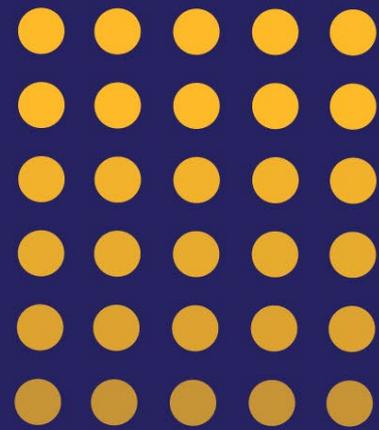




**“Maybe
it will be
different
abroad.”**

Student and Staff
Perspectives on
Diversity and Inclusion
in student exchanges



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Introduction

Fostering the development of competences ‘to harness the full potential of education and culture as drivers for jobs, social fairness, active citizenship as well as means to experience European identity in all its diversity’ is one of the aims in the vision towards a European Education Area that would be able. The first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights states that everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that allow full participation in society and successful transitions in the labour market. Learning mobility is one of the key tools in the coordinated by the European Commission to support upward social mobility across Europe for young people with fewer opportunities. In order to achieve this, inclusion is a key priority for the upcoming Erasmus+ programme for the period of 2021 – 2027, however there is still little research done on the accessibility of the programme for students from less-advantaged backgrounds to understand which groups in society are underrepresented in mobility opportunities and which barriers they perceive. According to the EUROGRADUATE pilot survey¹, the social background of students is an important factor that impacts mobility, with students more likely to participate in mobility if their parents are Higher Education graduates themselves.

The Erasmus Impact Study (2019) states that for more than 50% of non-mobile students, issues related to finances, personal relationships and lack of financial resources were a barrier to participate. Furthermore it is reported that for 40% of reported students this conflicts with work commitments. Students taking part in an Erasmus mobility are 23% less likely to be unemployed 5 years after graduation, as 93% of all employers value the soft skills gained by participants of mobility programmes.

Universities UK international published the *Gone International: Expanding Opportunities* in 2018 in which they analysed the impact of student mobility in the UK context. The results show that students from disadvantaged groups are less likely to participate, while the impact of a mobility programme on these groups is often more pronounced.

1 EUROGRADUATE pilot survey, 2020, European Commission

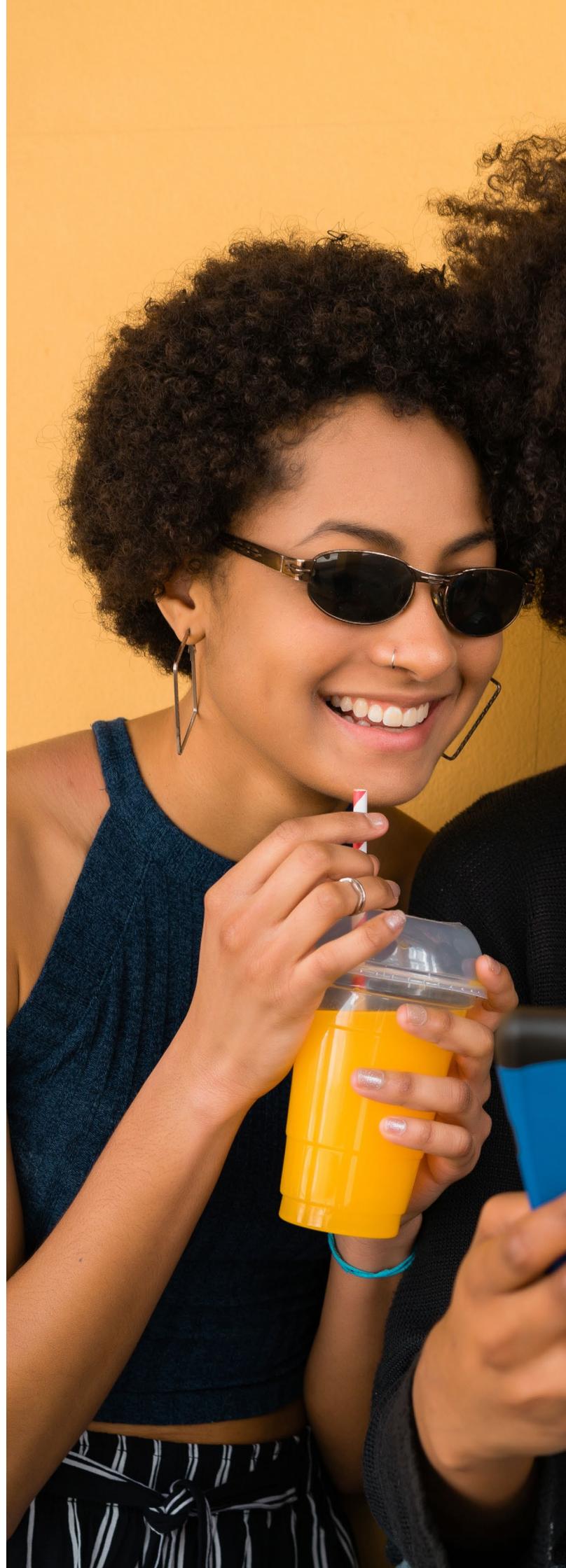
Social Inclusion and Engagement in Mobility

In response to this need for a better understanding of the barriers students experience to participate in mobility, a collaborative cross-European partnership established the Social Inclusion and Engagement in Mobility (SIEM) project.

This project is an important step toward making international mobility opportunities more inclusive, enabling students from all backgrounds to study, work, or volunteer abroad. The project has two objectives

- Widening participation of underrepresented groups of the Erasmus+ programme in order to make the programme more inclusive;
- Increase the interaction between international students and local communities with fewer opportunities in order to increase integration and intercultural exchange.

The project is a collaborative cross-European partnership between the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), Universities UK International (UUKi), the European University Foundation, YES Forum, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (BE), University of Vigo (ES), Masaryk University (CZ), University of Latvia (LV), ESN Spain (ES) and ESN France (FR).







Executive Summary

The cross-cutting objective of the SIEM project is to ensure that more young people with fewer opportunities participate in the Erasmus programme. The goal of this report is to provide analysis of patterns and trends in mobility by less advantaged student groups, and to gather intelligence which will support the increased participation of underrepresented groups in the Erasmus programme.

The research for this project focuses on outgoing mobility, that is the opportunity for learning abroad that students access during their degree programme including study, work, and volunteer abroad programmes. The research undertaken to support this project included a literature review, as well as the circulation of a staff survey (785 responses) and a student survey (12820 responses) which were used to map some trends in mobility participation, and to better understand the barriers experienced by students. The project consortia also ran 10 focus groups and undertook 6 study visits to institutions in five nations to gather additional intelligence to inform the reports recommendations².

This report makes a number of recommendations for ways in which universities can better support students to access mobility opportunities. The project calls for universities to take a first step by defining which student groups

they consider to have fewer opportunities. This will enable universities to introduce more targeted support and to measure progress made in increasing participation of these underrepresented groups. It is important to also embed mobility metrics across institutional strategies, and to work in collaboration with teams across the organisation to provide expert support for students.

Finance continues to be a major barrier to students accessing mobility programmes, and this barrier is compounded for students from less advantaged backgrounds. It is vital that grant levels are in line with real living costs and that students are able to access any additional funding they are eligible for while abroad. In addition, universities should provide clear information on the scholarships, grants and bursaries available to students and any eligibility requirements, as well as indications of cost of living while abroad.

It is essential that institutions are student-led and seek feedback from students, both when it comes to the support being offered to access programmes, but also when designing mobility activities. The report found that students were interested in taking part in a wide range of programme types and durations, and universities would benefit from offering a diverse range of options for students to go abroad. Working

2 Full methodology can be found on pages X - Y of this report

with mobility alumni as ambassadors for programmes and promoting the benefits of study, work and volunteer abroad from student role models can also help support a wider group of students to go abroad.

Key Findings

Mobility strategy

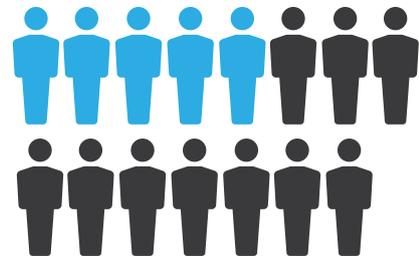


93%

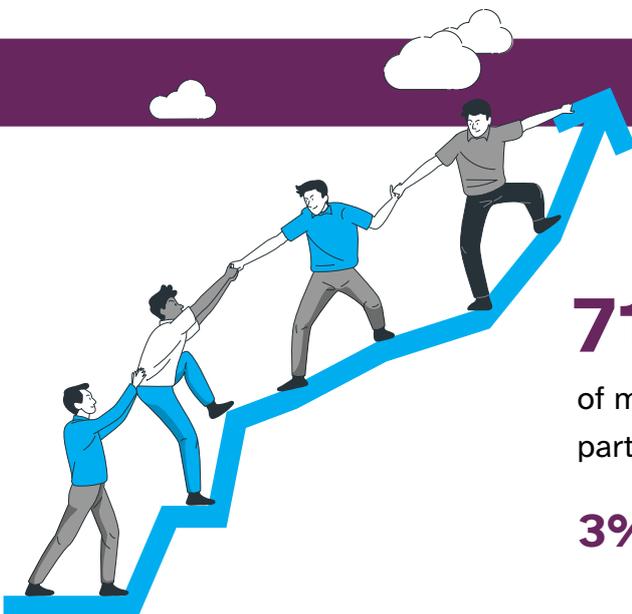
of staff survey respondents said their institutions' **strategic plans include outgoing mobility.**

1/3

included reference to **disadvantaged groups** in their strategy.



Types of programmes

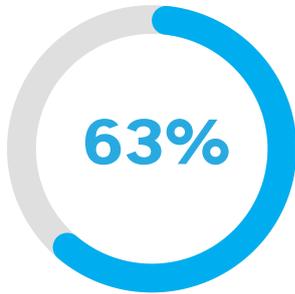


71%

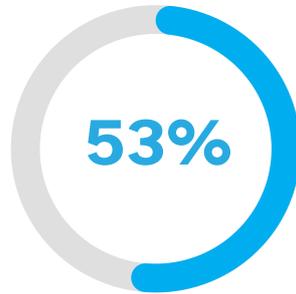
of mobile respondents participated in **Erasmus+ studies.**

3% took part in a short mobility programme.

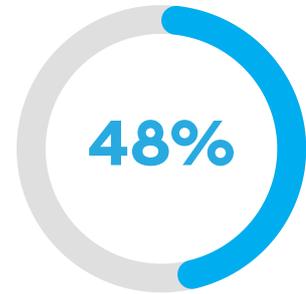
Non-mobile students most interested in participating in:



Erasmus+
studies



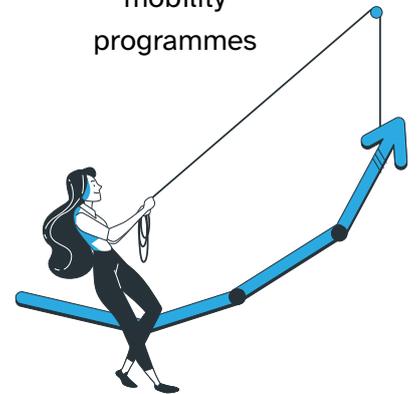
Erasmus+
traineeships or
internships



short-term
mobility
programmes

49%

of respondents to the staff survey
offered short-term mobility
opportunities to students.



Support

What did mobile students find useful when preparing for their mobility?

94%

information about
available funding

88%

support with the
application process

86%

help choosing
a host university



Just over half of mobile respondents found meetings with international officers (55%), group information sessions (53%), and briefing events (53%) useful.

Funding

67% of mobile respondents reported a **monthly cost of living** while on mobility of **over €501 a month**. **73%** of staff respondents reported cost of living in their location as over €501 a month.



19% of mobile respondents had at least **75% of their mobility costs covered** by a grant or scholarship.



53% of non-mobile respondents reported **needing at least 75%** of the mobility programme costs to be covered by funding if they were to go abroad.

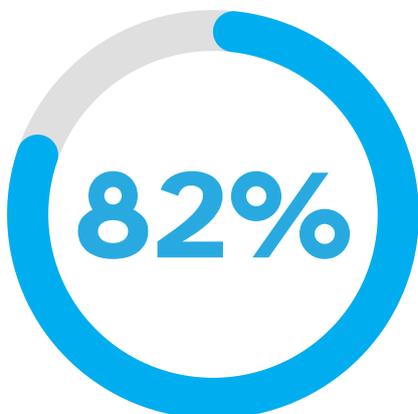
70% of non-mobile respondents from **low-income backgrounds** reported needing at least 75% of the mobility costs covered by a grant or scholarship, compared to 37% for respondents from high-income backgrounds. Similarly, for non-mobile respondents from **ethnic minority groups**, **69%** reported needing at least 75% of mobility costs covered by grants or scholarships compared with 44% of white respondents.



Once abroad, **82%** of mobile respondents found **welcome meetings** useful, in addition to **student organised events** (75%) and **social events** (78%).

89% of non-mobile respondents wanted to participate in a **buddy** or **ambassador** scheme.

Barriers to mobility



of mobile respondents reported needing to **advance the initial costs** for a mobility period.

In addition to this, across the four target groups higher proportions of respondents agreed that information about opportunities to go abroad not being available was a barrier.

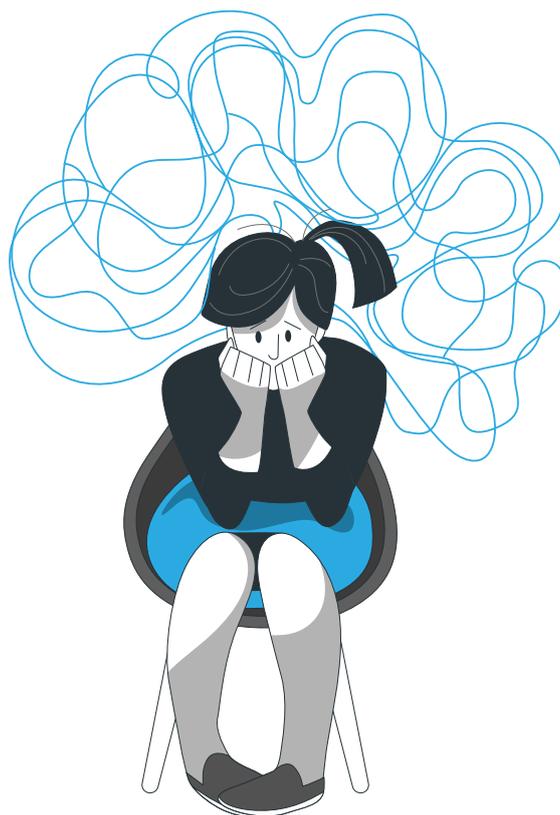
The barriers to mobility experienced by students were compounded for respondents from across the project's target groups which reported these at a higher rate. In addition, **17%** of **non-mobile ethnic minority** respondents agreed that **fear of discrimination** while going abroad was a barrier, compared to 11% of white respondents.

Other barriers for respondents included **loss of income or student job** while abroad (**41%**) and **additional debt** incurred while abroad (**31%**).

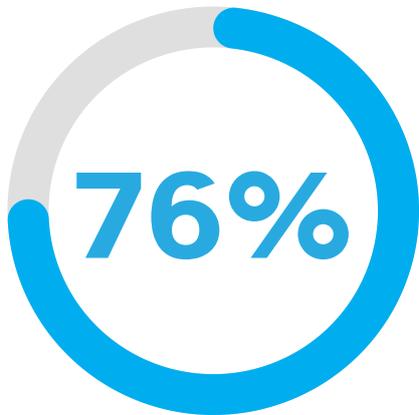
A higher number of respondents from **low-income backgrounds** reported strong concerns relating to **upfront costs and loss of job** (**43%**, compared to 34% for high income respondents).

Other barriers included:

- insufficient funding
- lack of practical support or information
- finding accommodation abroad and on return to home country
- being isolated while abroad
- impact on academic attainment.



Experiences of discrimination while abroad



had **positive** experiences while abroad.

However,

10% of respondents felt that they were treated differently or unfairly at their host university, and

15% felt that they did not have equal access to resources and opportunities compared to home students.

Impact

45%

of mobile respondents indicated that their **academic performance was impacted positively by their mobility**, and that their academic grade increased following their mobility period.

24%

reported experiencing some form of discrimination while abroad on a mobility programme.

16% experienced discrimination based on **nationality**, while

6% reported experiencing discrimination on the basis of **race or ethnicity**, and **5%** on the basis of **gender**.

For the report's target groups, respondents from **low-income households** reported a **slightly higher rate** (30%) of experiencing discrimination while abroad. These respondents reported being discriminated against **based on social status** (4% vs 2% for high income households). **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), and 1 in 5 reported this on grounds of **nationality** (20%, compared to 15% for white respondents).

67%

of respondents indicated that their interest to do further **study or work abroad** was significantly impacted by their mobility programme.

These patterns held for the project's target groups.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the research, the following recommendations were made in order to improve the participation of young people with fewer opportunities in mobility programmes. Each of the recommendations brings a general recommendation and suggests a course of action for the key stakeholders involved in operationalising student mobility.

1. Define 'fewer opportunities'

Structural barriers persist in higher education and it is important to know which students may require additional support to overcome these to achieve success. Institutions should define their underrepresented student groups to ensure that the right types of support are put in place, and to facilitate measuring equity in access to mobility programmes. Having target student groups ensures a systemic approach can be taken to remove barriers that stop students from engaging with mobility experiences.

European Commission:

- Facilitate a common understanding of underrepresented groups for inclusion action plans.

- Coordination of a common data standard for the Erasmus+ programme.
- Ensure national plans are in line with the Erasmus+ Inclusion strategy.

Higher Education Institutions:

- Define underrepresented groups based on local context in order to adjust and tailor mobility strategies to students' needs.

International Student Organisations:

- Be aware of the barriers students face in their local context.

2. Develop a strategy

Ensuring plans for mobility programmes are captured within institutional strategies means that goals and targets are sustainable and change can be achieved over the strategy timeline. It also ensures that mobility teams are appropriately resourced, and that there are mechanisms for monitoring incremental progress. This work can be supported by including mobility indicators in other institutional documents such as international strategies,

student experience strategies, access and participation strategies, etc. It is important to include explicit reference to work that will be done to support less advantaged students to access mobility, and mobility targets are adopted that include underrepresented groups.

European Commission / National Agencies

- Ensure that organisational support is available for international relations offices to develop inclusion strategies.

National Agencies:

- Ensure policy actions are in place to support all underrepresented groups.

Higher Education Institutions:

- Develop inclusion strategies to widen participation of underrepresented groups.
- Align inclusion strategies with Erasmus+ national inclusion action plans and other relevant internationalisation documents at the national level.

3. Provide financial support

Where possible provide structured funding in the form of grants and scholarships to support study, work or volunteering abroad opportunities. Make information on eligibility easy to understand and share information on other sources of

funding with students so that they can take advantage of the multiple funding pots available. Provide clear and transparent information relating to costs abroad both in terms of living costs (travel, food, accommodation) and about opportunities to work abroad which will enable students to better plan budgets for their mobility period. Where upfront costs are involved, consider allowing students to pay on an instalment plan. Ensure that grants are paid on time.

European Commission:

- Ensure transparent information is offered to students on the financial support they can receive.
- Ensure grants cover a substantial amount of costs obtained by students.

National Authorities:

- Ensure transparent procedures are in place for the allocation of grant and scholarship funds that are equal for all students.
- Apply top-up procedures to support students from less-advantaged backgrounds.
- Foresee national support to complement European funding to allow students to study abroad.

Higher Education Institutions:

- Ensure top-up systems are in place for those who need it.
- Ensure the scholarships are paid on time for students.

- Provide instalment plans for students who need upfront financing.
- Support students throughout the full duration of their exchange.

4. Diversify programme offer

Offer different types of mobility programmes across study, work and volunteer opportunities that will appeal to different student groups. Providing a variety of programme durations will also ensure that all students can engage with a programme that suits their circumstance. Consider offering group mobility programmes for students who are nervous to travel alone, and summer programmes for students who are unable or hesitant to go abroad during term time. Use short term mobility programmes to introduce students to mobility and open up ambition for more long-term mobility at a later stage in their degree.

European Commission / National Authorities:

- Ensure short term mobilities are embedded in the internationalisation strategy

Higher Education Institutions:

- Offer different types of mobility programmes across study, work and volunteer with a variety of durations.
- Embed short term mobilities in the strategy to increase long-term student mobility.

5. Streamline process

Ensure that the application process is easy to navigate, and where possible simplify the process by removing unnecessary paperwork or steps in the procedure. Consider offering drop-in sessions or group sessions where students can seek advice and be supported to complete any required paperwork. Develop guidance on completing the necessary documentation, which includes a timeline of the process that highlights key milestones and deadlines which students need to meet.

National Agencies:

- Foster exchange of best practices in terms of streamlining procedures, including success stories and innovative practices, in HEI meetings.

Higher Education institutions:

- Provide direct guidance using both online and offline methods,
- Align transparent procedures at the institutional level.
- Present a timeline of the whole mobility process, highlighting key milestones and deadlines.
- Set clear contact persons for procedural matters from the beginning of the application process.

6. Enhance collaboration between departments

Take a whole institution approach to sending students abroad to study, work, and volunteer. Work in partnership with colleagues across departments who can provide expertise in different areas of the mobility cycle, for example disability teams, academic schools, international offices, and student finance departments. Working collectively ensures that students are supported across all steps of the mobility process and minimises the risk of both misinformation and missed information. Having a collaborative structure also allows expert colleagues to take ownership of specific parts of the process, which will help students navigate who best to seek advice from at each stage of the mobility journey.

National Agencies:

- Increase collaboration at the national level with both Governmental agencies and civil society organisations working in the fields of inclusion and the social dimension of higher education.

Higher Education Institutions:

- Work with the collaboration tools developed in the Guidelines for Inclusive Mobility Promotion and Recruitment
- Appoint inclusive mobility officers or joint task forces which can coordinate the work among departments and facilitate collaboration.

7. Outline academic attainment

Make it clear how learning will be assessed while the student is abroad. Provide information on how the mobility programme will contribute to the students' academic progress, for example if modules are credit bearing or if grades are transferred. If a specific academic threshold is a requirement of a mobility programme, ensure that this is balanced with other criteria that take into account student motivation and personal background.

Higher Education Institutions:

- Balance academic requirements with other criteria such as personal motivation and background.

8. Encourage student to discuss their concerns

Be comfortable having difficult discussions with students. If they raise concerns around fear of discrimination while abroad be ready to discuss these and outline to students what their options are. Create a safe space where the student can discuss their fears without judgement, and if needed seek specialist advice to respond to the students' queries. When using student ambassadors, if they are comfortable to do so, invite them to share any challenges they faced and how they overcame these with support from the institution

National Agencies:

- Collaborate with student representatives in order to better understand the challenges which students face during their mobility experiences.

Higher Education Institutions:

- Create clear communication channels and reference persons for students to voice their concerns at the beginning of their mobilities.
- Be proactive, proposing feedback sessions with incoming students to improve the mobility experience.

International Student organisations:

- Reach out directly to incoming exchange students in order to offer peer to peer support and gather their experiences and challenges.
- Communicate with HEIs to agree on common support measures and ideas to improve the mobility experience and offer support.

9. Provide in-country support for student services

Assign students a key contact, both at the home institution and the host institution. If possible, introduce the students to their contact in advance of departure. Any support given to students should be provided in English or a shared language,

so the student feels confident to vocalise concerns.

National Authorities/ National Agencies:

- Ensure that nation-wide student services aimed to the local student population are also applicable to international students

Higher Education Institutions:

- Ensure that services are accessible to international students and equal treatment is guaranteed.

International Student Organisations:

- Organise social and cultural integration activities for international students.

10. Ensuring peer to peer engagement

Connect mobile students with local students, via a buddy or ambassador scheme to help students navigate the new institution or organisation, as well as the local area. This is particularly important in the early days of the mobility programme to help students to settle into their new environment.

Higher Education Institutions:

- Support peer to peer initiatives to encourage interaction between international and local students.

International Student Organisations:

- Organise buddy and ambassador systems supported with events to connect the two groups.
- Organise community engagement initiatives to support interaction between international students and locals.

11. Support student health abroad

Universities have systems and services in place to support both the physical and mental health of students on the home campus. Where possible, provide these services to students abroad via virtual methods. In addition, ensure these services are accessible to incoming students when they are on exchange on your university campus.

It is also important that students have the right information about insurance options and know what to do in a medical emergency. These support measures are particularly crucial for vulnerable groups, but it is important for all students to know how their health will be supported abroad.

Higher Education Institutions:

- Support students with information about insurance and health issues abroad.
- Ensure health services can be made available to support students off site.
- Ensure on-campus support is

accessible to incoming international students.

12. Develop a crisis plan

It is of vital importance that universities are ready to support students in an emergency, and that all students know who to contact in the first instance should they encounter a crisis. This extends to providing support for students who experience discrimination while they are abroad. Ensure that students understand their rights while travelling abroad, and what to do should they encounter discrimination at the university or in the local community. Have a process in place to ensure that students receive the right support in the immediate aftermath, and also following any incident. Publish this information so students are informed about the procedures that are put in place, and address a contact person. Review university partnerships in cases where the local support fell short of expectations.

Higher Education Institutions:

- Ensure crisis plans in the institutions take into account international students.
- Signpost who students can contact if they experience discrimination.
- International Student Organisations
- Create a safe space for students to address positive and negative experiences.

13. Work with students

Collaborate with student groups at your institution, as well as mobility alumni. Ask students for feedback on programmes to improve these for future students via mechanisms such as surveys and focus groups. Establish buddy schemes and ambassador programmes with mobile students who can support others about to embark on mobility programmes by providing a student perspective. Invite students to get involved in events and enable student takeovers on social media. In addition, work with student associations or representatives who can provide support in communications and in preparing students to go abroad. It is important to give students agency to organise themselves in order to ensure they feel included in the process.

National Authorities/National Agencies:

- Support the establishment or the further development of students networks working in the field of student mobility
- Foster the creation of alumni ambassador schemes
- Encourage HEIs to support and work with student organisations

Higher Education Institutions:

- Provide structural support to student organisations and alumni networks
- Include students and student

organisations in the creation of internationalisation strategies

- Create mechanisms and procedures to gather feedback from students and student organisations.

International Student Organisations

- Actively contribute to the dialogue and provide feedback

14. Engage local and regional authorities

The international student experience does not end the moment students leave the university campus. International students spend a large part of their time outside of the university campus. They interact with the local community and they make use of public services. Work together with local municipalities and other local authorities to make them attentive to the role they play to ensure that the broader cultural environment is hospitable towards international students.

National Authorities/National Agencies:

- Ensure that local and regional authorities are aware about existing student mobility frameworks and encourage them to create internationalisation strategies for their local and regional environments.

Higher Education Institutions:

- Work together with local municipalities in order to ensure better integration of international students in the hosting city.
- Organise reception days to welcome the international students in the city.

International Student Organisations:

- Organise activities together with local stakeholders to integrate the international students in the city life.





Setting the scene

COVID-19 Pandemic 2020

As the goal of the project remains to increasing access to mobility opportunities for students from underrepresented groups, in order to boost their employability opportunities and increase their chances to social mobility, it is important to note that crisis tends to hit those who already face difficulties, such as students with fewer opportunities backgrounds, harder than those who do not.

Internationalisation should play a key role in empowering students for the upcoming societal challenges. If we want to ensure students are able to overcome the barriers that will be intensified by the ensuing crisis we can expect due to the COVID-19 outbreak, sufficient research and impact assessment on the access and effects of mobility needs to be put in place.

Our research process coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic that took place in 2020. This survey that targeted past mobile students, was launched before the pandemic and its subsequent lockdown measures took effect across the global, the majority (75%) of mobilities taking place in spring 2020 were affected by the pandemic, with a 75% of students returning home, continuing their activities through distance learning (42%), suspended their mobility (22%) or cancelled (36)³.

- 37.5% of the students experienced at least one major problem related to their exchange. The most common one was related to the loss of transportation to return home, followed by problems with accommodation and problems with access to basic needs such as food and sanitary products. Three-quarters of the students whose mobilities were cancelled got support from their home

³ Survey on the impact of COVID-19 on learning mobility activities, European Commission, 2020

universities⁴.

- 7% of the students reported that they will not get any grant at all for their studies. 24% reported that they will keep the grant, partially or fully. The majority of students do not know what will happen to their grants.
- Half of the students whose mobility continued have moved to online classes. 34% of them have moved to partial online or partially postponed classes.
- While the reported experience of discrimination based on nationality (6%) or ethnicity (4,3%) , there was a large in-group variation depending on nationality, with 21% of Asian students indicating they were affected by racism.
- A significant number of students report feelings of isolation (21%) or anxiety and stress (41%) because of COVID-19.

Further impact of the COVID-19 crisis on students in both spring and fall 2020 is analysed by the ESNsurvey 2021, which is not published at the time of writing. The focus groups took place in the fall of 2020, capturing the concerns and barriers to participate in mobility of currently enrolled students – amplifying some of the recommendations found earlier in the report:

- Diversifying mobility programmes to ease the way back to mobility through short-term or group mobilities.
- Ensuring crisis communication, including information about health care, is available in accessible languages to the international student population.
- Increase attention for student guidance and support to address mental health challenges and discrimination.
- Introducing digital tools to offer support to students, by for example having virtual briefing sessions or office hours to support students.

GG Women, children, people with disabilities, the marginalized and the displaced, all pay the highest price in conflicts and are also most at risk of suffering devastating losses from COVID-19.

- **António Guterres UN Secretary-General**

Student life has taken place in confinement for the bigger part of 2020, making it difficult for international students to interact with their peers and the local communities, creating a larger disconnect

⁴ [Student Exchanges in Times of Crisis](#), Wim Gabriels, Rasmus Benke-Åberg, Erasmus Student Network, 2020

between different groups in society, causing tension that can lead to further discrimination of disadvantaged groups and impact participation of underrepresented groups.

One of the key elements of the Erasmus+ programme is to increase interaction between different communities to increase intercultural awareness and tolerance to diversity across Europe and the world, the second pillar of the SIEM project that focuses on engagement between international students and local communities can play an essential role to maintain positive attitudes towards international student mobility.



Key Findings from Literature Review

More people than ever before are enrolling in universities across the world: the share of tertiary-educated young adults in OECD countries increased from 35% in 2008 to 44% in 2018⁵. The European Commission set a target that 40 % of young people should have a tertiary education qualification or equivalent by 2020, and that adult participation in learning should reach 15% by 2020⁶.

However, students from disadvantaged backgrounds and identities are underrepresented in higher education across Europe. There is a difference in which student groups are considered to be disadvantaged in each nation, and the participation in higher education by students of these disadvantaged group varies across countries. The EHEA Social Dimension Principles and Guidelines calls on countries to identify disadvantaged, underrepresented, and vulnerable groups. It goes on to note that in order to develop

effective policies, continuous national data collection on the student body, access and participation, drop-out and completion of higher education, including the transition to the labour market after completion of studies is necessary⁷. It is particularly important that this data is identified for vulnerable, disadvantaged, and underrepresented groups in order to track progress made on moving towards true equity.

