 117-118) stated that many universities are unanimous in complaining about the level of funding available to ERASMUS students; that the mobility grants only partially cover the cost of the mobility, as they are lower than other programmes; that the number of students have increase and the level of the grant has decreased; and that the grant does not cover the costs of linguistic, cultural and/or pedagogical preparation of students and the organisation of student placements. These statements seems to reflect the findings of Souto-Otero and McCoshan (2006: 9), reporting that 55 per cent of their respondents considered ERASMUS grant to be insufficient for their mobility period abroad and that their financial problems were notably affected by the cost of living in their host country.

ERASMUS conditions

The conditions of the ERASMUS are also framed by the financial issues reported above, as the level of grants can impact on e.g. the quality of accommodation and also on the quality of subsistence. However, a participant pointed out that the inclusion of other stakeholders such as employers from businesses and industries could contribute to the grant offered to ERASMUS students, as they also benefit from the knowledge, skills, experiences and competencies that students developed during their participation in the ERASMUS programme.

In relation to the requirements for student participation in the ERASMUS, all participants agreed that the requirements for student participation are proper and universal amongst ERASMUS participating institutions. The selection of criteria to be fulfilled is not a problem. As the FRSE points out, 'getting higher grades is the main rule'. A participant stressed that:

> *"In fact the most important requirement is: to be a student registered at the university having ERASMUS University Charter, studying a programme having inter-institutional agreement with foreign university (which is crucial for academic recognition) having good academic performance and language abilities and willing to go abroad with ERASMUS."*

However, another participant claimed that the rules are interpreted differently by individual universities, faculties and departments. They are not as strict as it is claimed.

In sum, all participants agreed that the financial support has an impact on the conditions that ERASMUS students find themselves abroad and that the application process of the ERASMUS is not bureaucratic. The requirements for student participation in the ERASMUS are flexible enough to allow interpretations from institutions and their faculties and departments. Information provided by the receiving institution about the conditions of accommodation, support given to students, and the quality of teaching also have impact on the conditions of the ERASMUS programme, as they will determine the student experience in the ERASMUS. The FRSE Report (2008: 117) found that some universities praised the ERASMUS for little bureaucracy, easy application for grants and simple submission procedures of application and reports, and other universities found it excessively bureaucratic, complicated in its administrative procedures and it is excessively complex in its monitoring of mobility.

System compatibility

Although the ERASMUS can only be applied to universities that are members of the ERASMUS Charter, and the rules on ECTS are quite clear, the recognition of programmes that ERASMUS students study abroad are an issue. All participants stated that professors always stand in the way of recognition of credits gained from students studying abroad. This according to them is one of their main problems when students come back from taking part in the ERASMUS, as professors' prejudice and their discrimination against courses taken through the ERASMUS make really hard to get courses recognised. A participant mentioned that,

> *The attitudes of academics towards the ERASMUS programme and the way in which they talk about it to students have a serious effect on student motivation and participation. Their prejudice against the ERASMUS programme becomes overt when the professors do not accept ERASMUS courses and devalue the ERASMUS.*

Another participant pointed out that the delay in sending students' records and the amount of ECTS credits students get also impact on the recognition of the courses students took abroad. The rule of a minimum of 30 ECTS credits is not a well- spread practice amongst the university members of the ERASMUS Charter. A participant from the MoSHE recognises that there is a problem of recognition of course in the ERASMUS programme. She argued that,

> *"The higher education institutions should sign the learning agreement, and that means that the programme should be recognised when the student comes back to Poland. It happens that higher education institutions require participation in extra courses. In fact, they do not recognise fully the ECTS points, and that is the problem."*

The difference between the national academic calendars of the ERASMUS institutions, according to all participants, is not a problem, because they negotiate their arrangements. The difference in the numbers of semesters in certain countries is also a problem that can be easily solved between the sending and receiving institution. However the FRSE

recognises that this difference can cause a series of other problems in the sphere of recognition, applications for further study, applications for national grants, etc.

In sum, the recognition of ERASMUS courses and ECTS credits are affected by the attitude and prejudice of professors against the ERASMUS courses and the ERASMUS programme per se. It can also be affected by the differences in the national academic calendars of countries. Furthermore, it can also be affected by delays in sending the record of ERASMUS students and the number of ECTS credits. According to the FRSE Report (2008: 30), a large number of faculties/ERASMUS departments (69.4 per cent) lay down a procedure for taking decisions on the recognition of a study period abroad and on missing credits to be obtained by students, where necessary. The FRSE Report claims that these regulations ensure transparency and equal treatment of all students. The FRSE Report found that 75.3 per cent of the problems with the recognition of ERASMUS study periods result mainly from curricular differences between the sending and receiving faculties/departments. It also found that 51.7 per cent of faculties/departments did not have access to detailed information about programmes offered at a foreign university. It claims that faculties/departments problems with recognition result from 'too general provisions in the Learning Agreement (15.3 per cent) or the absence of clear procedures for making recognition decisions at the home faculty/department (9.4 per cent)' (FRSE, 2008: 40-41).

Effectiveness of the ERASMUS programme

All participants in this study maintained that the ERASMUS programme is effective and it is working well in Poland, as all participant students experience added value from taking part in the ERASMUS programme. They also claimed that the effectiveness of the ERASMUS programme can be seen in the number of students engaging with the programme. A participant noted,

> *"The ERASMUS has been beneficial to the universities and the students. It fulfils our demands, because it encompasses different activities. It helps the cooperation with employers and industry representatives. I think it is in the right direction. It is effective and efficient."*

This (and other) examples provide clear signs that the ERASMUS programme is working effectively in Poland. However, only on participant claimed that there is not enough reliable information to demonstrate the effectiveness of the programme in Poland.

Problems related with the ERASMUS programme

In most of the subsections above, one can see that there are some underlying problems with the ERASMUS programme in Poland. Some of these problems are presented under the other subsections, such as Personal motivation of student; Awareness; Financial issues; ERASMUS conditions; System compatibility; Student participation; and International student. The exceptions are the subsections on Labour market, Student progress, and Effectiveness of the ERASMUS, as only positive evidence is reported under these subsections. Although all participants contended that the ERASMU is effective and it is working well in Poland, some participants expressed their perceptions of what the problems with the ERASMUS were. One participant claimed that '*the ERASMUS is very bureaucratic*'. However the overall majority disagreed with him by asserting that '*there are other things more bureaucratic than the ERASMUS in universities*'. Although, there is an overall agreement that the ERASMUS programme is not bureaucratic, there is an overall recognition that the lack on interest and engagement of professors is a serious problem. A participant asserted,

> *"Very often the academic community does not want to get involved in the ERASMUS. There are schools and universities that struggle to send scholars abroad within the ERASMUS programme. There is very little awareness among the scholars. We do not get problems with the students, but we do get problems with the scholars."*

One can observe that the academics' willingness to directly or indirectly engage with the ERASMUS is one of the major obstacles for ERASMUS coordinators and administrators and

international officers are facing in their daily lives. Another participant stated that '*when the academics take part in the ERASMUS they promote it very well and they motivate their students to take part in it as well*'.

A participant pointed out that the policies of universities and national policies do not support the work of ERASMUS coordinators and administrators and international officers. According to him,

> *"There is a need for change in culture and attitude towards the ERASMUS programme. I was in Finland last month and I could observe the way that they approach the ERASMUS programme. They have a huge number of students taking part in the ERASMUS and they want to increase it more. They have their national policy in order to achieve this goal. Here, in Poland, it is the universities that decide what quota of mobility they are going to implement. If we had the support of the politicians, not only on the operational level, but in practice, universities would get another incentive in order to increase their mobility of students and academics."*

Another participant expanded the list of problems to include:

> *"The big fluctuation of staff at HEIs dealing with ERASMUS – due to quite low salaries in this sector people who get experience and have been well prepared to deal with the programme, leave for other sectors with better financial conditions; The lack of additional funding – for grants and for institutional development (for example: programmes taught in English, training for administrative staff); The rigid study system; lack of possibility to apply flexibility due to too many obligatory courses demanded by the home university; this causes sometimes problems with recognition; The reluctance of academic teachers to participate multilateral projects (aiming for example in curriculum development); And due to the fact that teaching does not count for the personal academic career (only research work in taken into consideration).*

Another participant supported that the main issue that makes professors disengaged with the ERASMUS is the fact that the ERASMUS does not play any role on the personal academic career of academics. She observed that:

Academics know and are aware of the ERASMUS programme, but the programme has no impact whatsoever on their academic careers. They are evaluated on their publications and research, and ERASMUS has not an impact on their work.

In sum, the attitudes, perceptions and motivations of academics to actively engage with the ERASMUS clearly need to be changed, and intervention from the national, institutional, faculty and departmental levels should be in place. National governments, universities and academics keep valuing a narrow perception of academic careers. Consequently, there is unlikely a change in academics attitudes, perceptions and motivations to actively engage with the ERASMUS in Poland.

Changes in the ERASMUS

In relation to some of the changes that ERASMUS coordinators and administrators and international officers would like to see in the ERASMUS, three issues stood out: a change in the mentality and attitudes of academics towards the ERASMUS (include mechanisms that make internationalisation and mobility more important in academic careers), the inclusion of external stakeholders (also in terms of additional resources for mobile students), to the decentralisation of the decision-making process (length of internships).

Overall conclusion

According to the participants in this study, the personal motivation of students in taking part in the ERASMUS varies from gaining skills, practicing a language, acquiring

competences in order to improve their employability, developing their ability to work in a team and developing their ability to communicate with different cultures on the one hand, to tourism on the other. ERASMUS tourism is still a motivator for some students to take part in the ERASMUS, as 'ERASMUS is not all about study'.

All participants believe that student participation in the ERASMUS has an impact on the Polish labour market, because ERASMUS students have the unique opportunity to acquire knowledge and experiences and develop skills and competencies that are vital to the international market and are valued by employers.

The participants illustrated that there are various means of divulgating and promoting the ERASMUS programme. There are two levels of awareness: the awareness of the ERASMUS and the awareness of the possible impact that ERASMUS participation have on the market value of the students. According to the participants, more and more institutions are making their students aware of the possible impact their participation in the ERASMUS will have on their professional careers.

All participants in this study agreed that financial support is the biggest barrier to student participation in the ERASMUS programme. They all contend that the grants for ERASMUS students should cover expenses and cost of living abroad. They argued that the ERASMUS should support students from poor backgrounds, should offer scholarships for those with best grades and that more financial support should be available to support foreign internships. However, some participants stressed that when students are motivated to take part in the ERASMUS, they overcome these financial difficulties.

The overall majority of the participants agreed that the financial support has an impact on the conditions of ERASMUS students once abroad. They also agreed that the application process of the ERASMUS programme is not bureaucratic. The requirements for student participation in the ERASMUS are flexible enough to allow interpretations from institutions and their faculties and departments. Information provided by the receiving institution about the conditions of accommodation, support given to students, and the quality of teaching also have impact on the conditions of the ERASMUS, as they will determine the student experience in the ERASMUS programme.

In relation to the recognition of ERASMUS courses and ECTS credits, all participants perceived that the recognition of ERASMUS courses and ECTS credits is largely affected by the prejudice of professors against the ERASMUS courses and programme in general.

