



Research Report

ESNsurvey 2018

**MAPPING THE CHALLENGES AND ENABLERS OF INTERNATIONAL
MOBILITY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

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ESNsurvey 2018: Mapping the challenges and enablers of mobility for students with disabilities
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PREFACE

The number of Erasmus+ participants has not stopped increasing since the beginning of the Programme, contributing to making it one of the flagship initiatives of the European Union. Alumni of the Programme tend to be more pro-European, get employed faster, and essentially embody the European dimension of citizenship. This success is also benefiting students from all around the world as the Programme increases its opportunities outside of the Union. Overall, Erasmus+ is contributing to bringing people together to learn from each other and enjoy unity in diversity.

For all students, the full experience of studying abroad is not only about the teaching and learning environment, it is a combination of surrounding measures which should be taken into account: accommodation, support services, information provision, career advice, a buddy and peer-to-peer support system, campus area and integration in the local city, among others. Through the results of the ESNsurvey, our research programme, we continue to innovate with regards to how we approach our students and how we advocate to make the Erasmus+ Programme more accessible to all. The choice to explore the topic “Mapping the challenges and enablers of mobility for students with disabilities” comes as a great occasion to evaluate the expanding concept of student services. We hope that the results of this study, which complement the recommendations of the Inclusive Mobility Alliance, contribute to the reflection on how we and other stakeholders of the Programme can improve to make it more accessible.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Erasmus Student Network, an organisation that for a decade has worked to increase inclusion for students with disabilities not only within the Erasmus+ Programme and international student mobility, but also within its own structures and events. We do this in a context influenced by the 20th anniversary of the Bologna Process and marked by the efforts to transition Erasmus+ into a new phase. This changing environment offers the opportunity for the introduction of innovative solutions based on research and direct testimonies from the students. For ESN, the conclusions and solutions presented in this study ultimately aim at supporting all citizens in their enjoyment of the benefits of the European project, effectively building a Union for each one of us, regardless of citizenship or disability.

João Pinto

President of the Erasmus Student Network 2017-2019

INTRODUCTION

The ESNsurvey is one of the main research programmes of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN). This initiative is a Europe-wide research project covering different topics concerning mobility and education and is the largest project of its kind, carried out solely by volunteers.

The ESNsurvey Research Team, a selected group of individuals from the members of ESN, develops an online questionnaire and disseminates it among students at European Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to collect information about students' experiences from their exchange period abroad. Throughout the entire implementation of the project, various organisations, students, teachers, academics and European institutions collaborate with ESN to increase its scope, visibility, reach and representation. Since the establishment of the project in 2005, over 150,000 responses have been collected across its [eleven editions](#). The results are collected in the ESNsurvey Report, which is then shared with the main stakeholders in higher education and mobility programmes: the European Commission (EC),

National Agencies of the Erasmus+ Programme, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and many other relevant organisations working in the field.

Participating in a study abroad programme offers young people opportunities for self-development and enhances their future employability. It is a life-changing experience and it has played an important role in the lives of millions of young Europeans over the last 30 years. This experience becomes even more important when we consider groups at risk of social exclusion, such as people with disabilities. Studying abroad is, in fact, challenging for young people with disabilities as they may face inaccessible environments, lack of support services or disability-related stereotypes.

According to the official reports of the EC, around 0.15% of all Erasmus+ beneficiaries received an Erasmus+ supplementary grant to cover access needs regarding a disability they have chosen to disclose. Important to note is that there is a possibility that there are more people with disabilities that partake in Erasmus+ but who choose not to disclose their disability and/or request for such a

supplementary grant (European Commission, 2015).

Therefore, the topic of the ESNsurvey 2018 is “Mapping the challenges and enablers of mobility for students with disabilities”, aimed at analysing the experience of students with disabilities, both with and without mobility experience. The ESNsurvey 2018 also explores the different conditions and interventions each HEI could set to create a more accessible and inclusive environment on campuses around Europe. This project will, furthermore, explore how HEIs can act to improve their accessibility, both for their domestic and mobility students with disabilities. Both mobile and non-mobile students with disabilities take part in the process of internationalisation of higher education and it is in ESN’s interest to understand the challenges and enablers of mobility programmes and support Higher Education Institutions to improve the access and inclusion of both local and international students with disabilities.

The present report is based on the answers obtained from an online questionnaire in 2017. The questionnaire was divided into nine parts, starting with gathering information about demographics and the study abroad context such as nationality, country of study abroad, the length of study abroad, finances and accommodation. This was followed by points of interest including support services and information provision of HEIs, participation, barriers and opportunities, grants and satisfaction with the experience. Virtually the entire student population in higher education across Europe, including students with disabilities, was approached by ESN and its partners with a link to the questionnaire.

This ESNsurvey fills a research gap in the field of access and inclusion of persons with disabilities in international education. The outcomes of the survey aim at supporting stakeholders, policy makers and practitioners to improve and advocate for the better accessibility and inclusivity of higher education and the structures of exchange programmes towards students with disabilities.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In January 2019, the Inclusive Mobility Alliance released a comprehensive set of recommendations to improve the Erasmus+ programme in the youth and higher education fields (Inclusive Mobility Alliance, 2019). The following recommendations and conclusions are based on the results of the survey presented in this report and aim at supporting the broader recommendations of the Inclusive Mobility Alliance.

SUPPORT PROVISION AT THE HOME HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Support provision of home Higher Education Institution: The most common support service students with disabilities indicated at their home Higher Education Institution is an assigned person or office designated to supporting students with disabilities: 80.7% of students with disabilities (n=259) indicated the availability of such services at home Higher Education Institutions. Besides this service, 46.3% of students with disabilities identified their family members as their support network when it comes to their access and inclusion at their home Higher Education Institution.

Satisfaction with services for students with disabilities at home Higher Education Institutions: Overall, 15.8% of students with disabilities (n=259) were very satisfied, 28.2% were satisfied with support provision at their home Higher Education Institution, and only 10% were very dissatisfied with the services.

Recommendation: better support services for people with disabilities at Higher Education Institutions.

In order to improve their services, HEIs should conduct an extensive consultation with a group of students with disabilities enrolled at their institution and map the elements this group finds relevant for successful mobility and better inclusion in the local community.

Recommendation: mental health support at the home and host Higher Education Institution.

Many students face difficult and emotionally challenging situations that can affect their mental health before, during, and after their exchange. Because it is very important they are offered help to overcome their challenges, professional support such as counsellors and psychologists should be put at their disposal both at their home and host HEI.

Recommendation: better communication of the free movement aspects for European Union citizens

There should be better information provision on access to healthcare in different EU countries and the information on using the European Health Insurance Card.

INFORMATION PROVISION ABOUT INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES

The vast majority (80.3%) of respondents with disabilities (n=259) expressed that their home Higher Education Institution provides information about international exchange programme opportunities. The majority of students with disabilities (56.4%) highlighted the internet as the number one source of information and 48.6% of respondents rated International Relations Offices (IRO) as the second most important source of information.

More than one-third of students with disabilities explained that they received information about finances, budget and preparatory meetings. These findings reflect the information provided for all students. It should be mentioned that only 21.6% of them highlighted that home Higher Education Institutions do not provide accessibility information of the host Higher Education Institution.

As financial resources are crucial for all students - and especially for students with disabilities to cover their access needs to take part in any international mobility - only 15.1% of them mentioned that their home Higher Education Institution provides information on the Erasmus+ special needs grant for physical, mental or health-related conditions.

Recommendation: students with disabilities must have access to more accurate information on the levels of accessibility of Higher Education Institutions across Europe.

Support services for students with disabilities should tailor their

information provision based on the needs of those students. Moreover, there should be better information provision regarding the level of accessibility of HEI buildings and facilities.

GRANTS

Amount of expenses covered by the Erasmus+ Special Needs Supplementary Grant for students and staff with physical, mental or health-related conditions

Among the students with disabilities who successfully received this grant, 31.3% mentioned that all of their access needs (support costs) were covered and 28.1% had most of their access needs (between 60%-80%) covered.

Recommendation: information about grants must be made accessible and easier.

Although the overall satisfaction is quite high, mobile students with disabilities indicated challenges related to the difficult eligibility criteria and inaccessible application process. Each student with disabilities should be informed by their home HEI about the possibility to apply for supplementary grants as soon as they show interest in going abroad. Access to these grants should be made easier.

NON-MOBILE PARTICIPANTS

A vast majority - 68.7 % of students with disabilities (n=259) - did not participate in international exchange programmes. The most reported factors for not engaging in an international mobility programme are: lack of (accessible) information about International Exchange Programmes (42.2%), lack of support provisions from Home Higher Education Institutions (38.8%) and financial constraints (35.9%).

Recommendation: inclusion of students with disabilities who participated in Erasmus+ in the promotion of the Programme towards other students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities who participated in Erasmus+ can be good ambassadors of the programme and encourage other students to participate. They could also serve as informal networks of support and provide advice for students with disabilities that are about to undergo their mobility or that are currently on Erasmus.

They should also be encouraged to share the struggles and opportunities they encountered **with their HEI, National Agencies and European institutions, and give recommendations to all of them on how to improve the programme.**

MOBILE PARTICIPANTS

It can be summarised that planning and preparation for an international exchange programme takes more time for students with disabilities when compared to other students, as many factors should be considered because of the lack of information provision, inaccessibility and unknown host environment. Additionally, challenges of availability of assistance, such as support persons or medical assistance were among the highlighted elements.

EVALUATION

Satisfaction with studies abroad

The findings of the ESNsurvey 2018 highlight the importance of an inclusive, accessible and international-friendly environment which is non-discriminatory and culturally-diverse. It is relevant to highlight that 83.8% of the sample of students with disabilities (n=80) were either satisfied or very satisfied with their mobility experience.

Recommendation: Better overall accessibility measurements of Erasmus+ and other EU fundings.

Even though the satisfaction with the abroad experience is high, as gradually more persons with disabilities attend HEI, there is an increasing demand to put inclusion elements high on the agenda of the internationalisation of higher education as well. A strict requirement on the accessibility of the Erasmus+ programme and EU funded projects in general should be imposed. This requirement should be a condition for the approval of the funds for the implementation of the project.

CHAPTER 1: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

THE ESNsurvey 2018 PROJECT

There are several international definitions of disability and persons with disabilities but unfortunately there is no single, global or European definition available. The Preamble of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) states that *“disability is an evolving concept and (...) results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”*. *“Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”* (UNCRPD, 2006).

It is important to say that an individual can be considered a person with disabilities in one society or setting, but not in another, depending on the role that the person is assumed to take in their community. The perception and reality of disability also depends on technology, assistance and services available, as well as on cultural considerations. In most parts of the world, there are deep and persistent negative stereotypes and prejudices against persons with certain conditions and differences. These attitudes also shape who is considered to be a person with disabilities in each society as well as contributing to a negative image of persons with disabilities in general.

The social model of disability makes a clear distinction between impairment (condition, illness or loss/lack of function) and disability (barriers and discrimination) (Paley, 2002). Disability should be seen as the result of the interaction between a person and the person's environment. Thus, a disability is not something that resides in the individual as a result of an impairment. This survey is in line with the social model of disability and therefore provides space for self-determination in terms of disability.

This questionnaire was the first accessible edition of the ESNsurvey, as ESN wanted to ensure that it was accessible to

all. All students, both mobile and non-mobile students with and without disabilities take part in the process of internationalisation of higher education. ESN is interested in understanding the challenges and enablers of mobility programmes and support HEIs in improving the access and inclusion of both local and international students with disabilities.

STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED

The Erasmus Student Network is thankful for the support received from various stakeholders from the field of Higher Education and Disability. The following organisations/stakeholders provided their expertise to make the format and content of the survey accessible.

[AHEAD Ireland – Association for Higher Education Access and Disability](#)

[EDF – European Disability Forum](#)

[ENIL – European Network on Independent Living Education Working group of ENIL Youth Network](#)

[EDSU – European Deaf Student Union](#)

[EAIE Access and Diversity Expert Community](#)

[UNICA – Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe Erasmus+ Higher Education Working Group on mobility for students with disabilities/special needs](#)

[Euro Youth Mental Health](#)

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES

Definitions around **students with disabilities** are also various across Europe. Countries use different methods to identify underrepresented groups in Higher Education. In some countries, chronic illnesses such as diabetes are included in the definition, such as in Germany (Studenten mit Behinderung und Kronische Krankheiten (Deutsches Studentenwerk, IBS, 2017)). In other countries, such as in Ireland or the United Kingdom, students with disabilities and students with mental health conditions are included and under protection against discrimination (HEFCE, 2017). To respect the linguistic variety across Europe, terms such as medical condition, disability or impairment were all listed to support the understanding of the respondents in this survey, as they might refer to disability or impairment in various ways.

The mainstream promotion of the survey lead to both respondents with and without disabilities to participate in the survey. During the data analysis, the population was divided into sub-populations: those who have self-identified themselves as individuals with disabilities, those who have self-identified them as individuals without disabilities, and those who provided an indecisive answer. In the flow of the data analysis, the major focus is on the experiences of those who have self-identified as individuals with disabilities. It is precisely indicated where relevant or interesting comparisons are made between the two subpopulations, those who have self-identified as individuals with and without disabilities.

DATA COLLECTION

PROMOTION OF THE ESNsurvey 2018

A variety of channels were used for the promotion of the ESNsurvey 2018 questionnaire. The ESN network, with its more than 500 local associations in 40 European countries, was on the frontline of dissemination. Most of it happened with the support of disability offices of Higher Education Institutions which have direct contact with students with disabilities and can encourage them to take part in the survey. Additionally, Erasmus+ National Agencies, together with national and European organisations from the field of mobility, disability and higher education (e.g. AHEAD Ireland, ENIL and SIHO in Belgium), were involved in the promotion of the survey by actively sharing it via various communication

channels, such as websites, newsletters, social media and articles¹. Since the data collection period lasted for two and a half months, from 2nd of February to 26th of April 2017, most communication referred to that year. Hence, the ESNsurvey 2018 took advantage of the power of social media and used permanent hashtags #ESNsurvey2017, #disability, #inclusion, and #Mobility4All in order to support the promotion towards the target audience. The data used in this report were collected through an online questionnaire entitled “ESNsurvey 2017 Questionnaire”, made available on esn.org/esnsurvey2017.

ACCESSIBILITY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Accessibility and universal design aspects were taken into account and implemented in the survey in order to accommodate the access needs of all the individuals willing to take part in it.

The online platform of the survey was accessible for screen-reader software users and the accessibility level of the platform was checked with the European Internet Inclusion Initiative². The questionnaire was also available in plain text format file upon request. The opportunity to upload international sign language videos was provided for hard of hearing and deaf participants for the open questions.

DATA ANALYSIS

A challenge that had been foreseen was that not only students with disabilities would answer the survey. Therefore, respondents were filtered by asking: “Do you experience barriers because of a medical condition, disability or impairment?”. This query was run prior to any analysis in order to consider only the answers related to students with disabilities.