Access to higher education is not limited to enrollment within an institution, and extends to participation in university activities, and eventual progression to further education or employment following degree completion. There are differences in the completion and success rates of students on the basis of socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, and disability status, among other identities. The barriers students encounter when trying to gain

5 [Education at a Glance](#), OECD, 2019

6 [Higher Education Equity Policy: European Commission, World Access HE](#), 2019

7 [Rome Ministerial Communiqué: Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA, EHEA, 2020](#)

access to higher education are reinforced once enrolled within institutions, both in the academic space and in extracurricular activities:

“Disadvantaged students are less likely to engage in extracurricular activities not only because their relative lack of economic capital means they often have to work to fund their studies, but also because they are unaware just how much the relationships and knowledge such extracurricular activities develop can be worth”⁸.

In addition to barriers to access and participation in institutions, research from the European Commission finds that students from less advantaged groups withdraw from university at a higher rate than their more advantaged peers noting that there is “a lack of attention to the needs of a more diverse student population and a lack of a student-centered approach in designing and delivering higher education programmes”⁹.

These wider access issues and lessons are important to consider in the context of study, work, and volunteer abroad. Outgoing mobility is in many ways a microcosm of the university experience, and many of the barriers students experience accessing higher education are replicated when

accessing study, work, or volunteer abroad programmes. Trying to understand the barriers to mobility across Europe is further challenged by the fact that the majority of countries do not collect data on the participation in outgoing mobility programmes by disadvantaged student groups, and are therefore unable to measure whether groups are participating at a rate proportionate to the wider student population.¹⁰ Countries that have undertaken this analysis, for example in the United Kingdom, find that students from disadvantaged demographics participate in mobility programmes at a lower rate than their more advantaged peers¹¹.

Barriers to mobility programmes

There are many types of barriers to mobility including practical barriers, environmental barriers, and attitudinal barriers. Research from the British Council noted that obstacles to study abroad included the financial costs, distance from family and friends, concerns about foreign language capacity and concerns about quality of education abroad¹².

Financial concerns are broad and include a lack of grant or scholarship funding available and the risk of losing a student job. The *Erasmus+ Impact Study* (2019) noted that around two thirds of non-

8 “Who you know: the importance of social capital in widening participation” in [Where next for widening participation and fair access? New insights from leading thinkers](#), Paul Clarke, HEPI Report 98, Higher Education Policy Institute, 2017

9 [Drop-out and completion in higher education in Europe](#), European Commission, 2013

10 [Mobility Scoreboard: Higher Education Background Report 2018/19](#), Eurydice, 2020

11 [Gone International: Rising Aspirations](#), Universities UK International, 2019

12 [Broadening Horizons: Addressing the needs of a new generation](#), British Council, 2017

mobile students reported some type of financial concern¹³. Students are concerned about not only the cost of the programme but missed costs at home. Eurostudent research into students in paid work noted that on average 69% of students who work do so to cover their living costs and half of these students indicated not being able to afford studying without their job¹⁴. EUROSTUDENT research also found that graduates who financed their studies themselves reported much less participation in mobility programmes, while both parental and grant support increased the chance of studying abroad¹⁵. It is perhaps unsurprising that students are concerned about financial barriers to going abroad when only fourteen higher education systems in Europe offer unrestricted portability of domestic support for students taking part in mobility programmes¹⁶.

Research in the Nordic countries reported that a lack of information and knowledge, a lack of encouragement, a lack of role models as well as a lack of overall policy focus and supportive initiatives all presented barriers to students accessing mobility opportunities¹⁷. Lack of knowledge as a barrier to mobility extends to lack of

ambition or appetite for travel, particularly in the case of students from households with limited international experience. A Universities Australia reported that “awareness of mobility programmes is perpetuated by generational characteristics. These characteristics include an inherent interest in different cultures and societies, the desire to work in other countries following graduation and a deeply held wish to experience different places”¹⁸.

Essentially, students without a previous international experience may not seek out these types of programmes at university, yet these are the students who arguably stand to benefit the most from such an experience.

It is also important to recognize that the barriers to mobility differ depending on the phase of the mobility process: barriers at the decision-making stage will be different to the obstacles encountered once students have decided to go abroad and face the more practical barriers of international travel¹⁹. Research from Eurostudent noted that financial and familial obstacles are highly relevant when making the initial decision to go abroad. However once students have decided to go abroad they are “more concerned about practical matters: integrating a stay abroad into

13 Erasmus+ Impact Study

14 [Combining Studies and Paid Jobs](#), Eurostudent, European Union, 2018

15 [EUROGRADUATE Pilot Study](#), European Union, 2020

16 [Mobility Scoreboard: Higher Education Background Report 2018/19](#), Eurydice, 2020

17 [Equity in Student Mobility in Nordic Higher education](#), Kjetil A. Knarlag, Universell 2017

18 Universities Australia, Report into student mobility, Rob Lawrence, UniversitiesAustralia, 2016

19 [What Are The Obstacles To Student Mobility During The Decision And Planning Phase?](#), Eurostudent, European Union, 2016

their study programme, getting relevant information, securing a place in a mobility programme, and ensuring their results achieved abroad will be recognised”²⁰.

It is also the case that institutional barriers to mobility stop students from going abroad. Indeed, research from the European Commission noted that “Inequalities of student mobility are very likely to be also generated within countries’ education systems and higher education institutes... the decision and chance to study abroad will be determined by the opportunities available for students within their field of subject and higher education institute”.²¹

Institutions not providing mobility programmes across all disciplines, or a lack of flexibility in degree structure or credit transfer act as barriers to going abroad. In addition, where there are institutional requirements for outgoing programmes – such as a requirement to reach a specific grade point average – these can present further barriers for students who are less likely to do well academically due to the attainment gap that persists for some student demographics²².

Impact of mobility programmes

The world of work is constantly changing, and in the current climate students need to learn the advanced skills and qualifications required to fully participate in more knowledge-intensive and faster changing labour markets, including social and emotional competence²³. Through the Erasmus+ Impact Study students who go abroad reported developing a broad range of cognitive, and interpersonal skills to a significant degree including: intercultural skills, curiosity, flexibility and adaptability, confidence, self-awareness, interpersonal skills, communication, problem solving, language, tolerance for ambiguity, and course or major-related knowledge²⁴.

This is particularly the case for students from disadvantaged demographics. Research from Ireland found that the benefits of going abroad for disadvantaged students include improved career and employment opportunities, higher academic attainment, students' personal development in addition to improving language skills²⁵.

Research in the UK looked at measures across a range of academic and employment outcomes including degree attainment, starting salary, job level and unemployment rate six months after

²⁰ [What Are The Obstacles To Student Mobility During The Decision And Planning Phase?](#), Eurostudent, European Union, 2016

²¹ [Unequal uptake of higher education mobility in the UK: The importance of social segregation in universities and subject areas](#) European Commission: JRC Technical Reports, 2018

²² [Degree attainment gaps](#), AdvanceHE, 2020

²³ [Trends Shaping Education 2019](#), OECD Publishing, 2019

²⁴ Erasmus+ Impact Study

²⁵ [Enhancing Mobility of Access Students Ireland](#), Sinead Lucey, Irish Universities Association, 2018

graduation, and found that students who go abroad during their undergraduate degree programmes get better degrees and better jobs. In addition, when looking at students from less advantaged or underrepresented groups these positive outcomes hold, and in some cases are more pronounced for disadvantaged demographics²⁶.

Research from the European Commission found that outgoing mobility has a positive impact on career progression for participants, and increases the uptake and completion of postgraduate studies, especially for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds²⁷. The Institute of International Education (IIE) also found that “studying abroad had unintended benefits in terms of not only developing skills and shifting attitudes, but also opening career pathways and opportunities that had been either previously unknown or simply unconsidered.”. The period abroad increased students’ ambition for their future career plans, in addition to signposting unanticipated career pathways²⁸.

In summary, the literature review found that on a systemic level challenges around definition in which student groups are disadvantaged create issues when reviewing access to programmes. However, where countries are measuring

participation in mobility, student groups that are underrepresented in universities more broadly tend to also be underrepresented in mobility programmes. The barriers to mobility programmes are manifold and differ depending on both the student group looking to go abroad and the phase of the mobility journey. They include institutional barriers such as lack of information, environmental barriers such as mobility financing, and attitudinal barriers such as a lack of role models to open up ambition. However, the positive impacts of these programmes are broad, and can be particularly important for students from disadvantaged groups in supporting them to develop the right skillsets to succeed postgraduation in employment and further education.

²⁶ [Gone International: Raising Aspirations](#), Katherine Allinson, Universities UK International, 2019

²⁷ [Studying abroad: benefits and unequal uptake*](#) - European Commission: Science for Policy Briefs, 2019

²⁸ [Gaining an Employment Edge: The Impact of Study Abroad on 21st Century Skills & Career Prospects in the United States](#), Institute of International Education (IIE), 2017

Defining ‘fewer opportunities’

A note on terminology

The goal of this project is to ensure that all students, regardless of background, are able to access mobility opportunities abroad. Collective terminology is often needed to describe different student groups. However, there are some challenges in this space, for example, some communities rejecting the label ‘disadvantaged’. There is also a linguistic divide as countries do not have a shared language: certain terminology can be viewed as offensive in some countries and not in others. In addition, language is constantly updating and the terms in use today may change in the future. It is important that this is considered when developing policies in this space.

In this report, we follow the newly released Erasmus+ Programme Guide for 2021-2027 and will use the term ‘students with fewer opportunities’ to describe all students that face structural, institutional and social barriers to participation in education.

The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) prohibits discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, or other status²⁹.

Countries sit on a broad spectrum of data collection, both in terms of higher

education participation, and on outgoing mobility participation. National differences in definition of ‘disadvantage’, and data on these groups, posed a challenge in this project. At a European level, we lack shared definitions of fewer opportunities, and when seeking views from these populations we also lack shared terminology to categorise demographic data. This further supports the call for countries to identify students with fewer opportunities, underrepresented, and vulnerable groups as outlined in the

²⁹ [European Court of Human Rights website](#), accessed 16 November 2020

EHEA Social Dimension Principles and Guidelines.

Therefore, a key challenge when working in the space of access to outgoing mobility is the lack of an agreed upon definition on what is considered to be a disadvantaged background for mobile students. Research looking into access to the Erasmus+ programme found that for partner countries the lack of a programme-wide definition of disadvantage causes a fragmented approach to access which in fact promotes inequity³⁰.

The European Commission has defined the following equity target groups: students from parents with low educational attainment, students from disadvantaged groups, students with a migrant background, refugee students, along with a focus on gender³¹. The Erasmus+ Programme Guide lists eight indicative barriers that can lead to fewer opportunities:

- disabilities (i.e. participants with special needs): people with mental (intellectual, cognitive, learning), physical, sensory, or other disabilities.
- barriers linked to education and training systems: young people with learning difficulties; early school-leavers; low qualified adults; young people with poor school performance.
- economic barriers: people with a low standard of living, low income, dependence on social welfare system or homeless; young people in long-term unemployment or poverty; people in debt or with financial problems.
- cultural differences: immigrants or refugees or descendants from immigrant or refugee families; people belonging to a national or ethnic minority; people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties.
- barriers linked to discrimination: people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc.
- social barriers: people with limited social skills or anti-social or risky behaviours; people in a precarious situation; (ex-) offenders, (ex-) drug or alcohol abusers; young and/or single parents; orphans.
- geographical barriers: people from remote or rural areas; people living in small islands or in peripheral regions; people from urban problem zones; people from less serviced areas (limited public transport, poor facilities).
- health problems: people with chronic health problems, severe illnesses, or psychiatric conditions³².

³⁰ [Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility - a study of the mobility of disadvantaged students from Partner countries](#), Luisa Bunesco, Howard Davies, Michael Gaebel, SPHERE, 2020

³¹ [National Higher Education Equity Policy](#) - European Commission, WAHED, 2019

³² [Erasmus+ Programme Guide](#), European Commission, 2019

Between 2016 and 2018 Universities UK International (UUKi) ran the [Widening Participation in Outward Mobility](#) project, which analysed the participation in mobility programmes by disadvantaged students. It also researched barriers for students accessing programmes, and collated best practice across the UK in supporting students with fewer opportunities to go abroad³³. The SIEM project aims to adapt and upscale the research by UUKi, by expanding the focus to a cross-European level. Research from UUKi found that students from demographics considered to be disadvantaged or underrepresented in UK higher education were underrepresented in mobility programmes. Of the 2016-17 graduating cohort:

- 9.5% of students from more advantaged socio-economic backgrounds were mobile, compared to 5.6% of students from less advantaged backgrounds.
- The mobility rate for white students was 8.3%, which was higher than that of Asian students (5.5%) and black students (5.1%).
- 4.4% of students from low-participation neighbourhoods went abroad, compared to 8.3% of graduates from higher participation neighbourhoods.
- First-in-family students participated in mobility at a rate of 5.4% compared

to 10.% for those whose parents or guardians were graduates³⁴.

Target Groups

This report builds on the work of the *Widening Participation in Outward Mobility* project and will therefore focus on the following four target groups:

- students from low-income households.
- students from rural backgrounds.
- ethnic minority students; and
- students who are first generation to enter higher education;

Low-income students

Entry into higher education can incur costs for prospective students, both in tuition fees and living expenses, which can act as an important obstacle to entry if there is insufficient financial support available to students³⁵. Across Europe, countries have different approaches to setting tuition fees and providing financial support to students to access programmes, including grants, scholarships, and loans, both at national level and institutional level.

The definition of low-income will vary across countries, and even within countries, depending on the living costs associated with a particular region. The European Commission [categorises Erasmus+](#)

33 [Widening Participation in Outward Mobility](#), Universities UK International, 2018

34 [Gone International: Rising Aspirations](#), Universities UK International, 2019

35 [How does socio-economic status influence entry into tertiary education?](#) OECD, 2019

[programmes countries on the basis of living costs](#)³⁶. The variation in income equality at a European level makes it difficult to compare countries across Europe, and therefore the definition of 'low income' is localised.



Project 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.

For the staff survey, definitions for low low-income students were defined by institutions.

Rural students

Rising inequality within countries creates challenges in terms of life opportunities and access to services for those living in rural areas. Since most universities are located in or near cities geographical distance can be a barrier for rural populations. In addition, those living in rural areas who face challenges when accessing higher education can also miss out on many of the support mechanisms in place to help overcome those barriers which may only be available in cities³⁷. However, rurality is a

complex identity:

“Rurality in the 21st century is a diverse picture: rural regions that are closer to cities or have good access to transport can facilitate mobility of people, goods and services and create strong "economies of proximity”³⁸.

When looking at data for rural student access and engagement in university activities, it would benefit universities to consider the wider context of their regions to account for these economies of proximity.



Project definition: for the student survey, the project asked participants to self-identify if they were from a rural area, a town or suburban area, or an urban area. The rural students were those that selected they were from a rural area.

For the staff survey, definitions for rural students were defined by institutions.

Ethnic Minority students

European Commission research on Data collection in the field of ethnicity

[and dispersed communities](#), IntoUniversity supported by Cabinet Office Social Action Fund, 2015

36 Accessed December 2020

37 [Rural aspiration: access to Higher Education in rural, coastal](#)

38 [Trends Shaping Education 2019](#), OECD Publishing, Paris - OECD, 2019

recognised that racial and ethnic data collection is a complex issue, particularly because of the great variety of stakeholders whose consensus it presupposes: minority communities, statisticians, data protection agencies, equality bodies and policymakers³⁹. The research broadly defined ethnicity as “being based on a 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, and so ethnic classification should be treated with movable boundaries”⁴⁰.

Students face discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnic origin, and immigrant background⁴¹. Ethnically diverse students encounter barriers in access, retention, success, and progression through the higher education system. There is increased recognition that direct and indirect racism is a significant cause of problems facing ethnic minority students. Research from the Netherlands found several reasons for this: “less contact with other students and lecturers, so less socially and academically integrated; greater work and family commitments; negative cultural atmosphere

and a sense that they do not belong, and financial problems because ethnic minority students are often associated with being from low socio-economic backgrounds”⁴².



Project definition: the student survey asked participants to confirm their ethnicity or cultural background. The survey offered a range of regional based categories, - for example North Africa, South Asia - in addition to some named groups - for example First Nations - for participants to select. Students were able to select all backgrounds that applied to them. In addition, there was an ‘other’ option for participants with an open text box in which the participant could define their ethnicity. In excess of 150 cultural backgrounds were reported by participants, a clear example of the complexity of definition in this space. Any participant who did not report their ethnicity to be fully White/Caucasian/Europid was classified as belonging to the broad ethnic minority group. For the staff survey, definitions for ethnic minority students were defined by institutions.

39 [Data collection in the field of ethnicity](#), Lilla Farkas, European Commission Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, 2017

40 Ibid

41 [Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey](#) - European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017

42 [Drop-out and completion in Higher Education in Europe among students from under-represented groups](#), J. Quinn, NESET, European Commission, 2013

The project team recognises the challenges when treating ethnically diverse students as a single homogenous group. The goal of this research 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. The project has adopted the term “ethnic minority” to describe this group, as this term is understood by a broad range of stakeholders across the world. Institutions would benefit from looking to their national or regional context to take a more targeted approach to better support access and participation for their students who experience racism.

First generation students

Individuals whose parents or guardians have not attended university tend to be considerably underrepresented among entrants to tertiary education: across the OECD countries, a child’s chances of participating in tertiary education are twice as high if at least one of their parents has completed upper-secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education⁴³. Young people in the UK who are the 'first in family' to go to university are less likely to attend prestigious universities and are more likely to withdraw from programmes than those with graduate parents⁴⁴. These

students also tend to have less access to information, support and guidance to navigate admission and wider university processes⁴⁵.

Research from EUROSTUDENT found that first generation students tend to enter higher education later, study in short or first programmes at non-universities, and rely on paid employment to a greater extent than students with higher education background⁴⁶.



Project definition: for the student survey, we asked participants if their parents or guardians had attended a university or obtained higher education qualifications. For the staff survey, definitions for first generation students were defined by institutions.

Intersectionality

It is important when working on access to also consider groups through an intersectional lens, accepting the interconnected nature of different identities – such as race, class, and gender – which may be subject to overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

⁴³ [Charting Equity in Higher Education: Drawing the Global Access Map](#), Pearson, 2016

⁴⁴ [Moving on up: 'first in family' university graduates in England](#), Morag Henderson, UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies, 2020

⁴⁵ [Rules Of The Game: Disadvantaged students and the university admissions process](#), Gill Wyness, The Sutton Trust, 2017

⁴⁶ [Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe](#), EUROSTUDENT, European Union, 2018

It is the case that for some students a series of overlapping dimensions of privilege interacting with and reinforcing each other act as a barrier to mobility for students from less advantaged groups. This was noted in research undertaken at the University of Sussex:

In sum, the socially and economically more powerful groups – the business-owners, professional and managerial classes, those with inherited wealth – see international mobility as a way of strategizing to enhance the educational capital of their offspring beyond the national to the global... (which)... clearly works against any socially inclusive HE agenda of widening participation in international mobility for students⁴⁷.

Project definition: This project took an intersectional view by analysing the responses for students that reported belonging to multiple target groups: ethnic minority and low-income, ethnic minority and rural, ethnic minority and first in family, low-income and rural, low-income and first in family, rural and first in family.

A note on students living with a disability.

The UN Convention on Human Rights states that people with disabilities must be able to access general tertiary education without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) recognises that “disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

The EPFIME project is another two-year project co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme. This project will examine in-depth the needs and expectations on inclusive mobility for students living with a disability. It will focus on how national authorities and higher education institutions can collaborate more strongly to ensure the quality and the transferability of support services for both incoming and outgoing students with disabilities in exchange programmes⁴⁸.

Some of the partners in the SIEM project are involved in the EPFIME project. [For more information, please visit the project website.](#)

47 [Motivations of UK Students to Study Abroad: A Survey of School-Leavers](#), Jill Ahrens, Russell King, Ronald Skeldon, Máiréad Dunne, Sussex Centre for Migration Research, 2010

48 [Establishing a thought-out Policy Framework on Inclusive Mobility across Europe, 2019-2021](#)



Methodology

The research for this project has included:

- A literature review.
- A staff survey which received 786 responses.
- A student survey which received 12820 responses.
- 6 focus groups were held with 36 participants in 4 countries.
- Study visits with six institutions located in Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Latvia, and Spain.

This project data sourced through surveys and focus groups relied on participants' self-identification. Self-identification has several methodological limitations⁴⁹. Identities and group affiliations are complex: in the student survey the project group followed where possible good practice recommendations to allow for multiple answers when responding to requests for information on identity and background.

Survey Methodology

A student and a staff survey were hosted via JISC Online Surveys. The surveys were open between February and June 2020.

Invitations were sent from ESN via direct email messages and shared on its social media channels to more than 438.000 students. Partners in the project consortia circulated the survey via their networks and

invited partners and student organisations to circulate the survey to their networks. Reminder messages were issued across the period the survey was open. Participation in the survey was voluntary, however the project provided incentives by entering student participants into a prize draw.

The survey questions were developed by UUKi staff with contributions from the partner consortium. Expertise on the student perspective was provided by ESN. The survey was shared in English only, with efforts made to ensure this was Plain English.

The survey aimed to follow the following principles⁵⁰:

- Using simple not complex questions
- Making questions specific, and where needed including a reference period
- Using a number scale rather than vague quantifiers
- Using rating rather than ranking
- Avoiding satisfaction statements where possible
- Avoiding agree/disagree questions where possible
- Avoiding hypothetical questions where possible
- Where possible removing a middle

49 Collecting ethnic statistics in Europe, Patrick Simon, September 2011.

50 Dillman, D.A. Smyth, J.D and Christian L. M (2014) *The Tailored Design Method*; Wiley Fowler, F and Mangione T (1990) *Standardized Survey Interviewing: Minimizing Interviewer-Related Error*; Fowler (1995), *Improving Survey Questions: Design and Evaluation*; Krosnick (2000) *The threat of satisficing in Surveys: The shortcuts respondents take in Answering Questions*; Krosnick and Presser, (2010) *Handbook of Survey Research Elsevier*

option to avoid “satisficing” where respondents will choose the middle category when not holding a true middle position

The surveys were tested by both staff and students before publication. The tests focussed on both the content of the survey and the mechanism used to collect responses. Each survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete. The responses were confidential with reasonable efforts made to protect respondents’ anonymity and confidentiality.

Data presentation

- The data from the surveys is presented as percentages rather than numerical data to draw more meaningful comparisons in proportional changes and trends.
- All counts of respondents where present have been rounded to the nearest five to protect the confidentiality of individuals. As totals have also been rounded based on unrounded values, some may be greater or less than the individual count numbers presented in the report.

Focus Group Methodology

Student focus groups were held to help the project gain an understanding of the perceived benefits of mobility amongst target groups, to identify existing barriers to participation and to generate ideas

around increasing participation of mobility activities.

6 focus groups with a total of 36 students were held in October and November 2020. Focus groups were delivered at the following institutions: Vrije Universiteit Brussel (BE), Masaryk University (CZ), University of Vigo (ES), University of Latvia (LV)

Focus groups were delivered to groups of either mobile or non-mobile students. The groups who were mobile engaged in a range of types and durations of mobility. Focus groups were hosted both virtually and in-person depending on localised rules relating to Covid-19 lockdown and social distancing measures. The sessions were interactive and designed to encourage students to engage with the topic.

Methodologies used included:

- Group discussions
- Private reflections
- Ranking exercises
- Polling exercises

Data was collected via digital recording, scribed harvesting of discussions (flipchart notes and post-its) and through note taking. Focus groups were delivered in the local language, and a transcript was drafted in English to allow collective analysis of all sessions.

Example questions groups were asked included:

- What attracts you to going abroad?
- Where would you like to go abroad?
- What type of mobility experience would you like to participate in?
- What duration do you think an outgoing mobility programme should be?
- Do you think going abroad will help your academic achievement?
- Do you think going abroad will help your employment prospects?
- Do you think going abroad will help your personal development?
- In what other way do you think going abroad will impact you?
- What are some of the challenges to participating in a mobility experience?
- What support needs to be put in place to enable you to go abroad?

Students who had been abroad were more able to engage with certain questions, as they had concrete experiences on which to base perspectives. However, when these students related motivations and decision making, some post-mobility rationalisation was likely to have been involved.

Limitations to the Research

The reader should be aware of the following limitations when drawing conclusions from the data and information included in this report:

- While the individuals are from a specified population (the student population) the survey relied on a convenience sample rather than a census. This sample was also self-selecting.
- The sampling may reflect the primary membership base of the Erasmus Student Network and may therefore not be reflective of the diversity of student populations worldwide.
- The information captured from this survey relies solely on self-reported information and assumes the participants are providing accurate information about their experiences.
- The questions included in the survey were primarily drafted in a European context.
- Participants may have come to the survey with different interpretations of the questions, although every effort was made to provide instruction, direction, and classification for each question.
- The survey used closed questions rather than open questions due to the volume of expected responses. It is likely that there are other factors which could influence a student's decision to go abroad, or a student's experience while they are abroad, that are not captured in this report.

- Responses to the survey that relate to institutional support and provision are based on participants' experience.
- The report does not seek to establish causation but instead is aiming to highlight correlations between specific target groups and their responses.
- The survey was only available in English and may therefore exclude students who did not feel comfortable filling it in in another language than their own.







Student Perspective

Student Survey: Main Findings

The goal of the student survey was to map participation in mobility programmes by different students, and to understand barriers and enablers of mobility. The survey received a total of 12,820 responses. The survey findings are split into the following six areas:

- Mobility Experience
- Motivation for mobility
- Mobility Support
- Mobility Funding
- Barriers to mobility
- Impacts of mobility

Who were the student survey participants?

Respondents studied their bachelor's degree across 134 different countries. The most represented nation was Spain, with 18% of respondents studying their bachelor's degree in Spain, followed by Italy (10%), and Portugal (10%). The countries that provided the largest numbers of responses – Spain, Italy, Portugal, Germany, and Greece – together accounted for 51% of the total responses, but more than 50 responses were received per country from

an additional 32 countries.

The student survey received responses from 93% of the EU 28 countries⁵¹ (26 out of 28), from 91% of the Erasmus+ programme countries (30 out of 33) and 90% of countries in the European Higher Education Area (43 out of 48).

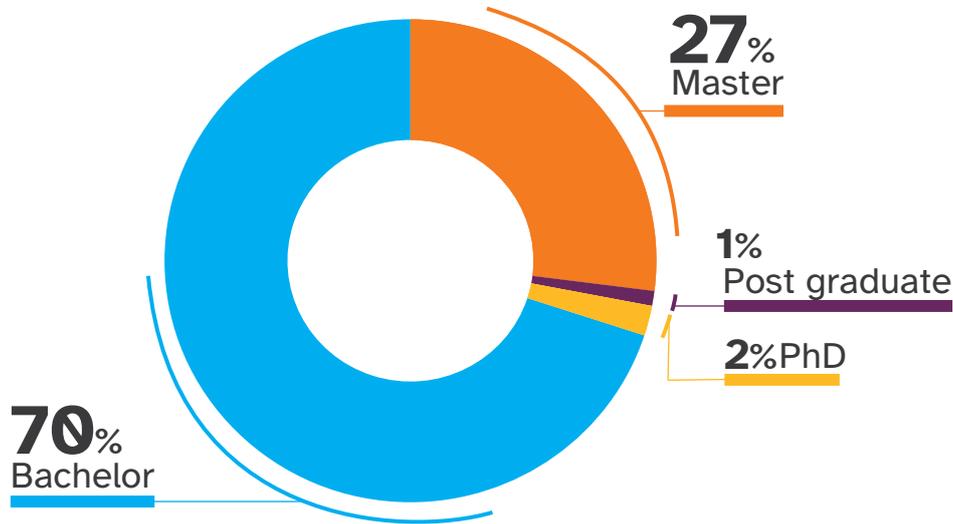
Top 10 Countries	All	%
1 Spain	2340	18%
2 Italy	1275	10%
3 Portugal	1215	10%
4 Germany	845	7%
5 Greece	730	6%
6 Latvia	405	3%
7 UK	395	3%
8 Czech Republic	390	3%
9 Indonesia	385	3%
10 France	380	3%

Q. In which country did you study for your bachelors degree?

⁵¹ At the time of survey circulation, the United Kingdom was a member of the European Union

Figure 1: highest degree obtained

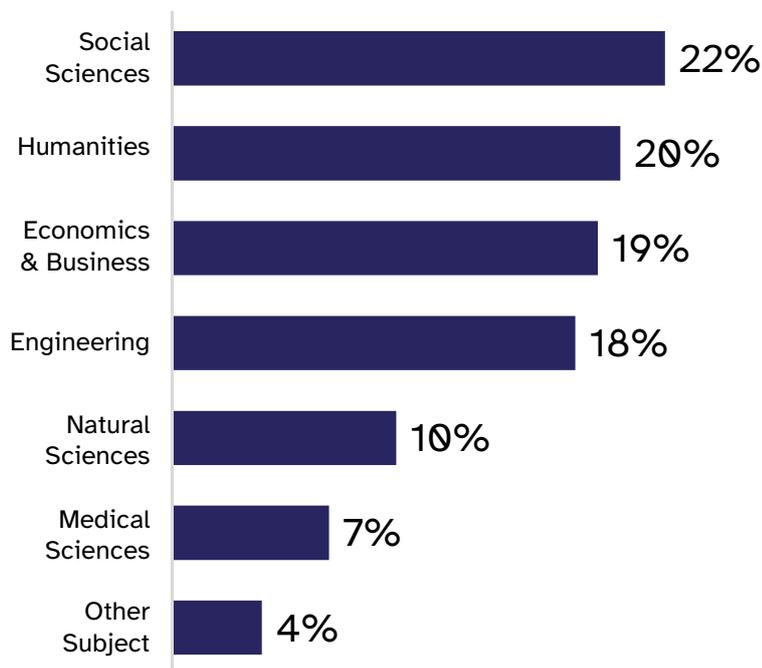
Q. What is the highest level of degree education you have studied? (total respondents, n = 12,820)



70% of respondents had a bachelor’s degree. Just over quarter of students (27%) had studied for a master’s degree. [This pattern held across the project groups.](#)

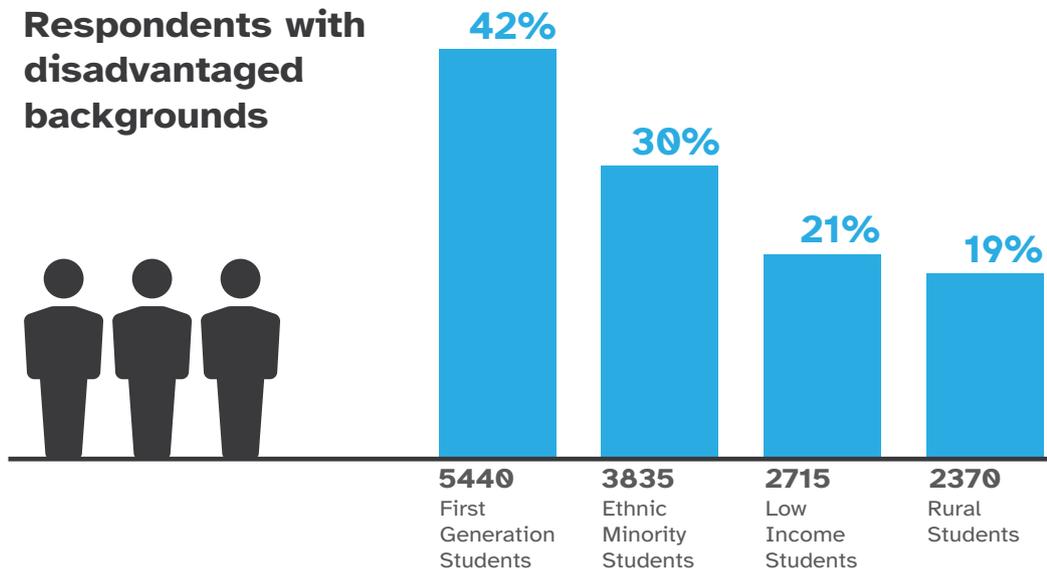
Figure 2: Study subject

Q. In which academic subject was/is your bachelor’s degree? (total respondents, n = 12,820)



Respondents studied across a range of subject areas, with Social Sciences the most highly represented (22%). A fifth of respondents (20%) studied Humanities subjects, 19% studied Economics and Business Sciences, and 18.3% studied Engineering subjects.