The ERASMUS programme in Poland is working well and effectively. It has benefited students and their universities, faculties and schools. Academics and administrators are given the opportunity to acquire new skills, knowledge and competencies through mobility.

The attitudes, perceptions and motivations of academics to actively engage with the ERASMUS clearly need to be changed, and interventions at the national, institutional, faculty and departmental levels should be in place. As long as national governments, universities and academics continue valuing a narrow perception on academic careers, there will be no change in academics attitudes, perceptions and motivations to actively engage with the ERASMUS programme.

Changes that ERASMUS coordinators and administrators and international officers would like to see in the ERASMUS vary from change in the mentality and attitudes of academics towards the ERASMUS, and the inclusion of external stakeholders, to the decentralisation of the decision-making process.

CASE STUDY 4: Spain

Spain was selected as a case study for this project as an example of a country with reported high financial barriers to participation in ERASMUS combined with a high degree of participation in the programme. In the 2006 survey of the socio-economic background of ERASMUS students 21% of Spanish ERASMUS students[7] reported that they had 'many' friends who had thought of participating in ERASMUS but had been unable to do so mainly due to financial reasons (Souto-Otero and McCoshan 2006). A further 59% reported that they had 'some' friends in that situation. On the other hand, participation in the programme is high (above 0.9%) and has been increasing recently: from around 18,000 outgoing students in 2002/03 to over 22,000 in 2006/07, almost 25,000[8] in 2007/08 and over 27,000 in 2008/09.

The case study is based on a documentary review and four focus groups with students (who had and who had not participated in the ERASMUS programme), student representatives, ERASMUS coordinators, employer representatives, members of the Spanish national agency for the lifelong learning programme -OAPEE- (ERASMUS section), members of the Spanish Ministry of Education and representatives of financial institutions that have set up ERASMUS support programmes[9].

Personal motivation

The decision to participate in ERASMUS seems to be more related to the desire for new life experiences and to learn a new language than employability concerns, according to student representatives. However, some students believed that ERASMUS may bring some labour market benefits:

> *"My main motivation to participate in ERASMUS was personal development. However, and although I have not made any job applications yet, I have seen that some companies state in their job advertisements that they value the ERASMUS experience positively" -ERASMUS student.*

This view, however, was not uniformly shared, as some ERASMUS placement students and ERASMUS placements coordinators reported that in their experience employers in Spain do not value ERASMUS placements, although employers abroad do. A website is under preparation (´yosoyERASMUS.com´- *IamERASMUS.com*) by the Spanish national agency for ERASMUS alumni to put their CVs so that they can be recruited by employers more easily and their employability is thus improved.

Language learning is a strong motivation to study abroad, but lack of language proficiency is a barrier to participation. Student representatives argued for a greater emphasis on language teaching in secondary and higher education, but other shorter-term formulae too, to increase participation:

> *´I would favour that more places were made available in English-speaking countries and that more programmes in English were offered in non-English speaking countries, as this is the language that most people want to perfect learn, and that most people in Europe can speak´ -ERASMUS student.*

´More programmes in English would for sure increase participation in the programme´ Student representative.

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[7] In this case study the term 'Spanish ERASMUS students' refer to students in Spanish institutions, regardless of their nationality. People in advanced vocational training courses of 2 years of duration can participate in ERASMUS placements, but not student mobility.

[8] This figure includes study and placement mobility. See: http://ec.europa.eu/education/ERASMUS/doc/stat/table1.pdf.

[9] The study team is grateful to the ERASMUS Section of the Spanish Organismo Autonomo Programas Educativos Europeos (national agency for the Lifelong Learning Programme) for the preparation of these focus groups.

Whereas ERASMUS coordinators argued for greater language learning in secondary school they saw less of a need to increase provision in English as this has increased substantially already in recent times. Student representatives highlighted that motivation varies by field of study: for instance whereas in languages or architecture an ERASMUS period is highly useful, in nationally specific fields such as law its professional relevance is lower. In fact, in some degrees some ERASMUS places are often unfilled whereas in others students cannot participate in the programme due to a lack of places. Group-decision making also operates, as often students come into the programme as a result of the decision to participate of their friends. A lower number of references were made by student representatives regarding the motivation of an easy academic year abroad.

Awareness

Awareness of the ERASMUS programme is high in Spain. This works mainly through word of mouth, which is an effective dissemination mechanism once a critical mass of students participates in the programme, as it happens in Spain. HEIs, nevertheless, offer information, advice and guidance sessions (in which often student questions relate to financial issues and eligibility for non-EU students, as the number of third country students goes up in Spanish HEIs). There are also permanent international offices in HEIs that can inform about the programme on an ongoing basis. Some HEIs additionally have information on their websites – including lists of those institutions with which they have agreements. Some HEIs have e-mail lists and ERASMUS Facebook groups and organise ERASMUS students meetings and similar activities. ERASMUS has also received recently the prestigious 'Principe de Asturias' prize for international cooperation, which receives extensive press coverage and the programme is often featured in the media. Student representatives highlighted that more needs to be done in raising awareness regarding HEI in Eastern European countries, as fewer students feel attracted to institutions in those countries, but those students who go there report a high degree of satisfaction.

While the ERASMUS programme is well know, student representatives and the Organismo Autonomo Programas Educativos Europeos (ERASMUS Division) –OAPEE- highlighted a strong lack of information in relation to ERASMUS placements. Employer representatives acknowledged that the ERASMUS 'brand' is well known, but the details of the placement option are not. Thus the main problem in relation to this strand of the programme is that it is yet unknown amongst companies.

Most student representatives reported generally high quality student services in host institution, which through word of mouth plays a role in stimulating other students to participate in the programme in the future:

> *´The quality of student services was high. They had an ERASMUS bureau, who for instance helped you to find accommodation and even went with you to inspect properties. But this varies highly across institutions´ -ERASMUS student.*

However, variation by HEI is high, and student representatives considered that some standard minimum requirements should be ensured, to provide prospective students with more confidence about the ERASMUS period – in particular in relation to help with accommodation. Improving awareness and transparency of different ERASMUS co-financing schemes (cf. Section on financial issues below) was highlighted as a potential improvement to the programme. Although international offices already provide information in this respect in many HEIs, it was suggested that the information be available online, to interest more people in the programme.

Financial issues

Regarding financial issues, uncertainty about grant levels and late payment, are the main problems. As the ERASMUS grant varies year-on year, it is not possible for students to know the volume of the ERASMUS allocation in advance. As an important amount of the funding students have been obtaining in Spain comes from national co-financing –see below- and it is committed annually, ERASMUS information sessions in HEIs cannot provide

students with a precise figure regarding the financial support they will receive. Students only obtain notional information regarding the amounts awarded in previous years. Moreover, each ERASMUS grant is of a different value, as students can tap into different sources or not depending on several aspects such as income, place of study, place of residence and academic performance.

This is a difference with other international programmes, and is seen as a problem, in particular for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, as reported by student representative. Alternative study abroad programmes were reported to provide greater financial support than ERASMUS, greater security about grant amounts in the call for applications and to make payments more timely. These programmes were, on most other aspects (except geographic coverage), similar to ERASMUS as they have often, in fact, been modelled on the ERASMUS programme, as highlighted by coordinators. Policy-makers noted in this respect that ERASMUS could be better integrated with ERASMUS Mundus (which is more centred on postgraduate studies, whereas ERASMUS is focused on undergraduates) and extend its boundaries beyond the EU.

The degree of co-financing in Spain is high for ERASMUS student academic mobility. Co-financing for placements is much lower as the Spanish Ministry of Education (MEC) and regional governments (CCAA) support is only marginal for placements. Employer representatives thus noted that placements are benefiting mainly well-off Students. This high degree of co-financing is the result of great investment increases in recent times. For student academic mobility, in fact, the European grant has recently become only a small fraction of what students receive as a result of their participation in ERASMUS. Whereas national contributions made up for just over 65% of the Commission contribution in 1998-99, they made up for 120% in 2003-04 and 239% in 2008-09. National co-financing comes mainly from the MEC, all but one of the 17 CCAA, educational institutions and banks, as detailed in.

The Spanish government in particular has increased its contribution massively in the last five years. MEC financial aid has become in recent years much larger for individual students than the EU grant; it is partly means tested. Regional government grants can also be substantial, at levels above the EU grant, and can be selective depending on the economic situation of students. Since financial institutions (such as Caja Madrid which invested 10 Million Euro in ERASMUS grants in five years recently), has also been giving in the recent past substantial co-financing grants (500 Euro per month) a minority of students qualifying to different sources of financial help could go on ERASMUS with very significant grant levels –several times the contribution received from the EU. Although the Caja Madrid programme of complementary grants has been discontinued given MEC recent grant increases a number of other financial institutions continue with their complementary grant programmes, with eligibility often being dependent on being a client of the bank and region of residence.

Table 24: ERASMUS student support funds in Spain by source (in Millions of Euro)

	1998-99	2003-04	2008-09
European Commission	11.2	14.7	41.3
Spanish Education Ministry	1.3	4.6	61.0
Institutional contributions	3.1	6.3	8.0
Regional Governments	1.8	4.7	18.5
Banks	1.0	1.8	4.1
Other entities	0.1	0.5	7.3
Subsidised loans	-	-	1.7
Total	**26.0**	**50.5**	**239.2**

Source: Organismo Autonomo Programas Educativos Europeos

However, national co-financing is not always transparent for those who have not looked at the programme in-depth nor is it guaranteed, which may deter students from less privileged backgrounds from participation in the programme. Coordinators, indeed, highlighted that students often fear that the amounts they will get will not be enough to fund their period abroad. They also reported that some of the students who have already been awarded an ERASMUS grant drop-out from the programme for economic reasons.

Moreover, although the award of the grant is made before the start of the ERASMUS period payments in practice can come several months after the start of the period abroad (and the last payment also comes months after the end of the ERASMUS period), which filters students who cannot put money in advance –as highlighted by student representatives. Some problems were also reported in terms of lack of coordination in regional contributions as students who are mobile within Spain sometimes claim grants from two regional governments –one from their region of origin and one from their region of study.

As noted by the OAPEE the risk with this level of co-financing is that if national support goes down, either the OAPEE would need to reduce the number of ERASMUS grants, to maintain the overall funding students receive at its current level, or reduce their amount, which would make ERASMUS only attractive to well-off students. Another aspect is that the EU funding is one of the few sources that guarantees no geographic discrimination within the country (it is equal for all), as in Spain CCAA provide different levels of co-financing per student.

Students did not support further introduction of subsidised loans as they can already be obtained but are not attractive given the current economic climate. Moreover, they believed that loans should not make-up for what they saw as an administrative 'malfunctioning' in the late allocation of the grant. It is important to note that the current rules of EU allocation of funds per country paradoxically play against countries with high demand and high participation in ERASMUS, as Spain. The EU only takes marginally into consideration the number of students taking part in the programme at the time of allocating funds. This can have consequences in terms of overall levels of participation, as in some countries the 'unit cost' of participation is high. This also means that students in countries with high participation in the programme, such as Spain, often end up with lower grant levels than students from countries with low participation. Rules thus actually penalise high participation countries. Thus in Spain the value of the EU grant has been decreasing as the national priority has been to increase participation levels (not grant levels), and help to meet EU targets. The EU grant is today clearly insufficient and decreasing. It is also difficult to justify in the eyes of Spanish ERASMUS students that the level of EU funding received by ERASMUS students from some other countries is several times the amount they get. In fact, Spain could solve financial problems of students by reducing the number of grants

radically –as countries decide how many grants to allocate with the EU funds they receive- but this would go against EU targets.