Descriptive statistical analysis was used as the main method to compare the experiences of mobile and non-mobile students with disabilities. This included an analysis of the level of satisfaction regarding their exchange period (for mobile students), as well as the reasons for non-mobile students not to go abroad. The results were interpreted in the context of access and inclusion to mobility in Europe for students with disabilities. The research questions were developed in order to pinpoint which were the enablers and challenges of mobility programmes, including support services available at HEIs, grants, and how their (in)existence/promotion

1 For example, enil.eu/news/survey-on-accessibility-by-erasmus-student-network.

2 For more information visit cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/111010/factsheet/en.

affected the overall satisfaction of the mobility experience. Additionally, information was gathered about the demographics of the sample, such as gender, nationality, economic status and other higher education context variables.

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

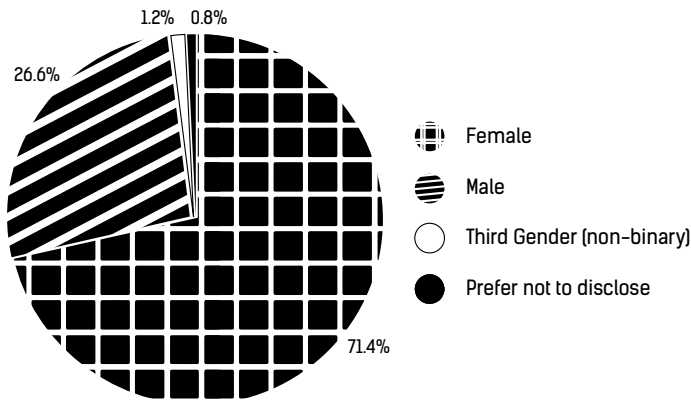
Out of the 948 answers, only 259 (27.3%) individuals stated that they experienced some barriers because of a medical condition, disability or impairment. Overall, 67.3% of people expressed that they did not experience barriers because of a medical condition, disability or impairment and 5.4% of them were indecisive about their experiences. As the main focus of this survey is to map the challenges and enablers of mobility programmes for students with disabilities, most results in the following chapters are based on these answers.

AGE RANGE

No specific age range was set for individuals in the survey.. The average age of the sample composed of 259 students with disabilities was 26.1 years, with the youngest respondent being 18, while the oldest was 53 years old.

GENDER DISTRIBUTION

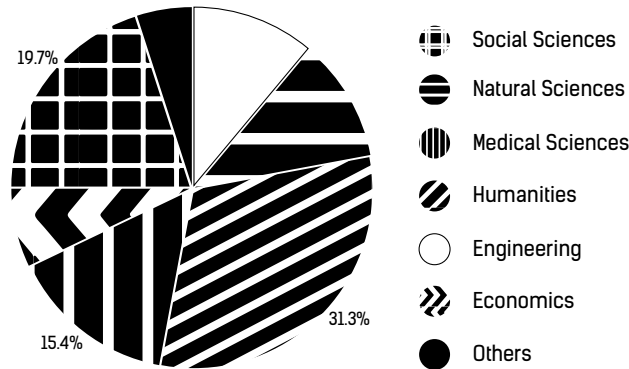
Looking at the gender distribution, out of the total number of students with disabilities who fully answered the questionnaire (n=259), 71.4 % are female respondents, 26.6% are male, 1.2% identified themselves as a third gender (non-binary) and 0,8% preferred to not disclose their gender.



Graph 1 - Gender Distribution

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

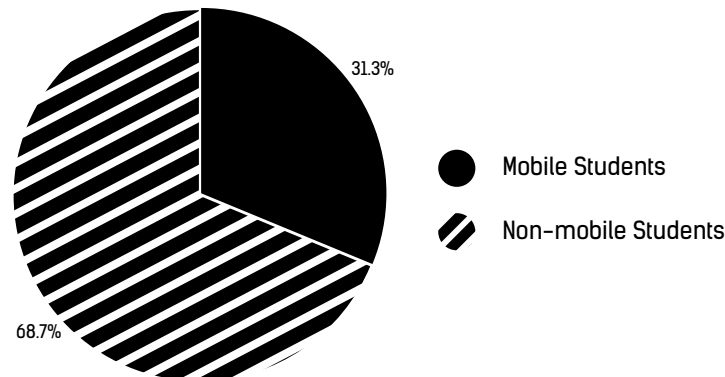
Regarding study disciplines/subject areas of respondents with disabilities (n=259), the highest amount selected humanities (31.3%), and social sciences (19.7%) and 15.4% of them indicated medical sciences. Among the mobile students with disabilities (n=81), 51.6% were at the Bachelor level, 42% were Master level students, 2.5% chose Doctorate (PhD) or any other equivalent during their mobility experience, and 4.9% of them mentioned other levels of study during their mobility experience.



Graph 2 - Study disciplines/subject areas

PARTICIPATION IN EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES

Overall, 31.3% of respondents participated in an exchange programme. These will be referred to as mobile students in the following chapters, while 68.7% did not participate in any exchange programme and, therefore, will be referred to as non-mobile students.



Graph 3 - Participation in student exchange programmes

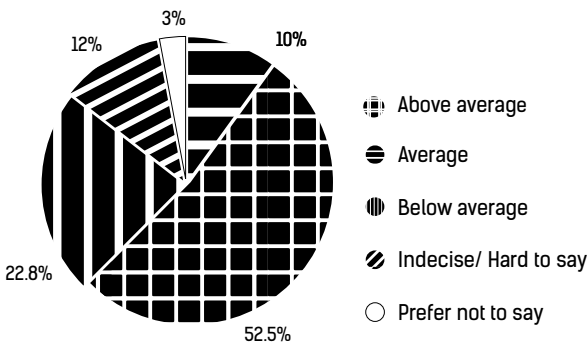
The reported mobility can have different forms, which the respondents had a chance to identify. Regarding the exchange programme type, 74.1% of mobile students with disabilities participated in a study mobility under the Erasmus/Erasmus+ programme, 9.9% participated in a traineeship/placement mobility, while the other 6% took part in other mobility programmes or were international full degree students.

HOME COUNTRY OF RESPONDENTS

From the total number of respondents (n=948), the highest amount is from Portugal with 14.2% of all respondents (135), 13.5% of them are from France (128), and 12.2% of them are from Italy (116). From the respondents with disabilities (n=259) the highest amount are from Italy (46) with 17.8%, then 11.6% are from Belgium (30) and 11.3% are from Sweden (29). A total of 28 countries are represented in the answers.

PERCEIVED SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

The majority (52.2%) of the total number of respondents (n=948) perceived their family's income as average. Similarly the majority of those with disabilities (n=259) with 52.5% perceiving their family's income as average. It is important to include that 22.8% of the students with disabilities indicated their family's income below their country average.



Graph 4 - Income of the family of origin of students with disabilities

DATA QUALITY AND REPRESENTATION

The sample cannot be considered as fully representative and, therefore, the collected data cannot be generalised to the entire population of students with disabilities in Europe. It is also impossible to compare the data with previous research on the same topic as questions on disability are often excluded

from European or national questionnaires (van Oorschot, 2008). When collecting data regarding the participation of people with disabilities in higher education and exchange programmes, many aspects have to be considered: personal data, such as disability, are under protection; disclosure of a disability is a personal choice even towards disability coordinators of HEIs (AHEAD, 2013). **The number and participation rates of students with disabilities in higher education across Europe is therefore difficult to estimate.** Although there are education and training policy frameworks in the European Union, the Member States have autonomy on both education policies and social policies/social affairs, including disability policies. The Eurostudent Survey investigated between 2008-2011 the socio-economic situation of the student population across Europe and underlined that data collection about students with disabilities is challenging and varies across countries (Orr, Gwosc and Netz, 2011).

Even if the data presented in this survey cannot be extended to the entire population of students with disabilities, it can still be useful for a large variety of stakeholders as well as for policy makers, as one of the aims of this ESNsurvey is to increase the amount of information available about disabilities in higher education and exchange programmes. The following data can surely be considered as a starting point for follow-up studies that will further explore this topic.

CHAPTER 2: SUPPORT PROVISIONS AT HOME HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

INTRODUCTION

HEIs are paying an increasing amount of attention to students with disabilities. However, these students are still underrepresented in exchange programmes despite the increasing demand (Fazekas, 2017). There are many challenges for students to participate in exchange programmes, such as lack of financial resources, foreign language skills, convertibility of knowledge and credits transfer across HEIs in Europe (as confirmed by several ESNsurvey Reports). Students with disabilities encounter additional barriers such as accessing buildings, teaching and learning methodologies, insufficient provision of accessible information within and between HEIs, or difficulties of availability and portability of support services across countries, such as personal assistance for people with disabilities. Students with disabilities fear a lack of information, support provision and how their access needs will be accommodated in the host country and in the institution. And so these barriers of exchange programmes have an impact which translates into lower participation rates (Fazekas, 2013).

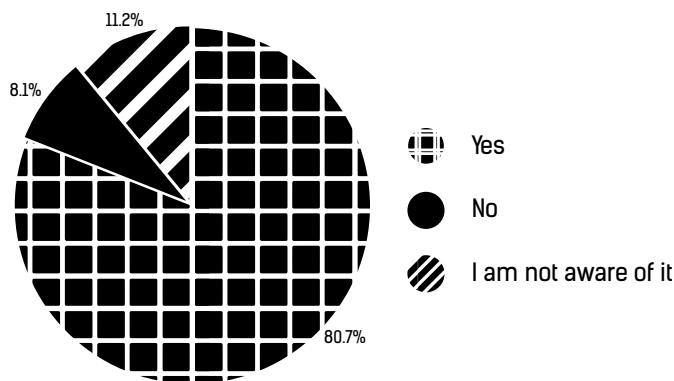
The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the services the respondents mentioned being available at the home HEI for students with disabilities to accommodate their access and inclusion. At the end of the chapter recommendations are provided for relevant stakeholders in higher education in order to make facilities more accessible for a diverse student population, including students with disabilities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The participants were asked to report the different services provided by their university and to rate their level of satisfaction.

PROVISION OF ASSIGNED PERSON/OFFICE SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

It was reported by 80.7% of respondents that their home HEI has an assigned person/office supporting students with disabilities, 11.2% of them were not aware if such support provisions were in place or not and 8.1% of them stated that in their HEI this person/office was not present. It is important to highlight that the question was phrased in a flexible way (such as assigned person/office) in order to cater for various support provision systems of HEIs across Europe.

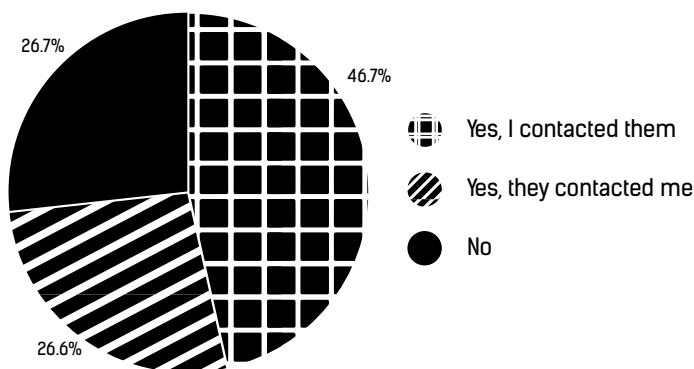


Graph 5 - Provisions of assigned person/office supporting students with disabilities

CONTACTS WITH THE OFFICE/ASSIGNED PERSON FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In total, 46.7% of respondents contacted an assigned person/office supporting students with disabilities at their home HEI, while 26.6% of the respondents indicated to have been contacted by that office and 26.7% were never contacted by, nor contacted this office/person themselves.

It is important to point out that since a disability needs to be disclosed by the individual, usually students with disabilities make the first contact with Higher Education Institutions to acquire this specific information. Higher Education Institutions may also reach out to all students with their repository of available support provisions and, therefore, they streamline the communication to students with disabilities as part of the standard information provision (Fazekas, 2013).



Graph 6 - Contacts with the office/assigned person for students with disabilities

PROVISION OF SUPPORT BY OTHER PEOPLE/ ORGANISATIONS WITHIN THE HEI

The respondents were provided with a list of potential support organisations or people who might have supported them throughout their tertiary education and it was possible to select more than one choice:

- 46.3% identified family.
- 34% mentioned other students (peer-to peer support).
- 32% identified teachers.
- 10.8% expressed student organisations whose work is directly related to persons with disabilities.
- 9.7% disabled people's organisations.
- 8.9% indicated specialist agency services.
- 6.2% highlighted student organisations whose work is not directly related to persons with disabilities.
- 28.6% claimed that no one else provides support related to their access needs at their home Higher Education Institution.

DISCLOSURE OF DISABILITY AT HOME HEI

Overall, 84.6% of respondents with disabilities disclosed their disability to the assigned person or office supporting students with disabilities at their home Higher Education Institution. Most of the Higher Education Institutions provide support provisions for students with disabilities when their disability is disclosed and medical reports are provided to justify eligibility for these provisions. HEIs should create a safe and welcoming environment for disclosure. Doing this can dismantle the fears that students may have about non-equal treatment and stigmatisation when

participating in Higher Education (AHEAD, 2013).

The most common reasons for not disclosing disability are the fear of prejudice and discrimination and of not receiving equal treatment compared to others. Some people decided not to disclose their condition due to the belief that it would not change the situation and lead to any advantages.

ACCESS NEEDS ASSESSMENT AT HOME HEIS

In total, 43.6% of respondents indicated that they partook a needs assessment procedure to identify and support their access needs to be included at their home HEI, 25.6% mentioned that they had no needs assessment procedures and 12.7% said that no such assessment procedures are in place at their home HEI.

SATISFACTION OF SUPPORT PROVISIONS BY ASSIGNED PERSON/OFFICE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AT HOME HEI

Overall, most of the answers were positive with 15.8% of participants identifying themselves as very satisfied, 28.2% satisfied, 16.6% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and 10% dissatisfied with the support services provided by their home HEI while 17.4% of respondents indicated an indecisive answer to this question.

CONCLUSION

This chapter mapped how HEIs support the participation of students with disabilities and explored the issue of disclosure and the concept of access needs. Service provisions were highlighted as core elements although students with disabilities still experience stigma and discrimination towards disability (especially hidden disabilities) and that accommodations for access needs are not always put in place.

Most HEIs provide support to students with disabilities when their disability is disclosed and most of the respondents disclosed their condition to the office/responsible person. Out of those that disclosed their condition, 44% were satisfied or very satisfied with the support provided. On the other hand, it was noticed that many of the respondents have to rely on their families for additional support and this could have an impact both on the family (e.g. in terms of economical support) and on the person who could struggle to reach their own independence. Around 15% of respondents chose not to disclose their condition to the

home HEI fearing that they would have experienced prejudice and discrimination or that the disclosure would not guarantee them a better environment or any advantages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- HEIs should create a safer and non-discriminatory process for disclosure and focus on the needs assessment and the support provision.
- Local student associations should try to innovate their activities in order to create a more welcoming atmosphere and allow people with disabilities to take part in them.
- Students and volunteers should be prepared to deal with disabilities and be aware of their prejudices in order to recognise them and avoid them. This process could be facilitated by HEIs which could provide seminars with all key players in order to further explore this topic.