Demographics of survey respondents



The survey received responses from respondents across a range of different demographics and backgrounds. 42% of respondents were the first in their family to attend university. Almost a third (30%) of respondents identified as being from an ethnic minority group, with in excess of 150 different ethnic or cultural backgrounds reported by participants in the project. In total, 149 nationalities were represented. A fifth of respondents (21%) were from low-income households and 19% were from rural backgrounds.

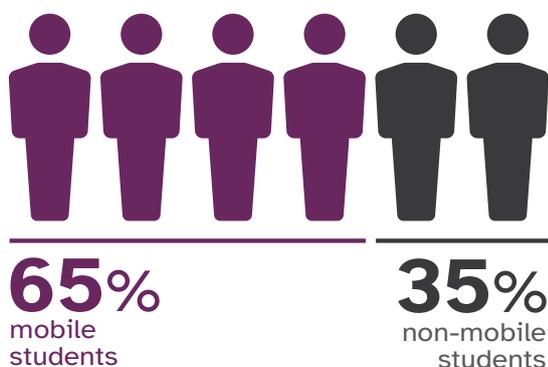
Response	All
Yes, between the ages of 5 and 10 years old	3%
Yes, between the ages of 11 and 16 years old	35%
Yes, between the ages of 17 and 18 years old	28%
No	51%
Total	12820

The survey asked respondents if they had travelled abroad through an educational programme prior to starting their bachelor’s degree programme. Half of respondents (51%) had not travelled abroad via an education programme prior to starting their degree. A third (35%) of respondents travelled during the ages of 11 and 16 years old, with just over a quarter (28%) travelling during the ages of 17 and 18 years old.

Q. Prior to starting your bachelor’s degree, did you travel abroad as part of an educational programme?

Target groups

For respondents from the report's target groups there was a higher percentage who had not been abroad as part of an education programme prior to starting their university degree: Two thirds (66%) of respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds had not participated in a programme compared to 42% of white respondents. 60% of low-income respondents had not taken part compared to 41% of higher income respondents.



In total, 8350 of the respondents (65%) participated in a mobility programme while studying for their bachelor's degree. 4470 respondents (35%) did not go abroad during their bachelor's degree, around a third of survey respondents.

Figure 9: Participation in Pre-departure activities

Q. Did you participate in any of the below pre-departure activities?
(mobile students, n = 8,342)

Target groups

A higher percentage of respondents from some of the target groups reported not having been abroad during their university degree: 59% of respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds had been abroad compared to 69% of white respondents. 60% of low-income participations had been mobile compared to 70% of higher income respondents.

Mobility experience

The student survey asked respondents about the mobility programmes they had participated in during their bachelor's degree programme or would like to participate in.

The majority of mobile respondents (81%) to the survey had been abroad in the past three academic years. Respondents to the survey had been on mobility programmes to a total of 98 different countries. The most reported destination for mobility was Spain (16%), followed by Germany (7%) and Italy (7%).

For most respondents (87%), the mobility period was not a mandatory part of their degree programme. For two-thirds of respondents (67%) the mobility programme was credit-bearing and therefore counted towards their degree classification.

Target Groups

For mobile respondents in the project’s target groups, the top five countries across all groups reflected the total cohort pattern (Spain, Italy, Germany, France, and Poland) including rates of participation.

Country	All	%
1 Spain	1305	16%
2 Italy	600	7%
3 Germany	515	7%
4 France	480	6%
5 Poland	405	6%
6 UK	380	5%
7 Portugal	310	5%
8 Belgium	390	4%
9 USA	265	3%
10 Czech Republic	260	3%

Total 8350

Mobility Programme

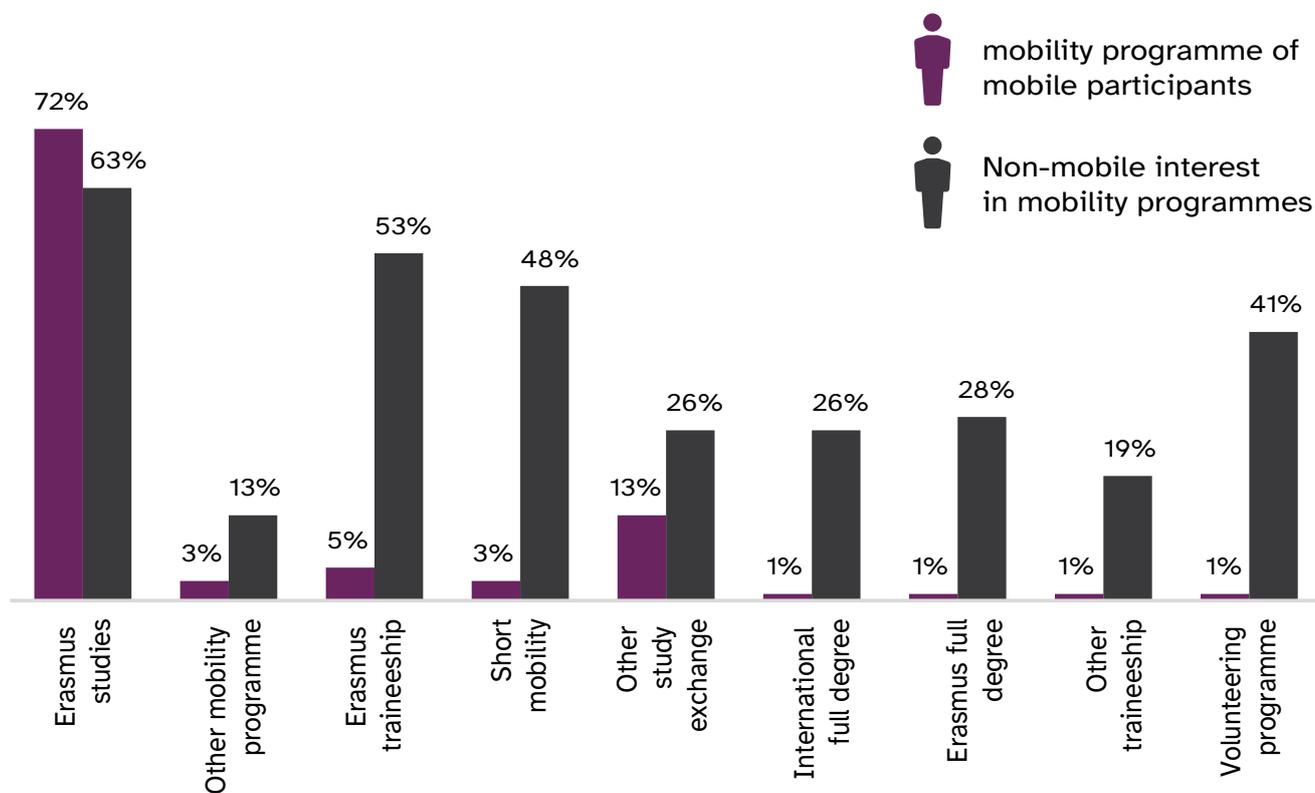


Figure 5: mobility programmes

Q. What type of mobility programme did you participate in? (n = 8,350)
 Q. If you were to go abroad during a degree programme, what type of mobility experience would interest you? (n = 4,470)

Most respondents (72%) participated in Erasmus studies, 13% took part in other study exchanges. 5% of respondents took part in an Erasmus traineeship or internship, and 3% took part in short mobility programme.

The survey asked respondents who had not been abroad during their bachelor's degree about the types of programmes they would be interested in participating in. There was broad interest across all different types of mobility programmes from the survey respondents. The most popular options reported were Erasmus+ Studies (63%), Erasmus+ traineeships or internships (53%), and short-term mobility programmes (48%).

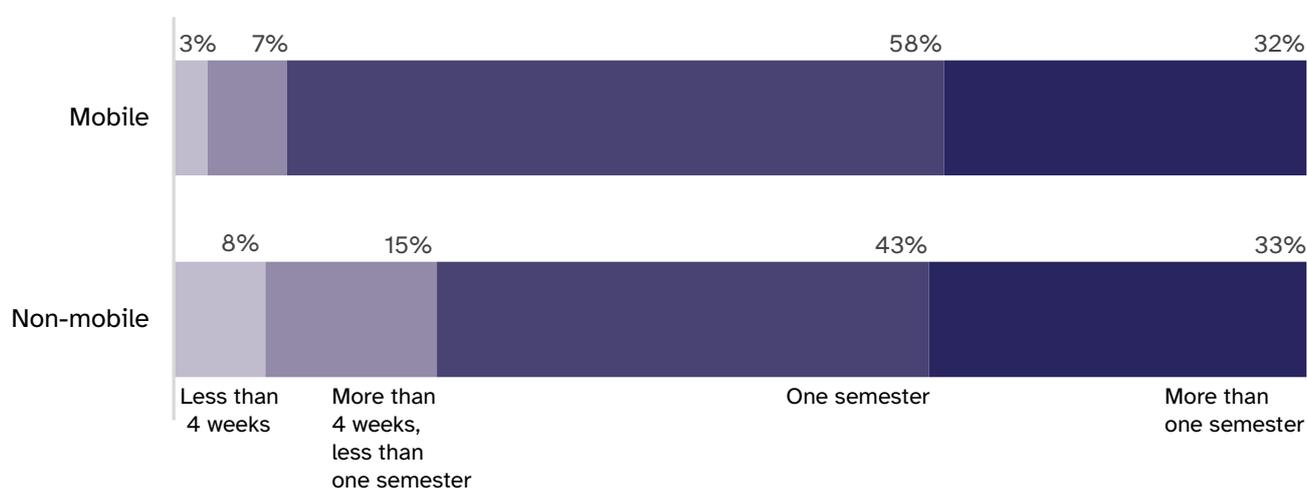


Figure 6: Mobility duration

Q. What was the duration of your mobility (mobile students, n = 8,350)?

Q. If you were to go abroad, what duration would you like the mobility programme to be? (non-mobile students, n = 4470)

Duration

For the respondents with a mobility experience, over half of respondents (58%) participated in a programme that was one semester in duration. Almost a third of respondents (32%) went abroad more than a semester, and 10% of

respondents went abroad for durations of less than a semester.

Target groups

Mobile: A higher percentage of respondents who were from ethnic minority backgrounds participated in short-term mobility programmes (16%, compared with 8% of white respondents). For respondents from low-income backgrounds, 13% participated in short-term mobility programmes compared with 9% for higher income respondents. For rural respondents

and first-generation respondents, the pattern mirrored the total cohort pattern.

For non-mobile respondents, the durations that were attractive to respondents mapped the mobile cohort participation. The most popular option was one semester mobility (43%), with a third of respondents (33%) interested in going abroad for more than a semester. However, there was a higher level of interest in short-term programmes, with 23%

of respondents interested in mobilities of less than a semester in duration.

Target groups

Non-mobile: The findings mirrored the mobile student pattern, although for both rural respondents and low-income respondents a slightly higher percentage were interested in short-term programmes

(rural 24% vs 21% urban, low income 24% vs 20% high income).

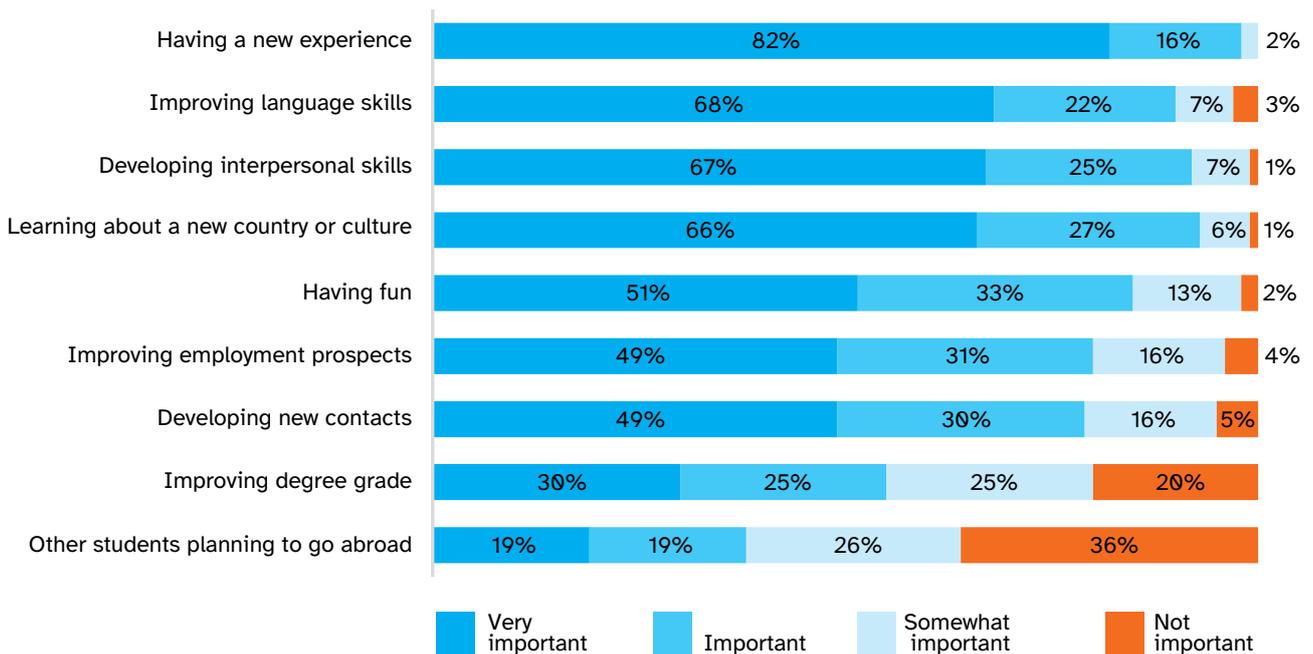


Figure 7: Motivation to study Abroad by mobile students

Q. How important were the below motivations when making the decision to go abroad? (n = 8,350)

Motivations to go abroad

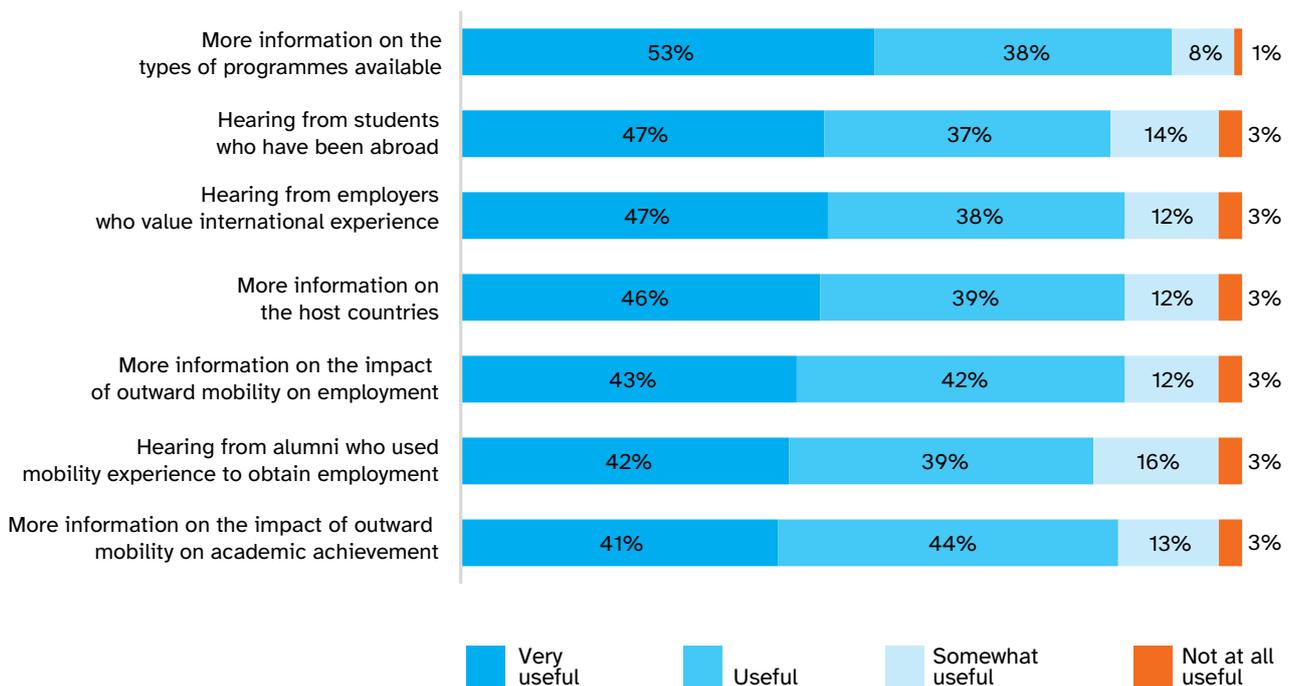
The survey asked mobile respondents about what motivated them to go abroad. Having a new experience was the main motivation for those who went abroad during their degree programme, with 98% of respondents reporting that this was important. In addition, the majority of respondents were motivated by improving their language skills (90%), developing their interpersonal skills (92%), and learning about a new country or culture (93%).

Target Groups

Across all the project’s target groups, the respondents selected very important at a higher rate than the total cohort. For respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds 73% reported that learning about a new country or culture was a very important motivator for going abroad (compared to 63% for white respondents). They also reported that developing interpersonal skills was very important (72% compared to 65% for white respondents). Additionally, other students planning to go abroad was felt very important by a quarter of ethnic minority respondents (26% compared to 15% of white respondents).

Figure 8: Encouragement for non-mobile students

Q. Would the below scenarios have encouraged you to go abroad during your degree programme? Please rate the below based on how useful they are. (n = 4,470)



Non-mobile respondents

Over half of respondents (53%) felt that more information on the types of programmes available would be very useful in encouraging mobility during degree programmes. In addition, 47% felt that hearing from employers who value international experiences or from students who had been abroad would be very useful. Across the board, respondents felt the proposed activities would have encouraged them to be mobile, with only 3% of respondents feeling the activities would not be useful.

Target groups

The projects target groups generally followed the same pattern as the total cohort. However, for respondents who were first generation students, who were from low-income backgrounds, and ethnic minority respondents, more information on the host countries was the second most popular measure reported.

Mobility Support

The survey asked questions about support measures for students, both pre-mobility and while abroad.

Barrier	Very useful	Useful	Somewhat useful	Not at all useful
Information about funding available	65%	29%	5%	1%
Support with the application process	53%	35%	10%	2%
Parental support for going abroad	53%	31%	13%	3%
Help in choosing a host university	51%	36%	11%	3%
Help finding an internship or work placement	43%	34%	16%	6%
Encouragement from academic programme	42%	41%	15%	3%
Encouragement from international office	39%	40%	17%	4%
Meeting other students considering mobility	37%	37%	22%	5%
Encouragement from mobility programme alumni	32%	37%	24%	7%

Q. What support or information is useful when preparing for a mobility programme?

Pre-programme support Mobile respondents

The majority of mobile respondents (94%) agreed that information about available funding was very useful (65%) or useful (29%) when preparing for a mobility programme. In addition, support with the application process (88%) and help choosing a host university (86%) was considered useful and very useful by respondents. Parental support for going abroad was also reported as supportive by 84% of respondents. It is worth noting that all of the support measures were considered useful or very useful by at least 70% of respondents to the survey.

Target groups

Across all the project's target groups, the respondents followed the same pattern as the total cohort but reported finding the support activities provided *useful* or *very useful* at a higher rate.

Barrier	Very useful	Useful	Somewhat useful	Not at all useful
Information about funding available	73%	24%	3%	1%
Help in choosing a host university	63%	31%	5%	1%
Help finding an internship or work placement	62%	30%	7%	1%
Support with the application process	58%	35%	6%	1%
Meeting other students considering mobility	40%	39%	19%	2%
Encouragement from academic programme	49%	39%	11%	1%
Encouragement from international office	45%	40%	13%	2%
Encouragement from mobility programme alumni	39%	39%	19%	3%
Parental support for going abroad	49%	32%	15%	5%
Total				4470

Q. What support or information would be useful to prepare for a mobility programme?

Non-mobile respondents

73% of non-mobile respondents reported that information about funding available for mobility programmes would be very useful. In addition, 62% of respondents felt that support finding a host university or work placement would be very useful. There was a general positive response to all listed support and information options, with the majority of respondents (80% or over) reporting finding these options useful.

Target groups

When looking at the projects target groups, there was in general a slightly higher percentage of respondents who would find the activities helpful. This was most notable for respondents from low-income households, where 81% would find information on available funding very useful, and 68% would find help sourcing an internship very useful.

Pre-programme activities

Mobile respondents

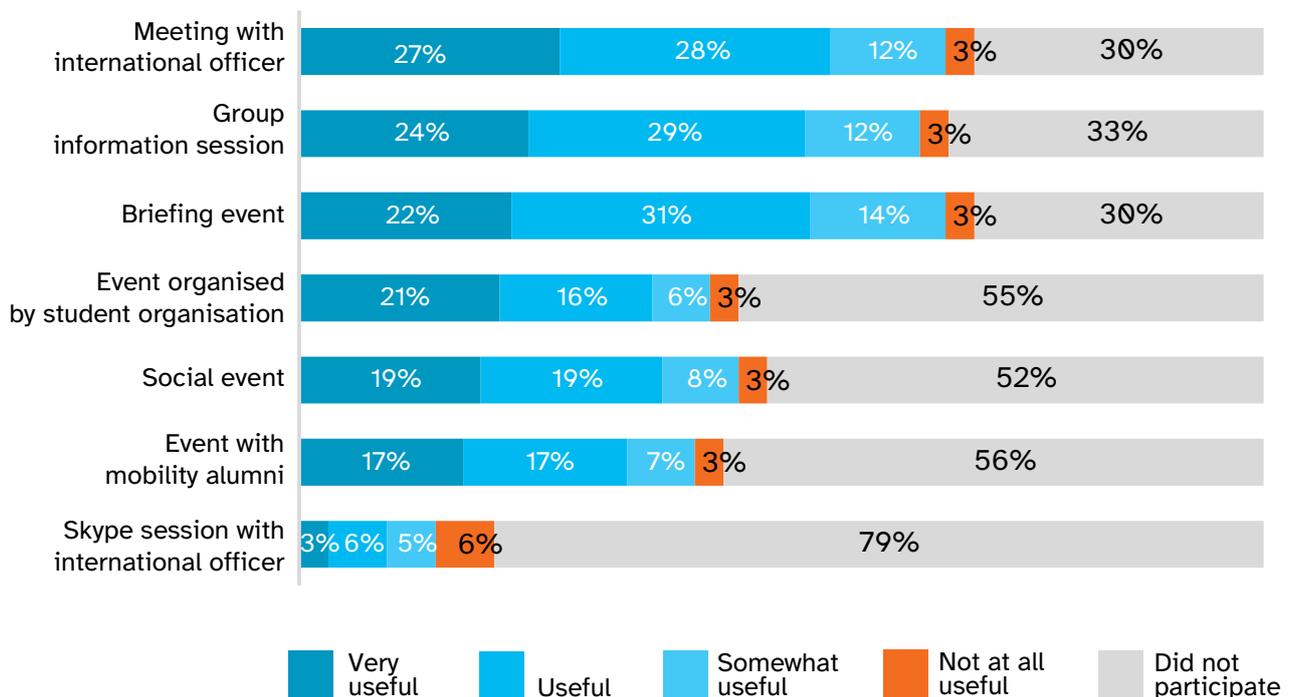


Figure 9: Participation in pre-departure activities

Q. Did you participate in any of the below pre-departure activities? (mobile students, n = 8,342)

Respondents reported participating in several different support measures and activities. Just over half of respondents found meeting with international officers (55%), group information sessions (53%), and briefing events (53%) either useful or very useful. It is notable that the majority of respondents (79%) reported not having a virtual briefing session available to them. There were a number of other activities that were available to respondents, including social events, alumni events, and student organised events. For those that participated in these activities, most reported that they were either useful or very useful.

Target groups

The respondents from the student demographics graphics in the reports target groups followed the total cohort pattern, although with a slightly higher rate finding the activities very useful.

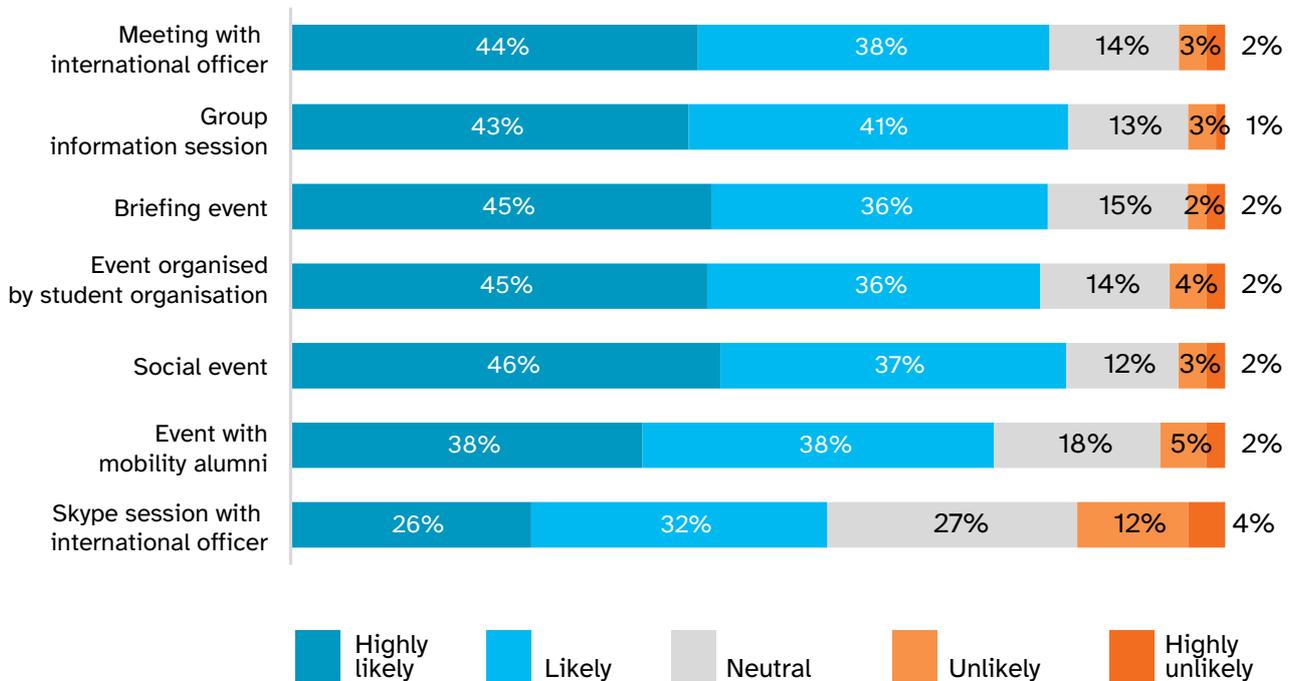


Figure 10: Interest in pre-departure events

Q. If you were to go abroad, and the following activities were available to you prior to departure, how likely is it that you would participate in them? (non-mobile students, n = 4,470)

Of the non-mobile student cohort, the majority of respondents reported being highly likely or likely to attend a social event if it was offered as a pre-mobility activity (83%). The majority also reported being likely to attend a group information session (83%), a briefing event (81%) a meeting with an international officer (81%), or a student event (81%).

Target groups

Looking at the project's target groups, 44% of respondents from ethnic minority groups reported that they would be highly likely to participate in an event with mobility alumni compared to 34% for white respondents. In addition, over 50% of respondents reported that they would be highly likely to attend a social event, a meeting with an international officer or a student organisation event. 49% of respondents from low-income backgrounds reported being highly likely to meeting with an international officer (compared to 42% for higher income respondents), and for this group the action tied for top place along with the briefing event.

