Students from Ethnic Minority groups in Student Mobility



Ethnicity is defines as "shared understanding of history and territorial origins (regional and national) of an ethnic group or community, as well as on particular cultural characteristics such

as language and/or religion", noting that "ethnicity is multidimensional and is more a process than a static concept."

The student survey asked participants to confirm their ethnicity or cultural background. The survey offered a range of regional based on the groups used by the European Fundamental Rights Agency.

Students were able to select all backgrounds that applied to them.

Over 150 cultural backgrounds in several combinations were reported by participants. All these responses that do not define themselves as white/Caucasian form the group "Ethnic Minority students" in the report.*

*The goal is to understand the experience of mobility, and the barriers and support required for students who are ethnically and culturally diverse, and who experience structural and individual racism in our society, while acknowledging that ethnically and culturally diverse student groups should not be treated as a homogeneous group.

30% 3835 respondents from ethnic minority groups

47% of universities recognise students from ethnic minority groups as students with fewer opportunities.

Access to Support & Role Models

44% of respondents from ethnic minority groups reported that they would be highly likely to participate in an event with mobility alumni. Meeting other students planning to go abroad was felt very important by a quarter of ethnic minority respondents, significantly higher than other groups.

- 17% of non-mobile ethnic respondents agreed that fear of discrimination is a barrier to mobility, compared to 11% of white/Caucasian respondents.
- Almost a third (32%) of respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds reported experiencing discrimination, with 14% reporting this on the basis of race or ethnicity (compared to 3% for white respondents)

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Reflections from the community

An important challenge to tackle for this group is inclusion in higher education, it is the one important prerequisite to participate in higher education mobility. Structural racism is widely present in most societies, students from ethnic minorities mostly come from lower-income backgrounds and have a higher threshold to succeed in academic opportunities and in the job market.

Many of them fear discrimination, they fear the unknown and how they might be treated abroad, and this scares them from perusing mobility. What they hear from their surrounding was discussed to be the same, students get convinced that they will get discriminated because of their ethnicity and/or nationality.



When working with this inclusion group and the topic of ethnic minorities, intersectionality has to be taken into account, stresses the participants. This inclusion group are in many cases not only ethnically discriminated against but carry other layers and dimensions that hinder their academic and professional development.

When looking at the information needs of the group, family and friends are very close sources to turn to. The students belonging to this group are heavily influenced by their family, by friends, teachers and politics. They might watch YouTubers/influencers from abroad. Students from ethnic minorities might also be consuming content in their own languages, e.g. therefore collaborating and promoting information in different languages is important.

In their support network are often students and friends with the same ethnic backgrounds.

SILENCE

Universities can support these students with:

- Role models who can show that academic studies and learning mobility is also for them.
- Provide a community where they can feel free to address their concerns among peers who understand them.
- Provide mental health services for how to deal with discrimination and racism abroad.
- It is also important for Erasmus students to learn about the different ethnicities in the country they are going, and what the reality might look like for them.
- Teach professors how to be more attentive towards ethnic minority groups when teaching about a sensitive topic.

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.