CHAPTER 3: INFORMATION PROVISION ABOUT EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES

INTRODUCTION

Higher education professionals need to be aware of the practical issues to be considered when including students with disabilities in study abroad programmes. Adele Brown and Femke Bloemendal, former members of the EAIE Access & Diversity Expert Community, highlighted in their work that many International Relations Offices have little or no experience in supporting international students with disabilities during a mobility experience. Higher educational professionals, and especially International Relations Offices and disability offices, should be able to provide information for domestic students both with and without disabilities. When considering participating in any international programmes and advising incoming international students with disabilities, it should be clear which services and facilities are available at the HEI. Adequate accessible information provision prepares students with disabilities to make informed decisions in order to take the leap to a mobility experience (Bloemendal, Engels-Perenyi, and Brown, 2011).

The outcomes of the ExchangeAbility project of the Erasmus Student Network in 2010/2011 highlighted that the biggest barriers are precisely the lack of (accessible) information (De La Rosa and Reina, 2011).

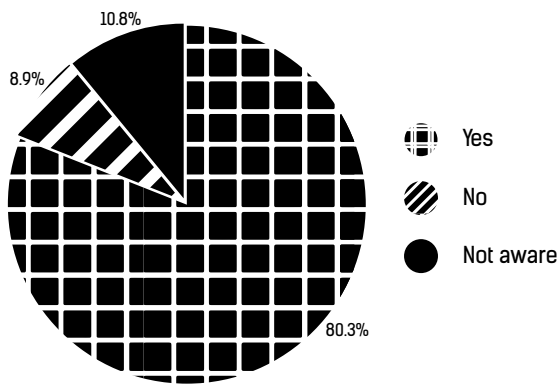
In this chapter, the ESNsurvey addresses the information provision of exchange programmes. Students with disabilities were asked to share their experiences about the accessibility to information regarding exchange programmes, with the aim to identify the current challenges and enablers of this information provision.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

INFORMATION PROVISION OF INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME OPPORTUNITIES BY HOME HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Taking a look at the information provision about exchange

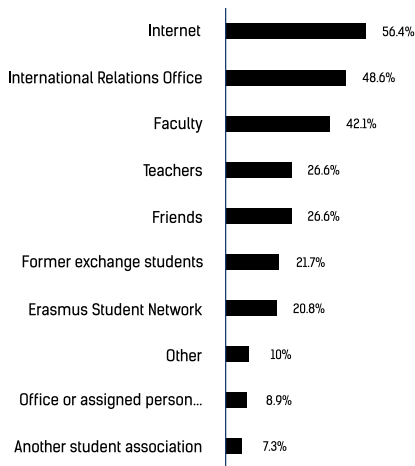
programmes by home HEIs, it can be seen that most students (80.3% of respondents with disabilities, n=259) indicate that their home HEI provides such information. Only a small amount of them, 8.9%, pointed out that no information was provided, while 10.8% stated that they were not aware of the information provided by their home HEI.



Graph 7 - Information provision about exchange programmes by home Higher Education Institution

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME OPPORTUNITIES

When taking a look at the sources of information about exchange programme opportunities, the internet (56.4%), International Relations Offices (48.6%) and faculty staff (42.1%) are the main providers of this information to students with disabilities. Former exchange students were mentioned as a source of information by 21.7%, while professors and teaching staff as well as friends amounted to 26.6% and the Erasmus Student Network by 20.8%. Lastly, the disability office or person supporting students with disabilities (8.9%) and

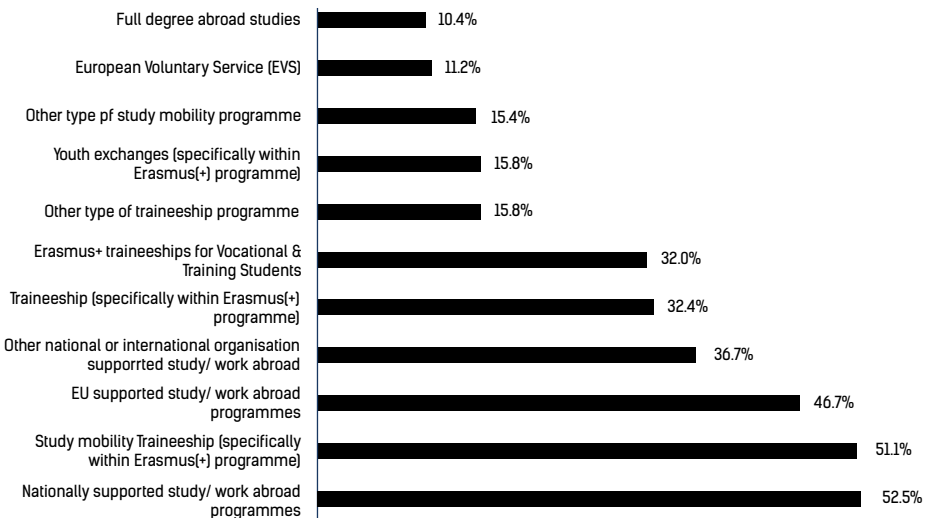


Graph 8 - Sources of information about exchange programme opportunities

other student organisations (7.3%) were mentioned as sources of information.

INFORMATION PROVISION ABOUT TYPES OF INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES BY HOME HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

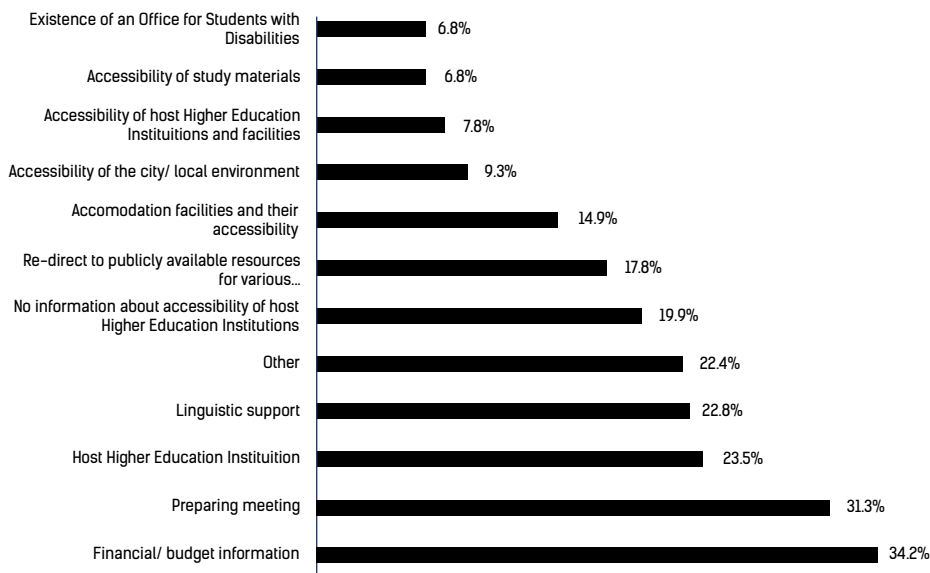
Students receive information about the available types of exchange programmes from their home HEI. About half of the students with disabilities received information on supported national study/work abroad programmes (52.5%), ‘study mobility’ (short term international exchange) specifically within the previous Erasmus or current Erasmus+ programmes (52.1%) and on EU-supported study/work abroad programmes (46.7%). Students also received information about other national or international organisations supporting study/work abroad programmes (36.7%), traineeships (short term work placement) specifically within the previous Erasmus or current Erasmus+ arrangements (32.4%) or Erasmus+ traineeships for vocational education (32%). Fewer students received information regarding other types of traineeship (short term work placement) programmes (15.8%), youth exchanges within the previous Erasmus or current Erasmus+ arrangements (15.8%) or other types of study mobility programmes (15.4%).



Graph 9 - Information provision about different types of exchange programmes

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PROVIDED BY HOME HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS ABOUT INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES

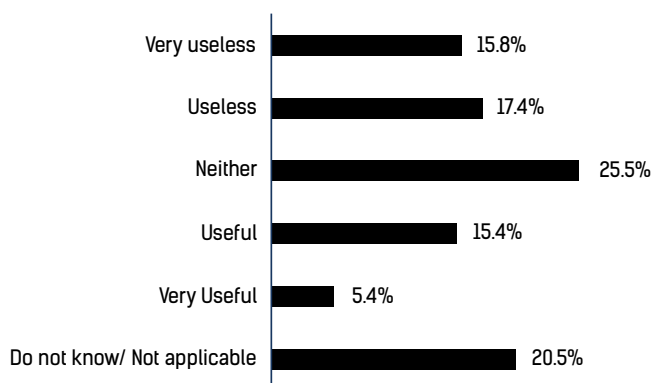
As home HEIs are the main source of information for students with disabilities, a further look was taken at the additional information those HEIs provide. Respondents received information about finances/budget (34.2%), their *eventual* host HEI (23.5%) and linguistic support (22.8%). Furthermore, 9.3% responded that they received information about the accessibility of the city/local environment, 7.8% about the accessibility of the *eventual* host HEI facilities, 6.8% about the accessibility of study materials and 6.8% received information about the existence of the office for students with disabilities. Finally, 19.9% highlighted that their home HEI did not provide accessibility information about the *potential* host HEI.



Graph 10 - Type of information students receive from HEIs

USEFULNESS OF INFORMATION PROVISIONS BY HOME HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS ABOUT INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES

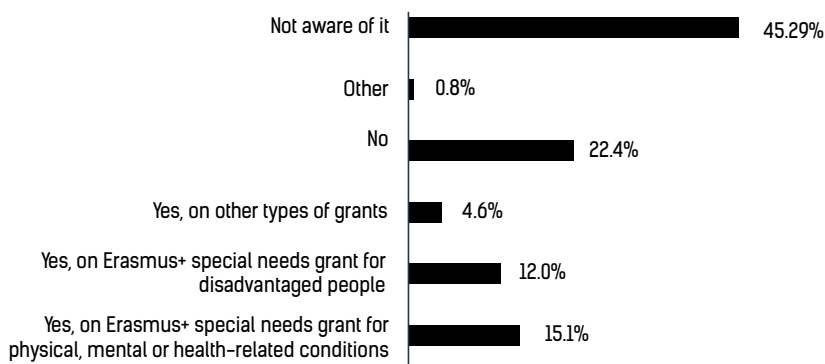
One fifth of respondents with disabilities stated that the information provision by their home HEI about exchange programmes was at least useful, while one fourth found it neither useless nor useful and one third found it useless.



Graph 11 - Usefulness of information relevant to access needs of their disability

INFORMATION PROVISION ABOUT GRANTS BY HOME HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Almost half of the respondents (45.2%) were not aware of grants provided by their home HEI, while 15.1% stated that their home HEI provided information on the Erasmus+ special needs grant for physical, mental or health-related conditions and 12% received information on the supplementary grant for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.



Graph 12 - Information provision about supplementary grants on top of Erasmus+ scholarship

Overall, although general information about exchange programmes is widely provided, specific information provision about financial support to cover access needs and the accessibility of various facilities of the host environment is often still severely lacking.

CONCLUSION

HEIs should include on their general communication and general information platforms, such as websites or presentations about exchange programmes, that there is existing specific support and information available for students with disabilities who would like to participate in an exchange programme. This information should be easily accessible for all students (e.g. on a web platform) so that students who choose not to disclose their disability can also access this information easily. Furthermore, HEIs and IROs should refer to the disability office, which should be able to provide more detailed information, as well as assist the student with any specific request. HEIs should also aim to harmonise accessibility related information in their general communication when promoting exchange programmes for all students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- HEIs should actively provide information about the accessibility features of Erasmus+ to all their students with disabilities (Erasmus+ special needs grants, supplementary grants for students from disadvantaged backgrounds). This can be tackled through an enhanced collaboration between IROs and disability offices/units.
- HEIs should make use of information provision platforms such as MappED!³, by providing information on their accessibility and support services provided to prospective incoming exchange students, and using the platform for the provision of information about host HEIs to their outgoing students.
- Local student associations should promote mobility for all by organising inclusive activities which can also be attended by students with disabilities.
- Local student associations should also promote existing sources of useful information for students with disabilities, such as the MappED! project, to both HEIs and students with disabilities. This will support the informed decision-making about participation in an exchange programme.

CHAPTER 4: NON-MOBILE PARTICIPANTS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will explore the main reasons that prevent students with disabilities from participating in an exchange. Among the respondents, 68.7% did not participate in any study abroad programme. This might happen due to a lack of information about study or work opportunities provided by their home HEI or it might simply be a personal choice to go on an exchange later in life. Therefore, another possible outcome of this chapter is the identification of the main factors that determine the participation in mobility programmes and based on these, offer recommendations as to what could be done to increase the number of outgoing students with disabilities.

Some factors were already expected to be pointed out, as mentioned before, as they have been addressed in the literature. These can be discrimination, lack of support on many levels or even training by teachers among others. In reverse, some good practices are also set in place but without reaching all of this population.

Discrimination. According to the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) and a common legal framework on non-discrimination (Article 13), it is prohibited, among other things, to discriminate a person because of their disability. At the international level, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006, Article 24) also banishes non-discrimination and promotes equal opportunities in education at all levels. Countries now have to allocate additional technical, financial and human resources to make their schools more accessible (Ebersold and Watkins, 2011). The success or failure of students with disabilities is influenced by faculties' attitudes towards them as well as awareness of students' needs. If the attitudes are negative, students may not disclose their disability at all (Sachs and Schreuer, 2011). Although not every student discloses or needs to disclose their disability, for many, doing so and in a timely manner can prevent a lot of complications at the host institution (Katz and Morris, 2007).

Support. Students with disabilities expressed a lack of support or fear of it not only from their home or host HEI and their respective

staff, but also from their families or friends. Students with disabilities frequently suffer from restricted social networks, limited physical access and academic pressure due to inaccessible learning materials (NESSE, 2012). Inadequate accessibility of Higher Education Institutions, lack of support, adverse social attitudes, social isolation and low financial capacity lead to low enrolment and high dropout (Sachs and Schreuer, 2011). Students with disabilities tend to be found in specific disciplinary areas, for instance, dyslexic students in arts and design. Although dyslexic students are relatively successful in education and employment, they may still experience low self-esteem, frustration, lack of confidence, anxiety and insecurity (NESSE, 2012). Based on research by Sachs and Schreuer (2011) on students with disabilities in Israel (n=170), they needed to study more often, participated in fewer social and extracurricular activities and used computers and information technology less.

Training of teachers. Some educational systems do not have teachers who would be prepared to adapt their teaching practices to students with special needs. In addition, there might not be enough or any assistant teachers or appropriate methodological tools (Ebersold and Watkins, 2011). Moreover, many Erasmus+ coordinators think that receiving an Erasmus+ incoming student with, for instance, visual impairment presents many challenges. The biggest problem, therefore, is the lack of accessible materials specially adapted for students with visual impairment (EBU and ICEVI Europe, 2018).