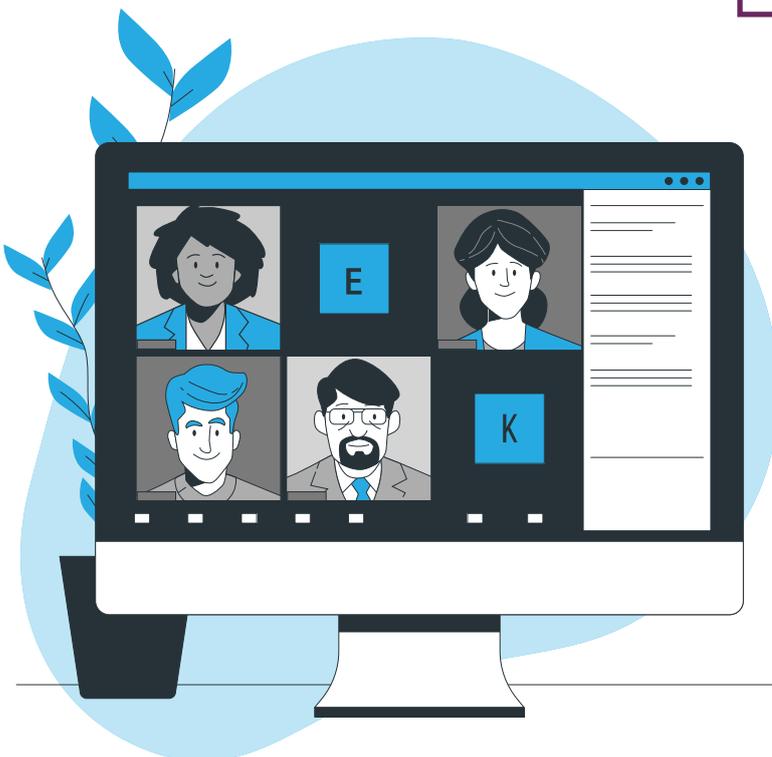
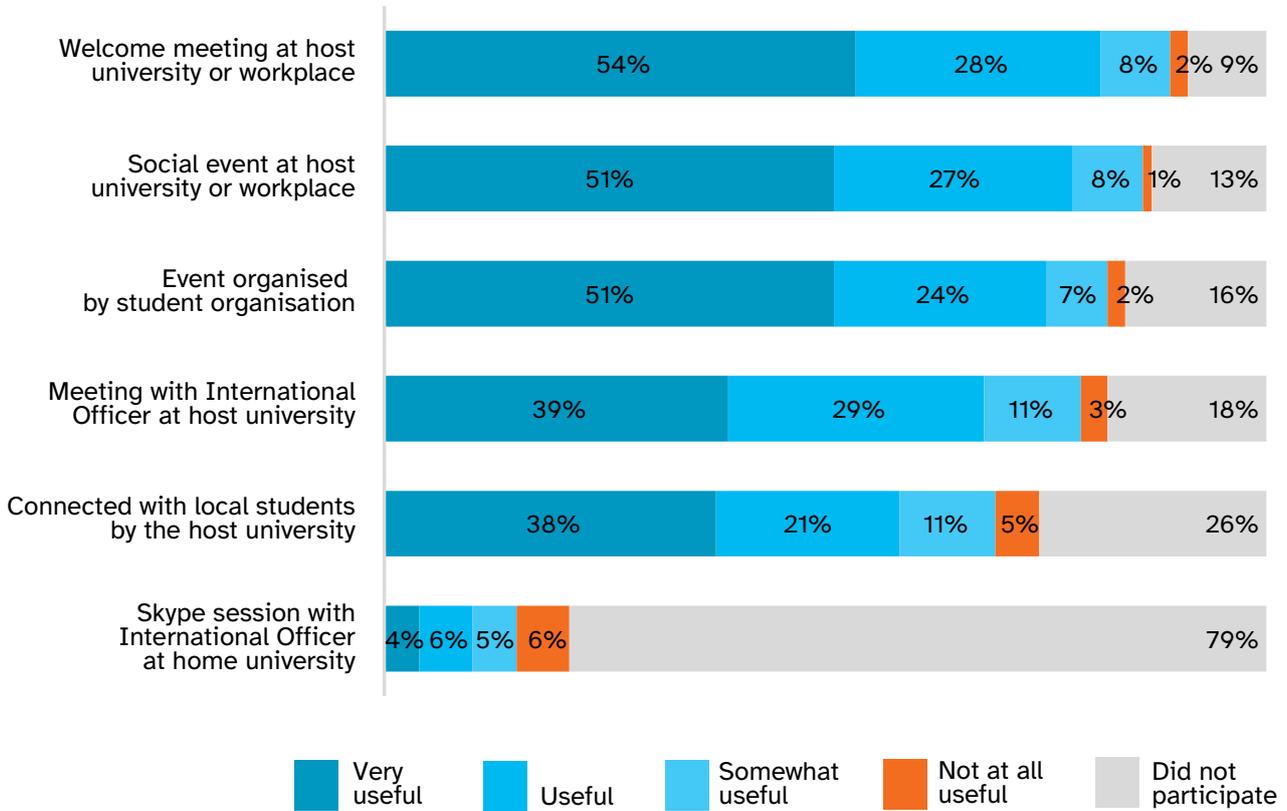


Figure 11: Support offer while abroad

Q. Did you participate in any of the below activities while you were abroad? (mobile students, n = 8,342)



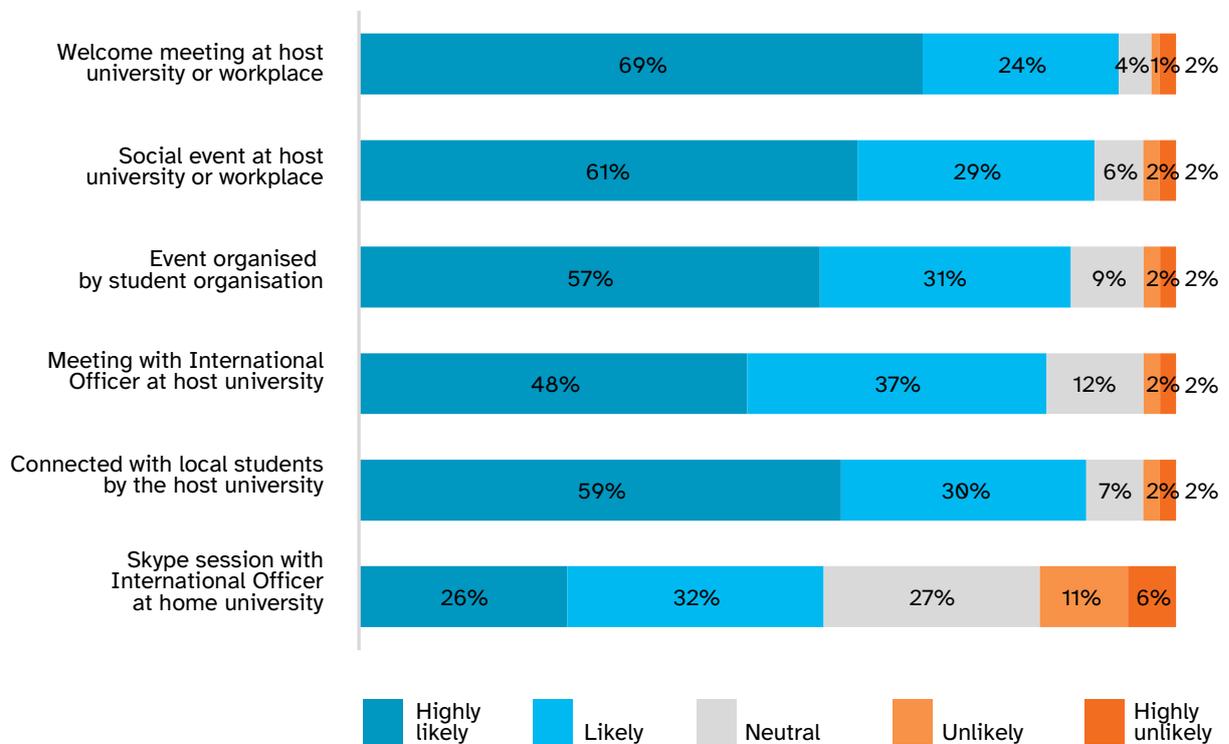
By contrast to the pre-activities which are more information focused, once abroad, over half of the participants (54%) found the welcome meeting very useful, in addition to student organised events (51%) and social events (51%). Again, the majority of respondents (79%) did not have a virtual session available. One quarter of respondents (26%) did not have access to a buddy scheme, but the majority of respondents who participated in these found them useful (28.1%) or very useful (50.8%).

Target groups

The respondents from the student demographics graphics in the reports target groups followed the total cohort pattern, although with a slightly higher rate finding the activities *very useful*.

Figure 12: likelihood to access support while abroad

Q. If you were to go abroad, and the following activities were available to you while you were abroad, how likely is it that you would participate in them? (non-mobile, n = 4470)



Non mobile respondents

The pattern here reflects the patterns of the activities the mobile cohort found most useful when going abroad: a welcome meeting, a social event, and an event organised by student organisations were all ranked highly by respondents. It is worth also noting that 89% of respondents would like to participate in a scheme linking outgoing students with local students.

Target groups

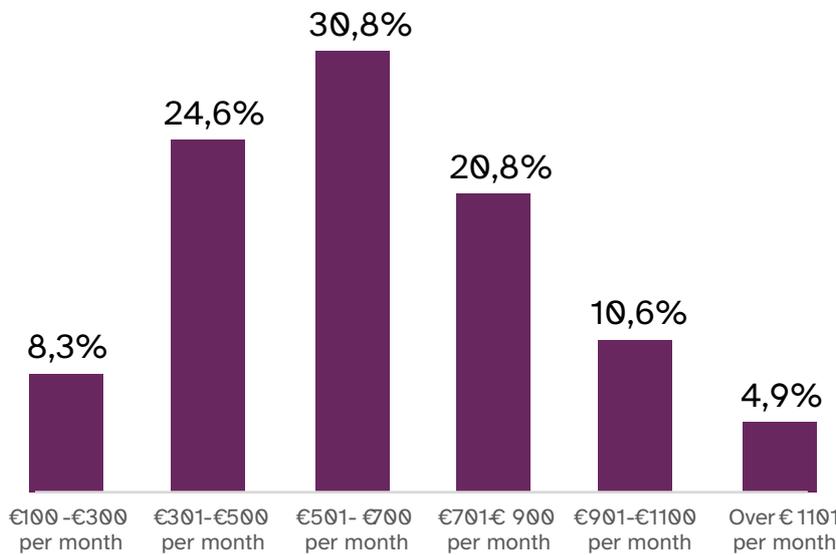
When looking at the project's target groups, the pattern for the total cohort mapped across the four demographics, including the 89% wishing to participate in a buddy or ambassador scheme.

Mobility Funding

The survey asked questions about mobility funding, including monthly budget and availability of scholarships and grants.

Figure 13: cost of living per month while abroad

Q. What was your average cost of living per month while you were abroad? Please consider the cost of accommodation, travel, food and pocket money.? (mobile respondents; n = 8,350)



Mobile respondents

A third of respondents (31%) reported a monthly cost of living between €501 and €700 a month. 5% of respondents reported a monthly cost of over €1101 a month. Two-thirds of respondents (67%) reported a monthly budget of at least €501.

Figure 14: Financial support offered versus needed

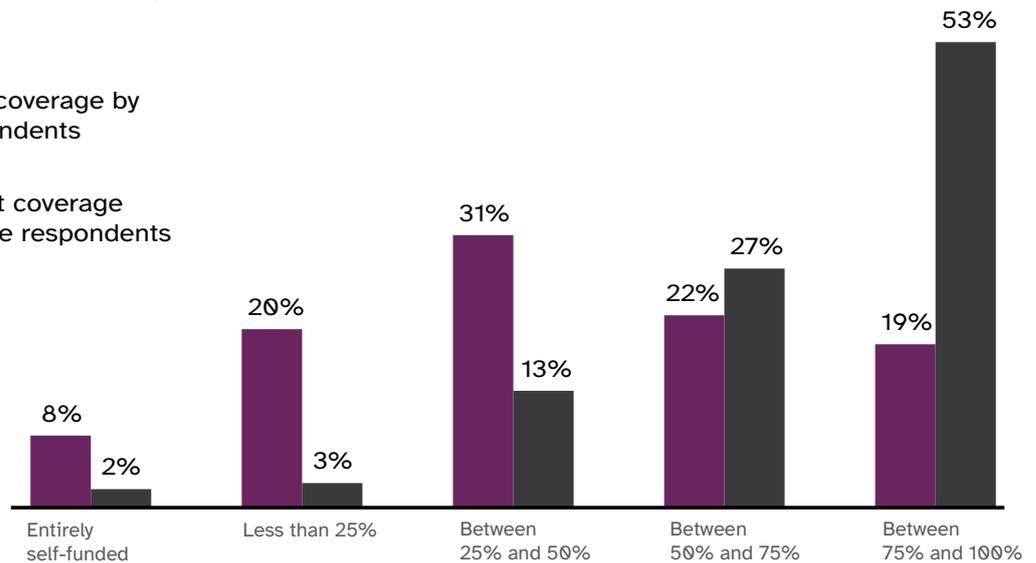
Q. How was the total cost of your mobility period funded? (mobile respondents; n = 8,350)
 Q. What level of funding would be needed if you were to go abroad? (non-mobile respondents; n = 4,470)



Actual grant coverage by mobile respondents



Needed grant coverage by non-mobile respondents



59%
 received less than 50% financial support



80%
 indicated they would need more than 50% financial support



Respondents received varied levels of funding to support their mobility programmes. A third of respondents (31%) received a scholarship which covered at least 25% of costs. 41% of respondents received a scholarship which covered at least 50% of their mobility costs. Just under a fifth of respondents (19%) had the majority of their costs covered by a grant or scholarship.

Target groups

A higher percentage of respondents from low-income backgrounds had at least 75% of their mobility programme funded (29%) compared to 11% of their high-income peers. For ethnic minority respondents, 28% received grants or scholarships to cover at least 75% of their costs, compared to 15% of white respondents. When looking at student demographics, across the reports target groups there was a lower level of respondents self-funding their mobility period in full: For respondents who were first generation 4% self-funded compared to 8% for their peers, for rural, 4.6% self-funded compared to 10% for their peers), for low income 5% self-funded compared to 8% for their peers.

Non-mobile respondents

Over half of respondents reported needing the majority of the mobility programme costs to be covered by funding (53%). Only 2% of respondents reported not requiring any grant or scholarship funding.

Target groups

When looking at the project's target groups, 70% of non-mobile respondents from low-income backgrounds reported needing at least 75% of the mobility costs covered by a grant, compared to 37% for respondents from high-income backgrounds. Similarly, for respondents from ethnic minority groups, 69% reported needing the majority of mobility costs covered by grants or scholarships compared with 44% of white respondents. First in family respondents and rural respondents followed the total cohort pattern.

Barriers to Mobility

The survey asked participants questions about what the main barriers are to taking part in mobility programmes.

Practical barriers

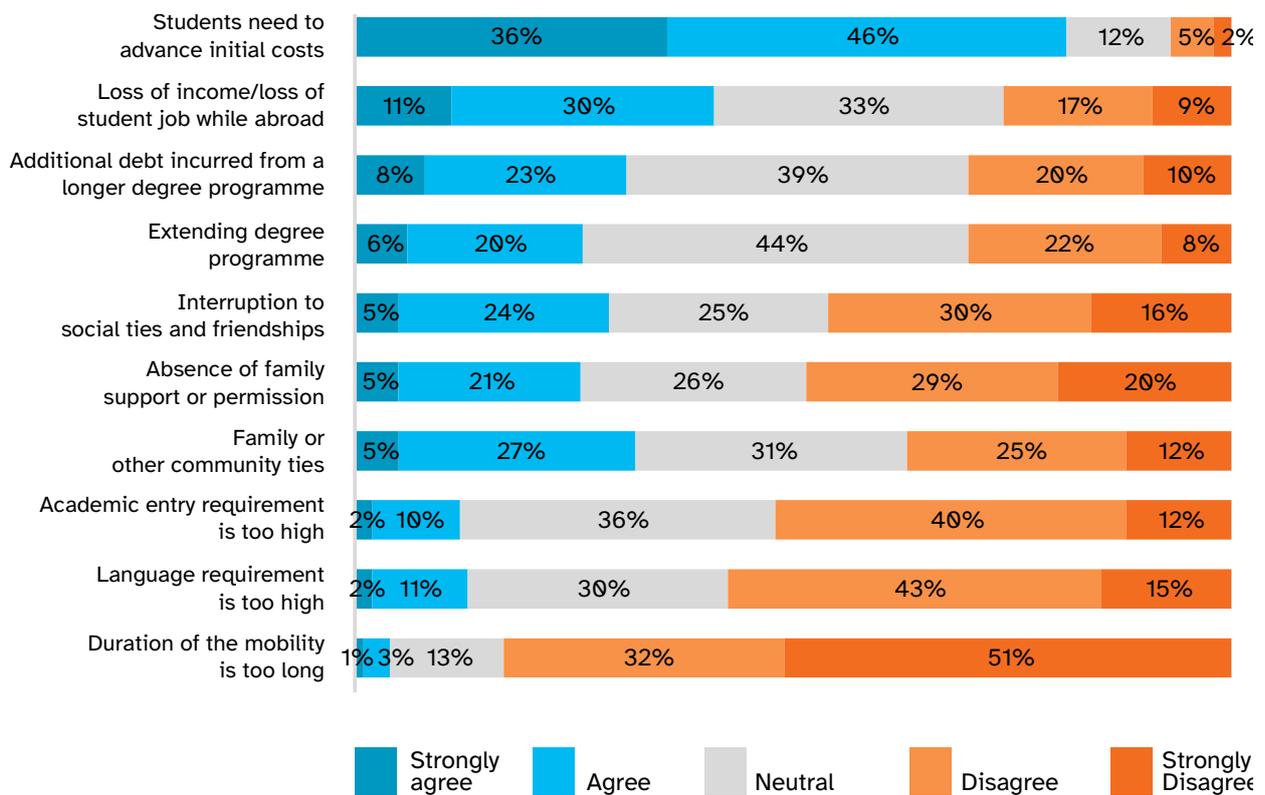


Figure 15: Practical barriers to mobility

Q. What are the most significant practical barriers to overcome, when considering going abroad? (mobile students, n = 8,350)



Mobile respondents

Of the options listed, students needing to advance the initial costs for a mobility period, for example for travel, insurance, or accommodation was the biggest practical barrier reported by respondents: 36.3% of respondents strongly agreed and an additional 45.9% of respondents agreed. Other barriers for respondents included loss of income or student job while abroad (41% agreed or strongly agreed) and additional debt incurred while abroad (31% agreed or strongly agreed). Roughly a third of respondents (32%) either agreed or strongly agreed that family or other community ties was a barrier to going abroad.

Target groups

A higher number of respondents from low-income backgrounds reported strongly agreeing that advancing initial costs was the main practical barrier to engaging in mobility programmes (43%, compared to 34% for high income), and 13% reported strongly agreeing that the loss of income or a job was a barrier (compared to 10% for high income respondents).



Non-mobile respondents

The responses from non-mobile respondents to this question reflected the barriers experienced by mobile respondents: students needing to advance initial costs (81%), loss of income or a student job (48%), and additional debt incurred (49%).

Target groups

48% of ethnic minority respondents reported strongly agreeing that the initial cost was a barrier, compared to 37% for white respondents. In addition, the academic entry requirement was too high for 46% of respondents, compared to 20% of white respondents. 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, compared to 1 in 9 (12.1%) of high-income respondents. In addition, a fifth of respondents (21%) were concerned about losing a job while abroad, compared with 14% for high income respondents.

Institutional barriers

Barrier	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
There is not enough funding available for study, work or volunteer abroad opportunities at my institution	16%	29%	22%	24%	9%
There is lack of practical support from my institution to help me to go abroad	11%	22%	22%	30%	15%
There is lack of support from academic tutors to go abroad	10%	23%	25%	27%	15%
There is not enough information about opportunities to go abroad at my institution	9%	22%	16%	33%	19%
Degree structure is too rigid to allow participation in a mobility programme	7%	18%	22%	33%	20%
Mobility programme credits do not count towards degree	6%	11%	19%	28%	37%

Q. We are interested in institutional barriers. Please rate the following statements depending on how much you agree or disagree (Mobile)



Mobile respondents

44% of respondents agreed that not enough funding being available was the biggest institutional barrier to mobility. A lack of practical support or information (33%), as well as support from academic tutors (34%) was also flagged as a barrier by a third of respondents.

Target groups

Respondents from an ethnic minority background reported availability of funding being the main barrier at a higher rate (51% reported agree or strongly agree, compared to 43% for white respondents). In addition, across the four target groups higher proportions of respondents agreed that information about opportunities to go abroad not being available was a barrier.



Non-mobile respondents

The responses from non-mobile respondents to this question reflected the barriers experienced by mobile respondents: a lack of funding being available (57%), a lack of practical support (45%), and a lack of information about opportunities to go abroad (43%).

Target groups

For ethnic minority respondents, 36% strongly agreed there was not enough funding, compared to 18% of white respondents, 20% strongly agreed there was not enough information compared to 12% of white respondents and 24% strongly agreed there was a lack of practical support compared to 14% of white respondents. For respondents from low-income backgrounds, 35% strongly agreed there was not enough funding compared to 18% for respondents from high income backgrounds. 23% reported a lack of practical support being a barrier, compared to 14% for high income respondents. In addition, 20% of respondents cited a lack of information about available opportunities, compared to 12% for high income respondents. For respondents from rural areas and first-generation respondents, the pattern followed the total cohort response but on average reported a high rate of agreement.

Environmental barriers

Barrier	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The total cost of a mobility period is too high	16%	40%	26%	15%	4%
I was worried about finding accommodation while abroad or when I returned	15%	34%	16%	21%	14%
The visa application process is too complicated or too strict	7%	10%	33%	21%	29%
I had concerns about my personal safety abroad	2%	11%	15%	34%	39%
The language requirements for going abroad are too strict	1%	6%	18%	45%	30%
The mobility programmes available to me are too long	1%	3%	12%	44%	42%

Q. We are interested in environmental barriers. Please rate the following statements depending on how much you agree or disagree (Mobile)



Mobile respondents

Just over half of respondents (56%) reported that the total cost of a mobility period being too high is a barrier to going abroad. In addition, concerns relating to finding accommodation either abroad or on students return to the home country was reported by 49% of respondents.

Target groups

For low-income respondents, a slightly higher rate reported that the cost of mobility being too high was a barrier (58% compared to 56% for high-income respondents). For ethnic minority respondents, 31% reported that the visa application is too strict (compared to 12% for white respondents).



Non-mobile respondents

The responses from non-mobile respondents to this reflected the barriers experienced by mobile respondents: the total cost is too high (71%) and concerns relating to finding accommodation (49%).

Target groups

For ethnic minority respondents 35% strongly agreed that the cost of mobility being too high was a barrier, compared to 26% for white respondents. For low-income respondents, 42% strongly agreed the cost of mobility being too high was a barrier to mobility compared with 21% of high-income respondents. A fifth of low-income respondents (20%) strongly agreed that concerns relating to accommodation were a barrier, compared to 12% for high income respondents. For first generation respondents, 35% strongly agreed that the cost being too high was a barrier, compared to 26% of their peers.

Attitudinal barriers for mobile respondents

Barrier	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I was worried about being lonely or isolated while abroad	7%	27%	16%	25%	25%
I was concerned that a mobility period will negatively affect my academic achievement	3%	13%	11%	24%	49%
I did not want to leave family and friends to go on a mobility programme	1%	9%	15%	35%	39%
I had family/community commitments that makes it difficult to participate in a mobility programme	1%	7%	12%	36%	44%
I was concerned that a mobility period would negatively affect my job prospects	1%	4%	6%	22%	67%
I am not interested in participating in a mobility period	1%	1%	2%	12%	83%
I did not wish to visit the countries where the mobility programmes are hosted	0%	3%	7%	28%	62%

Q. We are interested in attitudinal barriers. Please rate the following statements depending on how much you agree or disagree.

A third of respondents (34%) reported being concerned about being lonely or isolated while abroad, with 7% strongly agreeing and 27% agreeing. Respondents also reported being concerned that a mobility period might negatively impact their academic achievement (16%) and expressed concerns about leaving friends or family (10%).

Target groups

One fifth of respondents from low-income backgrounds reported being worried about impact on degree (19%, compared to 15% for high-income respondents).

For respondents from rural areas a slightly higher percentage did not want to leave family and friends to go on a mobility programme (13%, compared to 9% for respondents from urban areas).

For respondents from an ethnic minority background, the responses followed the same pattern as the total cohort although with a slightly higher rate agreeing to the barriers.



Other barriers for non-mobile respondents

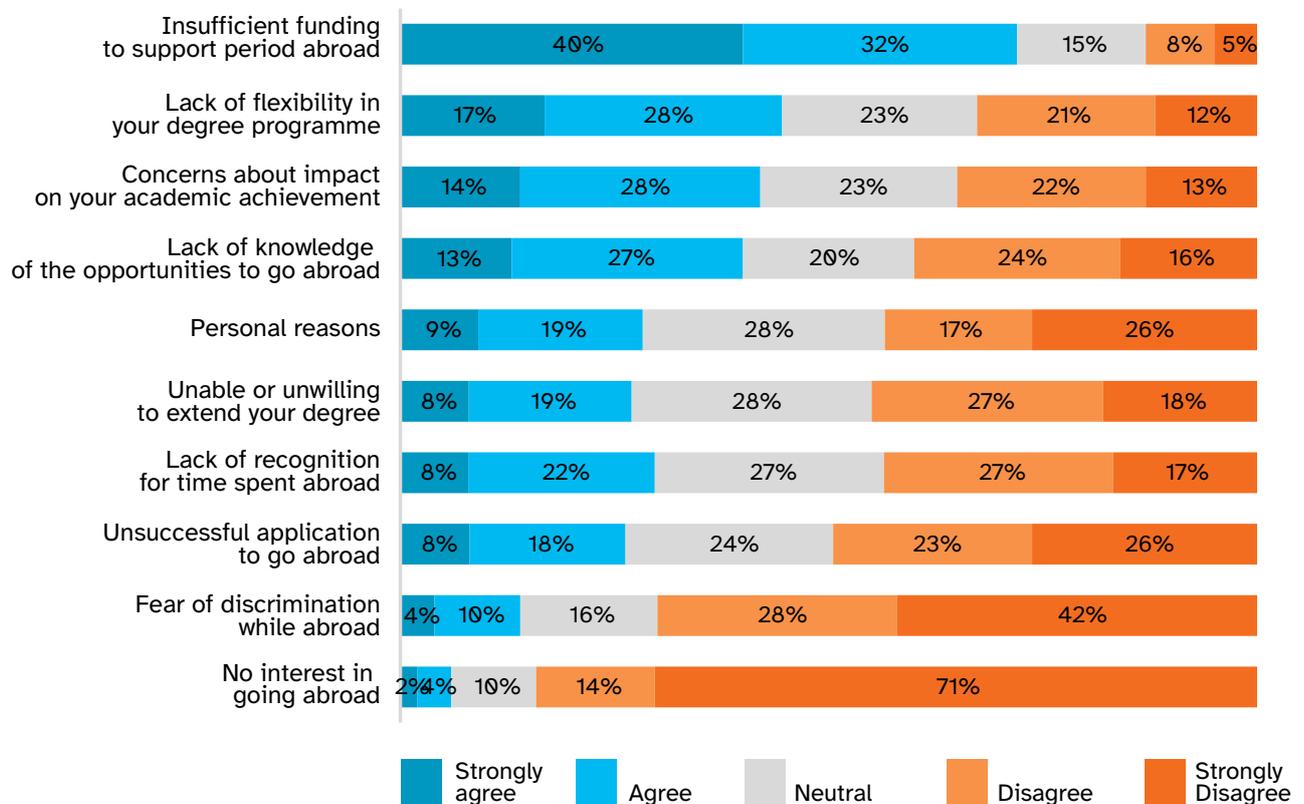


Figure 16: Support offer while abroad

Q. What are your main reason(s) for not going abroad?
(non-mobile students, n = 4,470)

Almost three quarters (72%) of non-mobile respondents reported insufficient funding as their main reason for not going abroad, with almost half (40%) strongly agreeing and 32% agreeing). Respondents also agreed that a lack of flexibility in degree programme (45%) and concerns on the impact going abroad might have on their academic attainment (42%) as barriers to mobility, in addition to a lack of knowledge of opportunities (40%).

Target groups

For low-income respondents, 59% strongly agreed compared to 29% of their higher income peers. For first generation respondents 46% strongly agreed that insufficient funding was a barrier compared to 36% for their peers. For ethnic minority respondents, 54% strongly agreed, compared to 33% for white respondents. In addition, 17% of ethnic minority respondents agreed that fear of discrimination while going abroad was a barrier, compared to 11% of white respondents.

Discrimination while abroad

Response	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I felt I was treated differently or unfairly at my host university	2%	8%	12%	29%	47%	2%
I felt I was treated as less intelligent at my host university	2%	6%	9%	25%	56%	2%
I heard people at my host university make insensitive, degrading or insulting remarks about international students	2%	6%	8%	23%	58%	3%
Compared to local students, I felt I didn't have equal access to resources and opportunities at my host university	4%	12%	12%	26%	45%	2%
I felt comfortable discussing academic issues with professors there when needed	33%	34%	13%	8%	7%	4%
I felt that professors made an effort to understand difficulties international students could have had with their academic work	34%	32%	16%	9%	6%	4%

Q. Please read the following statements and rate how much you agree or disagree that they reflect your experience of being an international student at your host university.

The majority of respondents had positive experiences while abroad. However, 1 in 10 respondents (10%) felt that they were treated differently or unfairly at their host university. 15% (1 in 7) felt that they did not have equal access to resources and opportunities compared to home students. 16% of respondents did not feel comfortable to discuss academic issues with their professors.

Target groups

The respondents from the student demographics graphics in the reports target groups followed the total cohort pattern.

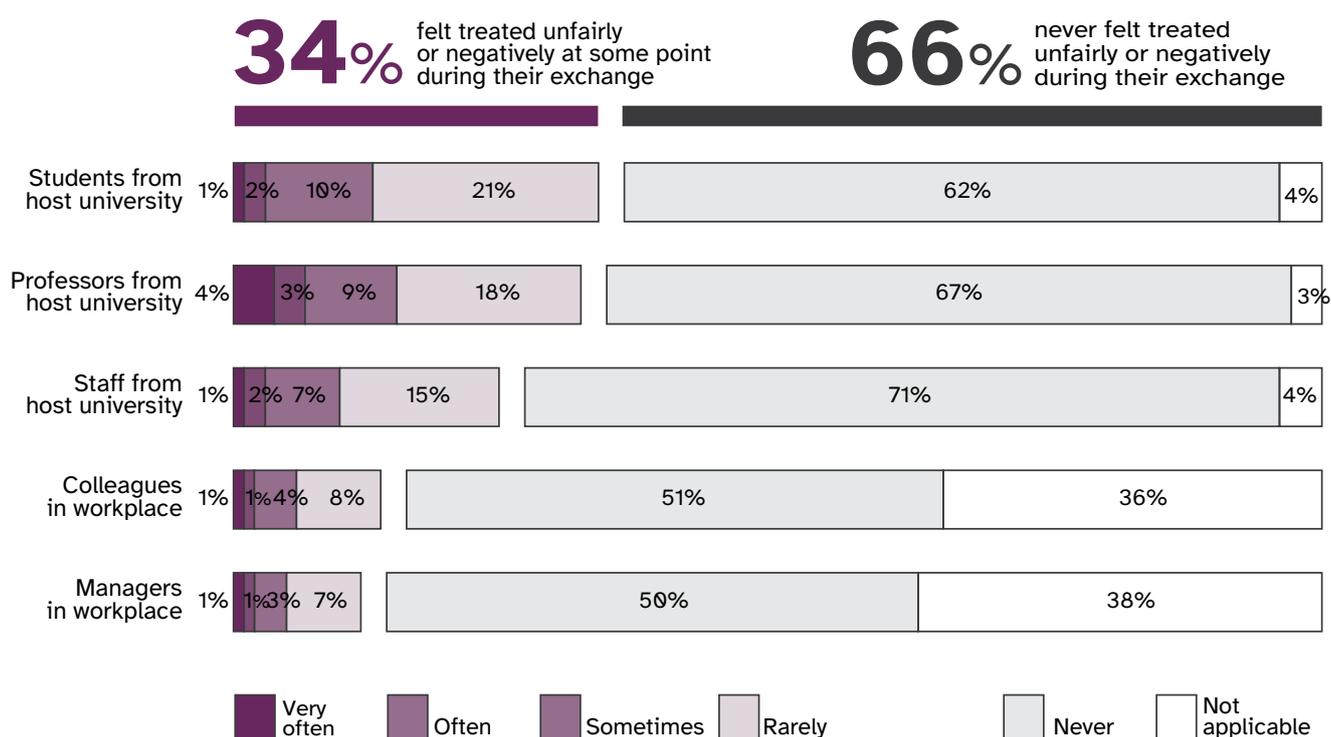


Figure 17: Treatment by members of the host society

Q. How often did the following people treat you unfairly or negatively while you were an international student? (mobile students, n = 8,340)

The majority of students did not feel treated unfairly or negatively by students from the host institutions (62%), professors (67%) or staff from the host university (71%). A third of respondents (34%) reported that they were treated unfairly or negatively by students or professors while they were abroad. A quarter (25%) felt that they

were treated unfairly by staff at the host university. It is worth noting that for most of the participants this was a rare occurrence, however 3% of respondents reported experiencing unfair or negative treatment from students and staff often or very often. 7% of respondents reported being treated unfairly or negatively by professors while abroad.