It is interesting to note that the Spanish OPAEE uses a system whereby HEIs are monitored for their level of actual use of the number of ERASMUS grants they have allocated. If a HEI uses less than 75% of the ERASMUS grants it has allocated each year, some of its allocated grants could be withdrawn and reallocated to other HEI.

Student representatives were in favour of a more nuanced allocation of funds by country – or, ideally, city of destination as the current 'flat' allocation of funds is perceived as unfair and potentially having an impact on participation in the programme as the most desirable locations for Spanish students tend to be high-cost. This was the most popular financial measure to increase participation in ERASMUS. Students did not support that students who live at home in the home country receive a higher grant level even though their associated ERASMUS expenses are higher as, they argued, those who live outside the parental home need to keep accommodation and incur in other expenses in their home institution during their ERASMUS period.

Student representatives had mixed opinions in relation to whether parental income should be taken into account when setting the level of individual awards. Whereas some students were in favour of this to enable a wider range of students to take part in the programme, other student representatives were sceptical given the possibility of fraud.

ERASMUS conditions

The first condition students face regarding ERASMUS is its selection criteria. Discussions with students revealed that the difficulty in obtaining a ERASMUS grant varies strongly depending on the HEI and subject under consideration. Student representatives also suggested that there should be uniform criteria for selection, including academic record, language proficiency and personal interview, in that order. It is important to note that some HEIs in Spain are adopting strategies to reduce the number of ERASMUS applications by adding conditions not specified in EU regulations to the ERASMUS grant, for instance by only allowing students in the last year of the degree to apply for participation in the programme. This highlights that an approach to further increase participation will be to provide HEIs international offices with greater resources to be able to manage a greater number of applications, agreements and mobility periods. It must be noted that the size of these offices, however, can be substantial already in some HEIs. The Technical University of Madrid (Universidad Politecnica de Madrid), for instance, reported an international office staff headcount of around 60 people for a student population of around 35,000.

Student representatives did not believe that making the grant personal would increase participation in the programme, as HEIs tend to have a wide range of agreements available. The situation may vary for HEIs who have joint the programme recently, as they may find it more difficult to establish agreements, as HEIs participating in the programme already have the agreements they need. Moreover, HEIs acting as hosts would not like to deal with the processing of large numbers of potential ERASMUS students. Policy-makers noted that students would prefer to go where there is an agreement in place as this would be the only way to guarantee recognition of the period abroad in their home institution. Recognition is very often based on trust and academic's knowledge of each other. The possibility of providing additional funding to institutions in high demand was supported by student representatives.

Student representatives also highlighted that many Eastern European HEIs do not have subject programmes online or in English, which makes it difficult for students to know whether they would be interested in participating in ERASMUS and attending a particular Eastern European institution.

Student representatives and ERASMUS coordinators considered that the duration of the average periods abroad should not be reduced further, as three-month periods or shorter do not allow for sufficient language and academic learning. Student representatives favoured the possibility to study for a full programme abroad with an ERASMUS grant to improve participation in the programme.

Although the majority of students mentioned that ERASMUS is not a bureaucratic programme, student representatives criticised the high level of bureaucracy with which students need to deal. According to them, this is particularly challenging when institutional coordinators are not active. In this respect, student representatives and ERASMUS coordinators considered it important to better recognise the work ERASMUS coordinators do in their administrative/ management workloads. Currently this recognition is non existing or encompasses, at most, the reduction in teaching load equivalent to one ECTS credit, which is clearly insufficient. Some of the bureaucratic requirements students need to deal with, it was noted, derive from Spanish administrative law, rather than from ERASMUS programme requirements. These comments referred to academic mobility. Regarding placements, bureaucracy was reported as more manageable for students but not for companies, as detailed below. Student representatives suggested that further use of ICT for programme management, including the reception of marks at the home institution to avoid delays that make it difficult to enrol for the following academic year in the home institution, apply for national means-tested grants, etc.

ERASMUS coordinators saw greater potential for expansion in ERASMUS placements than in student academic mobility. There is increasing awareness and interest from Spanish students regarding placements. However, the number of grants currently available is low compared to those for academic mobility, so funding for this measure would need to increase. The main problem so far with this strand is, nevertheless, that employers are not familiar with ERASMUS placement grants and that it is difficult for HEIs/ students to find employers abroad who want to participate in the programme. Both ERASMUS coordinators and employer representatives saw an important role for the EU on this. Ideas in this respect included reducing the paperwork for companies (in fact some large companies, employer representatives reported, do not use the programme to move trainees across countries as the time lost in ERASMUS administration is for them worth more than the grant value itself), creating an online pool of participants to facilitate the matching process or providing funding for intermediary institutions (for instance chambers of commerce) to deal with the process of matching employers and students. It was also suggested that EAC should work more closely with DG Enterprise and Eures to make the programme better known amongst employers and facilitate the matching.

System compatibility

Discussions on system compatibility mainly referred to recognition issues, the quality of ERASMUS period, the impact of the Bologna process, issues derived from the existence of different academic calendars in participant countries and legislative diversity between EU countries regarding the regulation of placements. Lack of flexibility in the recognition of credits studied abroad during the ERASMUS period, making this automatic if you go on ERASMUS and pass your examinations abroad, deters a large number of students from participation, according to student representatives. In some degrees in some HEIs recognition does not really work and only a very small proportion of what is studied abroad is recognised. Student representatives also highlighted that, in spite of these difficulties, there are also many cases in which students get credits too easily in their host institutions, in particular in southern European HEIs. This was perceived as a problem. Coordinators also noted that there is no sufficient control over academic quality in the period of studies abroad and that much of what is registered in learning agreements is later altered. Some students are thus deterred from participation in ERASMUS as previously outgoing students report the weaknesses of the period abroad and a lack of academic learning. On the other hand, other students feel attracted by the prospect of a relaxed academic year abroad, as student representatives noted. Linking academic performance aspects and financial issues,

it was suggested that students who perform very poorly academically during their ERASMUS period should return the grant 'tourism is fine, but individuals and not the taxpayer should pay for it' (as one student said). This money should be made available to fund further grants the following year for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Student representatives did not believe that Bologna would make recognition easier as diversity continues (e.g. as there are three and four year degrees). Coordinators also believed that Bologna would not make recognition easier in the case of Spanish HEIs. In the previous situation, it was highlighted, Spanish 5 year long degrees had similarities with degrees in other countries in some or most subjects (Finland, Germany, Italy, France, etc.) and recognition was simple. Now in some countries there are 3 year long and in others 4 year long degrees. The difference in duration is thus 25% of the study programme, which is large.

The situation of MAs has also become more complex. In the past Spanish students in the 5th year could have exchanges going to the 5th year in another university with long degrees or to an MA course in countries with 3-4 year degrees. Now there are 1, 1.5 and 2 year MAs and coordinators believed that it would be unlikely that students in a 1 year programme would go abroad on ERASMUS, as they would miss a substantial part of the programme in their home university. Moreover, whereas before agreements could be made with the HEI, for MAs agreements need to be signed by the MA directors. This multiplies the number of agreements required vis-à-vis the previous situation. As a result, some Spanish HEIs may reduce their exchanges at that level. For students things also become more complex as they will need to apply for participation in ERASMUS the year previous to their 1 year MA, at a time when they do not know in which (if any) MA programme they will get admission –some Spanish HEIs are dealing with this by offering conditional grant offers pending on the admission to an MA. Double degrees were seen as a good solution, but it is unfeasible to implement them quickly on a large scale.

Coordinators raised incompatibilities between academic calendars as a problem. Sometimes students who go, for instance, to Nordic countries need to contact their Spanish coordinator when their course abroad starts, which coincides with the holiday period in Spanish universities and little support is available for them unless the coordinator works on ERASMUS during the holiday period. This has made the experience of some students stressing, reducing their appreciation of the programme, which they may have transmitted to other students interested in the programme. Different calendars also affect the progress in ERASMUS processes for students going to different countries and creates anxieties as they make comparisons between themselves, the information they have received from host HEI at each point in time, etc. Thus, coordinators recommended the unification of dates for the main milestones in ERASMUS participation.

A particular issue on system compatibility facing ERASMUS placements relates to different legislation for placements in different EU countries. This often raises doubts in companies, and some eventually do not join the programme not to face complex legal issues. For instance, in Spain the legislation regulating placements does not include references to students from other countries. Moreover, HEIs sign an agreement with employers to undertake placements, but there is nothing similar for students coming from abroad. In Germany it is possible to undertake a placement having completed less than 50% of the credits of a degree, but in Spain it is not. EU consistency on such issues would make companies' participation simpler. Student representatives did not consider it appropriate to make participation compulsory.

Conclusions

The Spanish case study provides rich data on how motivation, awareness, financial issues, ERASMUS conditions and system compatibility can affect participation in the ERASMUS programme. The case study shows how personal motivation is primarily related to personal development and language learning, whereas the importance of professional relevance

seems to be an 'added value', and varies strongly by field of study. Professional benefits are not something that students demand for the programme to the extent that academic literature often assumes. According to students more provision in English would motivate and enable a higher number of students to participate in the programme. This, however, may be to some extent in tension with the aims of ERASMUS to preserve European diversity.

Partly building on the high levels of participation already achieved, there is a high level of awareness regarding ERASMUS as a 'brand' in Spain. HEIs are active in the dissemination of the programme, but actually much dissemination comes through word of mouth between students themselves. The exceptions to this rule are the value of studying in Eastern European countries, the new ERASMUS placements, which are not yet sufficiently known by students and employers, and national co-financing levels. It was considered that Eastern European HEIs should more often make available course descriptions in English online. Regarding student placements, there is a role for EAC, according to focus group participants, in working more closely with other DGs, such as DG Enterprise, to disseminate this strand of the programme. The EU could also provide funding to intermediary institutions, such as Chambers of Commerce, to disseminate ERASMUS placements and to work with employers to ensure that high placements are available, an online pool of applicants could also help in facilitating the matching process between companies and placement applicants. In relation to national co-financing levels, these are currently high, but there is a need to make students more aware of their volume and the processes required to obtain national co-financing. Student services were also discussed. Whereas awareness regarding student services in the host institution is satisfactory, there is a need for further homogeneity in the services received abroad, so that students are clearer about the support they will receive during their ERASMUS period.

More uniformity is also required in the criteria for selection, so that students know what these are for all participants in ERASMUS. Also regarding ERASMUS conditions, the possibility of making the grant personal instead of institutional was rejected on the grounds of the increasing work this would require from participant HEIs and the problems this would generate for the student in terms of recognition of the period abroad in his/her home institution. The proposals that ERASMUS can be awarded to study for a full programme abroad and allowing additional payments to HEIs in high demand as host institutions were, by contrast, supported. Reduction of bureaucracy was requested for both students and companies. In fact, bureaucracy was highlighted as one of the reasons why some companies are not interested in ERASMUS placements. Better recognition of the work of ERASMUS coordinators, the development of greater capacity in international offices and the further development of IT management of the periods abroad were seen as actions that would help to enhance the quality and volume of ERASMUS periods abroad.