However, there are also some cases of good practices. Every university in Sweden is required to allocate funds to cover extraordinary costs for educational support measures for students with disabilities. The Student Service Office at the University of Gothenburg coordinates services and support for students with disabilities or dyslexia at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Students may also benefit from pedagogical or technical support. This can contain note-taking support, alternative examination form, software with spelling programmes and speech synthesisers, sign language or extended library book loans and Braille translation (as concluded by the EADHE project⁴).

4 For more information visit eadhe.eu.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When discussing mobility, it is important to understand whether students with disabilities are aware of mobility opportunities: 70.3% have heard about the Erasmus+ programme or another exchange programme, whereas 29.7% have not heard about them. This seems to indicate that lack of general knowledge is not the main issue and that other factors might be more relevant.

The following themes were explored in order to understand their role as a reason not to take part in mobility programmes among students with disabilities.

INFORMATION PROVISION

Although, as previously discussed, there is general knowledge about mobility programmes, accessibility seems to be an essential factor to consider. In fact, 42.2% of students felt that they lacked information about the accessibility of mobility programmes, 19.1% did not feel properly informed about the accessibility of the host city, 26.4% did not know about the accessibility of the host HEI and 18.5% mentioned they did not receive enough information about the accessibility of their potential workplace. Besides these places, others included flats, public transport, in addition to financial problems. Finally, 22.5% of students were worried about not having their studies recognised, whilst 11.2% felt the same about their traineeship.

DISCRIMINATION

A look at fear of discrimination shows that 19.6% of students feared discrimination would come from international exchange organisers, 13.5% from people in the host country or city and 19.6% from people at the host HEI. Another fear was not getting accepted or supported like other students at the same HEI or not getting a chance to participate like any other student.

SUPPORT SERVICES, STAFF AND CLOSE NETWORKS

When asked about support services that could encourage students to go on a mobility, 38.8% expressed a lack of support from their home HEI, 16.3% in their host country/city and 21.9% at the host HEI as a demotivating factors. In addition to a support system as such, 16.3% of students also expressed that they did not feel they would be supported enough by teachers at the host HEI, 20.8% feared a potential denial of access to academic life and

26.4% believed staff or teachers would not support their access and learning needs. Besides support from HEI, being it the home or host one, 24.7% of students expressed a lack of support from their family and 15.7% from their friends as a reason not to go on mobility. Students also feared disability-related stereotypes (24.7%), not making friends at the host HEI (23.6%) or their peers having a closed mindset (14.6%). Some fears, however, have to do with some individual and personal matters, for instance, 23.6% felt they did not have the proper language skills.

FINANCES

The last significant area of fears includes financial constraints which 35.9% of students pointed out as relevant. Furthermore, 29.2% feared unforeseen emergency costs while abroad and 35.9% worried about additional expenses related to their access needs. Nonetheless, 82.8% of students who had financial constraints had not heard about any Erasmus+ supplementary grants on top of their Erasmus+ scholarship.

PLANS FOR FUTURE MOBILITY

When someone has not participated in any mobility programme, it does not necessarily mean they will not participate in the future. In fact, 28% of non-mobile respondents plan to apply, 39.3% take this option into consideration, 13.5% are indecisive and 19.1% do not plan to apply.

CONCLUSION

Information provision seems to be one of the major factors that influence participation in student mobility programmes. Although non-mobile students are mostly aware of study or traineeship opportunities abroad in general, more specific information about accessibility support seems to be lacking. Websites of host and home HEI tend to be accessible, but sometimes they can be difficult to find and navigate (EBU and ICEVI Europe, 2018).

Looking at the bigger picture, there is also a lack of information about access and learning outcomes, and planning and monitoring students' progress, as Ebersold and Watkins (2011) mention. Although education providers are encouraged by their countries to establish individual education plans, many stakeholders do not develop one and lack tools which would enable them to plan and monitor their strategies effectively. According to NESSE (2012), because many universities in Europe are independent bodies, they

are not required to report information about the social profile of their students, therefore a lack of data remains on governmental level. On the other hand, some countries, such as in Norway, believe that keeping data about students with disabilities may infringe their privacy.

Lastly, regarding **finances**, students who received an extra grant to cover their needs connected to their disability found it very useful (EBU and ICEVI Europe, 2018). In 2013-14, 401 students with disabilities received an additional grant, which is a 3% increase compared to the previous year (European Commission, 2015).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- HEIs should provide different kinds of information on mobility programmes, taking into account the accessibility of their websites, printed material and programmes.
- Local student associations should showcase mobility experiences of mobile students with disabilities, such as [MappED Ambassadors](#) with non-mobile students.
- An emphasis is also advised to be put on information about supplementary grants.
- Provide detailed information about the accessibility of the different campuses and buildings.
- Provide detailed information about the accessibility of study material of different courses and degrees.
- Properly train teaching staff and inform people about specific differences regarding teaching students with disabilities.

CHAPTER 5: MOBILE PARTICIPANTS

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the focus is put on understanding the reality of students with disabilities (n=81) who go on a mobility experience. First, the study looks at some objective characteristics of the respondents' international experiences. Then, the analysis is centered on more practical aspects that take place before and during mobility, such as potential barriers and challenges encountered during the preparation and during the stay abroad itself. This chapter also aims to understand what influences the choices students make when preparing their study abroad experience, which factors play the biggest roles and how broad and efficient the services provided by the home and host institutions to students with disabilities are.

For students with disabilities, a study abroad experience can be related to the so-called Independent Living philosophy, defined as *"a philosophy and a movement of people with disabilities who work for self-determination, equal opportunities and self-respect. Independent Living does not mean that we want to do everything by ourselves and do not need anybody or that we want to live in isolation. Independent Living means that we demand the same choices and control in our everyday lives that our non-disabled brothers and sisters, neighbors and friends take for granted."* (Ratzka, 2003).

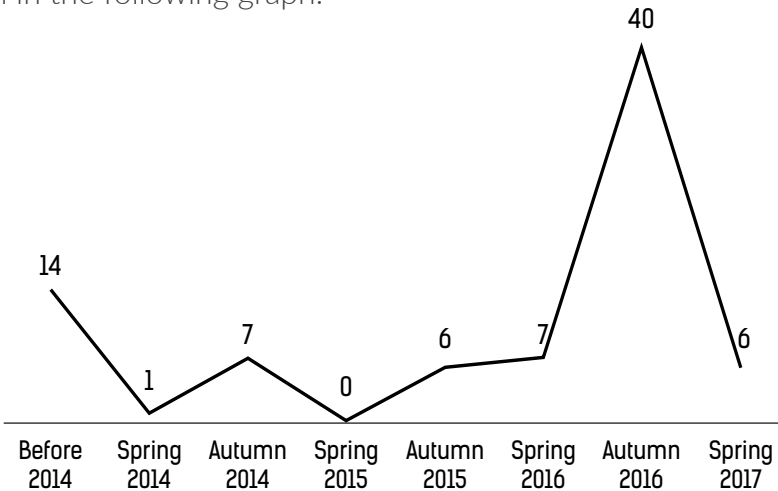
The aim of this chapter is to explore the complexity of taking part in a study abroad experience for a student with disabilities. More concretely, mobility experiences of students with disabilities are characterised in terms of length, study level, possible interruptions of the mobility experience, previous participation in study mobility and financial support. The study then describes the steps undergone to prepare their study experience abroad and what the most important factors that influence their development are. Finally, the study identifies the main challenges that students face during their study abroad experience and how much support they find once they arrive at their destination.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

CHARACTERISTICS OF MOBILITY

To introduce the context of a study abroad experience of students with disabilities, it is necessary to describe some objective characteristics of the respondents' exchange experiences.

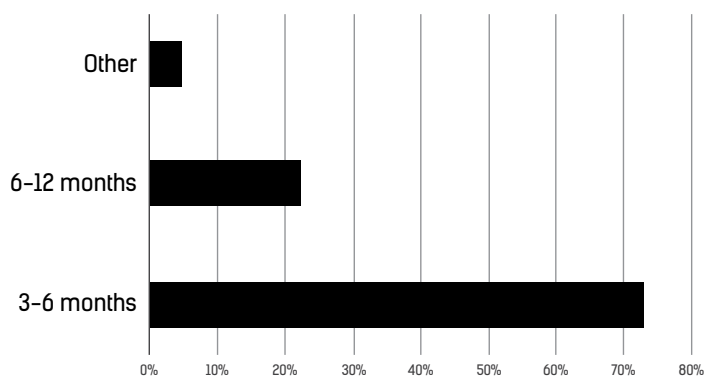
From the sample of students with disabilities who had participated in an exchange (n=81), about 70% of them received a grant within the Erasmus+ Programme (which started in 2014), 17% received a grant within the Erasmus Programme (2006-2013), 6% received another grant and another 6% received no official grant or main financial support. The starting point of their studies abroad can be seen in the following graph.



Graph 13 - Start of study exchange

These experiences abroad had a **duration** of approximately one semester (3-6 months) for almost 73% of the mobile respondents with disabilities and of two semesters for 22% of them. 5% answered other durations.

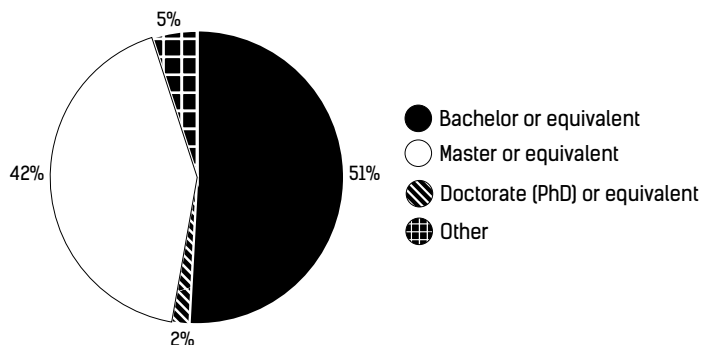
The **most popular destination countries** among respondents are Norway, Spain, the United Kingdom, France and Germany.



Graph 14 - Duration of the stay

Destination	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Norway	16	20%
Spain	12	15%
France	7	9%
Germany	7	9%
UK	7	9%

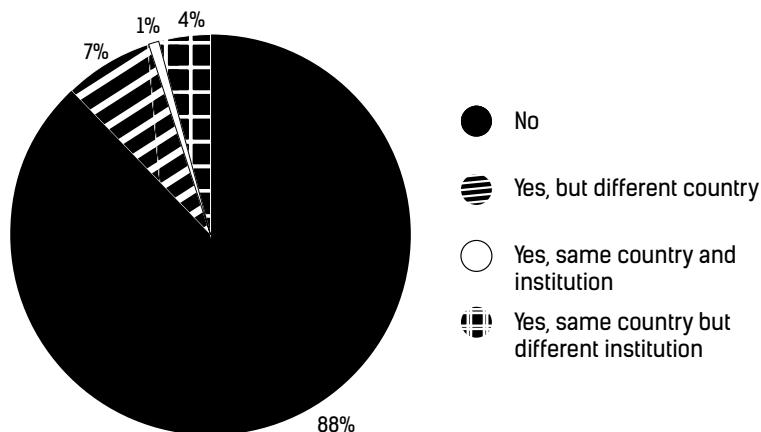
When it comes to the **study level** at which the exchange took place, 51% of the respondents went on exchange during their Bachelor studies, followed by 42% who did so during their Master studies. Only 2% of them did an exchange within their doctoral programme.



Graph 15 - Level of studies

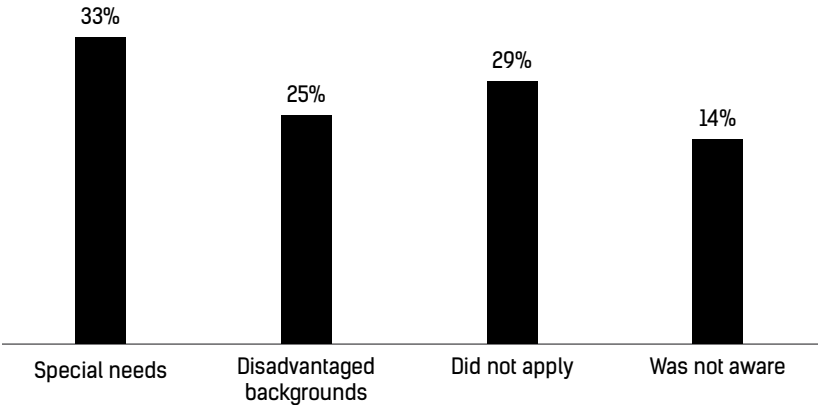
Looking at **possible interruptions of the study abroad experience**, almost all of the respondents (96%) indicate that they did not interrupt their studies and only a small portion (4%) did it.

When asked about **previous international exchange experiences** (longer than 3 months), almost 88% of respondents had not previously participated in any kind of mobility programme, about 7% had participated in a mobility programme in a different country, almost 4% had done it in the same country but at a different institution and approximately 1% repeated their exchange in the same country and institution. In all cases, the previous experiences were study mobilities.



Graph 16 - Previous exchange experience

Finally, 33% of mobile respondents applied for the **Erasmus+ supplementary grant** for people with special needs regarding physical, mental or health-related conditions, about 25% applied for the Erasmus+ supplementary grant for people with disadvantaged backgrounds, 29% were aware of the supplementary grants but did not apply for them and another 14% were not aware of their existence.

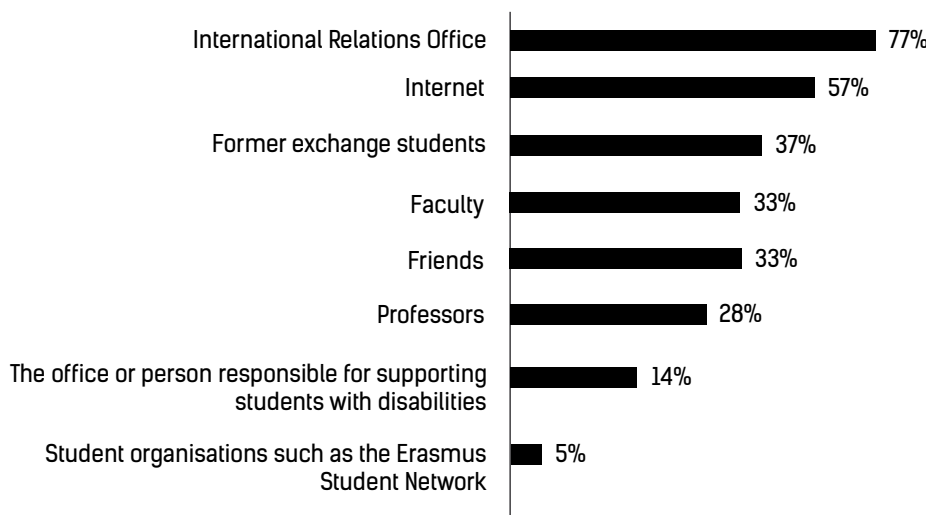


Graph 17 - Reception of Erasmus+ supplementary grants

PREPARATION TO STUDY ABROAD

A study abroad experience does not begin on the day that the student goes abroad but a few months earlier, when the preparation for the international exchange takes place.