Target groups

Looking at the reports target groups, respondents from low-income households reported being treated unfairly by students at a slightly higher rate (39% compared to 34% for respondents from a high-income household), as did respondents from an ethnic minority background (39% compared to 33% for white respondents).

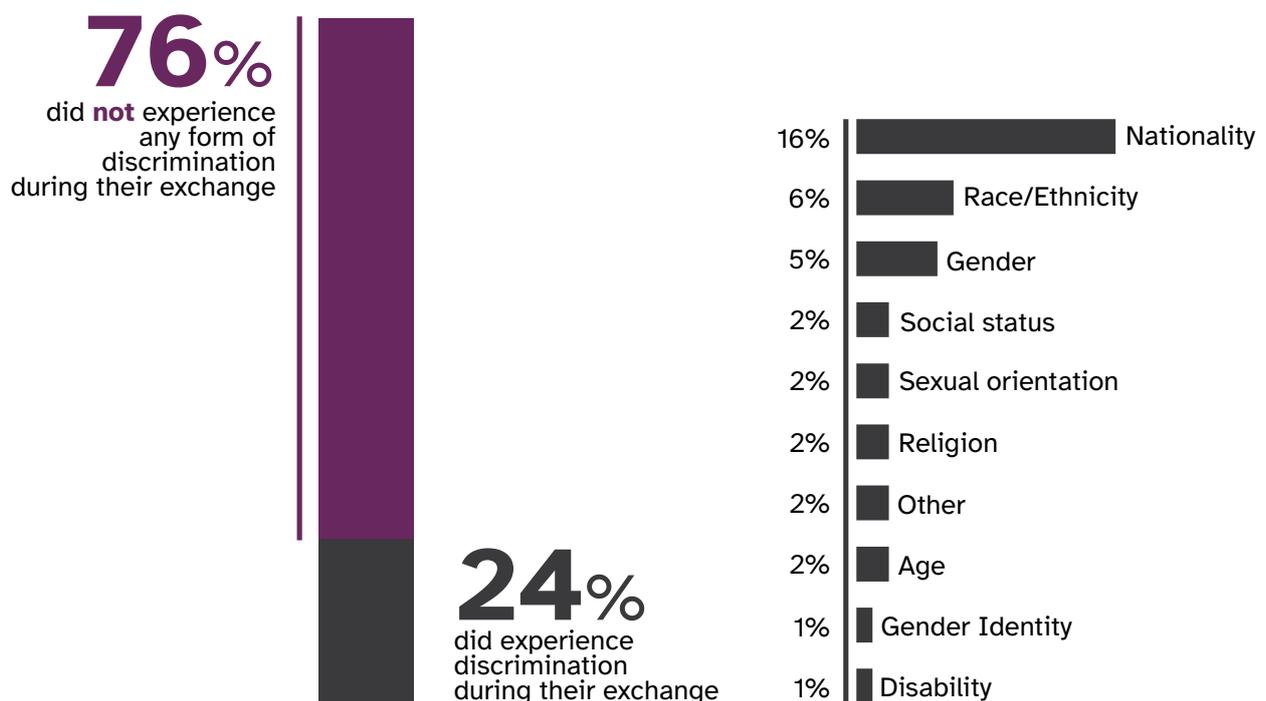


Figure 18: Discrimination on exchange

Q. While you were abroad for your mobility programme, did you experience any discriminatory behaviours based on any of the following protected characteristics? (mobile students, n = 8,340)

Respondents were asked about any discrimination they experienced abroad, and if so, were able to select all characteristics that applied. Three quarters (76%) of respondents had not experienced any discriminatory behaviours while abroad. However, a quarter of respondents (24%) had experienced some

form of discrimination while abroad on a mobility programme: 16% of respondents experienced discrimination based on nationality, while 6% reported experiencing discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity, and 5% on the basis of gender.

Target groups

For the report's target groups, respondents from low-income households reported a slightly higher rate (30%) of experiencing discrimination while abroad. These respondents reported being discriminated against based on social status at a higher rate (4% vs 2% for high income households). 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, and 1 in 5 reported this on grounds of nationality (20%, compared to 15% for white respondents). Responses from participants who were first generation respondents or from a rural background followed the total cohort pattern.

Response	Count
Family and friends	21%
Home university	8%
Host university	9%
Local services (including but not limited to police, local community groups, hospital)	3%
Student organisations (including but not limited to Erasmus Student Network, Student Unions, Student Societies)	9%
Workplace	2%
Other	4%
I did not experience any discriminatory behaviours	71%
Total	8340

Q. Did you receive any support following the incident(s) from the following organisations or groups?

For those respondents that did experience discriminatory behaviours, the majority (71%) received support from their Family and Friends, followed by the host university (31%) and student organisations (31%), and the home university (28%).

Target groups

Respondents in the report's target groups followed the total cohort pattern.

Impact of mobility

The survey asked respondents about the impact of a mobile experience, including academic achievements as well as skills acquisition and personal development.

Academic Achievement

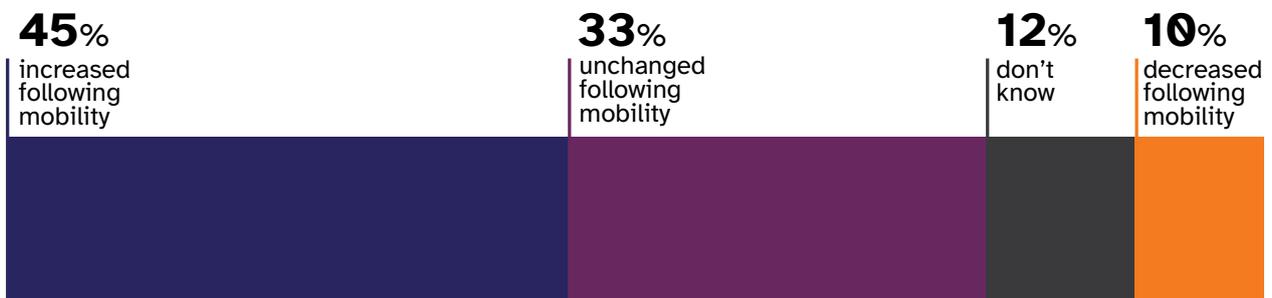


Figure 19: Impact on academic achievement

Q. In terms of your academic achievement, my academic grade ... (mobile students, n = 8,349)

Overall, 33% of respondents indicated that their academic grades were not impacted by their exchange, their grades stayed the same following their mobility period. 45% of respondents indicated that their academic performance was impacted positively by their mobility, and their academic grade increased following their

mobility. 10% experienced a decrease in their academic grade following their mobility period, while 12% did not know how mobility impacted their academic achievement.

Target groups

49% of ethnic minority respondents reported that their academic grade increased following mobility, compared to 43% for white respondents. 31% of the respondents indicated that their academic grade stayed the same following their mobility compared to 35% of white respondents.

47% of first-generation respondents indicated that their grades increased following their mobility, compared to 43% of students whose families had undergone higher education.

The pattern holds for respondents from low-income backgrounds (44%) and respondents from rural backgrounds (44%).

Academic Impact

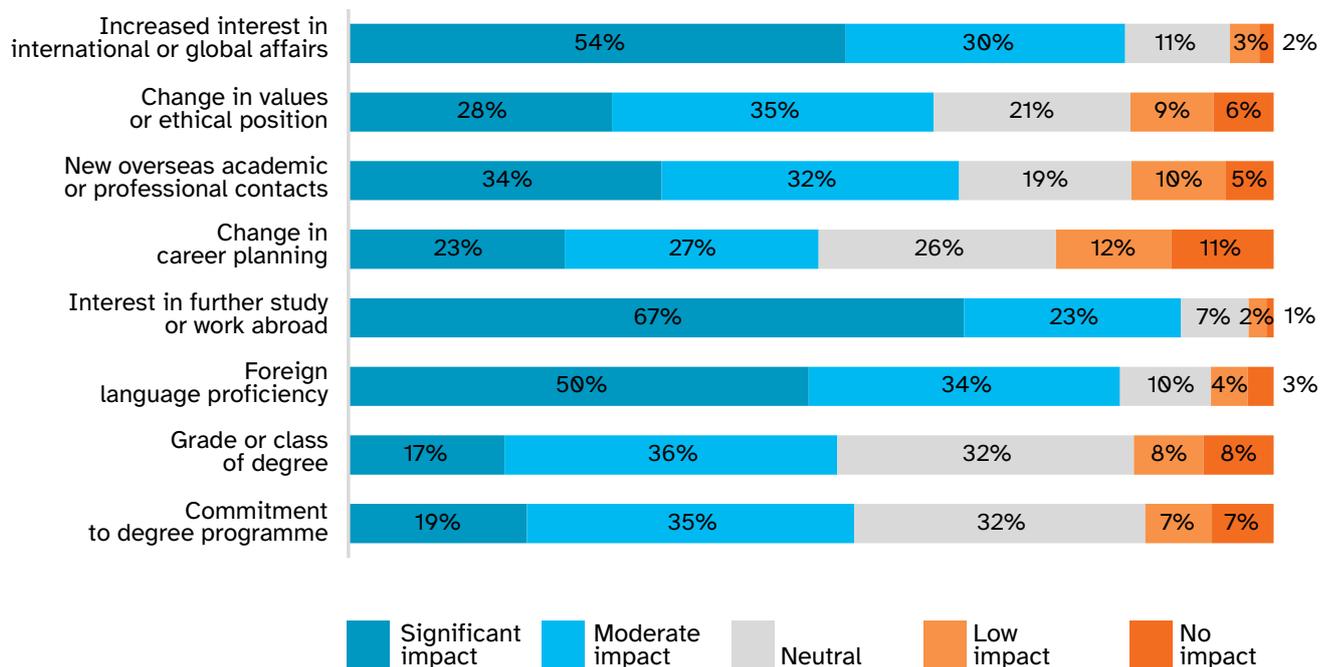


Figure 20: Impact of mobility

Q. What impact did your mobility programme have on the following areas (mobile students, n = 8,349)

Respondents were asked to assess the academic impact of their mobility programme. 52% of respondents indicated that the mobility had a significant or moderate impact on their grade or class of degree at graduation, whereas 32% of respondents reported a neutral impact, reflecting the previously indicated 33% who did not report a change in their academic performance following a mobility experience.

67% of respondents indicated that their interest to do further study or work abroad was significantly impacted by their mobility, and 23,4% of students reporting a moderate impact. 54% of respondents reported that their mobility period had a significant impact on their interest in international or global affairs, while 30% of students reported a moderate impact. For 50% of respondents, there was a significant impact on their foreign language proficiency, while 34% of respondents reported a moderate level of impact on their proficiency in foreign languages after their mobility. 63% of respondents reported a significant (28,5%) or moderate (34,8%) impact on their values or ethical positions, while 66% of respondents an impact on their overseas academic or professional contacts.

Target groups

The pattern holds for first generation respondents, as well as for respondents from rural areas. For respondents from a low-income background the patterns hold as well, with very similar results when compared to the respondents from high-income backgrounds, although 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.

The pattern holds as well for ethnic minority respondents, although in some cases a higher percentage of students agreed that there were specific impacts experiences: ethnic minority respondents reported a higher significant impact on their interest in international or global affairs at 62% compared to 51% of white respondents. They also reported a higher impact on their change in career planning, with 57% of respondents from an ethnic minority reporting their mobility had an impact on their career planning, compared to 48% of white respondents. 68% of ethnic minority respondents reported an impact on their values or ethical position, compared to the 62% of white respondents.

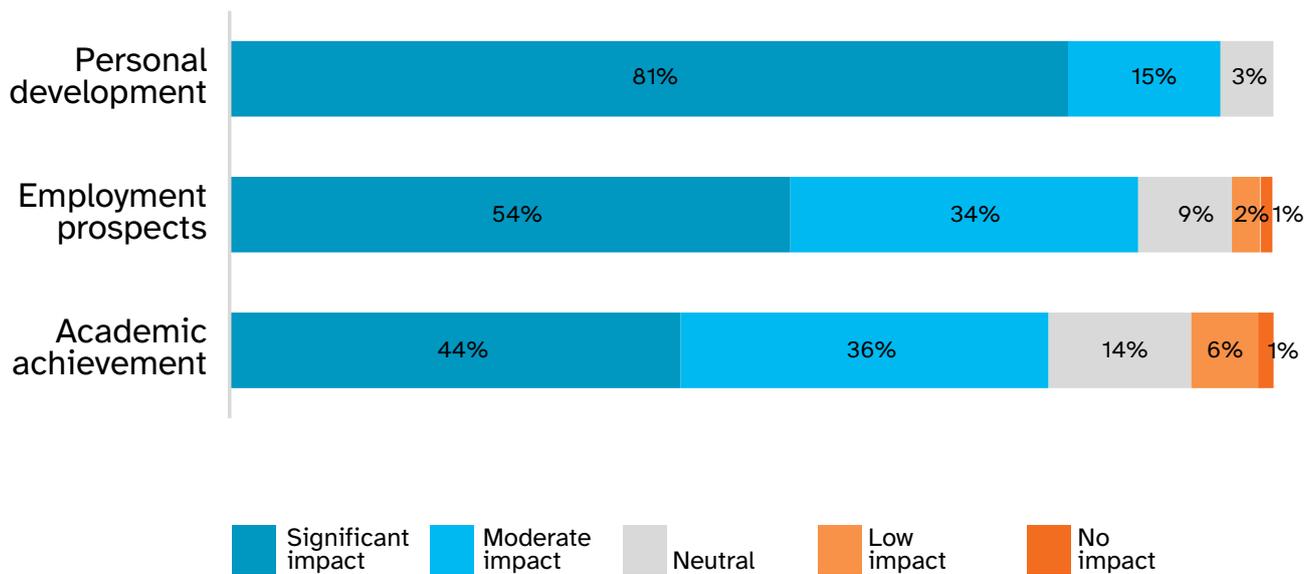


Figure 21: Non-mobile students' impression on the impact of mobility

Q. Going abroad will help your ... (non-mobile students, n = 4,471)

When asking non-mobile respondents what they would consider to be the impact of a mobility opportunity, they indicated that they consider the impact on personal development would have the most impact, with 81% of respondents stating that they consider the impact significant, and 15% considering the impact moderate. 54% of non-mobile respondents consider the impact of a mobility opportunity abroad significant on employment prospects, with 34% of non-mobile participants considering this moderately impactful for career prospects. According to non-mobile respondents, there is also an impact on academic achievement, as 44% of respondents state they believe there is a significant impact on academic achievement, while 36% of non-mobile respondents consider this to have a moderate impact on academic achievement.

The majority of respondents are currently studying full time as their main occupation at the moment of the survey. 71,2% of mobile respondents are currently still enrolled in education, whereas 72,5% of respondents that did not take part in mobility are currently enrolled in education. A greater percentage at 12,1% of mobile respondents are currently in full time or part time employment, whereas 7,0% of respondents without mobility experience are currently engaged in full time or part-time employment. A larger group of respondents without mobility experience are combining employment and studying, 14,7% of non-mobile students reported to currently be in employment as well as studying at the moment, while this is only the case of 10,4% of past mobile students.

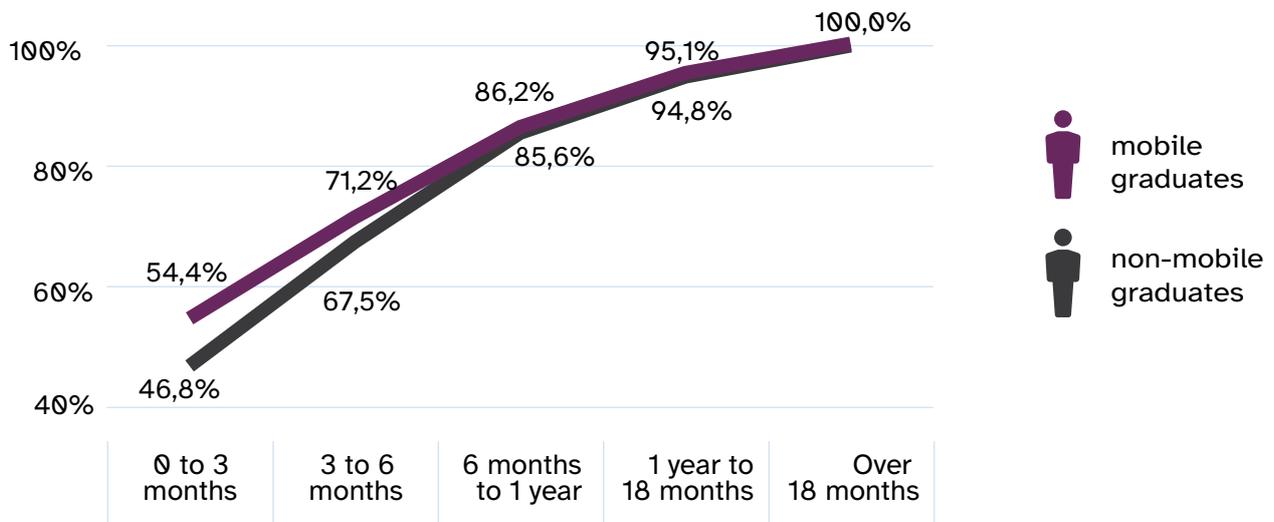


Figure 22: Duration till full time job after graduation

Q. How soon after completing your studies did you get a full-time job?
 (graduated respondents, n = 3,691)

Out of all those graduated, and currently in employment (n = 3.691), respondents were more likely to have a job in the first three months after graduation, with 54,4% of mobile respondents to report obtaining a full-time job between 0-3 months after graduation, compared to 46,8% of respondents with a non-mobile experience upon graduation. When looking at full-time employment within the first 6 months of 71,2% of respondents with a mobility experience will find full-time employment within the first six months of graduation, compared to 67,5% of students without a mobility experience. Within the first year after graduation, respondents without mobility have caught up, as 85,6% of graduates without mobile experience have found full-time employment, compared to 86,2% of graduates with mobility experience.

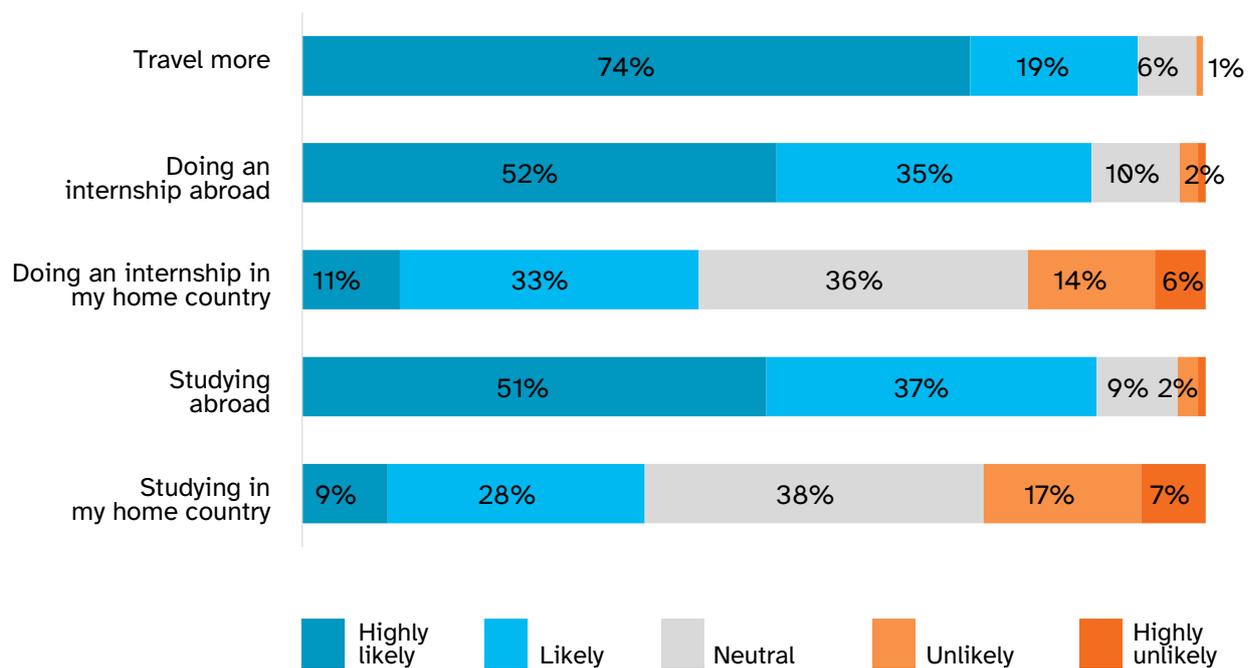


Figure 23: Duration till full time job after graduation

Q. Has your mobility experience made you more or less likely to participate in the following opportunities? (mobile respondents, n = 8.349)

Respondents with a mobility experience tend to be more interested in general travel, as 74% of respondents indicate that their mobility has made it highly likely they will participate in general travel, whereas 18,5% of respondents indicate that they are likely to take part in general travel following their mobility experience. Respondents further state that their mobility experience has made it more likely for them to take part in a study abroad experience (more likely for 88% of respondents) or do an internship abroad (87%). With 38% of respondents indicated that they are more likely to continue studying in their home country, and 44% of respondents saying they are more likely to do an internship in their home country, there is a stark contrast between the interests in opportunities abroad compared to opportunities in the home country.

Competencies – Knowledge

Respondents reported high impacts based on the knowledge gained from their mobility experience. The highest majority (95%) of respondents strongly agreed (65%) or agreed (31%) that they knew more about the cultural characteristics of the host country following their mobility experience, while 71% of respondents indicated to understand their home country

better. Understanding of the differences between their home country and host country was reported with a high degree of agreement at 93%, with 57% strongly agreeing and 36% agreeing. 88% of respondents reported an improvement in their knowledge of foreign languages.

Target groups
The pattern holds across all target groups.

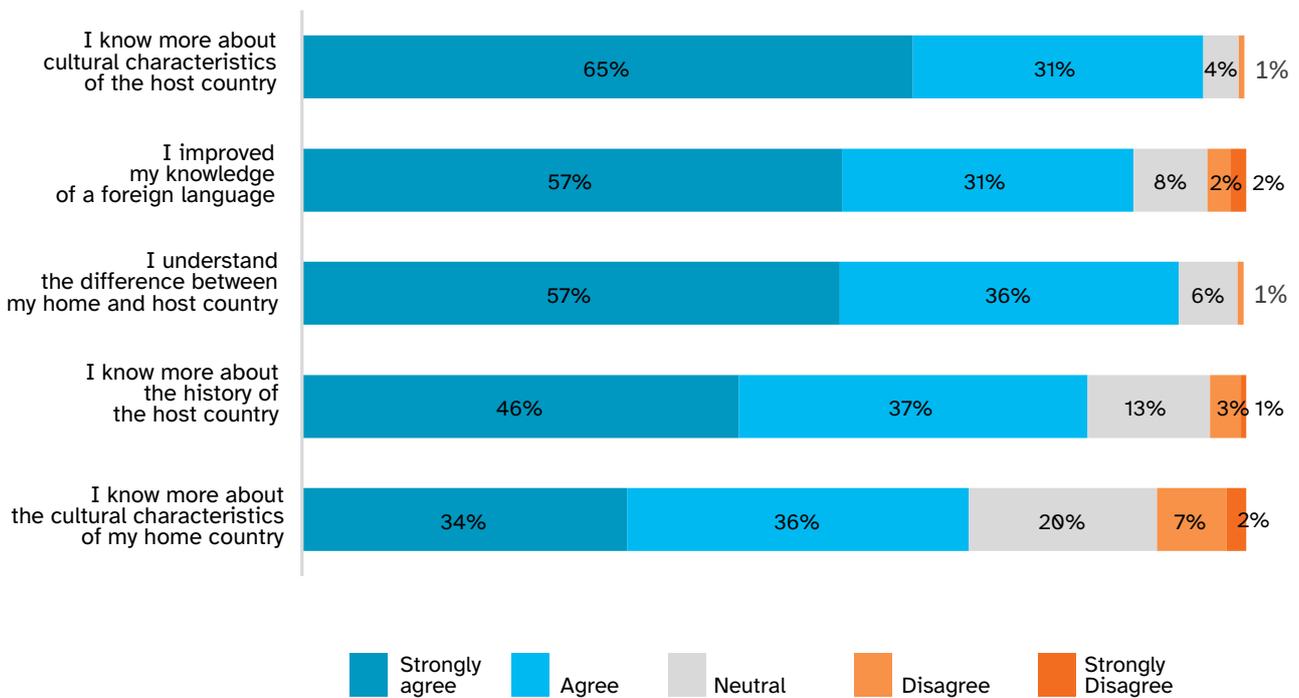


Figure 24: Gained knowledge on mobility

Q. Please rate the following statements with regards to how much you agree with the statement following your mobility experience. (mobile students, n = 8,349)

Competencies – Skills

92,4% of respondents indicated that they could work in intercultural teams after taking part in a mobility with 58% strongly agreeing and 35% agreeing with the statement. The skill to adjust working practice to an international setting also emerged as a strong skill that was improved following a mobility experience, with 89% of respondents either strongly agreeing (47%) or agreeing (42%). Being able to work independently is a skill respondents felt more confident in: 86% indicated they were more able to do so after their mobility experience. 84% of respondents reported

that they are able to adjust their language to the needs of the audience following their experience abroad. Confidence to speak in public was impacted positively for 77% of respondents, with 77% of respondents indicating that they became better at

Target groups

The pattern holds across all target groups.

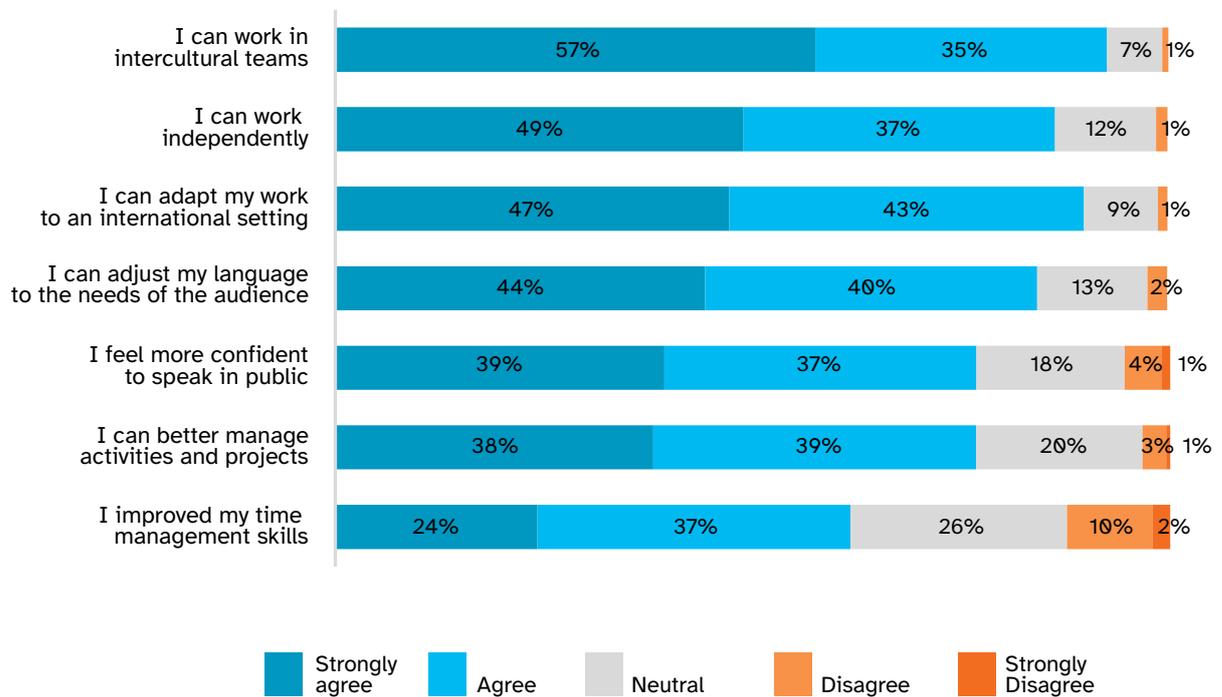


Figure 25: Gained Skills on mobility

Q. Please rate the following statements with regards to how much you agree with the statement following your mobility experience. (mobile students, n = 8,349)

Competencies – Attitudes

The majority of respondents (92%) indicated that their curiosity increased following their mobility experience with 61% strongly agreeing and 31% agreeing with the statement that they were eager to learn more about cultures different from their own. Confidence to operate in an intercultural setting was also impacted: 91% of respondents agreed this had improved following their mobility experience. 90% of mobile respondents reported to strongly agree (57%) or agreed (33%) to the statement that they felt more aware and accepting of cultural differences following their mobility experience. 87% of respondents reported having a better understanding of the diverse needs in society, as 51% strongly agreed and 36% agreed to the statement that they understand better what is going on in society upon return from their mobility. 84% of respondents expressed that they have a better understanding of other people’s point of view, and 80% of respondents reported feeling more responsible for the society they live in.

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Target groups
The pattern holds across all target groups.