Regarding financial issues, there is a high degree of co-financing from public and private stakeholders in Spain for academic student mobility (not so much for placements), and the level of this co-financing has increased substantially in the last few years. Part of the national co-financing takes into account the socio-economic background of ERASMUS students. This high level of co-financing has worked as an incentive for students, including some of those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The level of co-financing is however dependent on year to year decisions. This uncertainty about the level of national co-financing is seen as a deterrent for student participation, in particular in relation to students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. National co-financing also leads to inequalities in the volume of the grant within Spain. Greater financing is required for ERASMUS placements, the strand in which stakeholders saw a greater degree for expansion of the programme. More generally, greater transparency is required in relation to national co-financing levels. Finally, it is noted that the current system of allocation of ERASMUS grant funds from the EU to individual countries penalises high participation countries.

Improvements in the area of system compatibility related to the need to ensure greater recognition of the subjects studied abroad in the home institution. According to Spanish stakeholders it will also be necessary to monitor the development of the Bologna process as this may reduce the incentives for undergraduate students and, above all, MA students to participate in the programme as well as complicate the establishment of agreements at MA level. Differences in academic calendars and national legislations for placements also act as barriers to the quality of the ERASMUS period abroad and the involvement of companies in ERASMUS placements respectively.

ANNEX 4: STUDENT SUPPORT IN EU-27 - COUNTRY FICHES

Table 25: Overview of the national student aid systems

	Grants			Loans	Family allowance	Other
	Universal	Need-based	Merit-based			
Austria	Yes	Yes	Some	Yes (limited)	No	Support for commuting, childcare, health. Additional funds for mobility.
Belgium-Fl	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	--
Belgium-Wa	No	Yes	No	Yes (limited)	No	Funds for mobility in EHEA.
Bulgaria	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	--
Cyprus	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	--
Czech Republic	No	Yes	Yes	Yes (limited)	Yes	Subsidies for commuting, housing, food.
Denmark	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Grants for mobility.
Estonia	No	Yes (limited)	Yes	Yes	No	Some grants for mobility.
Finland	Yes	Yes (limited)	No	Yes	No	Housing and food subsidies, adult education subsidy.
France	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Grants for short-term mobility, grants for specific fields and needs.
Germany	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Social welfare benefits.
Greece	No	Yes	Yes	Yes (limited)	na	Free books, healthcare, public transportation subsidies.
Hungary	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	--
Ireland	No	Yes	No	No	No	--
Italy	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Subsidised housing and food .
Latvia	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	--
Lithuania	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	--
Malta	Yes	No	Yes	Yes (limited)	No	A variety of additional scholarships for lifelong learning, dual system students and other.
Netherlands	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Transportation subsidy.
Poland	No	Yes (limited)	Yes (limited)	Yes	No	--
Portugal	No	Yes	Yes (limited)	No	No	Subsidies for food, housing, health.
Romania	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	na	Subsidies for housing; specific support for mobility
Slovakia	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Subsidised housing and food.
Slovenia	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	--
Spain	No	Yes	Yes	Yes (limited)	No	Grants for mobility.
Sweden	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	--
UK-England	no	Yes	no	Yes	No	--

Source: Adapted and updated from Vossensteyn (2004).

Austria

In Austria students can access grants and loans, both for in- country studies and specifically targeted to study abroad. There are also "additional social benefits"

- The study grant ("Höchststudienbeihilfen") is paid monthly to students. € 679 p/m is paid to the following students: students whose parents live too far for daily commute; whose parents have died, married students, students in legal partnership or with a child. Other students receive € 475. Students with a child receive an additional 67 per month per child. The grant is reduced dependent on the income of the student him/herself or the parents of the student (below age 27) and will be reduced starting from the joint income of € 4,725.
- Grant for studying abroad is given to students for a study abroad up to 20 months. The aid is dependent on the living and school expenses abroad and reaches up to € 582 per month. It is paid in addition to the regular study grant.
- Travel allowance covers the travel costs related to the study abroad.
- Language subsidies are linked to participation in study abroad and can be spent either in Austria or abroad.
- Mobility Scholarship offers a grant for studying in the EEA countries.
- Travel grant (for commuting to the university).
- Additional social benefit: allowance for medical insurance.
- Additional social benefit: a scholarship for graduating.
- Additional social benefit: allowance for childcare costs.
- Additional social benefit: performance based scholarship.
- Funded loans: students who pay a tuition fee are eligible for a subsidized student loan. The government covers 2% points of the interest. The subsidy does not depend on financial needs or academic progress.

Sources

- http://www.stipendium.at

Belgium (Flanders)

Sorts of support available and eligibility requirements in Flanders are:

- "Studietoelagen": study grants leading to a diploma (i.e. not "credit contract") for needy Belgian (or long-term resident) students whose prior education is recognised by the Flemish Community (or, under some conditions, by the French or German). The grant is given according to study-credits. In 2009/10 it was up to €4,707.62 – for students living in student halls (Vlaamse Overheid, 2010a).
- Scholarships/Loans: are available from associations/foundations usually for students without study grants, enrolled in certain programmes/institutions, &c.

Eligible students enrolling in recognised programmes leading to a diploma can use grants in the EU/EEA. Their main residence is Flanders or they hold a Flemish diploma or degree. Grants are portable outside the EU/EEA if the programme is not offered in Flanders. In 2008-09 62,047 grant applications were submitted and 40,804 were successful; the average grant was € 1890.48. In 2007/08 56,648 grant applications were submitted and 38,593 were successful; the average grant was € 1514.55.

Sources

- Vlaamse Overheid (2006). Studietoelagen hoger onderwijs 2006–2007. Voor wie? Hoe berekenen? Hoe aanvragen? At: http://www.tienen.be/upload/pdf/Broch_studietoelage_2006.pdf.
- Vlaamse Overheid (2010a). *School- en studietoelagen 2009-2010*. At: http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/Studietoelagen.

Belgium (Wallonia)

Belgium has different forms and regulations regarding students support in Wallonia and Flanders. Generally, grants ("bourse d'étude", see below) are portable if the course of study is not available in Belgium (Wallonia). The support available and eligibility requirements in Wallonia are as follows:

- "L'allocation d'études" (a.k.a. "bourse d'études"): are grants to students and parents (incl. long-term foreign residents) on need-basis. Not refundable unless given for unexpected income reductions because of death, loss of principal employment, &c. when it must be repaid at a 12% rate. The amount is determined by income, the number of dependants and on pedagogical grounds (with some exceptions, repeaters are ineligible), years of study, distance from campus, receipt of other family grants, and year or enrolment (last year students receive 10% more). Recipients also pay lower fees: in 2009/10 long-degree fees were €455 p/y (last year €350.44) but bursary recipients paid €52.28; short-degree fees were €227.50 p/y (last year €175.22) but bursary recipients paid €35.33 (Enseignement.be(a)).
- "Prêt d'études": is a loan given to students of families with more than three dependant children. It is given on a need-basis, but also on pedagogical grounds (students may not be repeating a study year at a similar or lower level as the prior level – with some exceptions), nationality, age and family composition (Enseignement.be(b)).
- Fund to support student mobility within the European Higher Education Area: instituted in 2004 and worth over € 1000,000 in 2008/09 (Eurydice 2009, p.50), it took off in 2007-2008 (National Report 2006, p.2).

In 2008 financial aid to students was €22,736,000.

Sources

- Expertisecentrum O&O Monitoring van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap, in Collaboration with the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training (2009). Bologna 1999-2009 – Higher Education in the Flemish Community of Belgium, the French Community of Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. At: http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/Bologna/conference/documents/BENELUX_HE.pdf.
- http://www.allocations-etudes.cfwb.be. Accessed February 10, 2010.
- http://www.enseignement.be.

Bulgaria

Bulgarian and EU students receive financial support in the form of scholarships and loans. Students and Doctoral candidates have the right to apply for state budget scholarships, scholarships established by higher schools and scholarships of natural persons and legal entities. The amount, terms and procedure for students and Doctoral candidates to receive their scholarships is determined by the Council of Ministers and the Higher Schools Regulations or by the will of the donor. Scholarships in higher education could be scholarships based on academic achievements and scholarships for social assistance. When scholarships for academic achievement are granted, this is done on the basis of the average grades from the previous two semesters.

The amount of scholarships is close to that of the minimal salary for the country. In 2005/06 the grant to meet living costs was € 403 in Purchasing Power Standard.

The head of the higher school, the Rector, has the right to award students with prizes and grant them assistance in the following cases:

- As awards for the achievement of success in the field of academic, research and development and other activities;
- As assistance in cases of poor financial circumstances. Students are entitled to preferential conditions for loans which would ensure their tuition and maintenance during their studies.

In Bulgaria there is partial portability of national support as well as grants, loans or other special measures for mobile students. Portability depends on several conditions, including language, progress in the studies and type of programme (study began in the home country of the reference student, Study abroad leads to a qualification recognised in the home country, or Study abroad is an integral part of courses undertaken in the home institution or of the entire study programme), the host country (bilateral agreements apply) and length of time spent abroad (Eurydice 2009, p. 53).

Sources

- Eurydice (2007). Key Data on Higher Education in Europe.
- http://tertiary-education.studentnews.eu/serwis.php?s=2328.
- http://www.eurydice.org.

Cyprus

In Cyprus main support is in the form of loans and grants. In Cyprus education is “free of charge or almost” (Eurydice, 2007, p. 105) and financial support for the payment of private contributions is based solely on merit and not on need (*Ibid*.). However, to meet living costs there are grants and loans, which are means tested but also dependant on merit. Loans can be repaid at a lower interest rate than market rates, but are not guaranteed by the State and repayment must start already during the studies (this is true only for Cyprus and Romania and Liechtenstein, see Ibid. p.111).

Portability of student support depends on progress (the reference student satisfactorily completes the year of study and study abroad leads to a qualification recognised in the home country), the host institution and the length of stay abroad. In 2005/06 the grants to meet living costs ranged from € 1,914 to € 2,871 (p. 109).

Sources

- Eurydice (2007). Key Data on Higher Education in Europe.

The Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic student support derives from three sources, i.e. the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education (through contributions to some services for school such as meals and accommodation), and the budget of the school's organising body in the form of reduced fees for families with low income or academically high achieving children.

- Child allowance and tax benefits to parents: parents are entitled to a child support and tax benefits until the child is 26 old if still in school. Child allowance is dependent on the financial situation of the family. If the family income is four times the minimum subsistence level no child allowance is offered.
- The social grant targets students in financial need. A monthly grant of CZK 1,620 for a 10 month period is offered to students whose family income does not exceed 1.5 times the minimum subsistence level.