Among the **sources of information on study abroad opportunities** used by mobile respondents with disabilities, the most popular are the International Relations Offices (77%), the internet (57%), former exchange students (37%) and friends (33%). They also found information from their home institution, provided by the faculty (33%), by professors (28%), by the office or person responsible for supporting students with disabilities (14%) and also student organisations such as the Erasmus Student Network (5%).



Graph 18 - Sources of information about study abroad opportunities

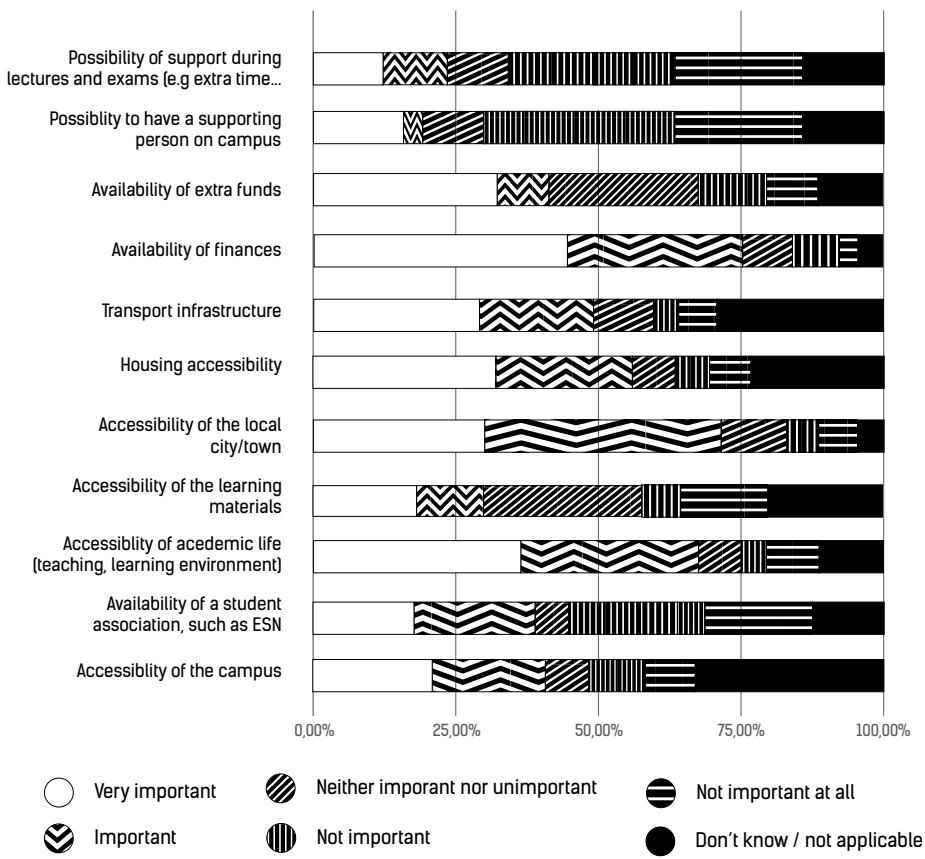
ROLE OF FAMILY IN PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES

When it comes to **the role of the family**, 84% of the mobile respondents expressed that their families supported their decision to go abroad and about 41% indicated that their families had also shared some concerns about them going abroad. However, none of the respondents indicated that their family was against the decision of going abroad.

FACTORS IN THE CHOICE OF DESTINATION FOR INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

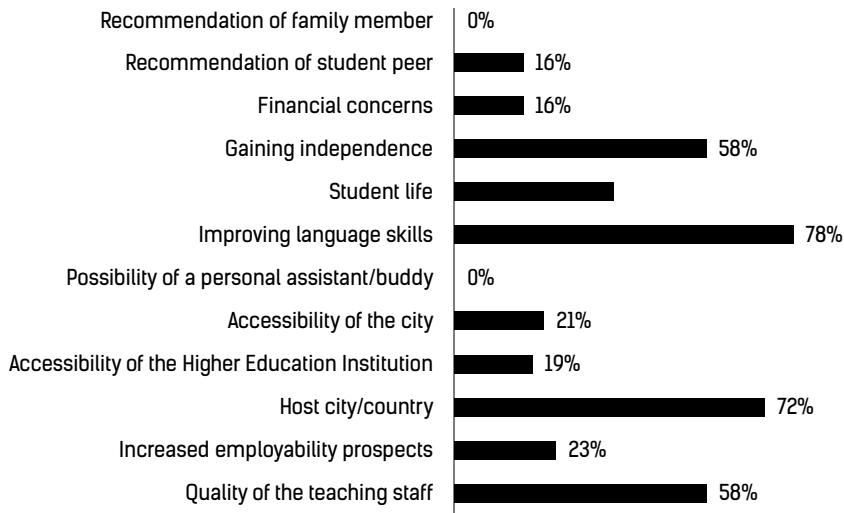
One of the most important choices to make is the **destination city of the mobility experience**. When asked about the importance of several factors involved in this choice, the availability of financial support and the accessibility of the destination city/town were rated as important or very important by 76% and 72% of the mobile respondents respectively. They are followed in importance by the accessibility of the academic life (teaching, learning environment), which was rated as important or very important by 69% of the mobile students, the housing accessibility (54%), the

transport infrastructure (49%), the accessibility of the campus (40%), the availability of a student association helping international students such as the Erasmus Student Network (40%), the availability of extra funds (38%) and the accessibility of learning materials (31%). Among the least important factors, the possibility of having a supporting person on campus or support during lectures and exams (such as extra time during exams, pedagogical support, assistance in taking notes during classes, receiving lecture notes in advance, etc.) was rated as important or very important only by respectively 23% and 26% of the respondents.



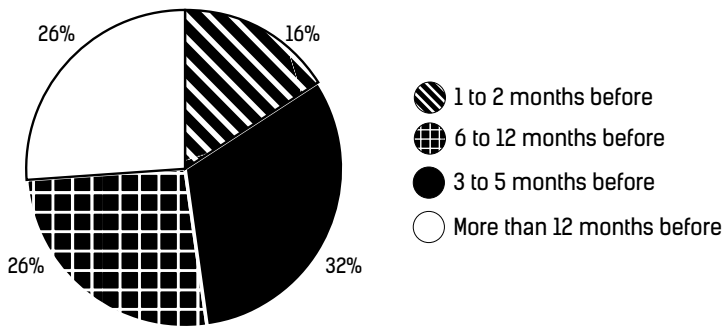
Graph 19 - Factors influencing the choice of a destination city

When asked which factors played a role in the **choice of the destination institution**, the possibility of improving language skills and the city or country where the institution is located were the factors that played a role for most of the respondents, in respectively 78% and 72% of the cases. They were followed in popularity by the quality of the teaching staff (58%), the possibility of gaining independence (58%) and the student life (37%). The factors that were taken into account by the smallest proportion of students with disabilities that went abroad were the accessibility of the host institution (19%), financial concerns (16%) and recommendations by other students (16%).



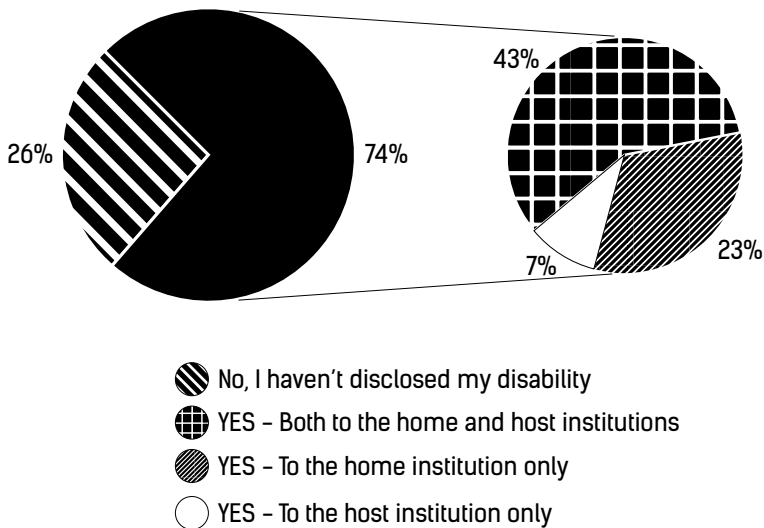
Graph 20 - Factors influencing the destination institution

Different students **start with preparing their exchange programme** at different times. More precisely, among mobile respondents, 26% of them started with the preparations more than 12 months before departing, another 26% did it between 6 and 12 months before departure, 32% of them did it between 3 and 5 months in advance and only 16% of the respondents started with the preparations 1 or 2 months before the start of their study abroad experience.



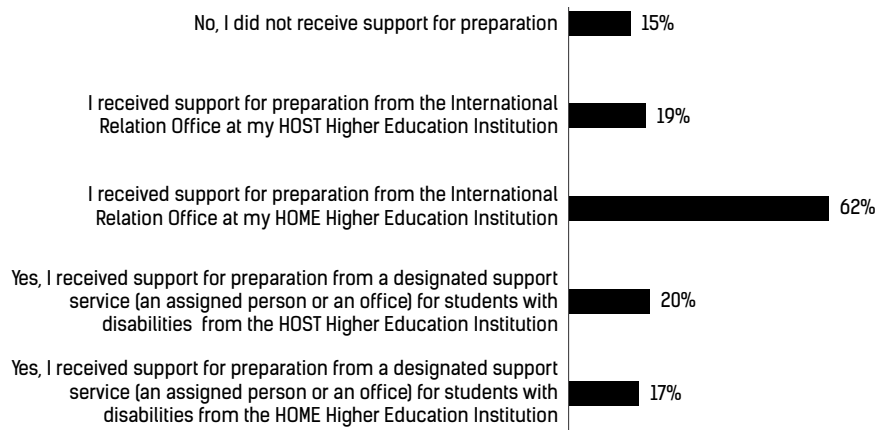
Graph 21 - Start of preparation for study abroad experience

Another important decision students with disabilities have to make when preparing a stay abroad is whether they want to **disclose that they have a disability**. Among the mobile respondents with disabilities, 74% disclosed it and 26% decided not to disclose it. Among those who decided to disclose it, 43% disclosed their situation both to the home and the host institution, 23% of them disclosed it only to the home institution, 7% did it only to the host institution and 26% preferred not to disclose it to either of them.



Graph 22 - Disclosure of disability

Students often receive some **support during the preparation** of their stay abroad. Among mobile respondents, 62% mentioned having received support from the International Relations Office of the home institution, 19% from the host institution and 20% from both the home and the host institutions. The office or person responsible for students with disabilities from the home (17%) and the host (20%) institutions also provided support. Another 15% of the respondents indicated that they had received no support during the preparation period.



Graph 23 - Reception of support for preparations

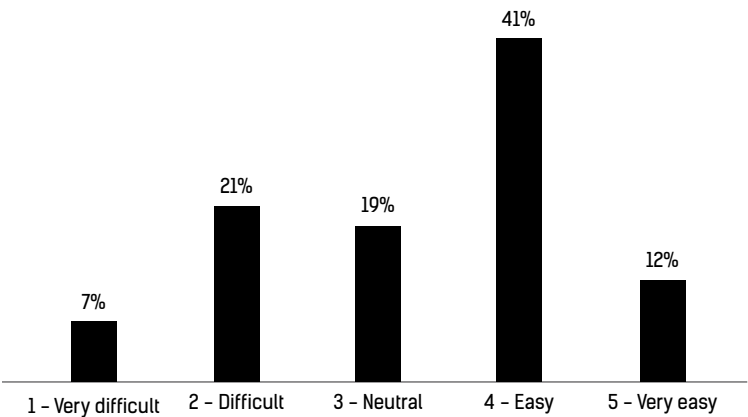
Students can also experience obstacles during the preparation for an international exchange. In particular, 38% of the respondents indicated that they had experienced such obstacles, 54% indicated that it was not the case, and 7% could not determine it.

When asked about the type of barriers experienced, 21% of respondents mentioned barriers of financial nature and 11% found students with disabilities lacked support services from the home institution during the preparation period.

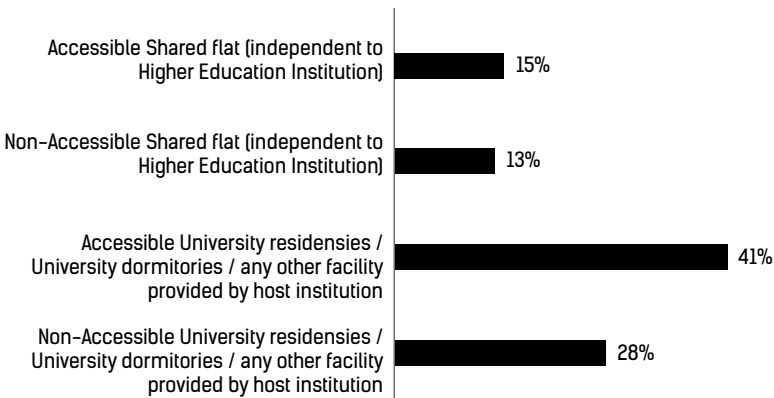
DURING THE MOBILITY

Most of the aspects that determine whether a study abroad experience is perceived as a successful experience for students or not take place after departure.

Among the respondents with disabilities that participated in an exchange programme (n=81), 12% considered it very easy to find accommodation, 41% considered it easy, about 19% of them considered it neither easy nor difficult to find accommodation, 21% considered it difficult and about 7% said that it was very difficult to find accommodation.



Graph 24 - Difficulty in finding accommodation



Graph 25 - Type of accommodation

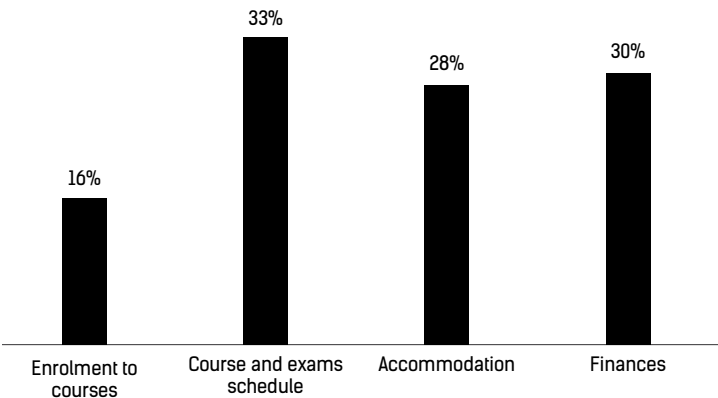
When asked about the types of accommodation, 41% of the mobile respondents stayed at accessible university residences / dormitories / other facilities provided by the host institution and 28% stayed at non-accessible facilities provided by the host

institution. Other students stayed at accommodation independent of the host institution: 15% stayed at accessible shared flats, 13% did the same in non-accessible shared flats and 5% stayed at non-accessible private studios.

On the issue of the discrimination experienced by students when looking for accomodation, 72% of the mobile respondents did not provide any answer, but out of those who did, 83% indicated that they did not face any discrimination related to accommodation and 17% indicated that they did.