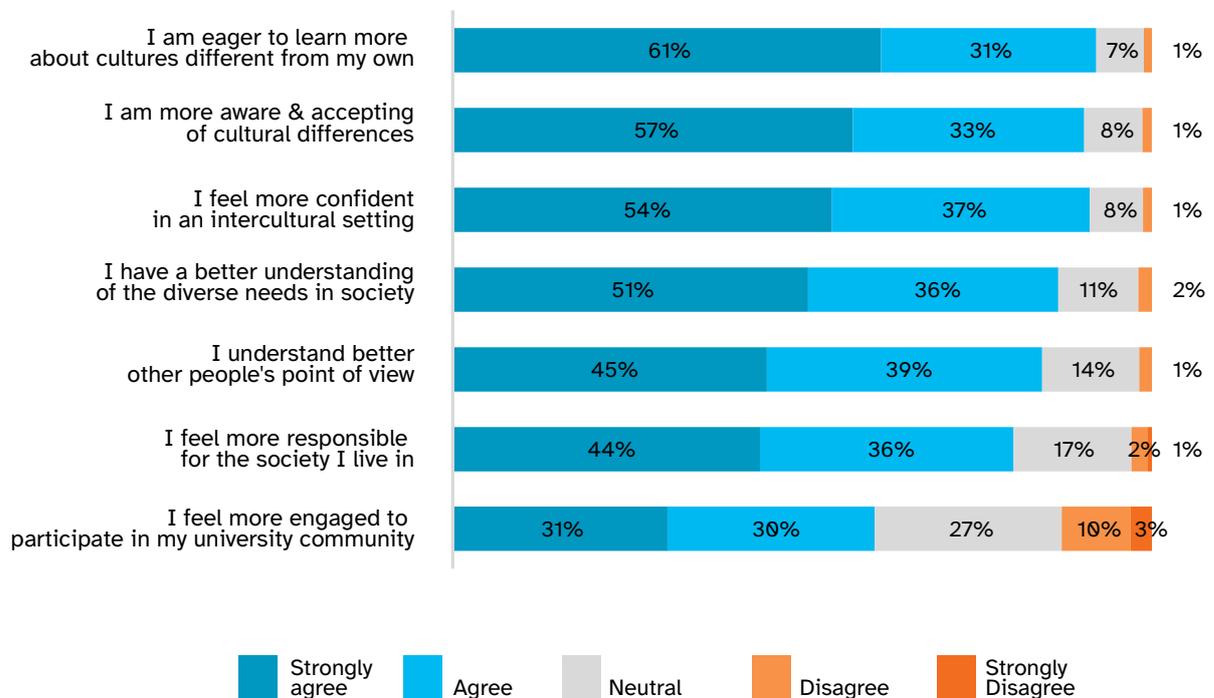


Figure 26: Changes in values and attitudes

Q. Please rate the following statements with regards to how much you agree with the statement following your mobility experience. (mobile students, n = 8,349)

Intersectionality

The analysis within this report reviews the data for each of our target demographics in isolation. However, identities are complex, and while analysing the findings for these groups is useful in plotting trends and patterns it does not tell a full story. For students with overlapping disadvantaged identities, the barriers can compound and reinforce each other creating further and more challenging barriers to mobility for students.

The project analysed the findings for:

- Ethnic minority respondents from a low-income background (994 total respondents)
- Ethnic minority respondents from rural backgrounds (524 total respondents)

- Ethnic minority respondents who were first generation to attend university (1675 total respondents)
- First generation respondents from a low-income background (1707 total respondents)
- First generation respondents from rural backgrounds (1407 total respondents)
- Respondents from rural backgrounds and low-income backgrounds (664 total respondents)

The project team was cautious of the risk of overinterpreting the results for some of the smaller populations in these groups. Below are the top line patterns and findings for these intersectional groupings.

Key Findings

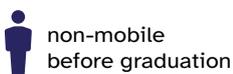
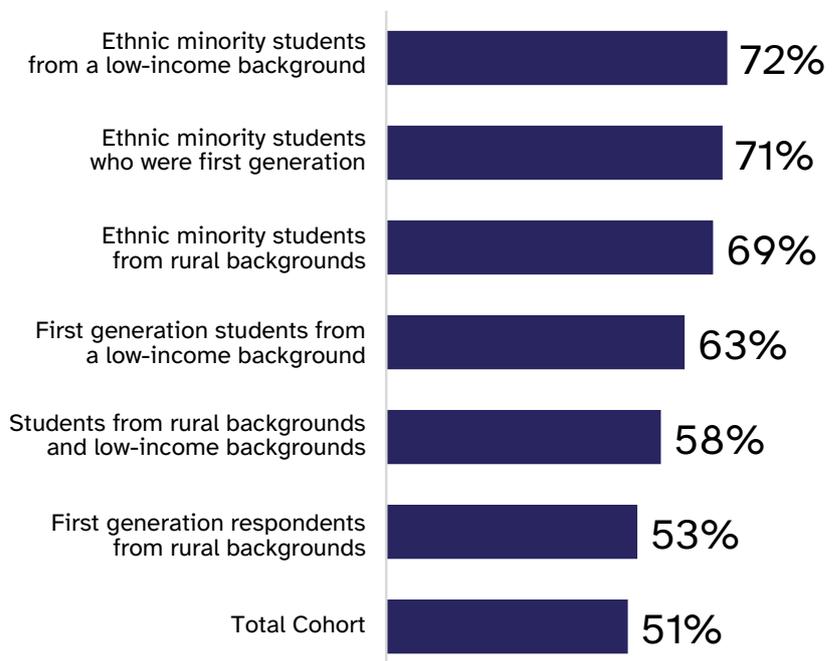


Figure 27: Students who had not traveled abroad on an educational programme before their bachelor

Q. Prior to starting your bachelor's degree, did you travel abroad as part of an educational programme? (mobile students, n = 8,349)



Across all groups, a higher percentage of respondents reported not having travelled abroad as part of an educational programme when compared to the total survey cohort.

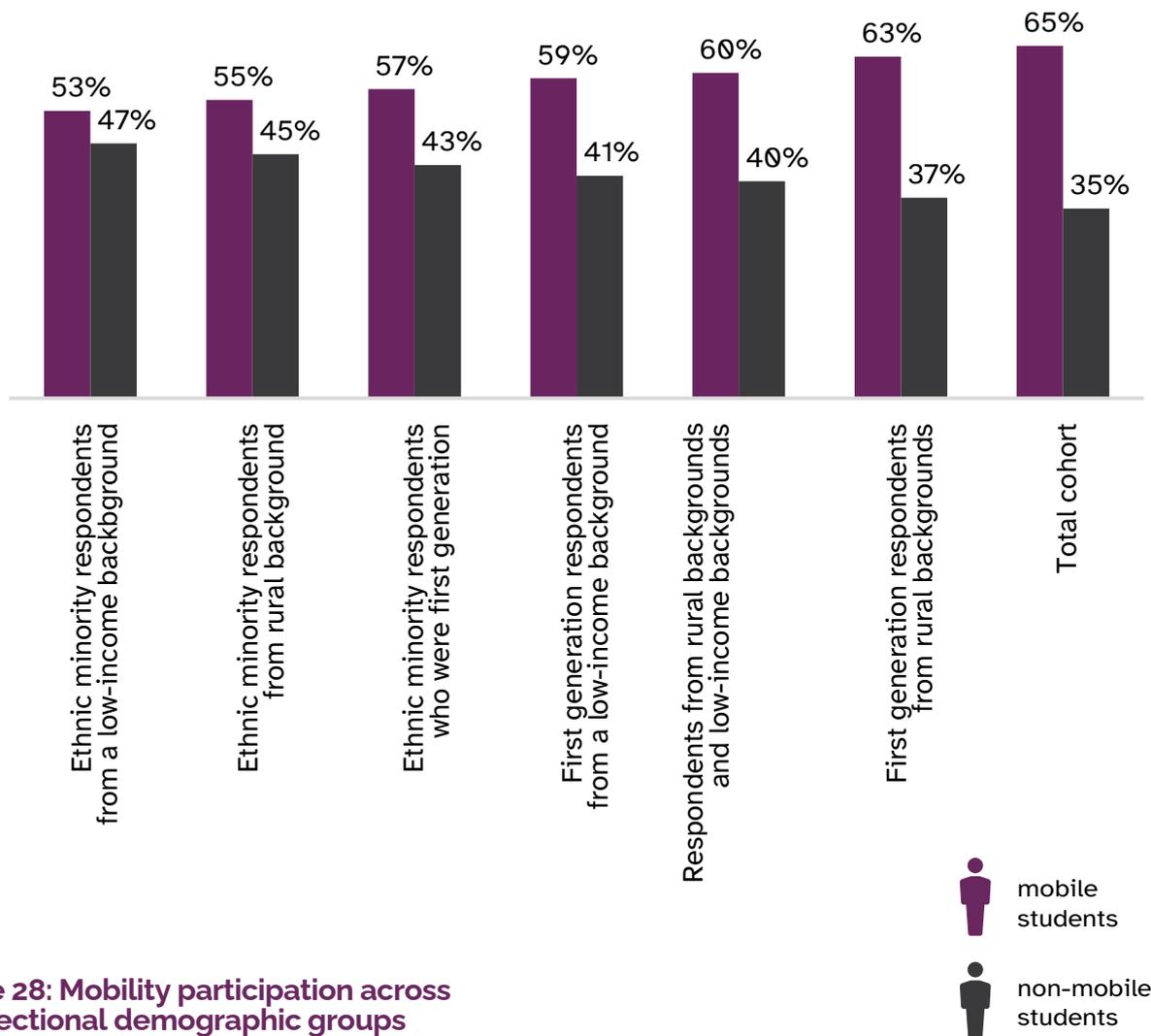


Figure 28: Mobility participation across intersectional demographic groups

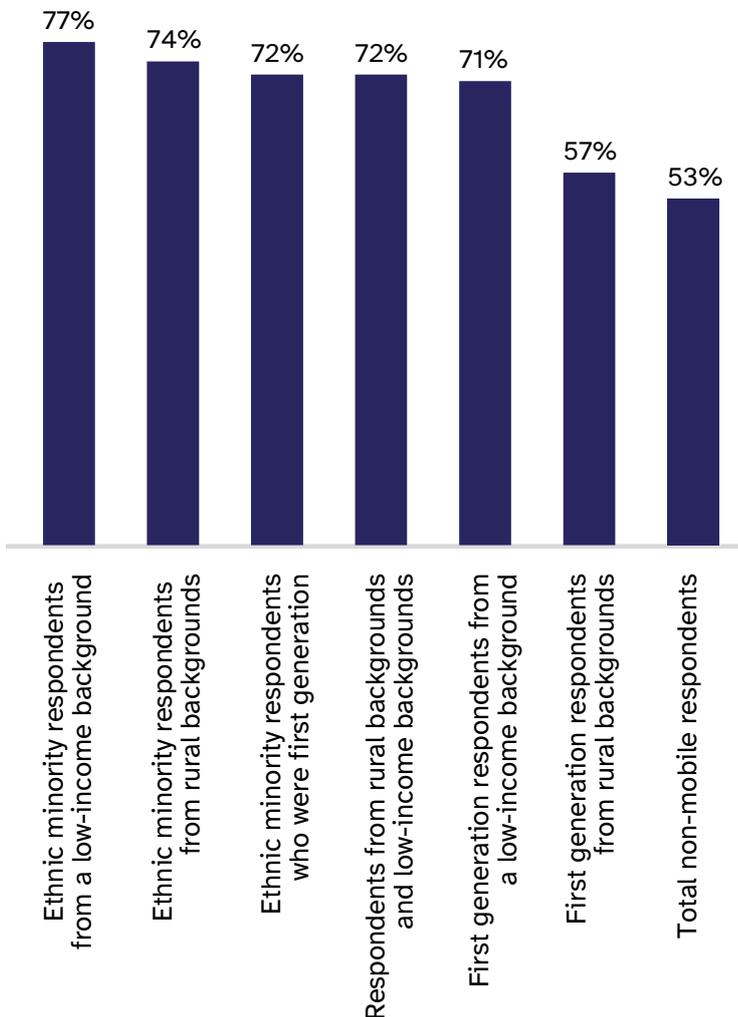
Again, a higher percentage of respondents did not go abroad during their bachelor’s degree when compared to the total cohort.

Across all groups, a higher rate of the mobile respondents participated in short-term duration mobilities when compared to the total cohort. This was particularly the case for ethnic minority respondents from

low-income backgrounds (22%) and rural backgrounds (18%). For the non-mobile participants, there was a broad interest in participating in short-term mobility programmes.

Group	Short-term mobility
Ethnic minority respondents from a low-income background	22%
Ethnic minority respondents from rural backgrounds	18%
Ethnic minority respondents who were first generation	16%
Respondents from rural backgrounds and low-income backgrounds	16%
First generation respondents from a low-income background	12%
First generation respondents from rural backgrounds	11%

Q. What type of mobility programme did you participate in?



Again a higher percentage of respondents in the intersectional groupings reported needing at least 75% of the mobility programme costs to be covered by funding if they were to go abroad, compared to the total cohort. For five out of the six groupings, in excess of 70% of respondents reported needing the majority of mobility costs funded.

Figure 29: Percentage of respondents needing at least 75% of mobility costs covered

Other trends for the intersectional groupings:

- A higher percentage reported that they were treated unfairly or negatively by students or professors while they were abroad. 43% of ethnic minority students from a rural background reported being treated unfairly by students, as did 40% of ethnic minority respondents from low-income backgrounds and 40% of respondents from rural and low-income backgrounds. As with the total cohort, most of the respondents reported that this was a rare occurrence.
- Across all intersectional groups, respondents reported experiencing discrimination while abroad at a higher rate than the survey cohort, with the exception of first-generation respondents from rural backgrounds who were in line with the total cohort. 36% of ethnic minority respondents from a low-income background reported experiencing discrimination while abroad (compared to 24% for the total cohort).
- Across all groups, the pattern for barriers encountered mapped that of the total cohort, with barriers relating to finance, including lack of funding, the risk of losing a part-time job and the additional debt incurred while abroad all reported by respondents. In addition, a lack

of information about available mobility programmes, and concerns relating to academic attainment were reported. These barriers tended to be reported at a higher rate, with a larger proportion of respondents reporting that they strongly agree these were barriers to mobility.

Student Focus Group Findings

Who participated in the focus groups?

Placing student voices at the centre of efforts to increasing participation in outgoing mobility is key. The SIEM project conducted a series of focus groups with project partners institutions during October and November 2020. The workshops covered motivators, barriers and challenges to mobility and discussed what support should be put in place to encourage more students to go abroad.

The aims of the focus groups were:

- to gain an understanding of what attracts students to study, work or volunteer abroad.
- to identify existing barriers to participation in mobility programmes; and
- to discuss solutions to barriers, and ways to increase participation in mobility programmes

A total of 36 students participated in the sessions, with a mix of mobile and non-mobile students. Focus groups took place

in four of the project partner countries: Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, and Latvia.

The students studied across a wide range of disciplines. A third of students (32%) studied humanities subjects, with a fifth (21%) studying Economic and Business Sciences.

Students in the focus groups were from less advantaged or underrepresented groups as defined in the outset of this report.

What attracts students to going abroad?

Overwhelmingly, students reported being keen to learn about other societies and cultures. Students were interested in learning about the history of different countries and immersing themselves in a different lifestyle. In some cases, the students already have knowledge of the location, for example having studied the history of a country, which inspired their choice of destination. In other cases, students reported seeing the country captured in videos, photographs and in literature, which spiked their interest in visiting.

“The chance to meet new people, to get to know new cultures and see how I get along in a different country as I was never abroad before, and I cannot imagine what I will face

Students were keen to have new experiences and adventure, and to visit places that look different to home, both in terms of urban architecture but also the local nature.

They were excited by the idea of visiting a new place, and the different activities available, including opportunities to try out new hobbies and leisure activities.

“It's a completely different lifestyle and there's a lot of strangers that have a lot to talk about because they came from very different environment than I do.

Meeting new people and expanding networks was something students discussed. Including the opportunity to make new friends, and to meet likeminded people. Students were also interested in meeting students with different perspectives to their own, who have had a different life experience.

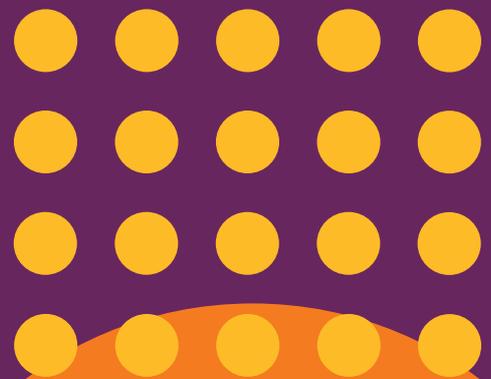
“I really wanted to see how life is somewhere else and to meet new people.

Students were excited by the prospect of expanding their learning related to their degree subject. They felt a different study environment would offer new perspectives. Some students flagged particular countries as these were the locations for specific institutions that they were interested in studying at, or because they were interested in learning about a national approach within their field.



“

Currently life consists of studying, which is now our priority. But to do that in combination with something really cool... that's a change, that's great.



The learning extended to an interest in improving language skills and language learning. Students felt they would benefit from being immersed in the local language and learn more than they would in a classroom. Related to this, some students selected locations where they knew they could speak to the local language.

“It's best to learn a language by actually visiting the country and being forced to use the language... when you are in the country for long enough you can improve to the level of a native speaker.”

Students were interested in visiting locations where they had family or cultural heritage, to learn more about their own history, or to spend time with their relatives. They were also interested in visiting locations where they had friends locally, or where friends had visited. In addition, some students reported being encouraged by family who like to travel. Related to this, some students had been dissuaded from travelling to some locations based on other people's reports, for example, where a parent believes a country has a lot of crime.

“To travel is a big dream for me because with my parents we would only travel to go camping in [Home Country], so the option to go for an Erasmus somewhere and study was awesome - It's one of the reasons I even went to university.”

A few students flagged that the opportunity to travel abroad with the university was in itself a motivator. In one case a student had been motivated to attend university for the chance to travel abroad. Students felt that the programmes offered by a university were different to the type of travel options available to you as a tourist, that they would allow you to immerse yourself more fully in the culture and society of a place.

What mobility programmes are students interested in?

Students were asked what type of mobility programme they would like to participate in, where the programme should take place, the duration of the mobility programme

Location of Mobility Programme

The students named a wide range of countries or places they would like to visit across the world. The most popular destinations were the United States, New Zealand, and Denmark. It is worth noting that in some cases the students were specific, for example naming the city 'Copenhagen' rather than the country Denmark.

In other cases, students named regions or continents such as 'Southern Europe' or 'South America'. For many students, their initial response was to “see the whole world” and wanting to visit many countries. Students also mentioned that they would like to visit multiple countries in one trip.

Type of Mobility Programme

Almost half the students expressed an interest in study abroad (43%) with an additional 21% interested in the opportunity to study and work abroad. 11% of students expressed an interest in working abroad. Volunteering abroad is something that was of interest to a third of students (31%) although only in combination with another activity, such as work or study.

“ I would like to study and work there because I like to connect theory with practice, so I can apply what I'm learning, that's the reason.

I would like to go on the work mobility related to my field of study... going on work mobility would also give an insight how people are in their daily life that again would be different from a typical study environment.

For the students who wanted to work, they were keen that the work was related to their discipline. They were excited by the idea of working in the field and meeting new people through the workplace. Some students felt that working would enable them to really immerse themselves in a local culture and community. Some students expressed concern that they might

end up “stuck in an office”, noting that they would want to do something different if working abroad.

“ I see it more as an opportunity to learn more outside of the curriculum.

Some students were more interested in taking part in a more informal programme, such as a language learning opportunity or a cultural experience. They were keen to learn, but potentially outside of their academic field and formal curriculum. As one student noted they were mostly interested in getting to “talk to local people and know the local culture”.

“ I strongly believe that people who are doing the volunteering are special people and it is worth it to meet them at least once per lifetime.

Students who were interested in volunteering alongside other activities were motivated by giving something back, and for some students this was related to their religious belief. Students were also keen to meet other volunteers and learn from their experience.

Duration of Mobility Programme

When students were asked about what duration a mobility programme should be the results were mixed: Just over a third of students (39%) were interested in a semester abroad, with another third (36%) interested in an academic year abroad. A quarter of students (25%) wanted to participate in a short-term programme. The reasons for length of programme depended on a few factors, including the type of mobility programme a student was interested in participating, the experience the student had with international travel, and their home commitments.

“During one year you can better learn the language and culture

Students were keen that the experience made an impact on them. They were motivated to make the most of the opportunity, particularly as there is a financial outlay. Students expressed concern that a shorter period abroad would not allow them to immerse themselves in the culture. A year abroad offers a better opportunity for immersion in a local culture, and to develop skills, particularly language skills.

“I have nothing against shorter conferences, like for a week, if it has some specific topic, so you leave, you learn something and then you go back.

For some students, they felt that a shorter duration mobility would be positive if it had a specific purpose, for example, a conference, so that students were sure to get something out of the experience. There was the suggestion that a short-term programme should be structured to make the most of the time abroad.

“I'd like to first try that out for about a month or two weeks and then go abroad for a longer time, like three or four months, so I'd like to try it out for a shorter time and then I'd see what to do next.

Several students were “afraid” to apply for a full year abroad and opted instead for the shorter duration mobility. For students who were worried about going abroad, having a short-term programme was more appealing as it would allow them to trial a location or programme. Students were interested in the option to extend stays if they were going well.

“I have a family and a husband, and I don't want to spend so long time separate from them.

Other reasons given for wanting a short-term duration mobility was family and community commitments. This included both formal care provision with children and dependents, but also romantic

relationships, familial obligations. In addition, students were concerned about leaving jobs, social clubs, sports clubs, and their course mates.

“In my opinion the perfect length of the stay is one semester because it's long enough to really experience something and learn something.”

For some students that middle ground was a semester abroad, which they felt was a long enough time for them to experience the learning and culture of a new place but short enough that they would not miss out on life at home, particularly friendship groups and their host university curriculum.

Location also informed the students decision around the duration of a mobility opportunity: if it were a short flight a shorter period abroad would be ok. However, for long haul trips students felt it would be better to spend a more substantial time abroad.

What is the impact of mobility programmes?

“Studies in other countries are organized differently; there are different professors, language and environment.”

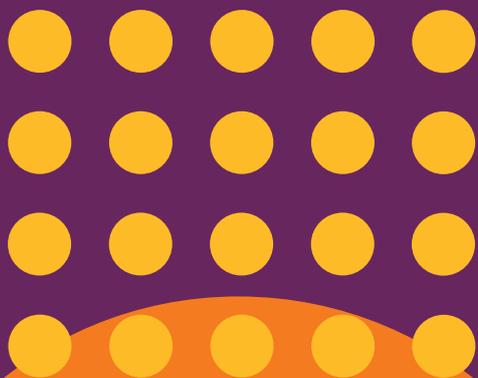
There was a general consensus that mobility programmes broaden your horizons and provides different perspectives and different approaches to studies. Students felt that going abroad will help their academic achievement by providing new insights, methods, and technologies. Students were also interested in meeting other students who they could learn from and as one noted “who may turn out to be colleagues in the future”. Students also felt that mobility would lead to an increase in confidence making them more likely to participate in classes which would have a positive impact on their academic attainment.

Some students were not sure if the mobility would improve their academic attainment, students thought this depended on the length of the mobility, the personal qualities of the student, and how the academic modules mapped to their home courses and if these were credit bearing. A few students were concerned the experience might negatively impact their grade, particularly if they struggled with language barriers or if the host university did not support their academic attainment.

There was consensus across all groups that having a mobility experience looks good on your CV, and helps you stand out from other candidates applying for roles. They felt the experience would be particularly impressive if the experience were related to specific career, but that any experience would set



You have to make yourself an interesting candidate for the job and I think some experience from abroad can really help.



you apart from others. Some students were keen to work abroad as this was in their ambitions for the future post-university, and they were eager to trial this. Students suggested the mobility programme put you in contact with more people from different cultures, which prepares you to work with people from different backgrounds in the workplace

“ I think that employers like to see that their employees are able to adapt, are flexible and can speak more languages compared to others.

Students felt that mobility programmes provide skills to build on which would set them up well for future employment opportunities. Skills named included confidence, independence, adaptability, communication, tolerance, and learning to manage a budget. In addition, students felt that improving a foreign language, particularly English, would help them in the labour market.

“ I would go with one view and return with another, not only about that specific place but also about other countries and cultures.

Universally, students agreed that going abroad would help their personal development. They were excited to develop new networks, to learn from others, and to

“ The stay abroad definitely helped with personal growth and I think everyone should try that because you can gain a lot by being away from your social group and social bubble.

make friends with people from different backgrounds. Students talked about the mobility providing an opportunity to “step out of (their) comfort zone”, improve their socializing skills, and develop more courage. Students felt they would learn more about themselves, and “learn to be a better person through the process”.

“ Every negative experience teaches you something and helps you to grow.

Students discussed the possibility that the experience could be negative, the risk of depression being away from home and university or work pressures. However, they agreed that these would still be opportunities for growth, and that they would help students to “learn how to react and deal with difficult situations”. Students also raised concerns relating to reverse culture shock on their return to the home country.

What are the barriers to participation in mobility programmes?



I am someone who has to combine five jobs to pay for my room and studies.

I have to spend everything I earn immediately. Saving for Erasmus is therefore extremely difficult... and especially during this crisis now that I have also lost some jobs.

Across all groups, students cited finance as a barrier. Students had concerns that “the scholarship wouldn’t be able to cover all the expenses”, particularly accommodation costs as well as healthcare costs. One student described how they were “really scared (they wouldn’t) have enough money for food”. Students mentioned that without family support they did not think they could afford to go abroad. Other costs mentioned included insurance, accommodation for home rentals while abroad, and visas.



The information about grants is not really there. Which ones exist? Are there specific scholarships for students like me?

Some students lacked information about what grants and support were available to them to undertake a mobility experience. They were unclear how to apply for grants, and how the grants worked in practice.

Students who rely on part-time jobs to support their study at the home university were unsure if they would be able to work abroad, and if not, they would be unable to afford to take part in the programme. Students were also concerned about losing their jobs in the home country should they take up a mobility opportunity, with one student noting: “I have to start thinking right away about what I can do to earn money after an Erasmus”.



“I didn’t want to get kicked out of university just because of an Erasmus”.

Many students were concerned about failing their academic course if they did not do well in their studies while they were abroad. They were concerned that they may also “have to pay all of the scholarship back”. If they did not do well academically. Students were concerned that the courses they want to study abroad may not be available once they arrive in country.



They should give more opportunities to others. An average of eleven can sometimes be difficult for people who have to work in addition to studying.

Students were also concerned about the academic barriers to the exchange programme if there is a minimum

attainment needed to access the programme. This was felt particularly important where students might have extenuating circumstances which impacts their academic attainment, for example students who “have to work for their studies or to help at home”. Students expressed concerns that mobility was an “elitist opportunity”.

“The bureaucracy: (there were) lots of forms and papers to fill, the information about the places where we could go was structured badly... it was really hard to find the information.

Students flagged administrative barriers, particularly in trying to navigate the application process. Students were confused by the numbers of different papers and forms they needed to complete with one student noting that “the pile of information raises even more questions”. Additionally, the students struggled to find where the information on mobility opportunities was held, and when they found it they did not have the right information. Students felt that there was limited information provided about mobility programs, about who can go abroad and what their options are. Students found the application process too long, and in some cases they missed the deadline which was early in the term when they were not in a position to consider going abroad. Students

shared thoughts on the communications methods used by the university: they receive a lot of emails, so information on mobility opportunities shared via email could be missed.

“There are so many options, but how to choose the best one for me and what if at the end I choose but I don't like it there.

In addition, students felt there was a lack of information about the support provided while abroad. They did not know if they would have a contact abroad in case of emergency – students were worried about what to do if they encountered a crisis. Students also felt that the communications about mobility focused too much on the positives and did not clarify what to do if things were to ‘go wrong’. This made students uneasy about how they would handle a crisis abroad.

“I would say culture shock when the cultures are too different and because of that I don't want to go there.

A number of students discussed fear of the unknown as a barrier to mobility. Students did not know what to expect and were concerned that the mobility would be different to what they imagined. Students were afraid of being “alone” and struggling

with the exchange. Students noted that due to the Covid-19 outbreak, their fears were heightened as “the uncertainty is even bigger as the borders may be closed”. Students discussed concerns about leaving behind family, friends, and relationships, as well as their personal routine. Students were worried they would be able to get home in time if there was an emergency.

“What if I won't make friends and be totally alone there.”

Fear of being isolated and lonely while abroad was reported by a number of students. Students were worried about going to an “unknown environment, having no idea how things work there”. Some students had limited travel experience and were worried about how they would cope abroad. This lack of confidence was compounded by having to go on a mobility programme alone: “it's not easy to function when you're in a new environment all alone”.

“I really like to travel but due to my low self-esteem I was always shy to speak English... it's always keeping me from travelling anywhere because I think I won't be able to communicate properly in English.”

Many students reported being afraid of the language barrier. They were particularly concerned about the number of courses

that were available in English, or a language they felt comfortable speaking. They were worried this would impact their academic attainment while abroad.

Students were also worried about having to communicate in another language, particularly if they encountered a crisis. Students were concerned about becoming

“I was ill several times and I started having problems with my mental health and it's incredibly hard when you don't have things and people you can lean on.”

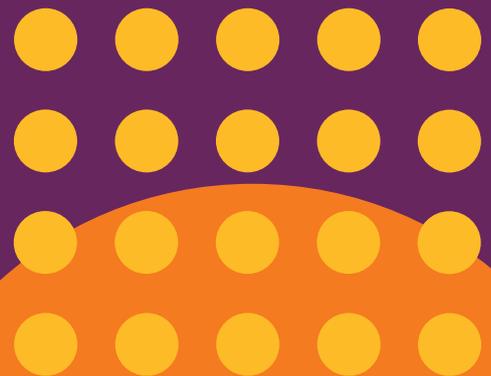
unwell when abroad and what support would be available to them if they did not have their local networks.

Medical support was flagged by a number of students, who were concerned particularly about accessing affordable health insurance while abroad. Students were worried about navigating the different health insurance companies and getting the correct coverage. Students with pre-existing medical conditions were worried about how they would be supported abroad, how they would access medical care and the costs associated with this, and if they could access their specific medication while abroad.

“I feel like those are some challenges that might actually be the reason why people go on Erasmus, not things that should stop you from going abroad.”



I am a Muslim myself and have Moroccan roots. You always feel a bit of an outsider or discriminated against. In (home institution) you still have an idea of where to go for help or support, but abroad that certainty may disappear. Where do you go when you experience something like this abroad?”



During the discussion on challenges, a number of students noted that facing challenges was part of the development that going abroad provides. They were not put off by the challenges themselves but were keen to know how they would be supported to deal with these challenges. Again, this links to the need to ensure students are aware of who to contact in the case of an emergency

Discrimination while abroad

When asked about barriers and challenges to mobility programmes, a number of students flagged concerns relating to experiencing discrimination while abroad:

“There are some countries I would avoid because of how they treat women.”

I also notice that (some) countries are very committed to letting people be who they want to be. And that may not be the case in many other countries. That also scares me. It has happened a few times that people sent me away when it became known that I had a diagnosis of ASD.