- Study grants are available to a limited number of students, based on their study results, scholarly, research, developmental, artistic or other creative results contributing to the enhancement of knowledge, a student's strenuous social situation or other cases worth special consideration, support of Czech citizens studying abroad and support foreign students in the Czech Republic. Grants are also available for students in doctoral programmes, at the level of CZK 5,000 to CZK 10,000 p/m. The grants are paid out of institutional scholarship fund that consists in state subsidies as well as "profits" from fee-paying students.
- Indirect support such as transport subsidies, subsidised accommodation in student dormitories, free health insurance, meal subsidy (students are entitled to subsidized food in student canteens.
- University Presidents may offer additional grants to students in the form of tuition remission or reduced tuition for excellent academic performance or on social grounds.

Students studying abroad have the same status as domestic students and are eligible for the same social benefits. There is no additional support for a full degree programme abroad.

Sources

- http://www.eurydice.org.
- Vossensteyn, Hans (2004). *Portability of student suppor.t*

Denmark

All Danish citizens (and equivalent) over the age of 18 and study in officially recognized higher education institutions are entitled to student support. The Danish State Education Grant and Loan Scheme ("Sustyrelsen") allocates money on a monthly basis.

- Study grants depend on the student's financial situation. In 2010, the maximum amount of the study grant awarded is DKK 2,677 p/m for students living with their parents, and DKK 5,384 p/m for students living on their own.
- State loans: all students can obtain State loans of DKK 2,755 p/m. Students who have used all the grant money are entitled to a completion loan in the last year of their studies, which is DKK 7,105 p/m for a maximum of 12 months period. After completion of their studies, students must start paying back the State loans. The repayment must begin one year after the end of the year, in which the studies have been completed. The duration of the period of repayment must not exceed 15 years. During the period of study, the State loans will carry a 4% annual interest rate.
- Scholarships for study abroad: the scholarship is intended to cover in part or entirely the tuition fee at certain study programmes in other countries. Applications may be made for a period of study or for an entire study programme at the Master level. The scholarship may run for up to two years. To qualify for a scholarship for a complete study programme at the Master level, the programme must be included in the list of approved study programmes and the student must be eligible for a study grant. The prescribed period of study must be between 60 and 120 ECTS. The maximum amount of the scholarship corresponds to the sum received by a Danish educational institution for a corresponding study programme in Denmark. Should the tuition fees at the foreign institution be higher than that, the student must pay the remaining fee by him- or herself. The scholarship for studies abroad is not dependent on personal earnings.

Grants and loans are entirely portable if the study abroad period is accepted by the Danish educational institution as part of their study programme. This means that the required work load and credit hours corresponds to the requirements of the Danish study programme. The

grant and loan scheme is portable for studying in another Nordic country. The study programme must meet the same conditions for recognition as a comparable study in Denmark and the acquired qualifications must be usable in Denmark. The support is granted for the prescribed duration of the study, another 12 months can be obtained, if needed.

For other countries, support is granted for a maximum of 4 years and the study programme must meet the conditions for recognition of Danish study programmes. In very special cases support is granted for more than 4 years if an equivalent programme is not offered in Denmark and if the qualifications obtained meet a special labour market need in Denmark.

Sources

- *Danish Education Support Agency* – http://www.su.dk.

Estonia

In Estonia the government funds a limited number of study places per field per institution. Consequently students may study either on a free, state-funded place or otherwise pay a tuition fee. Places are allocated based on academic performance. There are different forms of support, including grants and loans:

- Basic grant ("Põhitoetus"): this scheme is available to some full-time students in programmes that have state-funded study places. The number of available grants is around 1/3 of state funded places. The grant is issued based on academic performance and distributed by study programmes. The size of the grant is 875 kroons p/m for a 10 month period.
- Additional grant ("Täiendav toetus") is available to students who live in a different municipality than the municipality of the higher education institution. The grant is meant for compensating additional housing and travel costs. The amount is 440 kroons p/m for a 10 month period.
- Special grant ("Eritoetus"): each institution can use 20% of the money that is allocated for basic and additional grants as special grants. Institutions themselves can define the criteria according to which the money will be allocated to students. The criteria vary across institutions.
- Study loan ("Õppelaen"): all full-time students in accredited higher education institutions are entitled to the loan. Students in the teacher training programme are eligible also as part-time students if they work as teachers at least 18 hours a week. The loan requires either co-signing or collateral, and carried a 5% interest rate.
- State funded or partially state funded stipends, including the "Kristjan Jaagu stipend" for studies abroad (1 year, 5-12 months, and 3-21 days), and the stipend for a young scholar ("Noore õpetlase stipendium") which supports Bachelor degree studies in a highly recognized university abroad.

Study loans are fully portable for studying abroad in an equivalent higher education institution and study mode. Grants are not portable.

Sources

- Ministry of Education at http://www.hm.ee/index.php?03233.

Finland

Finland has several forms of financial aid for students (direct and in kind), with varying eligibility requirements and conditions for portability. Financial aid by State is available in the form of study grants, housing supplements and government guarantees for student loans. Full-time students in accredited higher education programmes are eligible for the support. Foreign citizens can get the aid if they have had a valid residence permit and have lived in Finland for at least two years for some other purpose than to study, and their residence in Finland is considered to be permanent:

- Study grant: most Finnish students receive a monthly study grant from the government. The amount depends on age, housing circumstances, and marital status. It ranges from € 55 for students under 20 who live with their parents to €298 for students over 20. Students who live with their parents and whose parents' income is below €39,000 are entitled to the increase in the fixed amount.
- Housing supplement: students may be entitled to a housing supplement for the months they attend school and live in rented or partial-ownership accommodation. In the case of living with parents or with a child the housing supplement is not applicable, but students may apply to the General Housing Allowance. Students are eligible to the housing supplement also when studying abroad.
- Student loans are granted by banks operating in Finland and guaranteed by the government. Repayment normally begins after the studies have ended. The maximum loan that is guaranteed depends on the age and the level of studies.
- Meal subsidy: the Finnish Centre of Financial Aid (Kela) issues a meal subsidy card that gives to students a discount in subsidized student restaurants. Kela pays the difference between the full price and the discount price to the operator of the restaurant.
- Adult education subsidy: people who have been active in working life for at least 5 years may eligible for an adult education subsidy from the Education Fund. The subsidy offers a government guarantee for a student loan both in and out of Finland: € 300 per month in Finland, € 440 per month outside Finland. The terms of the loan guarantee are the same as for other students in the financial aid system.

The study grant, housing supplement and government guarantee for student loans are available for studies abroad as an exchange student, i.e. studies completed abroad are included in the degree to be taken in Finland and students must complete 4.5 ECTS on average per each month to receive the study grant.

Sources

- http://www.kela.fi.

France

In France there are mainly grants, for a variety of purposes (including specific grants for mobile students). Support includes the following:

- "Bourse d'enseignement supérieur sur critères sociaux": hardship bursaries for EU/French (incl. overseas territories)/legal foreign residents who enrol full-time at a recognised public or private HEI in France or a Council of Europe (CoE) member. Students must follow courses that are relevant to the Ministry of Education or of Communication. In 2009-2010 these bursaries are max € 4140.
- "Bourse de la culture et de la communication": are hardship bursaries by the Ministry of Communication. These are valid only in France.

- "L'aide au mérite du ministère de l'enseignement supérieur": a mix merit/need-based grant for excellent secondary school leavers. It is for 9 months renewable annually depending on performance. Universities inform the CROUS of the list of beneficiaries. The amount in 2009-2010 is € 1800.
- "L'aide à la mobilité internationale" from the ministry of Higher Education: given on need-basis for short term mobility (2-9 months) as part of the programme. In 2009-2010 the amount of the grant is € 400 per monthly.
- "L'aide à la mobilité du ministère de la culture" is a grant given to students enrolled in schools of architecture for short term mobility (2-9 months) as part of the programme.
- "Allocation Parcours de réussite Professionnelle": a grant of € 2,400 annually for immigrant students who enrol in certain higher education programmes in France. The grant is mixed need/merit based, provided through the Ministry of Integration. Applicants must be eligible for social bursaries and other requirements, i.e. French proficiency and integration classes attendance. Applicants must have an "excellent" or "good" secondary exit exam grade.
- "Passeport Mobilité": provides students from French overseas territories a return ticket per year to study in France, or in another EU country if (a) it is a EU programme (b) the desired programme is full or unavailable at home.
- "Prêt étudiant": a State-guaranteed loan of up to € 15,000 available to EU/EEA (incl. French) students below 28 at favourable re-payment conditions. Students must be enrolled in French higher education. It replaces a prior more restrictive scheme called prêt d'honneur.
- Other aid includes (but is not limited to): urgency aid for students with particular needs, residence aid (in France only), aid for teacher trainees, Master thesis grants from the Environment and Energy Agency (ADEME), need-based bursaries from the Ministry of Agriculture (for French nationals only), regional and local grants for specific fields of study (e.g. paramedics), competitive grants for study abroad (e.g. for Mideast studies (bourses arabisants), Robert Bosch grants, Marie Curie grants, French assistants grants (US), ERASMUS).

Social bursaries and Passeport Mobilité are portable to CoE countries for full degrees. Aide à la mobilité is portable for short term mobility only. Hence: both are conditional portability.

In 2008-2009 over € 1.4 billion of public funds supported 525,599 students through bursaries. 524,618 were need-based and 981 were merit-based. There were 653 "prêts d'honneur", 6,540 students got annual "urgency aid" and 19,640 got one-time "urgency aid". In total 551,132 students received aid from the ministry of higher education.

Sources

- http://www.cnous.fr.
- http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid20204/aides-aux-etudiants-partant-a-l-etranger.html.
- http://www.etudiant.gouv.fr/pid20436/etudier-a-l-etranger.html.

Germany

In Germany there are several forms of support:

- Financial aid ("BaFög") for students who cannot support their studies through their own family income: the state has set the level of resources that students need monthly at € 478 for home living students and € 648 for students living away from home. Half of the amount is provided as a non-repayable grant, while the other half

takes the form of an interest-free state loan. In 2005, 345,000 students (about 19%) received BAFög grants. This is about 25% of all students that were eligible based on the characteristics of their studies. The average monthly grant was € 375 EUR. 38.1% of all recipients got the full assistance.

- Student loan ("Studienkredite"): Since 2006, a public bank, KfW, offers a loan for all students in Germany with special conditions regarding the maximum interest rate and repayment conditions. Several Länder, and increasingly commercial banks have started to offer special student loans. Maximum amount offered by KfW is € 650. In summer 2007 about 23,000 students received a loan from the KfW.
- Tax benefits to parents: parents of all students under the age of 27 receive a tax benefit.
- Child benefit to parents: parents get a fixed benefit for their child until the child is 18 years old. If the child continues his or her studies, then the child benefit extends until the age 25. The amount is € 184 per child, and slightly more for the third and subsequent children. Parents whose income exceeds 8,004 Euros are not eligible for the benefit.
- Merit-based scholarships from various foundations ("Begabtenförderungswerke")
- The "Bildungskredit" is a special credit that is granted the Federal Administration Office and supports students in finishing their studies faster. It is not need-based. The maximum credit is € 300 for 24 months. In 2004, 12,000 Bildungskredite were granted in a volume of € 66 m.
- Social welfare benefits: in case of need, students may qualify for an allowance to cover housing related costs. In exceptional cases students may qualify for general social welfare benefits.