Regarding the availability of a designated person responsible for providing services for students with disabilities at the host institution, 30% of the mobile respondents indicated that they were assigned such a person, 50% were not aware of whether the host institution had such a service and 21% indicated that the host institution did not provide them with anyone supporting students with disabilities.

In order to identify the major problematic factors during the mobility experience of students with disabilities, 33% of the respondents indicated having problems with the course and exam schedule, 30% of them had financial problems, 28% had problems with accommodation and 16% had problems with the enrolment in courses at the host institution.



Graph 26 - Major problems during mobility

Regarding other facilities connected to the quality of the mobility experience, 20% of the mobile respondents indicated having obtained additional financial support from other organisations or authorities to support their accessibility needs.

About half of the mobile students with disabilities (51%) indicated that they paid insurance for support and/or technical aid during their stay abroad. From those, however, 88% indicated that they did not receive any financial support to cover the costs of such an insurance.

When it comes to an accompanying or support person for the accessibility needs of the student, 26% of mobile students indicated having such person during their stay abroad. In 71% of the cases this person was recruited in the place of origin of the student, in 19% of the cases it was recruited from the place of destination and in another 10% of the cases the person was recruited in another way.

CONCLUSION

CHARACTERISTICS OF MOBILITY

A study abroad experience can be a great opportunity to develop an independent lifestyle. Among the motivations to spend a part of the study programme abroad, respondents indicated the following:

“Especially my desire to try to live abroad on my own and my wish to find out if I can successfully manage to study and live without my family’s help” and “The opportunity to try to live by myself, without the help of my family and friends, to become more independent.”

From the answers of students with disabilities that participated in a study abroad experience, most of them preferred exchanges of one semester (3-6 months) and they almost never interrupted the experience before its end. For example, a student mentioned that *“a single semester of my programme is a research project and this is typically where up to half the class group go abroad”*.

It was also noticed that almost no respondent had any other previous experience abroad and that there is a balance between those students that go on exchange during their Bachelor studies and those who do it in their Master studies. For some students it is optional to go abroad, but a student indicated that *“The study abroad aspect was an integral part of my International degree course of study [...] I had great support from my Irish health professionals”*.

From the respondents that went on exchange within the Erasmus+ programme, a significant proportion made use of the supplementary grants and only a small part were not aware of this possibility.

PREPARATION FOR MOBILITY

When starting the preparation of a study abroad experience, a great diversity of sources of information were used by the respondents, the International Relations Offices and internet being the most commonly used. However, a respondent indicated that *“first, my university thought it would be too complicated for me to go on Erasmus, and they strongly suggested that I just stay home”* and only after insisting he finally managed to have his exchange organised. Support of the family seems to be a key element, even if they can also be concerned. *“My family supported me, but they were worried at the same time”* a respondent explained.

When choosing the destination city and institution, many factors play a role. The most important ones are the accessibility of the destination, transport and teaching materials on one side and having financial support on the other. Culture, language and the possibility of meeting new people also appeared often in the open answers of respondents.

Most of the respondents disclosed their disability to the home institution but a smaller part decided to also do it to the host institution. For example, a student said: *“I communicated my access needs issues with my health insurance rather than the host institution.”*

Sometimes it was perceived that there was no designated person in the host institution for supporting students with disabilities, and a student wanted *“more clarity on how to obtain health care in specific countries and how to claim expenses on your return”*.

DURING THE MOBILITY

When it comes to more practical aspects of mobility, most of the respondents did not have any problems finding accommodation. In most cases, the host institution provided accommodation, often accessible. However, some respondents encountered barriers, such as lack of a *“hoist and a height-adjustable bed, accessible bathroom”* or *lack of an “elevator and corridor large enough to [...] go through it”*.

Only one third of students with disabilities that participated in a study abroad experience were assigned a person responsible for providing services for students with disabilities at the host institution and students often did not know whether such service existed. Among the most problematic factors during their mobility, respondents mentioned the course and exam schedule, as well as financial constraints. Some examples were *“electronic study material, print text in bigger format”* or *“adjustments during exams (more time to prepare an essay, according to difficulties of accessibility of literature, as well as more time for writing tests)”*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Make information about study abroad opportunities for students with disabilities also available at the office or service responsible for supporting students with disabilities and not only at the International Relations Offices.
- Prepare information brochures about study abroad opportunities for students with disabilities targeted at the family of the students with recommendations to address their potential fears.
- Make sure information and support for students with disabilities is not only offered to local and outgoing students

but also to incoming.

- Ensure HEIs have enough information and resources to support potential outgoing students with disabilities.
- Study the possibility of negotiating discounts for insurances, technical aid and accompanying support people for incoming exchange students.
- Disseminate more information about study abroad opportunities for students with disabilities to try to reach them before they consider taking part in a mobility programme.

CHAPTER 6: GRANTS

INTRODUCTION

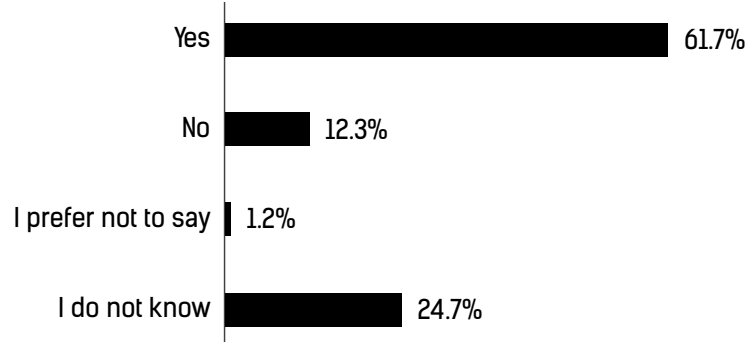
The Erasmus+ Programme provides an opportunity for students and staff with physical, mental or health-related conditions to take full advantage of its possibilities by providing a supplementary grant to cover their extra costs related to their disability-related access needs. The number of students with a physical, mental or health-related disability participating in the Erasmus+ Programme is available through the records of the students who successfully received the grant and indicated their disability. According to the European Commission's statistics about the Erasmus programme, during the academic year 2012/2013, 388 students with physical, mental or health-related conditions received a supplementary grant for their Erasmus study or traineeship experience (European Commission, 2013). This represents 0.14 % of the overall amount of both Erasmus students and trainees.

This chapter aims to investigate the various aspects of access to this supplementary grant for students with disabilities and their experience. It is crucial to underline that eligibility for supplementary grants varies across the different countries participating in the Erasmus+ Programme. To be eligible means that individuals meet the Erasmus+ special needs grant for physical, mental or health-related conditions grant application criteria in their country (place of residence). In some countries, individuals might need to be classified as a person with disabilities in their national system in order to apply for this grant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

61.7% of mobile students with disabilities stated that they were eligible to apply for the Erasmus+ special needs grant for physical, mental or health-related conditions, while 24.7% did not know whether they were eligible to apply for this supplementary Erasmus+ special needs grant and about 12.3% stated that

according to their knowledge, they were not eligible to apply for this Erasmus+ special needs grant.

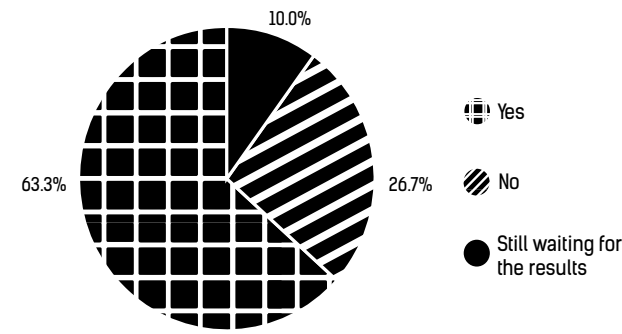


Graph 27 - Eligibility to apply for Erasmus+ special needs grant for physical, mental or health-related conditions

APPLICATIONS FOR ERASMUS+ SPECIAL NEEDS GRANT FOR PHYSICAL, MENTAL OR HEALTH-RELATED CONDITIONS

Taking a look at the number of people who applied for the Erasmus+ grant, 37% applied for the supplementary grant for special needs, while 63% did not. Out of those who did not apply, 54.3% were not aware of the opportunity. Regarding the students with disabilities who applied for this supplementary grant (n=30), 40% experienced barriers in the bureaucratic procedure.

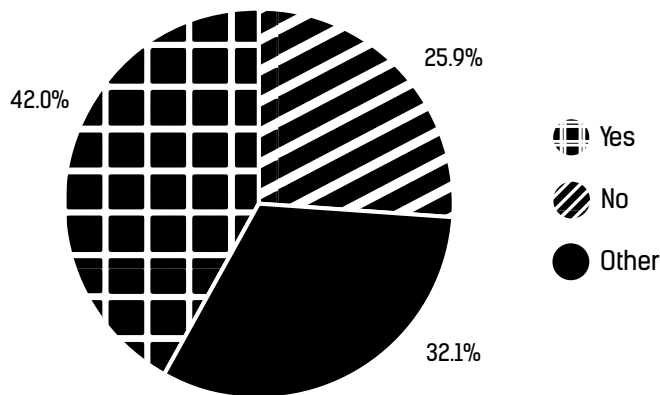
Almost two thirds (63.3%) of those who applied stated that they successfully received the grant. 26.7% of the applications were rejected, while 10% were still awaiting the results of the selection process, which was expected in Spring 2017.



Graph 28 - Success rate of applicants for the supplementary Erasmus+ special needs grant for physical, mental or health-related conditions

POSSIBILITY OF PRE-SELF FINANCING ACCESS NEEDS UNTIL THE RECEPTION THE ERASMUS+ SPECIAL GRANT

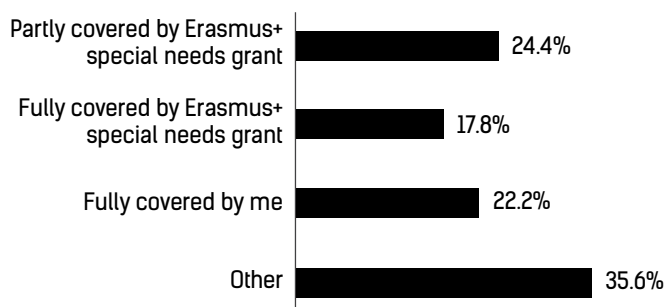
Out of the 81 students who went abroad, 42.0% indicated that it would be possible for them to pre-self finance their access needs, while 25.9% indicated that it would not be possible for them to pre-self finance them. It is important to note here that the matter of accessibility has many layers. Socio-economic backgrounds also play an important role in whether students are able to take a risk and participate in a study abroad experience or have to cancel their mobility opportunity.



Graph 29 - Possibility of pre-self finance access need

FINANCIAL COVERAGE FOR SUPPORT PERSON USER OR ANY EQUIVALENT USERS DURING THE MOBILITY

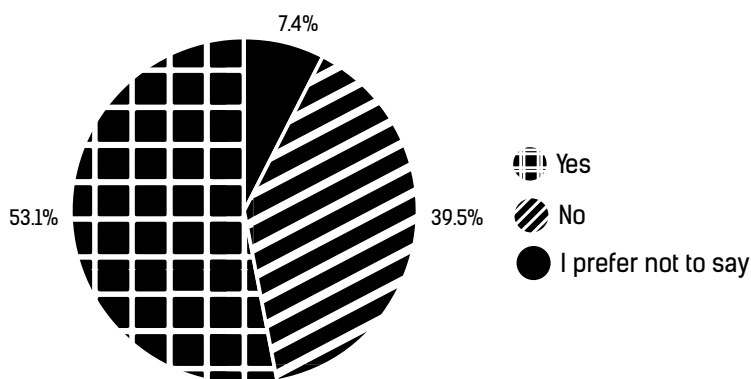
As some students require a support person, there could be an additional cost for the student with disabilities to have a support person at their host HEI. Out of the 45 respondents who have a support person, 24.4% stated that the financial cost of having this support person at their HEI was partly covered by the Erasmus+ special needs grant. Additionally, 17.8% stated this was fully covered by the Erasmus+ special needs grant, while 22.2% stated that this financial cost was fully covered by themselves and 35.6% indicated the costs were covered in another way.



Graph 30 - Cost coverage of students with disabilities with a support person

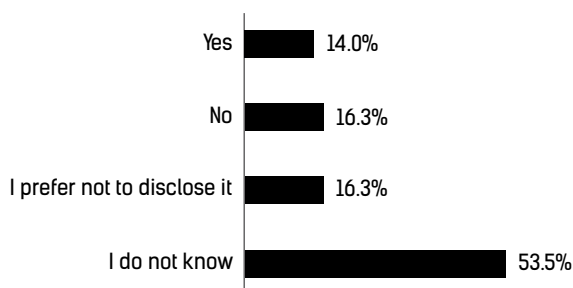
RECEPTION OF SOCIAL/DISABILITY ALLOWANCE

A small majority of the 81 students who went abroad (53.1%) received a social/disability allowance in the countries (place of origin), while 39.5% did not receive such allowance in their country.



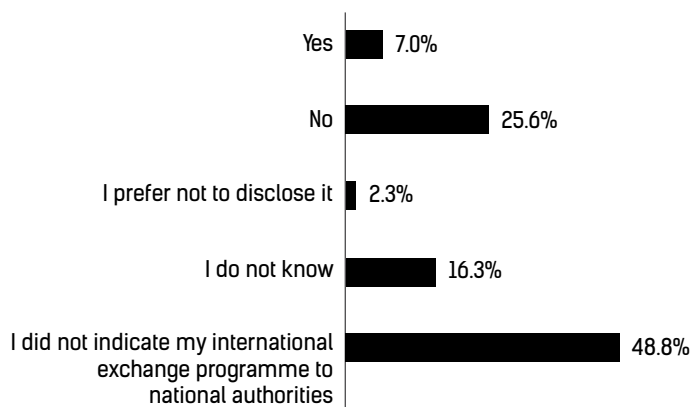
Graph 31 - Respondents who received a social/disability allowance in their country of origin

Out of the 43 students who received a social/disability allowance in their country (place of origin) 53.5% were not sure about the legislation and whether their allowance was portable outside their country. A small share knew that their allowance was portable outside their country (14%) or that their allowance was not portable outside their country (16.3%).



Graph 32 - Respondents who received a social/disability allowance in their country of origin and possibility of portability of the grant outside their country

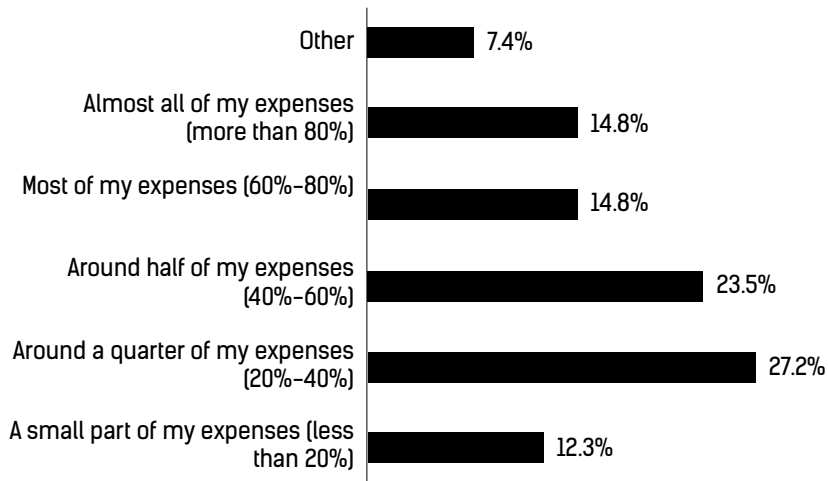
Taking a further look at the respondents who received a social/disability allowance in their country (place of origin), it can be seen that 48.8% did not indicate their participation in an exchange programme to the national authorities. Additionally, 25.6% experienced no restrictions with their national social/disability allowance during their exchange programme, while 7.0% did experience such restrictions.