“You never really know what they think about racism or migrants abroad.”

“I am bisexual myself. Then also being non-white ... discrimination remains something I remain afraid of and you never know what it will be like for someone else. You never know how people look at you.”

One student suggested that mobility was “not for (their) age group”.

Students were concerned about discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, and age. Students were concerned about being seen as an outsider and being treated differently or discriminated against on the basis of their identity.

What support is needed to access mobility programmes?

“For me it was really scary because there really is a lot of papers and it's hard to fill it all correctly and scan it and then upload it to the right place and sign it all... mentally it's really keeping you from even getting into it.”

Some students were discouraged by the administrative process for going abroad, which they felt was complicated and confusing. Students were keen for the information to be more streamlined and the process to be made clear. It was important for students that information was communicated in a “common language,

for example, that in the international office people speak in English". Students were keen for support in navigating the process of applying to go abroad. They felt this would make the process easier but also set the right expectations with the student. Students wanted clear deadlines in the application process.

“In my opinion people often don't know how to choose and don't even know all the possible criteria because they simply have no experience with that.

Students wanted the university to provide a list of partner institutions (including research centers, laboratories), traineeship placements and work experience options to help understand their different choices. Students wanted information about the courses available, how credits would be transferred, costs involved, information about the destination. They wanted the information in one place, so it was easy to access. They also wanted the information to be shared via social media channels. Students would also welcome faculty presentations on the options to go abroad. One student noted that their university did a lot of promotion for study abroad but that the information they needed was not available.

“You should be able to pay for the necessities with the scholarship like food and accommodation. Enough that even students without support from their family could go abroad.”

Across all groups, students were keen for financial support. Students wanted a scholarship which would cover the essentials such as accommodation and food. Students also discussed needing information about the opportunity to work while abroad, which would help support their budget and make the trip more financially viable. Information on visas and right to work would therefore be helpful.

“It is nice to have the scholarship, but it would be useful to have the information about the cost of living in the chosen country to get an idea how much the scholarship would cover and how much you can do with it - would you need extra money from home or would you need to look for a job”.

More specifically, students were interested in cost-of-living information. Students were keen to have in advance information relating to rental costs and other essential costs such as food and travel. In addition to this, they wanted information about opening bank accounts, and general financial

“Maybe they would need to talk to a professional to overcome some fears and uncertainties, to adapt and come back home.

management while abroad.

Students suggested establishing a buddy scheme, which would link them with a local student who could show them around and help them to adapt to the new study process, the new university, and the new city. Students felt that buddies “provide information that you cannot find on the internet.” This was particularly important at the start of the mobility programme when the student is beginning to navigate the new environment. There was a suggestion that international student clubs could support buddy schemes and take on a mentoring role.

A helpful person that would show me around as a newcomer in a place I do not know, who shows how everything works at the host university.

There was interest in hearing more from former exchange students before going abroad as they “know the unknown situation”. Students would like these to be in-person meetings or events with the opportunity to hear from the ambassadors about their experience and to ask questions. As above, it was important that

the ambassadors spoke to their challenges while abroad and how they resolved these.

“Maybe it'd be good if there was a well-being officer... the person would help with the specific need of the person abroad.

Students were really keen to have support while they were abroad. They wanted a contact in country that could help them in emergencies but also support from their home university. Students felt it was important that the support extend to “emotional support” where the host would check in on their wellbeing during the mobility period. This was particularly important “in the first few weeks”. It was important for students that support from the home university was available, particularly for those students’ additional needs or to ensure reasonable adjustments were in place.

Students were keen for there to be medical support available to them, and for the host university to support student health. They were keen to have more information and guidance about health insurance. Students wanted the support that was available to them at their home institution to be available at their host (for example. interpreter for hearing impaired students). Students would like access to a counsellor, as they were concerned about both their mental and physical health.



If there's forty people in our grade then why not to do a workshop for two weeks... we'd have our classmates there and have the same goal.

Students expressed an interest in participating in mobility with other students from the home university, which would provide in-country support and ensure the student did not feel lonely. For students happy to go abroad independently, they were also keen to be networked with other students at their home university that were going to the same host university, city, or country. Students suggested that short group programs “for example, going abroad for a week or two with study-field classmates” would also be helpful.







Staff Perspective

Staff Survey: Main Findings

The staff survey aimed to explore the mobility programmes and support offered to students at institutions across Europe. This survey aimed to:

- Understand how mobility programmes are organised across Europe.
- Understand how students are supported to access mobility programmes.
- Map different stakeholders involved in supporting a mobility experience for students.

Who were the staff survey participants?

The survey received 765 responses from respondents in 56 countries. Spain and Germany were the most highly represented country with 18% per nation. The countries that provided the largest numbers of responses – Spain, Germany, Italy, Greece, and Portugal– together accounted for just over 55% of the total responses, but more than 10 responses were received per country from an additional 13 countries. The survey received responses from 75% of the EU 28 countries (21 out of 28), from 70% of the Erasmus+ programme countries (23 out of 33) and 60% of countries in the European Higher Education Area (29 out of 48).

Country	All	%
Spain	140	18%
Germany	135	18%
Greece	60	8%
Italy	40	5%
Portugal	40	5%
UK	40	5%
Belgium	30	4%
France	25	4%
Lithuania	25	3%
Poland	20	3%

Q. In what country is your institution based?

The broad geographic reach of the survey brings diversity of experience and insight to the findings, which focus on the following areas of interest:

- Mobility strategy
- Mobility programmes
- Funding for mobility programmes
- Barriers to mobility programmes
- Student support

The European Commission [categorises Erasmus+ programme countries on the basis of living costs](#)⁵². These are as follows:

- Group 1 - Programme countries with higher living costs (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Sweden, United Kingdom, Liechtenstein, Norway)
- Group 2 - Programme countries with medium living costs (Austria, Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Greece, Spain, Cyprus, Netherlands, Malta, Portugal)
- Group 3 - Programme countries with lower living costs (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, North Macedonia, Turkey)

Mobility strategy

Outgoing mobility is included in 93.3% of respondents' institutions' strategic plans, the vast majority of survey responses. Just over a third of respondents (36.5%) confirmed that where outgoing mobility is included in the institution's strategic plan or internationalisation strategy, this also includes specific reference to less advantaged or underrepresented groups engaging with mobility programmes.

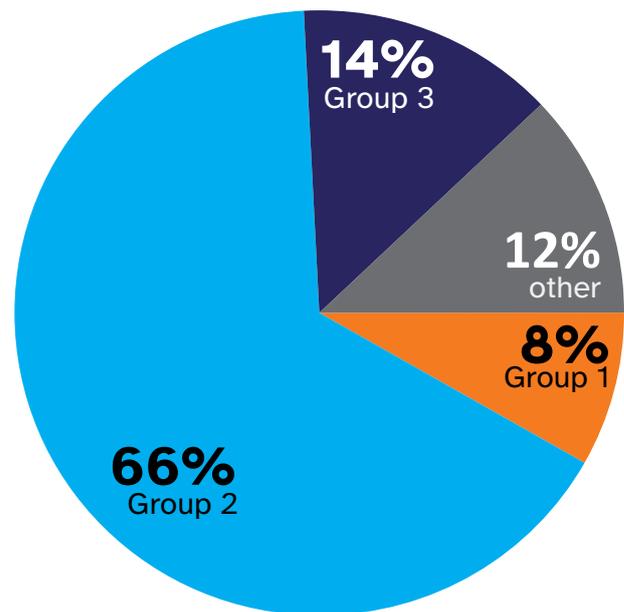


Figure 30: Erasmus+ Country groups

At points throughout this analysis, answers are considered split by Group, to provide additional insight on how student mobility is supported across countries. The majority of countries represented in the survey (66%) were Group 2 countries.

Response	All	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Yes	67%	93%	69%	39%
No	30%	1%	28%	58%
Total	765	65	500	105

Q. Does the institution have a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy?

Two thirds of respondents (67%) reported that their institution had a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. This rose to 93% for respondents from Group 1 countries and dropped to 39% for institutions in Group 3 countries.

Student Group	All	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Students from low-income households	71%	81%	70%	66%
Students from rural areas	25%	29%	19%	31%
Students from minority ethnic groups or with a migration background	47%	67%	50%	32%
Students from Roma and Traveller communities	26%	49%	26%	33%
Students who are first in family to go to university, pioneer students	27%	65%	27%	8%
Students living with disabilities	61%	71%	63%	57%
Students who are care providers, students with dependants, including student parents	40%	68%	41%	36%
Students with religious beliefs	7%	14%	6%	9%
LGBT+ students	17%	32%	14%	18%
Mature students, life-long learners	24%	56%	22%	20%
None of the above	7%	5%	6%	11%
Total	765	65	500	105

Q. Which students would you classify as being from less advantaged backgrounds or underrepresented groups at your institution?

71% of survey respondents would classify students from low-income households as well as students living with disabilities (61%) to be from a less advantaged or underrepresented group.

There was a considerable difference in which student demographics were recognised across Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3 countries.

Mobility Targets

The majority of respondents (82%) reported measuring the rate of outgoing mobility at their institution. 70% of respondents had a numerical target for the number of students they send abroad from their institution each year.

When looking across the three groups, respondents from Group 3 reported having a target at the highest rate (81%), compared to 64% for respondents from institutions in Group 1 countries.

Most half of respondents with a target reported having an institutional level target (48%), and a fifth (19%) reported a faculty or school level target.

While the majority of respondents' institutions had set targets for outgoing mobility, most targets (75%) did not include reference to specific student groups. When targets did include reference to specific student group, these targets focused on students from low-income households (12%) or students living with disabilities (9%).

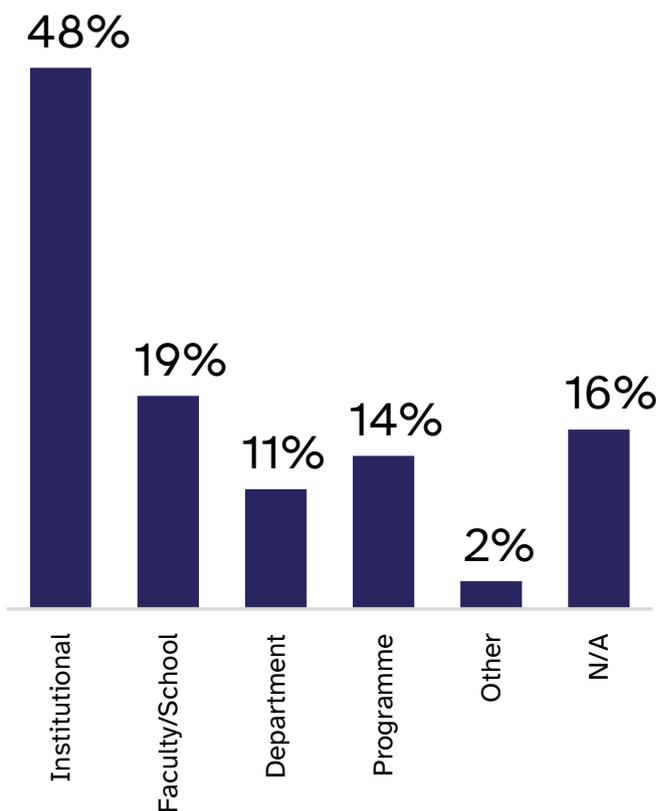


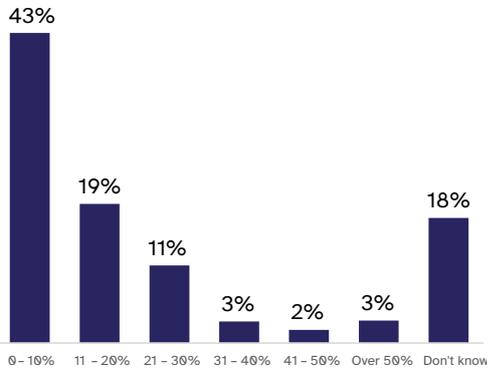
Figure 31: At what level are targets set?

Q. If you do have a target, at what level is this target set? (n = 765)

Student Group	All
Students from low-income households	12%
Students from rural areas	5%
Students from minority ethnic groups or with a migration background	4%
Students from Roma and Traveller communities	<1%
Students who are first in family to go to university, pioneer students	4%
Students living with disabilities	9%
Students who are care providers, students with dependants, including student parents	5%
Students with religious beliefs	1%
LGBT+ students	2%
Mature students, life-long learners	3%
None of the above	75%
Total	765

Q. If you have a target for outgoing mobility participation at your institution, do you have a target for specific student groups?

Withdrawal Rate



For almost half of respondents, less than 10% of students allocated places on mobility programmes withdraw from the process and subsequently do not go abroad. However, 19% of respondents reported a dropout rate of over 20%, or 1 in 5 students.

Figure 32: Drop-out rates of approved students

Q. What percentage of students who are allocated a place on a mobility programme withdraw from the process and subsequently do not go abroad? (n = 765)

Collaboration for Mobility promotion

Half of respondents (51%) reported that Outgoing Mobility Teams work with the institution’s Student Services department to deliver mobility programmes. A third of respondents also reported working with student organisations (36%) and other departments (32%).

Respondents from Group 1 institutions reported collaboration with other teams at a higher rate than the respondents from Group 2 and 3, namely the Disability Team (60.3%) and the Health and Safety Office (49.2%).

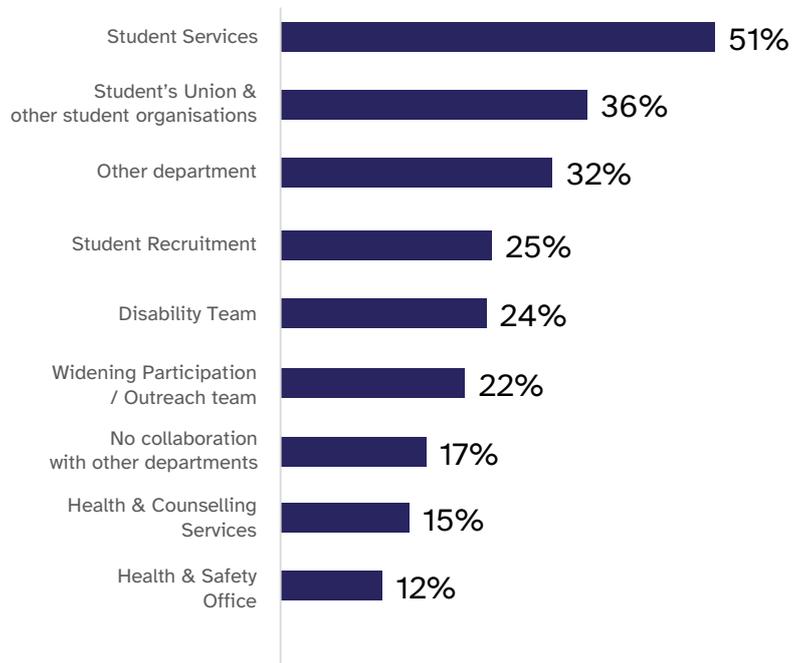


Figure 33: Collaboration with other departments

Q. Does the Outgoing Mobility team collaborate with any other departments when delivering mobility programmes? (n = 765)

Programmes

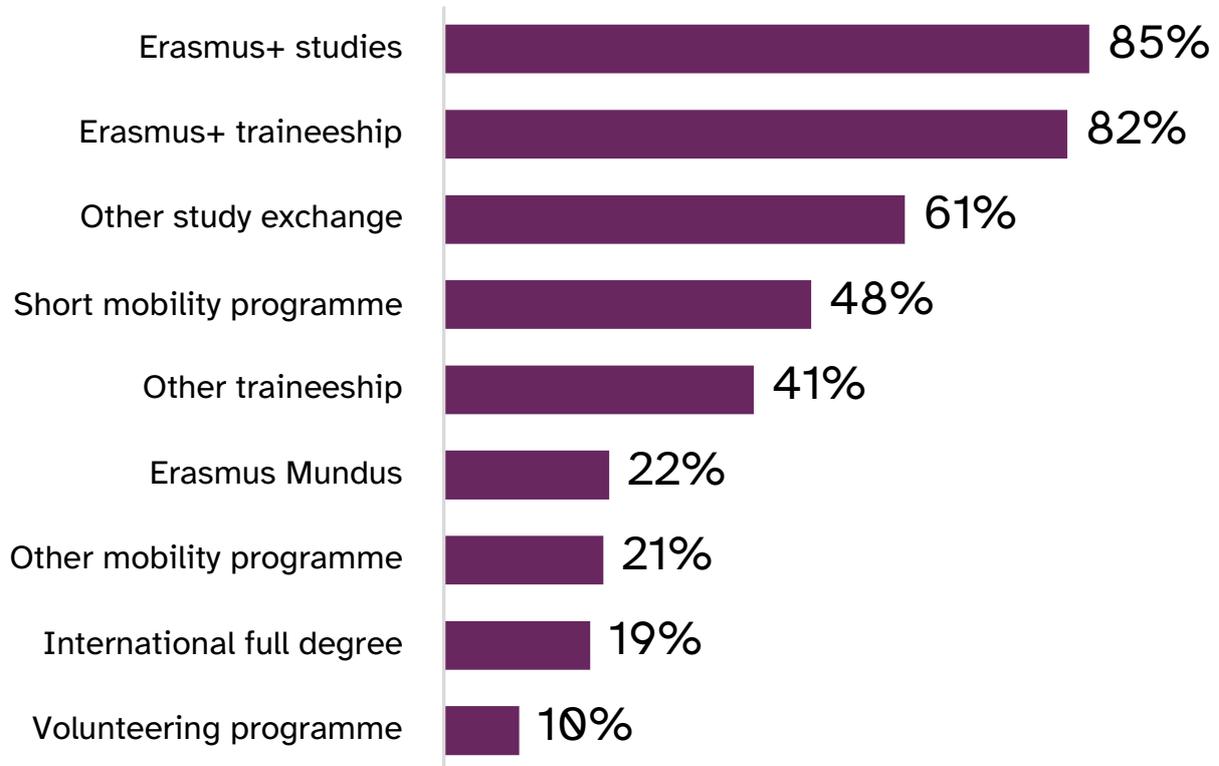


Figure 34: Mobility programmes offered by the university

Q. What type of outgoing mobility programmes do you offer? (n = 765)

Respondents reported offering a wide range of different mobility opportunities and programmes to students, the most popular being Erasmus+ programmes (85%, 82%), other forms of student exchange (61%), and short-term programmes (49%). Group 1 institutions reported delivering short-term mobility programmes (78%) at a higher rate than Group 2 (44%) and Group 3 institutions (42%).

Subject Discipline

Respondents reported that mobility programmes are offered by institutions across a range of academic disciplines. Two thirds of institutions offered mobility to Economic and Business Sciences students (62%), and just over half offered programmes for Engineering (58%), Humanities (55%) and Social Sciences (57%). However, only a third of respondents offered programmes for Medical Sciences students (32.9%).

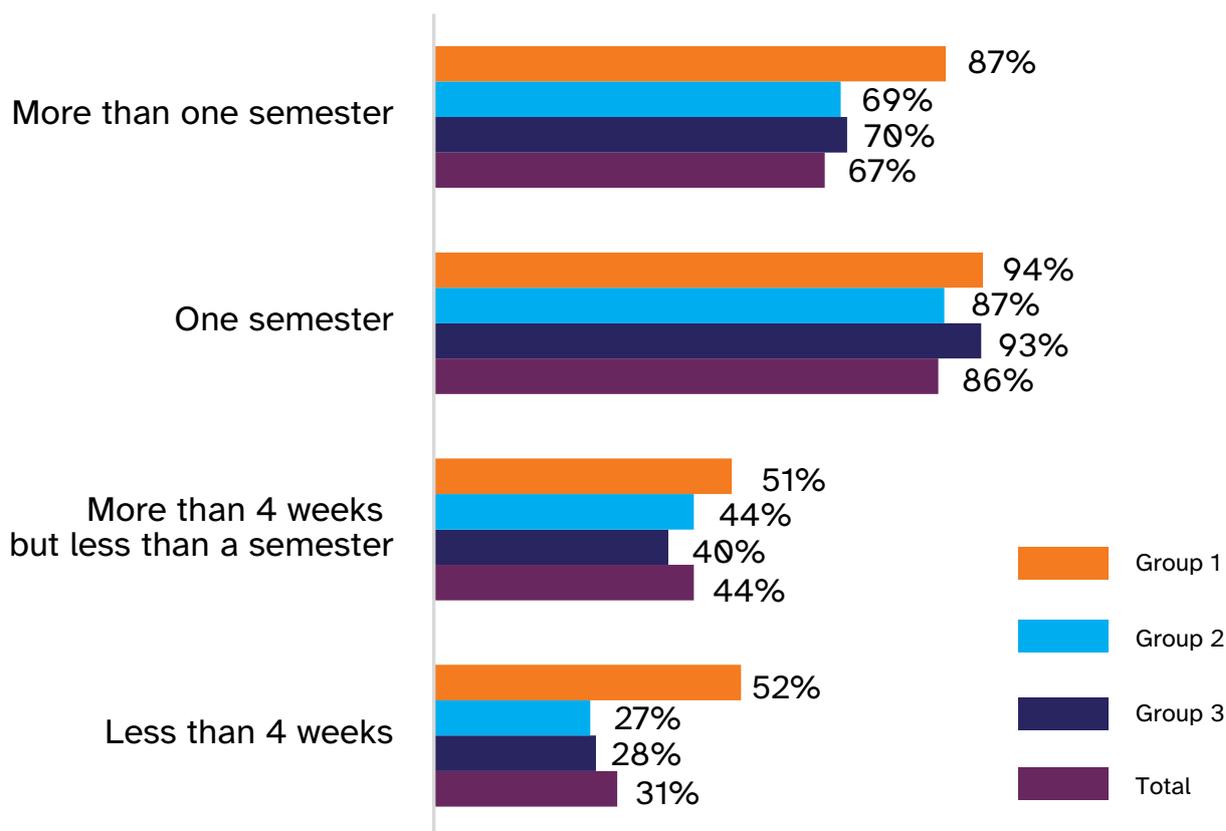


Figure 35: Mobility duration offered by university

Q. What duration of mobility experience do you offer at your institution? (n = 765)

Universities offer a range of mobility durations for students, with everything from short-term (less than four weeks) to a full academic year abroad. The most reported duration was one semester, which 86% of respondents reported delivering. There was a difference in the duration of programmes offered across the different country groups, mainly for the short-term durations of less than four weeks.

Funding for Mobility Programmes

The majority of respondents (91%) use Erasmus+ grant funding to support outgoing mobility programmes at their institutions. Just over half (56%) reported that students' self-fund. Just under half of respondents (43%) reported offering institutional financial support. 38% of respondents reported using partner or other stakeholder grants to fund programmes. A higher percentage of responders from Group 1 (76%) reported that students self-fund their programmes, compared to 46% for Group 3 respondents.

Almost three quarters of respondents (72%) reported not offering institutional funding to

students. 26% of respondents offered targeted funding to students, while 25% offered funding to all students. Group 1 respondents reported providing targeted funding at a higher rate (44%) than Group 2 and Group 3 (24%, 18%).

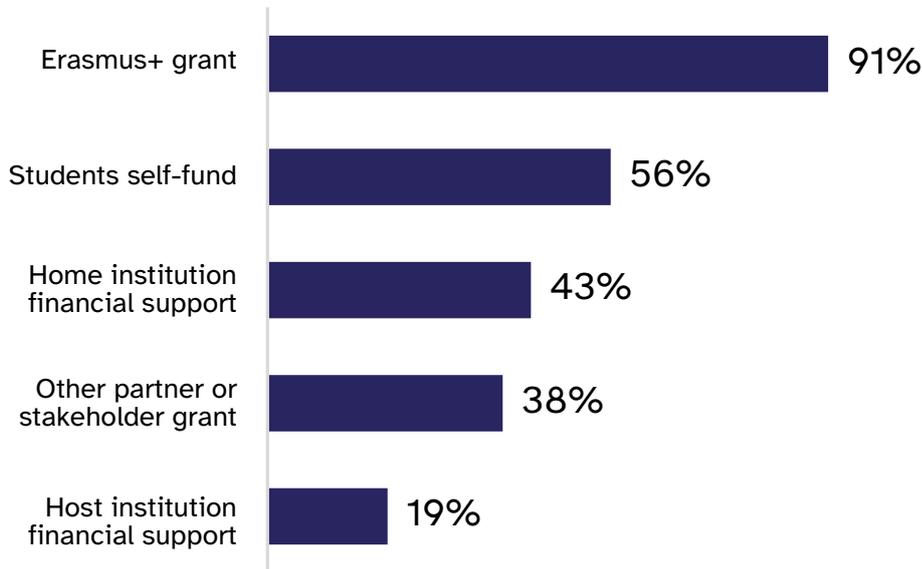


Figure 36: Mobility funding

Q. How are outgoing mobility programmes funded at your institution? (n = 765)

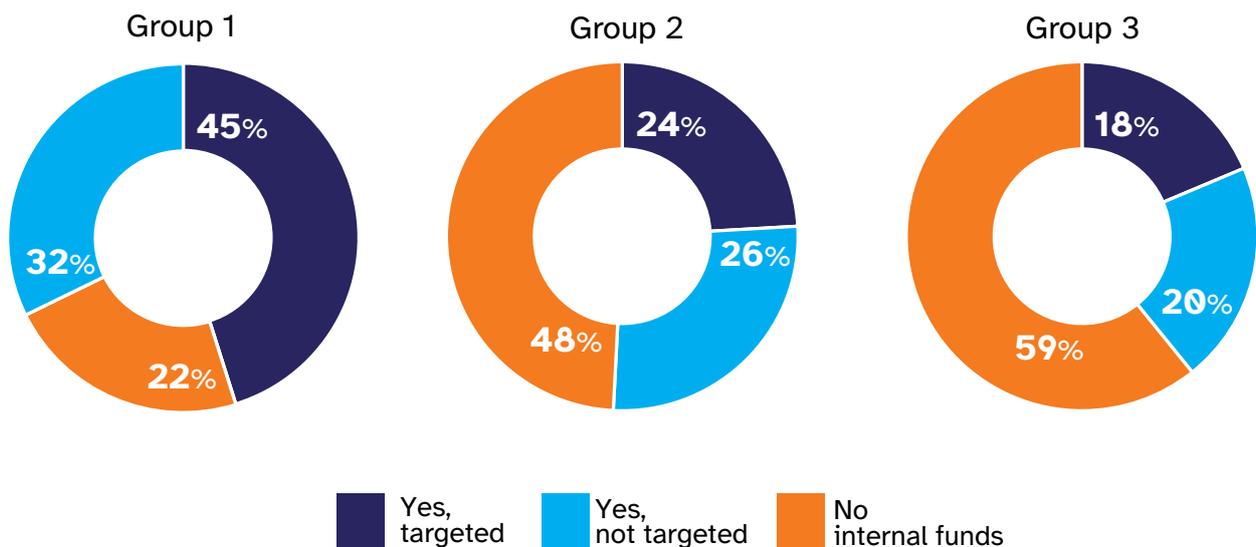


Figure 37: internal funds for students

Q. Are there any internal funds available to students, and if so, are these targeted? (n = 765)

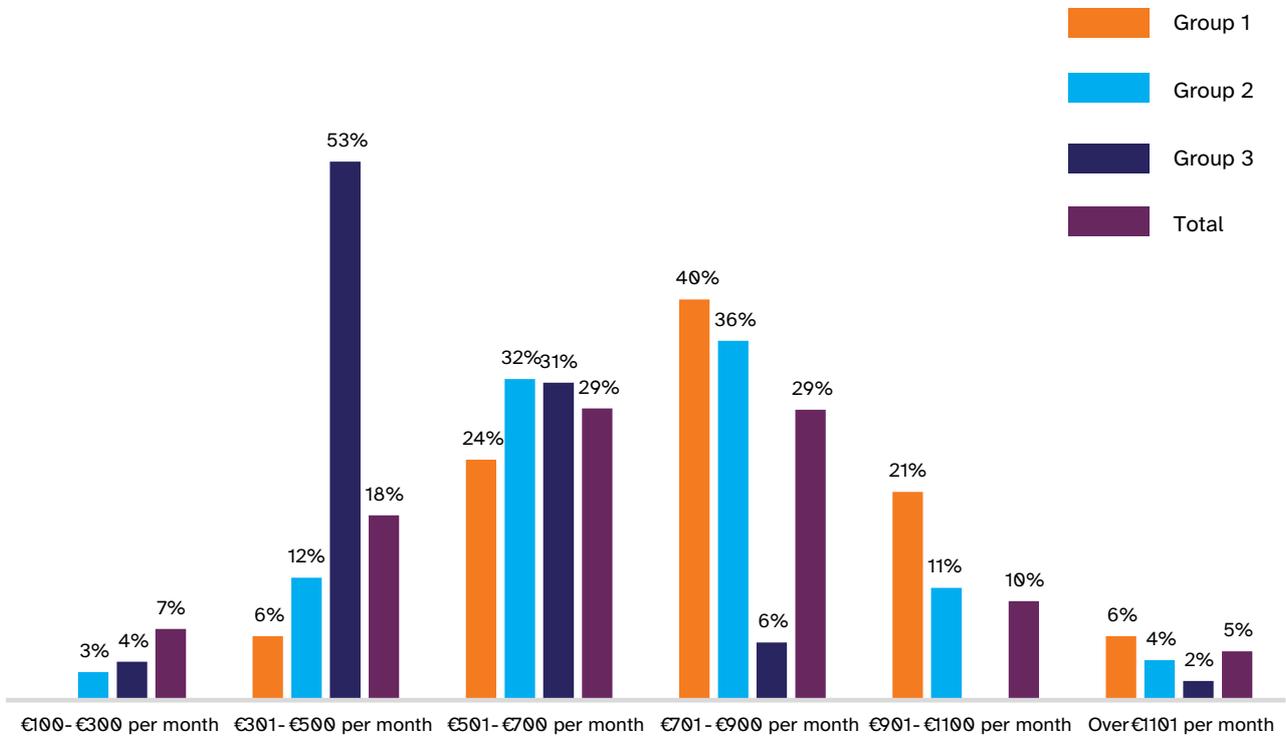
Student Group	All	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Students from low-income households	71%	40%	21%	23%
Students from rural areas	5%	3%	2%	10%
Students from minority ethnic groups or with a migration background	6%	14%	3%	6%
Students from Roma and Traveller communities	2%	10%	1%	3%
Students who are first in family to go to university, pioneer students	4%	19%	1%	1%
Students living with disabilities	12%	16%	10%	18%
Students who are care providers, students with dependants, including student parents	6%	16%	5%	4%
Students with religious beliefs	1%	3%	<1%	1%
LGBT+ students	2%	6%	1%	1%
Mature students, life-long learners	3%	14%	1%	1%
None of the above	53%	41%	55%	62%
Total	765	65	500	105

Q. If you offer targeted funds to students, which groups are these targeted at?

Where targeted funding was available, 25% of respondents reported that funding was reserved for students from low-income households, and 12% reported providing funding for students living with disabilities. When looking across the different nation groupings, 19% of Group 1 countries reported providing funding for first generation students to go abroad. In addition, 14% of respondents from this group reported funding for students from minority ethnic groups or students with a migration background, including students from Roma or Traveller communities (10%). 16% of Group 1 respondents provided grants for students who are care providers, and 14% provided grants for mature students. For Group 3 institutions, 10% of respondents reported providing funding for students from rural areas.