Financial aid is portable for a study abroad. The maximum level of the aid for studying abroad may be higher, particularly for studies outside the EU, including travel costs, fees and is dependent on the country of destination. However, students can claim financial aid for studying outside of EU and Switzerland only if they can prove that the experience is beneficial for their studies and the aid lasts maximum for one year. Longer support is possible only on exceptional cases. For the EU the time restriction does not apply.

Sources

- http://www.das-neue-bafoeg.de/.
- http://www.studienkredite.org.

Greece

In Greece there are several forms of support for students at undergraduate and post-graduate level. Support can be both direct and indirect. Portability of direct support depends on bilateral agreements between Greece and certain host countries. Support includes the following:

- Free university textbooks for all students of higher education.
- Many students, depending on their family and personal income, may have their living and accommodation expenses covered while undergraduate students making their studies in a city other than that where they live permanently may be granted an accommodation allowance.
- Reciprocating scholarships will be given to graduate and post graduate students, with the only obligation –on part of the students- to offer part time work, up to forty hours a month, to services the institutions.
- Students facing financial problems have the right to take interest-free student loans from Greek credit institutions of their selection, provided they have successfully

passed the exams for all the obligatory classes of the semester previous to the current and they have not exceeded their maximum time of studies.

- All students, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, are also entitled to free health care until the end of their studies.
- All undergraduate and postgraduate students are granted special student cards so as to get reduced prices in all public transportation means and in museums, theatres, art galleries and special artistic events.
- Scholarships are granted by the State Scholarships Foundation (Idryma Kratikon Ypotrophion - IKY) to undergraduate students having received excellent marks in universities and technological education institutes and to those students wishing to pursue postgraduate studies in Greece and abroad and have sat successfully for special exams held for this purpose.
- IKY also provides scholarships for Postgraduate research in Greece.
- Postgraduate research and, in general, research work by universities and TEIs is financed selectively in sectors of top priority for Greece ("Heraclitus" and "Pythagoras" programmes for Universities, "Archimedes" programme for TEI).

Sources

- http://tertiary-education.studentnews.eu/serwis.php?s=2328.
- http://www.eurydice.org.

Hungary

In Hungary support is given via the institutions as well as via the state. The main forms of support can be direct and indirect and include:

- State scholarships issued by institutions. Usually allocated based on academic performance and financial need. The government distributes its student support funding among higher education institution on the basis of the number of state-financed students enrolled in each institution. The normative amount per fulltime state-financed student is HUF 116,500 p/y. While in the early 2000s most (70%-80%) of the support is given in the form of scholarships related to study achievement (merit-based), the distribution model was revised in 2007 and the proportion of need-based support increased. All in all, about 80% of the full-time state-financed students receive scholarships between HUF 30,000 and HUF 150,000 p/y.
- Fellowships granted by the Republic are to about 1% of the full-time state-financed, based on academic excellence. It is worth about HUF 335,000 p/y.
- In an additional scheme ("Bursa Hungarica") local authorities provide scholarships to poor students permanently residing in the town or village and the Ministry of Education matches this. Almost half of the local governments participate in this scheme, assisting around 12,000 students every year.
- Tax benefits: in every tax year up to 30% but no more than HUF 60,000of the tax stated per student may be re-claimed during studies.
- Student loans are available to all students under the age 40. The maximum amount is HUF 30,000 p/m and can be used also for studies abroad.

Student loans are available also for study abroad. State scholarships are linked to a Hungarian university and are not portable (except for a short term study abroad period as a part of the programme).

Sources

- http://www.eurydice.org.
- Vossensteyn, H. (2004). *Student financial support*. CHEPS.

Ireland

In the Republic of Ireland there are various forms of support. The Central Statistics Office mentions that in 2006, overall, grants to households for higher education amounted to €70 million in 2006. The main Sorts of support available include:

- "Maintenance Grant": available from the Irish State for Irish/EU/EEA* students in full-time further education and higher undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Support is available to eligible students in Ireland and the rest of the EU. Short courses are not eligible. Grants range from €330 to €2,545 for "adjacent" students (<24 Km from the college) and from €810 to €6,355 "non-adjacent" students. Eligible undergraduate students may have their fees paid under the Free Fees Scheme. Non-eligible students may have 50% of their fees paid, however. The maximum amount which can be granted under the maintenance grant schemes for tuition fees is currently €6,270.
- "Free Fees": is an initiative by which course fees in Ireland can be paid on an undergraduate student's behalf by the State.
- "Tax Relief": is for students (e.g. part-time students) who must foot the bill for tuition fees. It is available on fees up to €5,000 and applies to higher education courses in Ireland and the EU. Undergraduate courses must be two years or more; postgraduate courses must be one year or more.
- "The Student Assistance Fund": assists students in hardship in Ireland. It is in addition to other schemes (e.g. the Maintenance Grant and the Millennium Partnership Fund). Money is given to eligible institutions in Ireland and the student can apply directly there.
- "The Millennium Partnership Fund": assists Irish/EU/EEA students in hardship. It is in addition to other schemes (e.g. the Maintenance Grant and the Student Assistance Fund). It is administered by local partnership companies and community groups in specific areas around the country. Students apply directly to their local community group. Eligible applicants have been accepted to participate in a recognised higher/further education course and are normally resident in the area where the partnership company or community group is. Eligible expenses include (but are not limited to) travel, course and examination fees, books, materials, equipment, childcare, accommodation and subsistence. It will be discontinued as of year 2010-2011.
- "Scholarships": under other programmes such as the ERASMUS programme (for study in another EU country) are available.

The Maintenance Grant is portable to EU countries for full-time undergraduate courses with some exceptions, i.e. courses in Colleges of Further and Higher Education lower that Higher National Diploma level, courses provided in a college which are offered in private commercial third level colleges in Ireland and validated by that college, and courses in colleges akin to private commercial colleges in Ireland. The Tax Relief scheme is also portable to EU countries. Free Fees, the Student Assistance Fund and the Millennium Partnership Fund are not portable.

Sources

- Central Statistics Office (2010). *National Income and Expenditure, 2006*. At: http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/economy/2006/nie_2006.pdf.
- http://www.studentfinance.ie/.

Italy

In Italy student financial assistance on merit and need basis is a constitutional right (Art. 34 of the constitution). There are a number of financial support mechanisms available to all residents (no nationality requirement) but are not portable abroad. In Italy student support is administered regionally. The central government supports regions financially, but the use of funds is regional responsibility. Hence, different regions have different use and availability of support. Support mechanisms include:

- Grants ("borse di studio"): available to needy (with low income) but meritorious (who reach the necessary number of credits per year) students. Special cases are handled by the regions according to national guidelines. For 2008/09 the minimum annual grants are €4,523.78 (students who had to move to the university location), €2,493.88 (commuters) and €1,705.11 (local students).
- Loans ("prestiti d'onore"): are provided by financial institutions at no or low interest rates and at advantageous return terms. Regional authorities define procedures and give guarantees to the creditors and to the students (with sanctions against institutions failing to fulfil their agreements). The amount of this loan can vary, but is usually about €6,000.
- Subsidised student housing or meals: Regions are responsible for the construction and maintenance of university areas but universities may request special funding for the construction of new buildings.
- Other support: a range of International grants support international mobility (e.g. ERASMUS) at times administered by institutions themselves. Moreover poor students can be exempt from paying fees.

National Grants and Loans in Italy are not portable. Mobility is usually supported by the Commission's ERASMUS grants and several other grants specific for mobility. Institutions may assist their own students to be mobile.

The real availability of student support in Italy is very limited. In a synthesis of the 180/2008 Ministerial decree, the Ministry states that 180,000 students are eligible for grants and tuition fee exemption but only 140,000 in fact receive it. The number of enrolled students in 2008 was over 1,776,000 (MIUR). Also the use of student loans is extremely low. According to the Ministry, in 2008 only 458 were administered. In solar year 2007, the total support given to undergraduate students (in all forms, including meals, housing, transport &c.) was €138,761,225.

Sources

- http://statistica.miur.it/.
- http://www.efors.eu/italia-sovvenzioni/.
- http://www.governo.it/GovernoInforma/Dossier/scuola_decretolegge/Sintesi.pdf.
- http://www.miur.it/.

Latvia

Student aid is provided in the form of grants and loans, including:

- State scholarships: available to students in state-financed places and are allocated competitively based on academic performance. Only about 16 percent of publicly funded students receive these grants.
- Student loans: All students in either full-time or part-time study programmes in all accredited higher education institutions are entitled to a student loan. The loan is

operated by private banks. The state pays the interest rate between the agreed 5% rate and commercial rate. To receive the loan, the student must have co-signatory, a guarantee from a local municipality, or security in some other form (e.g. real estate). Student loans can cover living expenses (student loans) as well as tuition for fee-paying students (study loan). Student loans are issued only to full-time students who study in higher education institutions in Latvia. Every year the list of professions is issued by the Government for which the study loan can be covered from the state budget. Students employed by a state or municipal institution can get released from the debt.

Grants are limited to a small number of students (about 16% of state funded students). Loans: 6,600 entered the loan in 2009. Considering that in 2009 about 31,000 students started their studies, about 20% of students take the loan. An average loan p/y is lats 2,041.

Sources

- Eurydice: www.eurydice.org.
- Latvian Ministry of Education: http://izm.izm.gov.lv/registri-statistika.html.

Lithuania

In Lithuania student financial support is direct (loans and grants) and indirect (tax reliefs). Support is need and merit based. There is also support for specific groups (e.g. disabled students). Support includes:

- Student loans: all students in the first and second degree programmes both in private and public institutions are eligible for a student loan. The maximum limit of the loan is LTL 520 per semester for covering tuition fee and LTL 4,680 p/y for living costs. Loans are allocated based on competition lists, considering the financial needs of students. The conditions of repayment for the loans taken for living expenses depend on the income level after graduation.
- Scholarship grants: there are two types of scholarship grants. Merit-based scholarships (awarded based on academic achievement) do not exceed LTL 325 (€94) p/m. Need-based scholarships are distributed to students from low income families, families who receive social benefits, and families with many underage children. The maximum for the nee-based scholarship is LTL 130 (€38) p/m. The majority of scholarships are merit-based. The scholarships are allocated by institutions and specific regulations are set by individual institutions, considering the input of student representatives.
- Tax benefits: according to the tax law, costs associated with studies that are intended to lead to a higher education qualification are exempt from the income tax. Costs associated with tuition fees or repayment of student loan is tax exempt.
- Additional support is available to orphans and to students with disabilities.

Sources

- http://www.eurydice.org.

Luxembourg

In Luxembourg there are combinations of grants and loans (referring to support consisting partly of a grant and partly of a loan). Luxembourg offers grants and loans in combination, in exactly half-and-half proportions. Amounts may reach PPS € 1,671 with preferential loan terms, namely an interest rate below the market rate, repayment subsequent to study, and scope for reducing the debt as a result of incentive premiums awarded to students who satisfactorily complete their studies on time (p. 105) (incentive premiums' are paid to students who complete their studies within the required length of time).