Graph 33 - Restrictions with nationally & locally provided social/disability allowances for participation in an exchange programme

Taking a look at the overall expenses covered by the overall grant/scholarship for those who went abroad (n=81), it can be noticed that only a small share of respondents (14.8%) could cover most of their overall expenses (more than 80% of the full amount) and that 14.8% could cover a big part of their expenses with this overall

grant/scholarship (between 60%-80% of the full amount). Around half of the respondents could cover half or less of their overall expenses with their overall grant/scholarship.



Graph 34 - Cost coverage of overall grant/scholarship

CONCLUSION

Although there is a supplementary Erasmus+ special needs grant for physical, mental or health-related conditions, not every student with disabilities is aware of this opportunity yet. At the same time, there are also several barriers students have to face when applying for this grant and often little support is provided to the student during the application process. A variation of legislation regarding students with disabilities across the European Union makes the process complex and possibly creates unequal access to the supplementary Erasmus+ special needs grant for physical, mental or health-related conditions for students with disabilities across the EU.

The coverage for the cost of support persons, such as sign language interpreters or personal assistants was mentioned as the most challenging process for mobile students with disabilities. In countries where personal assistance systems are in place, there is an issue about the cross-national mobility as usually the

personal assistance system is tailored within its national settings to support the person with disabilities. Therefore, there are still unresolved issues in the policy implementation for short-term study mobility and traineeship arrangements when it comes to the free movement of European disabled citizens (EDF, 2011). Additional examples include disclosing issues with covering the health insurance for disabled people for short-term study or traineeship mobility between 3-6 months or up to 12 months. Health insurance still varies according to the national legislation and depends on how the disabled person's health insurance and insurance on equipment is arranged. Supplementary Erasmus+ special needs grant for physical, mental or health-related conditions is definitely a good tool to contribute to covering the access needs of a disabled person, but, as mentioned above, there are still areas which can hardly be covered by the supplementary grant (Fazekas, 2013). Various consultations with stakeholders from the higher education and disability sector – such as the Roundtable event on the portability of personal assistance at the European Parliament in 2014 - highlighted that there are still policy implementation barriers and financial and human resources constraints when it comes to the realisation of supporting the disabled person participating in an exchange programmes and moving across EU Member States for other reasons (ENIL, 2014).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- HEI should provide more information on the supplementary Erasmus+ special needs grant for physical, mental or health-related conditions and provide additional support to students applying for this grant.
- Recommendations by the Erasmus+ Higher Education Working Group focusing on the mobility of students with disabilities (European Commission, 2016) should be widely promoted and used by HEIs.
- Local student associations should promote available grant opportunities for students with disabilities in an accessible format.

CHAPTER 7: SATISFACTION WITH THE MOBILITY EXPERIENCE

INTRODUCTION

In chapter 3 and 4 it was shown that students with disabilities indicated the lack of information about the accessibility of the programme (42.2%), accessibility of the host city (19.1%), the accessibility of the host HEI (26.4%) and the accessibility of the workplace (18.5%) as one of the main obstacles to mobility. It confirms the assumption that the environment of the host country and the built environments are a key factor for students with disabilities to decide to go on exchange. Access to information and support about accessibility of the host university and host city are core elements for satisfactory mobility experience for students with disabilities. Information on additional financial support, availability of personal assistant, accessibility of learning materials and availability of sign language interpreters, accessibility of accommodation, accessibility of the city facilities such as public transport, accessibility of important buildings in the city, etc., are just some of the important elements that influence the overall experience. For students with disabilities, there are many risk factors and obstacles during their exchange. Besides the physical barriers and inaccessible settings of the host environment, there are other aspects which could negatively influence the perception students with disabilities have of their mobility experience. Behaviour and attitudinal barriers such as disability related stereotypes, prejudices and lack of assistance for students with disabilities experienced by students with disabilities are just a few of them.

This chapter analyses the overall satisfaction of the mobility experience, especially focusing on the accessibility of different elements in the overall mobility. The aim is to map the satisfaction

of students with various elements of mobility in order to provide useful input for stakeholders to improve the inclusiveness and accessibility of the mobility programmes. Students were also asked to present suggestions in order to improve the accessibility of the Erasmus+ Programme, since the user's view is a crucial element to take into consideration when reviewing and developing study and traineeship mobility for students in Higher Education, and overall of the Erasmus+ Programme.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SATISFACTION WITH THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE HOME HEI

The survey asked the respondents about their satisfaction with the services provided by the home HEI. These included: promotion of student exchange, information about accessibility and support during the mobility period, information about extra funding available, consultation about needs and preferences, contact during mobility period and assistance with any difficulties.

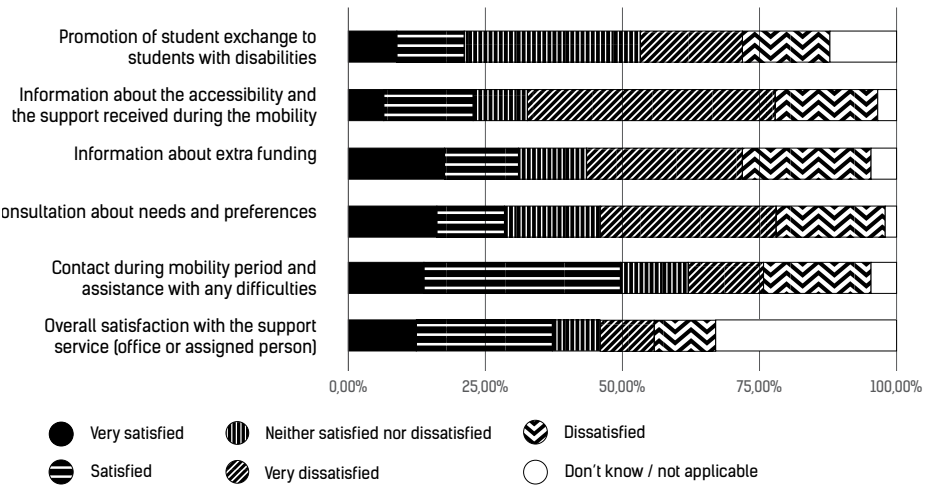
When asked about the **promotion of student exchange to students with disabilities**, 21% said they were satisfied or very satisfied with it. On the other hand, 34.55% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied. A large number of students (32.1%) stated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

A total of 22.5% of mobile students with disabilities were at least satisfied with the **information about accessibility and the support received during the mobility period**. On the other hand, 45% of the respondents were very dissatisfied and 18.8% were dissatisfied, making it a total of 63.8% at least dissatisfied students.

Regarding the **information about extra funding**, around 30% stated they were satisfied (17.3% very satisfied and 13.6% satisfied) with the information received from the home HEI. On the other hand, more than half of the respondents (51.7%) stated that

they were at least dissatisfied (28.4% of the respondents were very satisfied and 23.5% were dissatisfied). Finally, 12.3% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Almost half of the respondents (51.8%) stated that they were dissatisfied (32.1% of the respondents were less satisfied and 19.8% were dissatisfied) with the **consultation about their needs and preferences**. Only 28.4% of mobile students with disabilities said that they were satisfied (16% of mobile students with disabilities were very satisfied and 12.3% were satisfied) with the consultation and 17.3% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.



Graph 35 - Satisfaction with the services provided by home Higher Education Institution

Almost half of the respondents (49.4%) stated they were satisfied (13.6% were very satisfied and 35.8% were satisfied) with the **contact during mobility period and assistance with any difficulties**. From 33.3% of students with disabilities who said they were unsatisfied with the contact and assistance from the home HEI, 13.6% of the respondents were very dissatisfied and 19.8% were dissatisfied.

Finally, when asked to rate their **overall satisfaction with the support service (office or assigned person)** for students with disabilities at their home HEI, in total 37% said they are satisfied (12.4% are very satisfied and 24.7% satisfied) and 21% are

dissatisfied (9.9% very dissatisfied and 11.1% dissatisfied). Finally, 33.3% stated they are indecisive.

SATISFACTION WITH THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE HOST HEI TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The survey also asked the respondents about their satisfaction with the services provided by the host institution. These included information about support for students with disabilities, support from staff during international exchange period, consultation about needs and preferences, availability of accessible accommodation facilities and availability of affordable accessible accommodation facilities, support during lectures and exams (e.g. extra time during exams, pedagogical support, assistance in taking notes during lectures, receiving lecture notes in advance, etc.) and inclusion in student life.

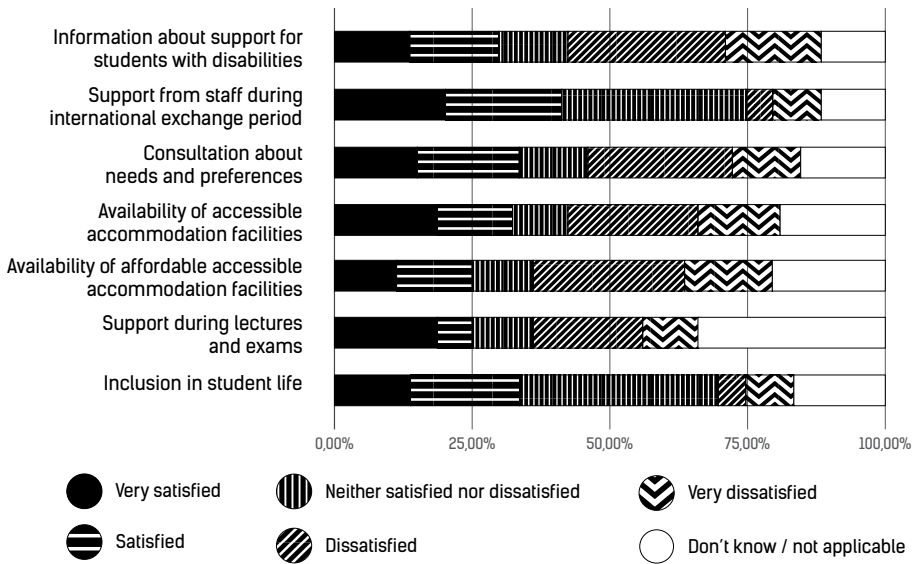
When asked about the **information about support for students with disabilities** provided by the host HEI, 29.6% stated that they were satisfied (13.6% were very satisfied and 16% were satisfied). On the other hand, 45.7% said that they were dissatisfied with the information about the support (28.4% of the respondents were very dissatisfied and 17.3% were dissatisfied).

Regarding the **support from host staff during international exchange period**, 40.7% of mobile students with disabilities were satisfied (19.8% were very satisfied and 21% were satisfied), 33.3% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. 13.6% stated that they were dissatisfied, meaning 4.9% of the respondents were very dissatisfied and 8.6% dissatisfied.

On one hand, 38.3% of mobile students with disabilities were dissatisfied with the **consultation about their needs and preferences** (25.9% of the respondents were very dissatisfied and 12.3% were dissatisfied). On the other hand, 33.3% said they were satisfied with this aspect (14.8% of mobile students with disabilities were very satisfied, 18.5% were satisfied). Finally, 12.3% were

neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Taking a further look at the **availability of accessible accommodation facilities and the availability of affordable accessible accommodation** we see that 32.1% said they were satisfied with the offer from which 18.5% of mobile students with disabilities were very satisfied, 13.6% were satisfied and 38.3% said they were dissatisfied (23.5% of the respondents were very dissatisfied and 14.8% were dissatisfied) and 19.8% were indecisive about the availability of accessible accommodation facilities. Further analysis of the **affordability of the accessible accommodation facilities shows that 43.2% of students with disabilities were dissatisfied** (27.2% of the respondents were very dissatisfied and 16% were dissatisfied), **24.7% were satisfied** (11.1% were very satisfied and 13.6% were satisfied) and 21% were indecisive about availability of affordable and accessible accommodation facilities.



Graph 36 - Satisfaction with the services provided by the host Higher Education Institution to students with disabilities

Support during lectures and exams (e.g. extra time during exams, pedagogical support, assistance in taking notes during lectures, receiving lecture notes in advance, etc.): 18.5% of mobile

students with disabilities were very satisfied, 6.2% were satisfied, 11.1% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 19.8% of the respondents were very dissatisfied and 9.9% were dissatisfied, and 34.6% were indecisive about support during lectures and exams. The survey also investigated how satisfied students with disabilities were with their **inclusion in student life**. A total of **33.3% said that they were satisfied** (13.6% were very satisfied and 19.8% were satisfied) and 14.6% were dissatisfied.

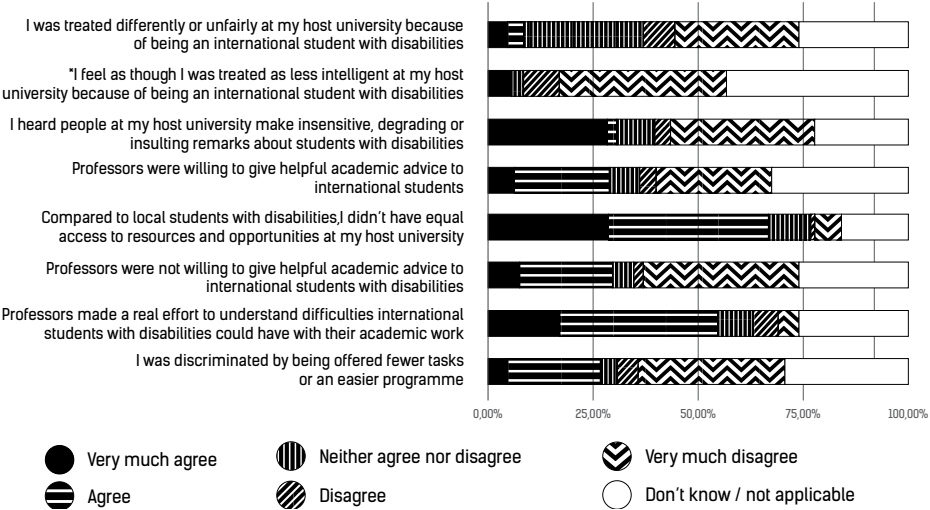
HOST HEI DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCE

The respondents of the survey were also asked about the **discrimination experience** at their host HEI. The main experiences were the feeling of being *treated differently, unfairly or treated as less intelligent*, if they were *discriminated by being offered fewer tasks or an easier programme* at their host university because of being an international student with disabilities. Additionally, the survey asked *if they heard people at their host university make insensitive, degrading or insulting remarks* about domestic and international students with disabilities. The survey also aimed at comparing them to local students with disabilities, if they felt they did not have equal access to resources and opportunities at their host HEI. Finally, the survey investigated if professors were willing to give helpful academic advice to international students with disabilities and if professors made a real effort to understand difficulties international students with disabilities could have had with their academic work.