Figure 38: Cost of living per country

Q. What is the average cost of living needed for a student in your area? (n = 765)



Respondents reported a range of different costs of living for their nation. For half of respondents (58%) costs of living was between €501 and €900 per month. When reviewing respondents by nation, we found Group 1 respondents reporting a higher cost of living when compared to Group 2 and 3.

Barriers to Mobility Programmes

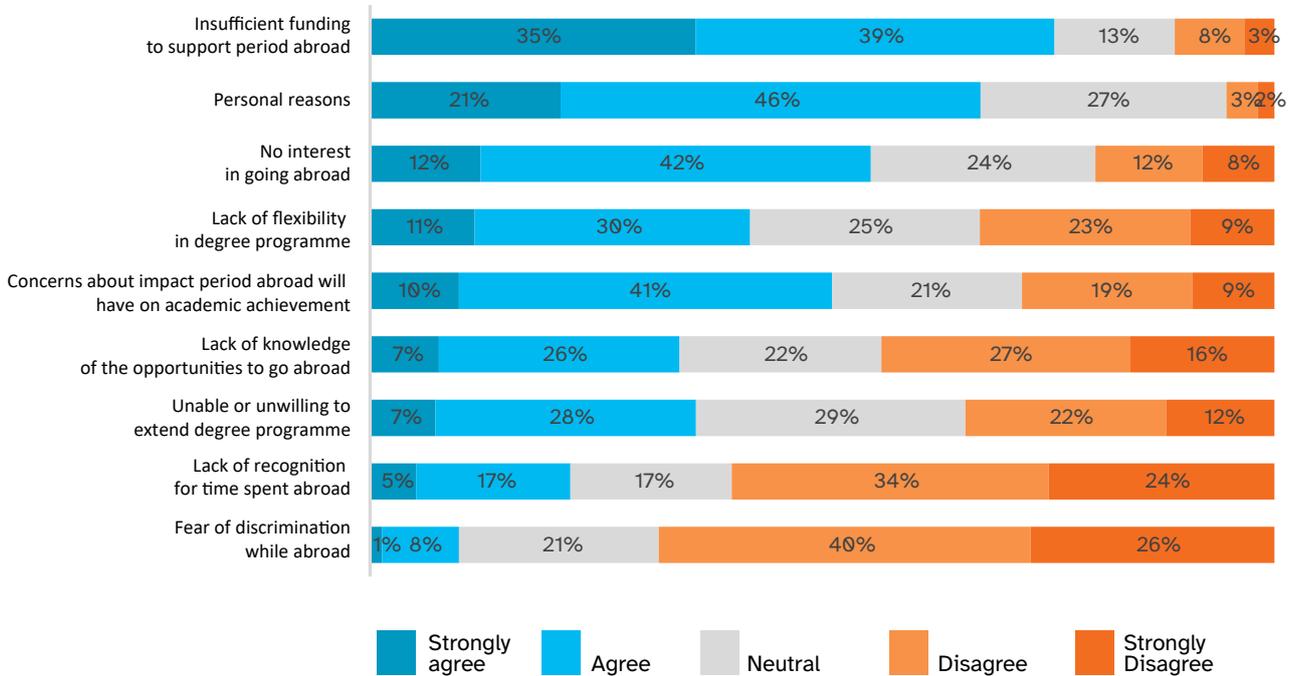


Figure 39: HEI's vision on barriers to mobility for students

Q. In your opinion, what are the main reasons for students not going abroad? (n = 765)

75% of respondents agreed that insufficient funding to support a period abroad was a barrier to students. In two thirds of respondents (67%) felt that students did not go abroad for personal reasons. Just over half of respondents (55%) reported that students have no interest in going abroad. Concerns about the impact that a period abroad might have on academic achievement were also cited.

Group 1 also cited a lack of knowledge of opportunities as a barrier, with 18% strongly agreeing. Group 3 respondents reported students having no interest in going abroad at a higher rate (61%), with a fifth of respondents (21%) strongly agreeing.

For respondents from Group 1 countries, a higher percentage (63%) reported a lack of flexibility in degree programme as a barrier, with 1 in 4 (25%) strongly agreeing. Over half the respondents (57%) from

Student Support

Outgoing Students



Figure 40: Pre-departure support for outgoing students

Q. Do you offer any pre-departure activities at your institution for outgoing mobility students? (n = 765)

Over two-thirds of respondents (71%) reported offering meetings with international officers as part of their pre-departure support package for students. In addition, 63% offered a group information session, and 59% offered a briefing event.

There was some variation across respondents from different country groups: half of respondents (51%) in Group 1 countries offer a social event for students, and a third (31%) of respondents from Group 3 countries support students via an event with a student organisation.

Student Group	Total	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Students from low-income households	23%	14%	18%	33%
Students from rural areas	8%	0%	5%	11%
Students from minority ethnic groups or with a migration background	8%	6%	7%	8%
Students from Roma and Traveller communities	3%	3%	3%	4%
Students who are first in family to go to university, pioneer students	6%	10%	5%	4%
Students living with disabilities	28%	24%	27%	38%
Students who are care providers, students with dependants, including student parents	11%	13%	12%	4%
Students with religious beliefs	3%	3%	2%	5%
LGBT+ students	4%	11%	4%	2%
Mature students, life-long learners	5%	6%	4%	2%
No target audience	59%	68%	61%	51%
Total	765	65	500	105

Q. Do you offer targeted guidance or advice for less advantaged or underrepresented groups?

59% of respondents do not offer targeted advice to less advantaged or underrepresented groups prior to their mobility experience. The student groups who do receive targeted advice are students from low-income households (23%) and students living with disabilities (28%). In addition, around 1 in 10 respondents (11%) offer targeted advice to student carers.

There was some variation across respondents from different country groups, most notably that respondents from Group 3 reported offering targeted advice to students from low-income households and students living with disabilities at a higher rate than Group 1 and 2 respondents.

Response	Total	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Key contact	60%	76%	56%	61%
Check-in sessions	15%	37%	13%	11%
Programme networks	14%	10%	12%	11%
Alumni links	14%	11%	13%	11%
Other mobile student links	14%	19%	13%	12%
Skype meetings	13%	18%	15%	8%
Staff visits	20%	30%	18%	30%
Regular emails	77%	79%	80%	82%
Other activity	14%	14%	13%	16%
Total	765	65	500	105

Q. How does the university support students while they are abroad?

77% of respondents reported sending regular emails to students while they are abroad. In addition, 60% of respondents provide students with a key contact while they are abroad. A fifth (20%) of respondents use staff visits to support students although this rose of almost a third for Group 1 (30%) and Group 3 (30%) respondents. In addition, a third (37%) of Group 1 respondents schedule check-in sessions as part of their ongoing support to mobile students.

For a third of respondents (36%) no other departments are involved in providing support for students while they are abroad. For just over a quarter of institutions (27%) Students Services teams support mobile students while they are abroad, and for 29% of respondents another department supports students. In addition, 44% of Group 1 respondents reported that the Disability Team provides mobile student support and 40% reported that the Health and Counselling Services are available to students while they are abroad.

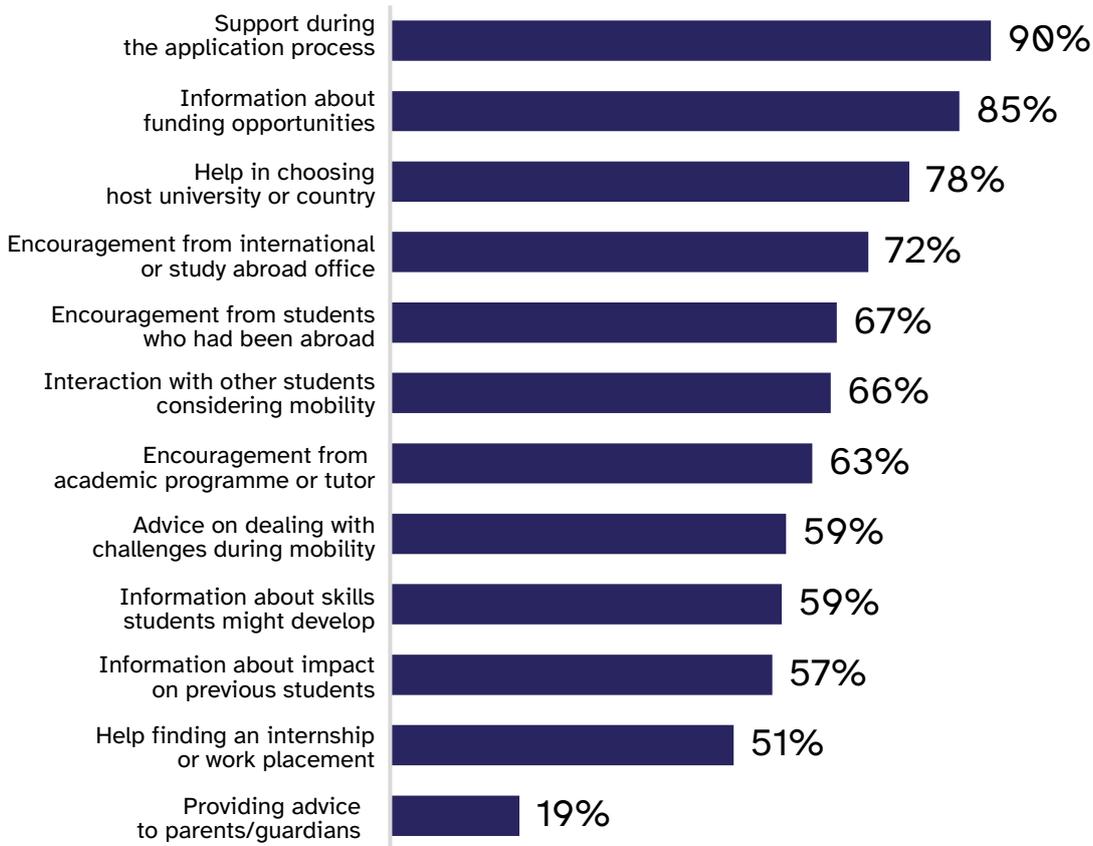


Figure 41: Type of information provided to outgoing students

Q. What support or information do you provide students when preparing for their mobility programme? (n = 765)

Survey respondents reported offering a wide range of support measures for students who are preparing to go abroad. Most respondents (90%) support students during the mobility application process, while 85% provide students with information about funding opportunities available to support their mobility period. Three quarters of respondents (78%) provide help for students finding a host university and provide guidance on host countries. By contrast, 19% of respondents provide information or advice to students’ parents or guardians.

Response	Count
Age	10%
Disability	26%
Gender	14%
Nationality	14%
Race	11%
Religion	12%
Sexual orientation	12%
Social status	12%
No specific support	63%
Total	765

Q. Do you offer any specific support for students who experience any discriminatory behaviours based on any of the following protected characteristics?

Two thirds of respondents (63%) do not offer any specific support for students who experience discriminatory behaviours while they are abroad. However, 26% of respondents offer support to students who experience disability discrimination. On average, 1 in 10 respondents provide specific support to students who encounter discrimination on other grounds including Age, Gender, Nationality, Race, Religion, Sexual Orientation and Social Status.

Incoming Students

The majority (86%) of respondents provide a welcome meeting for incoming students to their institution. In addition, two-thirds (75%) offer a meeting with an international officer at the university. 71% of respondents also provide a student ambassador or buddy scheme to help connect incoming students with local students. Only 4% of respondents did not offer any formal activities for incoming mobility students.

Student Group	Count	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Students from low-income households	13%	2%	11%	12%
Students from rural areas	6%	0%	3%	7%
Students from minority ethnic groups or with a migration background	9%	5%	9%	10%
Students from Roma and Traveller communities	2%	0%	3%	0%
Students who are first in family to go to university, pioneer students	4%	2%	3%	3%
Students living with disabilities	25%	19%	26%	29%
Students who are care providers, students with dependants, including student parents	8%	5%	10%	2%
Students with religious beliefs	5%	6%	4%	5%
LGBT+ students	4%	3%	4%	3%
Mature students, life-long learners	4%	3%	4%	3%
No target audience	64%	76%	65%	60%
Total	765	65	500	105

Q. Do you offer targeted guidance or advice for less advantaged or underrepresented groups?

64% of respondents do not offer targeted advice to incoming students from less advantaged or underrepresented groups. However, a quarter of respondents provide guidance for students living with disabilities (25%). In addition, 13% offer targeted advice to students from low-income households.

There was some variation across respondents from different country groups, most notably that respondents from Group 2 and 3 reported offering targeted advice to students from low-income households and students living with disabilities at a higher rate than Group 1 respondents.

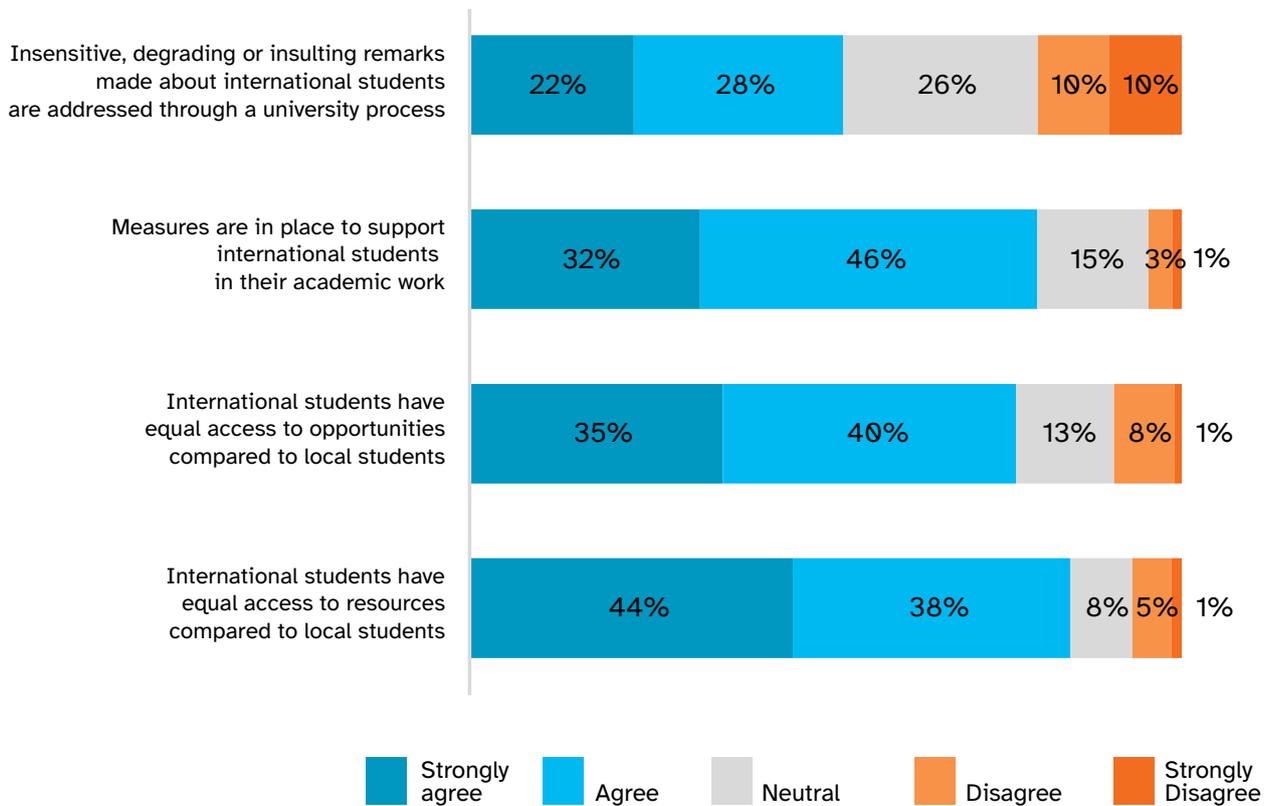


Figure 42: Inclusion & Equality of international students

Q. Please read the following statements and rate how much you agree or disagree that they reflect the experience of being an international student at your university. (n = 765)

The majority of respondents to this survey agreed or strongly agreed that international students had equal access to resources (82%) and opportunities (75%) when compared to local students. 78% of respondents agreed that measures were in place to support international students in their academic work. By contrast, 6% of respondents disagreed

that students had equal access to resources, with almost 1 in 10 (9%) reporting that international students did not have equal access to opportunities compared to local students.

Half of respondents (50%) agreed or strongly agreed that insensitive, degrading or insulting remarks made about international students are addressed through a university process.

By contrast, 20%, or 1 in 5 respondents, disagreed that insensitive, degrading or insulting remarks made about international students were addressed through a university process.

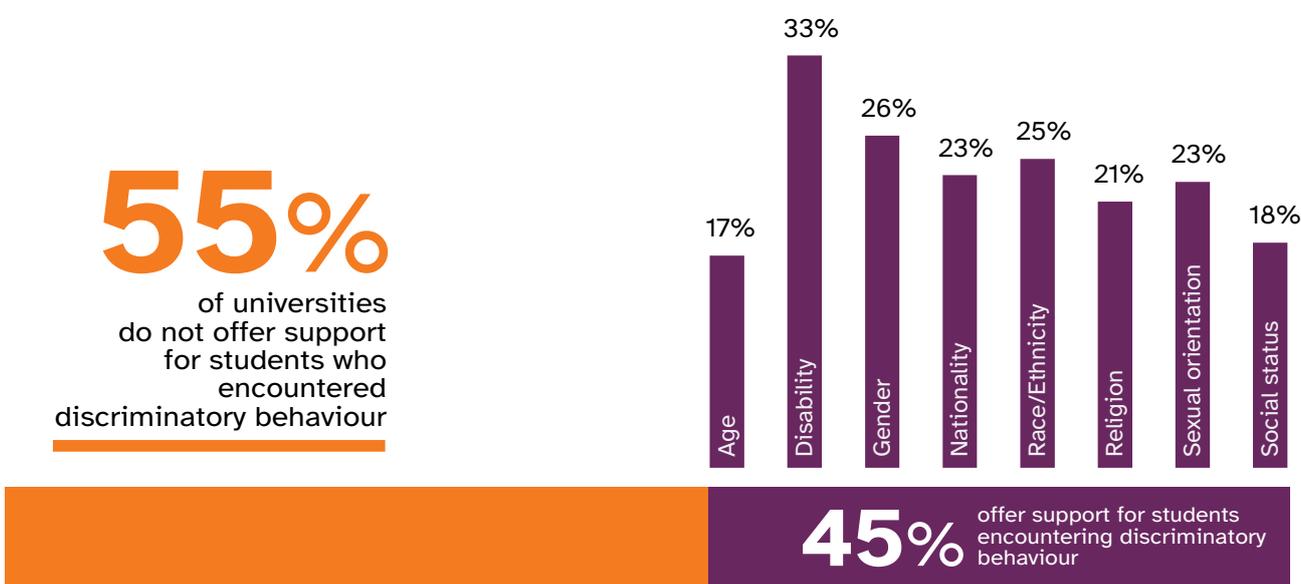


Figure 43: Support for students who encounter discrimination

Q. Do you offer any specific support for students who experience any discriminatory behaviours based on any of the following protected characteristics? (n = 765)

Just over half of respondents (55%) do not offer any specific support for incoming students who experience discriminatory behaviours. However, a third of respondents (33%) offer support to students who experience disability discrimination. On average, one quarter of respondents provide specific support to students who encounter discrimination on the grounds of Gender, Nationality, and Race, and on average one fifth of respondents provide specific support to students who encounter discrimination on the grounds of Religion and Sexual Orientation.



Conclusion

International student mobility is well embedded in the institutional strategies across Europe, with 93% of institutions including outgoing student mobility in the institutional strategic plans, showcasing that student mobility is acknowledged by institutions as a key feature in an overall student experience for students enrolled in HEI's. Two thirds of institutions reportedly have a "Diversity and Inclusion Strategy", with vast differences among nations as in Group 1 countries, ranging from 93% in Group 1 to 39% of institutions in Group 3. However, only 36, 5% reference the desire to widen participation in student mobility by students from less advantaged backgrounds and underrepresented groups in their strategic plans to engage with mobility programmes.

This can partially explain why there is a **lower uptake** of international student mobility in students from less-advantaged groups. The intersection between strategies focusing on Internationalisation and Diversity and Inclusion, is key to ensure targets are set widen participation of underrepresented groups in mobility programmes.

This is further compounded by the fact that not all student groups with fewer opportunities as defined in the Erasmus+ Programme guide are considered less-advantaged at institutional level, ranging from students from low-income households at 71% and students living with a disability at 61%, to 47% of institutions recognising

students from minority ethnic groups or with a migration background as students from a disadvantaged background, pioneer students (27%) students from rural areas (27%).

As this report shows (Page 86-87), intersectionality of characteristics decreases participation, and a lack of certain demographics being addressed in strategic plans, both in "Diversity and Inclusion Strategies" and "Internationalisation Strategies" prevents institutions from strategic reflections on the intersectional effects active in the local environment of the institution.

Mobility Programmes

The Erasmus+ programme remains one of the most popular programmes for student mobility, with a majority (78%) of respondents taking part in mobility opportunities through the Erasmus+ programme. This is significantly more than the EU 27 average recorded in the European Education and Training Monitor 2020 that indicates that approximately 50% of credit mobility across Europe is undertaken through Erasmus+ programmes. This difference can be explained both by the targeting done through the Erasmus Student Network, but also the profile of countries responding, with higher participation to the survey with students coming from countries where the participation rate to the Erasmus+ programme is higher.

The responses received from non-mobile students indicate that the Erasmus+ programme has a high top-of-mind awareness among students, as 63% of respondents indicated an interest to take part in Erasmus+ Higher Education Study Mobility, followed by 53% of respondents showing interest in Erasmus+ Higher Education Traineeship Mobility. The interest of non-mobile students to take part in short-term mobility is high, as 48% of students indicate an interest in this type of mobility programme. Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and students from ethnic minority backgrounds tend to participate more in short term mobility programmes as this makes participation more accessible.

With 49% of university staff members indicating they offer short-term mobility programmes, we see that participation of short-term mobility programmes is low; only 3% of students take part in this mobility type. This might indicate that while on offer, the number of available spots and the awareness on this type of mobility opportunities among students is low. With 23% of non-mobile respondents interested in short-term mobilities, we can see that there is interest in short term mobility types, however, the most preferred duration is still one semester (43%) or more than one semester (33%) together with only 2% of non-mobile students indicating they are not interested in studying abroad during their degree, this might indicate that their

desire to participate is not necessarily the biggest barrier to participation.

Barriers to mobility

Students experience three types of barriers to participation in mobility experiences: Institutional, Environmental and Attitudinal. Given that the both the student and staff survey were opinion surveys, the answers tackle the perceptions around such barriers.

Institutional barriers are barriers that reflect the programmes that are being offered and the regulations that coincide with these programmes that may impact the access of specific student groups to mobility opportunities. The biggest institutional barriers are related to funding; 82% of mobile students and 81% of non-mobile students express that the need to advance initial costs for their mobility related to travel, accommodation (rent and deposits) and insurance, is a barrier to participation, as they would need to be able to access **sufficient cash flow** to cover these initial costs. This indicates that students fear that the mobility funding will not be received on time to cover these costs in time. 45% of mobile students agree that insufficient funding is available, while 57% of non-mobile students indicate that this is a barrier for them. When it comes to other institutional barriers, we see that only 17% of mobile students consider the lack of credit recognition of their mobility a problem for their exchange, which is echoed by 18% of their non-

mobile students, while 67% of students disagree that this is a barrier. This is an indication that the past work on automatic recognition for credit has had an impact on the student's perception. A majority of both mobile students (53%) and non-mobile students (45%) consider that their degree allows for participation in mobility, whereas 25% of mobile students and 28% of non-mobile students indicate that their degree structure does not allow for participation in mobility. This might be highly dependent on the type of discipline that students follow, as the answers from our staff survey indicate that students with state-regulated degrees such as medicine or pharmacy experience this more as a barrier, given that participation rates in these sectors are lower.

Environmental barriers reflect on environmental and societal factors that influence the person's decisions to take part in a mobility. Environmental barriers also reflect on the financial impact of mobility on the overall living conditions of the student, indicating the impact a mobility participation has on their personal situations.

While both mobile (56%) and non-mobile students (71%) indicated that the total cost of mobility is a barrier to participation, there is a clear indicator that this barrier is more persistent for non-mobile students. The loss of income through student jobs while abroad is also indicated as a major barriers by both mobile (41%)

and non-mobile (48%), However next to financial considerations, there are also other considerations that are experienced as barriers, such as the worry to find accommodation while abroad (49% for both mobile and non-mobile students) or visa application processes for mobilities not taking place within the EU. A majority of students do not report concerns about personal safety abroad, however with 72% of mobile respondents indicating no concerns for personal safety, the reality is higher than the expected fear, as 51% of non-mobile students reportedly had no concerns for personal safety.

An important note to make is that this questionnaire started before the COVID-19 crisis, which might impact perception on personal safety, as health concerns were addressed more explicitly during the focus groups that took place afterwards.

Attitudinal barriers tackle the belief system and emotions around the topic of mobility opportunities, to see how they influence their participation rates. In the case of student mobility we wanted to know if students have concerns or personal opinions that might impact their mobility participation. 85% of non-mobile participants indicated to be interested in participating in student mobility abroad, which is in stark contrast with the fact that 55% of institutions say students do not participate because of a lack of interest. Overall both mobile and non-

mobile students respondents' perceptions or relatively positive on elements related to attitudinal barriers. The biggest barrier addressed by students is that 34% of mobile students were worried about feeling lonely or isolated while abroad, while this is the case for 29% of non-mobile students. Only 10% of mobile students experienced a fear to leave family and friends behind, while 17% of non-mobile students expressed this fear. Overall non-mobile respondents seem to be convinced of the benefits of mobility on personal development (96%), employment prospects (88%) and academic achievement (80%) which is another indicator that they perceive mobility as a positive experience, and that these are not the barriers that prevent them from participating.

In certain cases a discrepancy between the perceptions of students and staff can be noticed. As the perceived barriers are based on the personal perceptions both groups have on the matter, whereas institutions might believe sufficient support is offered for the diverse groups, lack of access to information as well as self-imposed barriers might impact the participation rates of students of underrepresented groups. When looking at the overall personal perceptions of students on barriers to participation in mobility, it is clear that students have an overall positive attitude towards the impact of a study abroad experience. The majority of concerns raised by students

are connected to their social context and living environment, as well as the access to mobility opportunities and the funding available at institutional level.

Financial barriers and support

The cost of a mobility period and the available funding connected to this remains one of the main barriers addressed by students. 60% of mobile respondents indicated that they had less than 50% of the total cost covered by a scholarship or grant funding. Students from lower income households tend to have a lower living cost on exchange, as 68% of them indicate to spend up to 700 EUR while on exchange, while this is the case for 56% of students of higher income households.

Our results also show that students from lower economic backgrounds as well as minority ethnicities tend to lean more on available grant structures in order to cover a larger portion of their expenses, as they indicate that a larger portion of their expenses are covered by the grant, ensuring that they can cover more of their costs with the external funding awarded to them. With 67% of respondents indicating that their overall living cost abroad was above 501 EUR, it showcases that the current grant levels offered in Erasmus+ are insufficient to cover more than half of their expenses, while 53% of non-mobile students indicated they would need scholarship or grant funding to cover the majority (75%-100%) to be covered, this

increases to 70% for students from low-income backgrounds and 69% of students from minority ethnic groups.

According to the Erasmus+ Annual report 2017⁵³, only 7% of students from disadvantaged backgrounds received an additional top-up, while according to the answers from the staff survey, we see that 25% of universities offer targeted support for students from low-income households. Funding is also one of the issues touched upon in the reflections of the students on information provision; 94% of students indicated that they find information on available funding useful when preparing for a mobility programme.

Student Guidance

With 88% of students indicating they would find support for the application process useful, students indicated that the most useful form of support accessed before departure was direct meetings with the International relations officer, followed by group information sessions. While almost all institutions indicated that they offered information on the funding opportunities (85%) and support with the application process (90), a significant part of the student respondents indicated a lack of access to information on mobility opportunities (31%) and practical (34%) or academic (33%) support. It is important

to note that over half of respondents did not access social events on the topic of international student mobility, or student organised mobility events to interact with mobility alumni, something that was highlighted by non-mobile students that they would like to participate in this type of events. Students experience learning in different ways and are convinced by a diverse range of motivating factors and stakeholders that can offer encouragement and inspiration, from university staff to fellow students or future employers. It is therefore important that institutions consider diversifying their methods to reach out to their student population.

The majority of mobile respondents had positive experiences while abroad,

as only 10% of respondents felt that they were treated differently or unfairly at their host university and 15% felt that they did not have equal access to resources and opportunities compared to home students or that they could not address academic issues with their professors.

Although the majority of students did not feel treated unfairly or negatively by students from the host institutions (62%), professors (67%) or staff from the host university (71), it is important to note that there is a group of students that had negative experiences abroad, with a quarter of respondents reported experience some form of discrimination while abroad on a mobility programme. Different forms of discrimination were experienced more

commonly by respondents from some of the target groups; as almost a third of respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds or students from low income background reported experiencing discrimination based on their background.

More striking is that when seeking support, the majority of students reach out to their personal support systems, where a smaller group accesses support through host or home university. Although the majority of institutions indicate that measures are in place to ensure equal access to resources or academic support, only half of the institutions indicate that a university process is in place to address discrimination, whereas the majority of university staff do not offer targeted guidance or advice for students of underrepresented groups, combined with the majority of institutions not offering any specific support for incoming students experiencing discriminatory behaviour, the lack of offer and signposting might indicate why students rarely access support.

Mobility impact

The positive experience during exchange is replicated after the exchange as well; the majority of students report no negative impact on their academic performance. Mobile students report a faster attainment of employment after graduation, which is

in line with the Erasmus Impact Study⁵⁴ findings that students find a job quicker after graduation.

Overall students report an increased interest in international affairs and further study or work abroad and a boost in confidence in their foreign language proficiency and their ability to work in international teams, a pattern that holds across demographics, with a more pronounced impact reported by students from ethnic minorities and first-generation students. This indicates that first-generation students and students from an ethnic minority group report higher levels of perceived impact of mobility participation. In general this can indicate that students that have participated in a mobility opportunity experience a boost of self-confidence and a new perspective on their future personal and career development that might help them overcome some of the barriers, sometimes self-imposed they experience in life.

54 Erasmus+ Higher Education Impact study, 2019, European Commission