Support to cover the cost of living is not tied to the academic performance of students (p. 108). In Luxembourg, financial support totals > € 7,000 and the maximum loans are higher than maximum grants, reaching up to PPS € 14,000 (*Ibid*). In 2005/06 the maximum grant to meet living costs was € 7,383 and the maximum loan to meet living costs was € 14, 767.

Support for the payment of administrative fees and contributions to tuition costs is paid if the amount of private contributions exceeds € 90.3 (purchasing Power Standard).

No restrictions to portability.

Sources

- Eurydice (2007). Key Data on Higher Education in Europe.
- Eurydice (2009). Higher Education in Europe 2009: Developments in the Bologna Process.

Malta

In Malta the following forms of support are available:

- Student Maintenance Grants (Stipends): available to Maltese students attending public and private institutions. According to 2007 legislation, students receive a fixed rate of €83.86 per four weeks (10/1-6/30), €232.94 per year for educational material and equipment, and a Supplementary Maintenance Grant of €41.93 every four weeks.
- Malta Government Scholarship: competitive scheme available to Maltese* students wishing to follow an under-/post- graduate course in Malta or abroad. Amounts differ by type of course. For general courses a fixed rate of €83.86 every four weeks (10/1-6/30), €465.87 per year, and a one-time grant of €465.87 is given; for "prescribed" courses a fixed rate of € 146.75 every four weeks (10/1-6/30), € 698.81 per year, and a one-time grant of € 698.81 is given.
- Strategic Educational Pathways Scholarship (STEPS): a post-graduate scholarship providing grants for tuition and subsistence for full-time programs at Master (€6,000 annually) or PhD level (€8,500 annually) in Malta or abroad. Higher grants are available for studies in priority areas (e.g. ICT), which are granted annually €13,000 for Masters and €22,000 for PhDs. Part-time and distance Masters are also funded. Support is granted towards tuition expenses only and for the entire duration of the course for up to €7,000.
- Career Guidance Capacity Building Scholarship (CGCB): covers tuition fees of part-time and distance programmes up to €7,000 for the entire duration of the course. In addition, a travel allowance is granted for up to 6 study visits with up to €2,857 for travel expenses and €3,312 for subsistence.
- Youth Specialisation Studies Scheme (YSSS): a joint scheme between the MoE and APS Bank that provides soft loans to Maltese nationals up to 30. It supports postgraduate studies not provided in Malta. The loan ranges from €11,600 (€9,300 for distance learning) to €23,300, to be repaid over ten years.

- My Potential: promotes lifelong learning in ICT. It supports students attending fee-based ICT courses in Malta only. Recipients receive future income tax deductions following the successful completion of the course and discounts of 25% on low-end ICT certifications, customized loan packages and tax credits on tuition expenses.
- Extended Skills Training Scheme and Technician Apprenticeship Scheme: assist Maltese* students following a dual system of vocational education through maintenance grants in addition to an agreed salary by the trainee's employer.
- Training Subsidy Schemes: offers recipients a grant of 75% of the costs related to their training, up to a maximum of €1,000. Apprentices, who meet these criteria, are also eligible.

According to NCHE (2008), 9 (of 80) PhD students received a (postgraduate) MGSS to study at the University of Malta and 32 PhD students received a (postgraduate) MGSS to study abroad.

Stipends are portable to other EU countries (ERASMUS programme). For full-degrees, post-graduate support is "more portable" than undergraduate support. STEPS and CGCB are fully portable and YSSS is portable if the intended study is unavailable in Malta.

Sources

- http://www.education.gov.mt/.
- http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=1968.
- https://mitc.gov.mt/page.aspx?pageid=291.
- https://www.nche.gov.mt/MediaCenter/.

The Netherlands

In the Netherlands students have access to basic and supplemental grants, study loans, college fee loans, and public transport benefits.

- The basic performance grant ("basis beurs") is open to all students. It is around €266 p/m for students who live away from home and €90 p/m for students who live at home. Students who do not complete their studies within 10 years must repay the grant.
- The additional grant ("aanvullende beurs") supports students from lower income families. Depending on family income, it can reach around €239. Students who do not complete their studies within 10 years must repay the grant.
- Study loans ("lenen") reach a maximum of €289 p/m and must be repaid.
- Tuition fee loans ("collegegeldkrediet") are cover tuition fees and thus cannot exceed the actual amount of tuition fees. This loan has to be repaid after graduation. All Dutch students and EU/EEA students are eligible for the loan.
- The public transport subsidy allows students to travel for free on all public transport in the Netherlands during the course of their studies.

Student finance resources are available to students in full time studies or in dual programmes, in accredited universities, of Dutch nationality or equivalent. In all cases, eligibility is limited to students who complete their studies within 10 years (i.e. who finish before age 30). All support mechanisms are portable with no further conditions for a short-term study abroad. For a degree programme abroad, in principle all financing mechanisms are portable if the programme is recognized as equivalent to the level of a Dutch programme. As a rule, the support lasts for the duration of an equivalent programme in the Netherlands. The public transport card can be compensated with cash.

Sources

- http://www.ib-groep.nl/particulieren/default.asp.

Poland

In Poland several forms of financial support are available to students, including grants and loans:

- Non-repayable support includes maintenance grants, special grants for disabled persons, scholarships for learning or sporting achievements, scholarships for learning achievements awarded by the minister, scholarships for outstanding sporting achievements awarded by the minister, meals grants, accommodation grants and aid payments. The grants are mixed merit-/need-based (as per LoHE, 2005). As of 2004 grants are available to eligible students regardless of mode of study (full/part time) and type of institution (public/private). They are awarded for one semester (excl. the Minister's scholarship for sporting achievements, which is awarded for a year). The money is allotted to and administered by the institutions, but the grants cannot be higher than 90% of the lowest wage paid to academic staff (Background Report, 2006)*.
- Repayable support: a loan scheme was introduced in 1998. Since 2004 its eligibility is extended to doctoral students, and civilian students of the National Defence Academy, the Military University of Technology, and the Naval Academy and the Central School of Fire Service. Loans are granted by the Student Loan and Credit Fund managed by the Bank for National Economy and by commercial banks on preferential terms. It covers all students who enrolled in higher education institutions before 25** (Polish nationals and EU nationals working in Poland). The loans have favourable re-payment conditions, including (a) 2-year grace period after graduation (b) repayment is spread over a period at least twice as long as the period for which the loan was taken; (c) the monthly repayment instalments up to 20% of the average monthly salary of the graduate repaying the loan (d) the loan may be partially remitted for a graduate in a difficult situation or for learning achievements or fully remitted in the case of a graduate who has lost permanently the capacity to repay the loan. The Fund is financed primarily by State-budget and covers the difference between the commercial interest rate charged by the bank and the interest actually paid by the student.

National Grants and Loans in Poland are not portable (see, *inter alia*, Eurydice 2009, pp. 49 ff.). Mobility is usually supported by the Commission's ERASMUS grants. However, institutions may assist their own students to be mobile. In 2003 Polish institutions subsidised their own students studying abroad with > €1 million (19% of the total ERASMUS grant). The final amount of a grant per student is determined by his/her home institution. In 2005 the max amount could not exceed €350, depending also on the average living costs in the destination country (Background Report, 2006, p. 94).

According to OECD (2007), in 2004/05 471,400 students (25% of student population) received a grant (OECD, 2007). The subsidy per enrolled student amounted to PLN 76.6 (<€20, LC).

Sources

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- http://www.nauka.gov.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/eng/he/OECD_Tertiary_Reviews_POLAND_2007.pdf.
- http://www.nauka.gov.pl/higher-education/studies-in-poland/studying-in-poland-how-much-it-costs/.

Portugal

In Portugal social support for tertiary students includes direct support, i.e. study grants and emergency assistance, and indirect assistance such as meals, accommodation, health services and assistance in cultural and sports activities. This support is for socioeconomically disadvantaged students and covers part of the costs, but not all. There are also merit-based grants. In Portugal there is no tradition of student loans operated by public authorities. Data below are from year 2003-2004 (the system is still the same, although the amounts are likely to have been corrected over the years).

Public higher education institutions and the Student Social Action Fund (*Fundo de Acção Social* - FAS) regarding private higher education institutions award every year student grants to university students if their family annual income per capita is lower than the national minimum salary (€463,58 per month in 2003-2004). The study grant is paid during ten months and it covers payment of fees, accommodation and travel costs. For academic year 2003/04, the monthly amount of the study grant varied between a minimum of €34.70 and a maximum of €408 (student living at home) or €513 (students living away from family home).

In the public sector, any higher education institution has its own office for social assistance, called SAS (*Serviço de Acção Social*). It is responsible for direct and indirect support (such as accommodation, student canteens, transport, health care, cultural activities). For academic year 2003/04, the existing 29 SAS were responsible for paying grants to about 50,000 students enrolled in public institutions. Furthermore, in the same academic year FAS supported about 13,000 students (out of 25,000 applicants) from independent private higher education institutions. Thus, about 16% of all 400,000 tertiary students in Portugal (public + private sector) receive grants.

Grants and loans are portable with some limitations. Portability of support for Portuguese students depends on the host country, the host institution, the type of programme, and how courses/students progress.

Sources

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- EURYDICE (2009). *Higher Education in Europe 2009: Developments in the Bologna Process*.
- http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/PT_EN.pdf
- http://tertiary-education.studentnews.eu/serwis.php?s=2328

Romania

In Romania there are grants to cover living costs, loans (at market interest rates) to pay fees and contributions, support for accommodation (both in kind, i.e. subsidised housing, and direct, i.e. cash advances), and specific support for mobility, usually in the form of special grants or loans. National funding is not portable.

- Grants are means-tested: they are awarded to those whose personal or family income is below a certain level rather than inversely proportional to the income.
- Loans are not means tested since there is no preferential interest rate or repayment term.

- Support for accommodation ranged from €189 to €333 (in 2005-2006 purchasing power parity).
- Support for mobility is distributed on the basis of results from a specific competition.

Currently, 25% of the students attending public higher education are granted scholarships financed from the state budget. Within the structure of these scholarships 30-40% are social aid scholarships, 30-40% are study scholarships, 25% are merit scholarships and 5% are performance scholarships.

Sources

- Eurydice (2007). *Key Data on Higher Education in Europe*.
- Eurydice (2009). *Higher Education in Europe 2009: Developments in the Bologna Process.*
- http://tertiary-education.studentnews.eu/serwis.php?s=2328.

Slovakia

The direct forms of social support are scholarships. Higher education institutions provide for the students scholarships from resources allocated for this purpose from the national budget and/or from their own resources via scholarship funds. In 2005 the Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic No. 453/2005 of the Law Code on the scope and other details on granting motivation scholarship came into force, which was annulled by amendment to the Act. The granting of motivation scholarships falls now within the area of competence of higher education institutions. Its aim is to appraise distinguished students and to motivate the other students to improve their academic achievements. The right to receive the merit-based scholarship is granted to 10 % of the best students pursuing full-time form of bachelor's and magister's degree study in every public higher education institution. This type of scholarship was awarded for the first time to 10 860 university students in academic year 2005/06. The exact criteria are determined by every higher education institution, or faculty. Each student is entitled to receive this type of scholarship automatically provided he/she fulfils the criteria set by the institution. Number of students awarded the scholarship as well as its size is upon the higher education institution. The latter will publicise the list of awardees.

