Students from low-income backgrounds in Student Mobility



research definition

the student survey asked participants the income level of their family household. The low-income student group were students who identified as being from a below average or slightly below average income household.

The variation in income equality at European level makes it difficult to compare countries across Europe, and therefore the definition of 'low income' is localised. Students from lower-income household have less opportunities in Higher Education.

Key Findings

Information provision remains key; 49% of respondents from low-income backgrounds reported being highly likely to meeting with an international officer, significantly higher than students from high-income background.

Respondents from low-income reported a 55% impact (significant and moderate) on their career planning, while this is only the case for 49% of respondents from high-income backgrounds.

2715 respondents from low income backgrounds

71% of universities recognise students with low-income backgrounds as students with fewer opportunities.

Financial Barriers

While financial barriers are a major concern for all respondents; students from a low-income background signal this is a significantly larger issue then their better-off peers.

- For respondents from low-income households, just over half (56%) strongly agreed that the initial cost was a barrier, compared to 32% for high income respondents. 1 in 5 (20%) strongly agreed that additional debt was a barrier.
- A fifth of respondents (21%) were concerned about losing a job while abroad, compared to 14% for high income respondents.
- 70% of non-mobile respondents said they need at least 75% of the mobility costs covered. This is only the case of 37% of respondents from high-income backgrounds.

Reflections from the community

The situation of young people from lower-than-average income families are particular in the way that they need more financial support and thought than other groups. They emphasised that young people from this target group can experience difficulties in:

- Accessing affordable accommodation or accommodation that is close to their campus. And being able to finance local transport if having to travel long distances.
- Integrating into the local student life due to the cost of activities and trips organised by and for students.
- Affording health care services in the host country.
- Affording books, laptops, WiFi and material that is necessary for their studies. Their only way to access these might be through university premises, making home-working/studying difficult.



Recommendations

this target group comprises a wide variety of profiles. Some might be coming from a high-income family background in their country, but when on the exchange they may belong to a low-income group due to the economical differences in Europe. Another thing to take into account is that they might not only have to take care of themselves while being abroad but of the family back home, making the opportunity more financial and mentally costly.

This target group can be hard to reach because they are subjected to the financial reality of going abroad. They might often get to hear or have the perception that it will be expensive; can't afford it but will only be able to take this opportunity once in their life.

Financial Information

 Inform about scholarship opportunities and a comparison of cost of living in different destination countries, e.g. how far do you get with 100 EUR in Romania compared to Norway?

Financial support

- Provide financial support for them to access mobility opportunities and material necessary for studies more easily.
- Find ways to offer student jobs for international students during their mobility to partially fund the mobility opportunity.
- Provide student discounts in a wide variety of areas to aid their experience.
- Opportunity to access free medical assistance and insurance in the host country.

The data extracted in this fact sheet comes from the Social Inclusion & Engagement in Mobility (SIEM) research project run by Erasmus Student Network (ESN) funded by the Erasmus+ programme. An extensive research report that gathers input of 12.000 students and 750 staff members across Europe and beyond on the inclusion in international student exchanges.