In 2006 a new decree came into force on granting social scholarship to university students in the Slovak Republic (No.102/2006 of Law Code). Students are eligible to receive social scholarship upon meeting the conditions, provided they pursue the first full-time course. This decree sets out decisive income for assessment of the right to social scholarship, the area of commonly assessed persons, the salary limit giving right to social scholarship and other details.

The handicapped students, that means, those with severe mental and physical impairments are presented scholarships for the disadvantaged to be able to study in higher education institutions according to their choice and be integrated among their healthy peers. The students must submit an application accompanied by medical report on their health state which is subsequently assessed by a commission.

The indirect non-market tools of university policy, such as tax relieves, allowances for children and contributions to children's allowances, travel reductions and other discounts for non-provided for children - have been applied in the Slovak Republic for a long time and their quantitative and qualitative characteristic depend on prosperity and economic power of the society. The social services are represented by subsidized catering and housing services and a contribution for sports and other activities.

The system of social aid also includes provision of loans favourable terms, such as the Study Loan Fund on favourable terms, the Act No. 200/1997 of the Law Code on Student

Loan Fund, as amended by Act 231/2000 of the Law Code. The intention of the Act is to mitigate the impact of increased financial demands for student at the study in higher education institution. Nevertheless, the number of applicants decreases each year (in academic year 2007/08 there were only about 3000 applicants). The reduction may be explained by introduction of social scholarships, new system of motivation scholarships, that can bring to student the required cash. In accordance with the above Act only the student of the first year of university study in the full-time form, who is a citizen of the Slovak Republic and has a permanent residence at the territory of the Slovak Republic as well as a foreign student who studies in a higher education institution in the Slovak Republic in the position of a foreign Slovak, is entitled to apply for the loan. The amendment to Act No. 231/2000 of the Law Code on the Student Loan Fund gives possibility to award a loan also for students - citizens of the Slovak Republic who study in a higher education institution abroad. The Fund resources are meant for covering the part of costs for the applicant's study, particularly, for accommodation, board, travel costs, study literature and study stays. The student may ask for a loan the faculty in which he studies. According to amendment to Law on Student Loan Fund the amount of loan was doubled (from 20,000 SK per year to 40,000 SK).

The indirect aid offered outside the education is a support in the form of "benefits to children" by 25 years of age, if the student is being prepared in the daily form of study for future occupation. The amount of monthly allowance is uniform – 540 SK per student.

The training institution provides to full-time Ph.D. student a scholarship for the period of his study. In 2004 the scholarship was not a subject of tax. Since 1 January 2005, however, the scholarships are again taxed. For the purposes of health insurance, retirement insurance and for the purposes of covering the social security contribution in case of unemployment the Ph.D. student in full-time form of study had position of employee by 31 December 2007. The amendment to Act specified the award of PhD scholarships in such a way that the PhD student in full-time form of study is entitled to it only during his/her standard length of pursuing the study programme and since 1 January 2008 the scholarship is not taxable.

Financial support is conditionally portable for study abroad with the restriction on the type of programme: study abroad must lead to a qualification recognised in the home country and must be an integral part of courses undertaken in the home institution or of the entire study programme (see Eurydice, 2009, pp. 53 and 55).

Sources

- http://tertiary-education.studentnews.eu/serwis.php?s=2328.
- Eurydice (2009). Higher Education in Europe 2009: Developments in the Bologna Process.

Slovenia

In Slovenia students can study either at a state subsidized or nonsubsidized study place. Students in part time studies or at nonsubsidized study places, post-graduate and supplementary non-degree studies must pay a tuition fee.

Financial support to students consists in scholarships, subsidies, and other benefits:

- Public scholarships. Altogether 20.2% of all students receive public funding support, in an average amount of EUR 186 per month (2007/08). Most of them are state scholarships for materially deprived students (2/3) and to talented and gifted students (1/3).
- Scholarships from individual employers, municipalities, and foundations.
- Subsidies for food and health insurance.

- Subsidies for accommodation and transport under certain conditions.
- Special allowances for disabled students, students from families with minimum income, students with above-average study achievements, students coming from the most distant places, students enrolling in under-subscribed programmes, students from minorities, and student families.
- Tax benefits to parents of full-time students.
- Tax benefits to students whose income from employment does not exceed a set amount (ca EUR 6,677).

Any study abroad that is recognized as part of regular studies is regarded as study at a national educational institution. All rights connected to studying in Slovenia therefore remain unchanged. A candidate who is resident in Republic of Slovenia and meets conditions of eligibility for public scholarships may also apply for these scholarships to study abroad.

When studying abroad is not part of studies at a home institution, the candidate is left with the responsibility to prove that studying abroad will enhance his/her employability and/or professional expertise and that the programme is not offered in Slovenia.

Sources:

- http://www.eurydice.org.
- Vossensteyn, Hans (2004). *Portability of student support.*

Spain

In Spain there are several grants and scholarships, which are typically need-based and may differ by community. The scholarship system administered by the Ministry of Education and Culture and applies only to students with Spanish citizenship or those with legal residence in Spain. There is some specific support for going abroad, including, e.g. Socrates/ERASMUS, European Comenius Programme, Seneca mobility grants for university students, and general grants for university study mobility. The general grants for study abroad differ based on the student's region of origin, but lie between € 3,000 and € 6,400. As a rule, national support is not portable (although loans from the Ministry of Science and Innovation are portable and indeed are higher when studying abroad).

There are also the FARO Scholarships, which promote FARO Global student mobility last year of all Spanish universities by conducting quality training practices in companies located in Europe, Asia, the US and Canada. The ultimate goal of the programme is to improve graduates' employability.

There is a wealth of individual awards from Awards of the Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology (FECYT) that may be available to students. They differ for university studies vs. non-university studies. Support for university studies includes:

- Scholarships for the Teacher Training University (FPU).
- Scholarships and general support and mobility for university students.
- Fellowships for Students enrolled in the second cycle of university studies at their final year. This award is based on a project proposal supported by the department and supplies € 2,700 to eligible applicants.

Support for non-university studies applies to Spanish nationals with low income, and who fulfil age and academic requirements. In 2009 the amounts were between € 2,020 and € 2,816 (depending on the course of study). In addition, these fellowships for non-university studies may also cover.

- Maintenance (€ 1, 350).
- Commuting costs (from € 190 for distances between 5 and 10 km, up to € 928 for > 50 km).
- City commuting costs for students of the arts (up to € 183).
- Accommodation costs (between € 2.531 and € 2,969).
- Study materials (between € 202 and € 242).

Finally, there are grants and loans from the Ministry of Defence and from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation in Spain or abroad. In Spain, students may also get loans from the Ministry of Science and Innovation for the completion of a Masters in Spain or abroad. The amount is of up to € 240 per Master credit, distributed in one or two payments of up to € 6,000 and up to 21 monthly payments of up to € 800. For a Master abroad students can apply for an additional € 6,000. The loan has a term of 20 years, with the top five qualifying. It has a fixed interest rate of 0% and are linear and monthly amortization.

Sources

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- http://www.fecyt.es/fecyt/seleccionarMenu2.do?strRutaNivel2=;Convocatorias;PremiosyAyudas&strRutaNivel1=;Convocatorias&tc=convocatorias_becas.

Sweden

In Sweden there are various kinds of financial aid for studies including grants and loans. Students can only receive direct student support. There are no indirect support arrangements for parents, spouses or students themselves. Support includes:

- Student grant for upper secondary school (studiehjälp).
- Student aid for a folk high school, adult secondary education programme (Komvux), national adult education programme, or another compulsory or upper secondary school (for people over 20).
- Student aid for college or university (studiemedel).
- Student aid for studying abroad (studiemedel).
- Study allowance (studiehjälp) to attend school abroad for under 20 year olds.
- Disability grants (Rg-bidrag).

The weekly student aid for full-time students is: SEK 674 (€ 70) for grants and SEK 1,361 (€ 141) for loans. There are possible supplements for children and a higher grant (högre bidrag), which can be received after turning 25 under certain conditions (e.g. for unemployed attending adult secondary education programme.

These resources are available to students:

- Attending a college or university or taking certain other courses after upper secondary school.
- Will be attending a folk high school, adult secondary education programme (Komvux), national adult education programme, or another compulsory or upper secondary school starting in the autumn of the year that s/he turns 20.
- Until 54 years (but eligibility for a loan may be limited starting in the year that student turns 45).

- If student will be studying at a college or university: s/he can receive student aid for up to 240 weeks (12 semesters).
- If student will be studying at the upper secondary level: s/he can receive student aid for 80-120 weeks (depending on whether s/he has completed upper secondary school).
- If student will be studying at the compulsory school level: s/he can receive student aid for 40-100 weeks (depending on whether s/he has completed compulsory school and need practice in reading, writing and arithmetic).

There is full portability of grants (SEK 674), including child allowances as mentioned above. Loans are also portable but the amount varies depending on the destination country. Normally, only Swedish citizens are entitled to student aid for studies outside Sweden. However exceptions can be made for EU nationals and their relatives.

Sources

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- Vossensteyn, H. (2004). *Student Financial Support. An Inventory of 24 European Countries. Background report for the project on the portability of student financial support*. CHEPS.

United Kingdom (England)

Student support in England includes grants and loans:

- Maintenance Grant: for students with family annual income below £50,020. In 2008/09 it was max £2,835 and there were 525,500 recipients in 2007-2008).
- Special Support Grant: available to new full-time students who may be eligible to receive benefits such as Income Support or Housing Benefit while they are studying. Incompatible with the Maintenance Grant. In Academic Year 2007/08, it was max £ 2,765.
- Higher Education Grant: contributes to accommodation and living costs of needy old-system students with family annual income below £ 16,340. In 2007/08 it was max £ 1,000 and there were 283,500 recipients in AY 2007-2008.
- Access to Learning Funds: given directly to institutions. Institutions are then responsible for using these funds to support low-income students.
- Tuition Fee Support: part of a student's fee contribution which they do not have to pay. It is a non-refundable grant that goes directly to the university. In AY 2007-2008 there were 280,000 recipients.
- Student Loan for Fees: A non-commercial loan from the government that covers the costs of student fees. In 2009 it was max £ 3,145. During AY 2006/07 there were 397,300 recipients (including students entering higher education before and after 2006/07).
- Student Loans for Maintenance (a.k.a. Student Loans for Living Costs): a loan to cover living costs that cannot be covered by the Maintenance Grant. It is max £ 4,625 for students living away from home (£ 6,475 for students living away from home in London), £ 3,580 for students living at home. In 2006/07 there were 728,100 recipients (including students entering higher education before and after 2006/07).

In the UK, full portability is only available for short-term mobility, with major barriers still remaining for all other periods spent abroad. Although there is no restriction on the host country, in the UK the study abroad must be an integral part of courses undertaken in the home institution or of the entire study programme. Students can maintain national support

and access additional support for mobility but only if their study abroad is part of their UK course (those who participate in an entire programme abroad are not entitled to any national financial support from the United Kingdom, see: Eurydice, 2009).

Sources

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