In order to look at the students with disabilities discrimination experience at their host HEI, items from the International Friendly Campus Scale were used (Wang et al., 2014). Students were asked about their discrimination experiences, if they were treated differently or unfairly, treated as less intelligent, if they heard insulting remarks or did not have equal opportunities, and about the support they received from host university professors.

Firstly, respondents were asked if they feel they were **treated differently or unfairly at their host university because of being an international student with disabilities**. Among them, 37% of disagree and very much disagree with the statement, and 8.6% agree and very much agree with it. Finally, 25.9% of them said they were indecisive about the statement and 28.4% neither agree nor disagree.

Second, respondents were asked if they felt **they were treated as less intelligent at their host university because of being an international student with disabilities**. A total of 48.1% disagree and very much disagree with the statement, 6.2% very much agreed with it⁵ and 43.2% were indecisive about the statement.



Graph 37 - Experiences of being an international student with disabilities at the host Higher Education Institution

Third, respondents were asked if they **heard people at their host university make insensitive, degrading or insulting remarks** about domestic and international students with disabilities and 30.9% said they agree and very much agree with the statement and 38.3% disagree and very much disagree with it.

⁵ *The option *agree* was mistakenly missing from the questionnaire, so the option was not available for the respondents to choose.

Fourth, the **comparison was made with local students with disabilities, if they felt they did not have equal access to resources and opportunities at their host HEI**. A total of 28.3% of students said they agree with the statement, 31.3% disagree with it and 32.5% of mobile students with disabilities were indecisive about the statement.

Fifth, **66.7%** students said that **professors were willing to give helpful academic advice to international students** and 7.4% disagreed with the statement. Students were also asked if they feel that **professors were not willing to give helpful academic advice to international students with disabilities**. A total of 39.5% disagree with the statement, 29.6% agree with the statement and 25.9% were indecisive about the statement.

Sixth, respondents were also asked if they feel that **professors made a real effort to understand difficulties international students with disabilities could have with their academic work**. Among them, 54.3% said they agree, 11.1% said they disagree and 25.9% were indecisive about the statement.

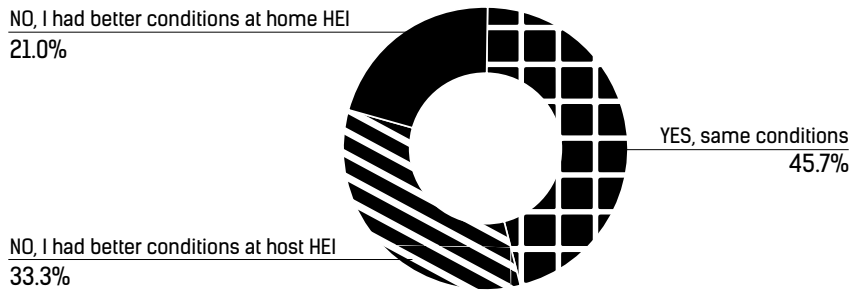
Finally, respondents were asked if they feel they were **discriminated by being offered fewer tasks or an easier programme**. A total of 39.5% said they disagree, 27.1% said they agree with this statement and 29.6% were indecisive about the statement.

OVERALL SATISFACTION AND EXPERIENCES OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS AND PERSONAL WELL-BEING

Finally, in the part of the academic success and personal well-being, respondents were asked about their employability after their stay abroad and if they can imagine working abroad in the future.

The survey asked respondents if they think they **had the same conditions for academic success and personal well-being at the host HEI compared to what they had at the home HEI**. Almost

half (45.7%) of mobile students with disabilities evaluated that they had the same conditions for academic success and personal well-being at the host HEI compared to what they had at their home HEI. A total of 33.3% had better conditions at the host HEI and 21% had better conditions at the home HEI.



Graph 38 - Conditions for academic success and personal well-being at the host Higher Education Institution compared to home Higher Education Institution

When asked about **the overall satisfaction** with their exchange programme, 83.8% were satisfied (56.3% of mobile participants with disabilities were very satisfied overall and 27.5% were satisfied). Among these, 15% said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 1.3% of the respondents were overall dissatisfied with their mobility experience.

Finally, in order to look into the effects that their stay abroad has on their **employability** and desire to work abroad, students were asked to tell us if they think they have **higher chances to find a job** thanks to their stay abroad and if they could imagine working abroad in the future. A majority of 75.3% of mobile students with disabilities think that they have higher chances to find a job thanks to their stay abroad, while 16% have not thought about this matter and 8.6% do not think they might have higher chances to find a job thanks to their stay abroad. A total of 88.8% of the mobile students with disabilities can imagine working abroad in the future, 3.7% replied that they cannot imagine working abroad and 7.4% of them were indecisive.

CONCLUSION

SUPPORT SERVICES AT HOST AND HOME HEI

Based on the results, it seems clear that there is a lack of information and assistance, specifically important for students with disabilities, about the accessibility of the overall mobility. Both home (63.8% dissatisfied students) and host (45.7% of dissatisfied students) HEIs have failed in providing such information and assistance to students with disabilities. A majority of 51.8% of the students were especially dissatisfied with the information about the extra funding. It is important to state how crucial the information provision and assistance are in order to increase the number of mobile students, students with disabilities especially. The lack of information about mobility is one of the major obstacles for students to become mobile as the ESNsurvey 2014 International experience and language learning results have shown (Muñoz et al., 2014).

The lack of information provision and assistance to students with disabilities might come from the lack of knowledge about the type of information and assistance students with disabilities might need. The results of this study show that there is a lack of satisfaction with consultation about students with disabilities needs and preferences at both home and host HEI. Although dissatisfied with the consultation of their needs, mobile students with disabilities were satisfied with the assistance to difficulties and maintaining contact with their home and host HEI during the mobility period with 49.4% (home HEI) and 40.7% (host HEI).

When it comes to accessibility and affordability of accommodation, a significant improvement is necessary as well. Students were dissatisfied both with the offer of accessible accommodation (38.3% dissatisfied) and the offer of affordable accommodation (43.2% of students with disabilities were dissatisfied).

Looking at the conditions for academic success and personal well-

being, almost half of mobile students with disabilities (45.7%) evaluated that they had the same conditions at the home and host HEI. 33.3% had better conditions at the host HEI and 21% had better conditions at the home HEI.

In conclusion, the results also indicate that students expected more than what they got from the services at their home HEI. Compared to the same services at the home and host HEI, students were more dissatisfied with the service at their home HEI.

DISCRIMINATION AT THE HOST HEI

Looking at discrimination students with disabilities experience at their host HEI, 30.9% heard people at their host university make insensitive, degrading or insulting remarks about domestic and international students with disabilities. Also, 28.3% said that compared to local students with disabilities, they felt they did not have equal access to resources and opportunities at their host HEI. Finally, 39.5% said they did not feel discriminated by being offered fewer tasks or easier programmes while 27.1% said they felt discriminated by being offered fewer tasks or easier programmes.

Students feel that the academic setting was supportive towards them since 66.7% of them said that professors were willing to give helpful academic advice and 54.3% stated that international students and professors made a real effort to understand difficulties international students with disabilities could have had with their academic work.

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

The ESNsurvey 2016 (Josek et al., 2016) included both students with and without disabilities and while the number of respondents with disabilities cannot be assessed with certainty, it can be assumed that the overwhelming majority were students without disabilities. In this chapter and in the next one, the findings from ESNsurvey 2016 will be used to compare the two groups of

students: students with (ESNsurvey 2018) and students without disabilities (ESNsurvey 2016). This comparison is a light reading of both studies as it must be acknowledged that these followed different methodologies, took place in different periods of time, and had potentially different respondents. Having said that, the research team still considers that the comparison of the main conclusions can lead to interesting realisations.

When asked about the overall satisfaction with their exchange programmes, 83.75% of students said that they were satisfied. If those numbers are compared with the numbers from the ESNsurvey 2016, where 87% of students said they were satisfied with their stay, it can be seen that the satisfaction with the stay abroad among students with disabilities and students without disabilities is very high.

Students were also very optimistic about their employability perspective since 75.30% said that they think they have higher chances to find a job thanks to their stay abroad. An important majority of 88.8% of the mobile students with disabilities said they can imagine working abroad, a number similar to the findings of the ESNsurvey 2016 results where 93% had the desire to work abroad.

When comparing the results of both studies, it can be concluded that when it comes to the satisfaction with their exchange programmes and desire to work abroad, exchange programmes have a similar effect in mobile students with and without disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a lack of information addressing the questions asked by the students with disabilities. It is necessary to provide information targeted for their needs and tailored to meet their needs and answer their questions. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in particular should be more aware of the needs of students with disabilities.

In order to decrease the fear of the unknown host environment, it is necessary to provide information about the accessibility of the host environment but also about the support services students with disabilities are entitled to in higher education. HEIs are not alone in the mobility process: relevant stakeholders such as the [EAIE Access and Diversity Expert Community](#) or the Erasmus+ Higher Education Working Group focusing on the mobility of students and staff with disabilities are in the field to provide advice, information for different actors in the mobility process. Student organisations, such as the Erasmus Student Network, are also suitable as students might be more confident to ask for advice from their peers instead of the institutions at their HEIs.

HEIs need to work more to improve the overall accessibility of host country environment.

The environment of the host country and the built environments of the HEI and the host city are key factors for students with disabilities to decide to go on exchange. Making the environment students with disabilities study and live in more accessible to meet their needs will greatly improve the mobility of this group of students. This means investing more financial resources into the build in environment, study materials and campus accommodation. This measure cannot be fully successful without the inclusion of other relevant stakeholders in the process. It also means investing more in human resources by hiring more people to assist students with disabilities. Finally, this also means providing adequate training for academic and non-academic staff.

More engagement from home HEIs

The results of this survey show that students expected more than what they got from the services at their home HEIs. In the survey, students marked the lack of information about the accessibility of the programme (42.2%), accessibility of the host city (19.1%), the accessibility of the host HEI (26.4%) and the accessibility of a workplace (18.5%) as some of the main obstacles to mobility. Home HEIs would provide up to date and detailed

information about the accessibility of the host HEIs and host cities. This information is necessary for students with disabilities to make the decision and to be confident about going abroad. The communication of the home HEIs with students should not finish when students go abroad, but the home HEIs should keep close contact with them and have regular check ups. Additionally, they should assist their students and if necessary act as liaison between the students and host HEIs.

Different actors need to collaborate and exchange their practices in the field of student mobility. Working towards inclusive exchange programmes requires everyone's commitment. Student organisations in particular could provide important information.

HEI should share practices within their structures and with other institutions to provide practical information to students with disabilities. They need to make a decision and be confident about going abroad - that is a key to make mobility programmes more accessible. A recommendation is also made to create a wider dialogue among International Relations Offices, disability offices, local authorities, student organisations and other relevant stakeholders and students with disabilities, where they are in the centre of communication - following the concept "Nothing about us without us" (Madrid Declaration, 2002). Besides the institutional support (referring to the HEI), it is important to enhance peer-to-peer support among students with disabilities. Local branches of Erasmus Student Network and ESN volunteers who are supporting international students can foster the integration of all students, including students with disabilities in the local community and provide opportunities to meet other students with and without disabilities (De La Rosa and Reina, 2011). A good example of the role student organisations and their project can have in improving the conditions for students with disabilities is MappED!, an ESN service to map HEIs' accessibility for students with disabilities with the aim to create a map (a web-based information tool) about the accessibility and services of European HEIs for students with disabilities.

LIST OF GRAPHS

- 1 - Gender Distribution
- 2 - Study disciplines/subject areas
- 3 - Participation in student exchange programmes
- 4 - Income of the family of origin of students with disabilities
- 5 - Provisions of assigned person/office supporting students with disabilities
- 6 - Contacts with the office/assigned person for students with disabilities
- 7 - Information provision about exchange programmes by home Higher Education Institution
- 8 - Sources of information about exchange programme opportunities
- 9 - Information provision about different types of exchange programmes
- 10 - Type of information students receive from HEIs
- 11 - Usefulness of information relevant to access needs of their disability
- 12 - Information provision about supplementary grants on top of Erasmus+ scholarship
- 13 - Start of study exchange
- 14 - Duration of stay
- 15 - Level of studies
- 16 - Previous exchange experience
- 17 - Reception of Erasmus+ supplementary grants
- 18 - Sources of information about study abroad opportunities
- 19 - Factors influencing the choice of a destination city
- 20 - Factors influencing the destination institution
- 21 - Start of preparation for study abroad experience
- 22 - Disclosure of disability
- 23 - Reception of support for preparations
- 24 - Difficulty in finding accommodation
- 25 - Type of accommodation
- 26 - Major problems during mobility

- 27 - Eligibility to apply for Erasmus+ special needs grant for physical, mental or health-related conditions
- 28 - Success rate of applicants for the supplementary Erasmus+ special needs grant for physical, mental or health-related conditions
- 29 - Possibility of pre-self finance access needs
- 30 - Cost coverage of students with disabilities with a support person
- 31 - Respondents who received a social/disability allowance in their country of origin
- 32 - Respondents who received a social/disability allowance in their country of origin and possibility of portability of the grant outside their country
- 33 - Restrictions with nationally & locally provided social/disability allowances for participation in exchange programme
- 34 - Cost coverage of overall grant/scholarship
- 35 - Satisfaction with the services provided by home Higher Education Institution
- 36 - Satisfaction with the services provided by the host Higher Education Institution to students with disabilities
- 37 - Experiences of being an international student with disabilities at the host Higher Education Institution
- 38 - Conditions for academic success and personal well-being at the host Higher Education Institution compared to home Higher Education Institution

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- EC** - European Commission
- ESN** - Erasmus Student Network
- HEI** - Higher Education Institution
- IRO** - International Relations Office

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ABOUT ESN

The [Erasmus Student Network](#) (ESN) is the biggest inter-disciplinary European student organisation in the field of student mobility. ESN is a non-political, non-profit and non-religious organisation with over 13.000 volunteer members from local student groups (sections) in more than 1000 Higher Education Institutions in 42 countries. ESN supports educational, social and cultural integration of international students and provides practical information for incoming and outgoing students about various exchange programmes. ESN acts in the fields of Culture, Education and Youth, Environmental Sustainability, Health and Well-being, Skills and Employability, and Social Inclusion. Furthermore, ESN provides intercultural experiences to students who cannot access a period abroad (internationalisation at home). The vision of ESN is the enrichment of society through international students – thus, ESN works to foster the mobility of students under the principle of Students Helping Students. ESN provides its services annually to about 220,000 international students in Europe and beyond. ESN's activities comprise hundreds of projects developed at all levels.

Some of the main international projects and programmes of the Erasmus Student Network are:

- 1. ESNsurvey** (esn.org/esnsurvey) is a European-wide research project covering different topics concerning mobility and education. It is conducted annually and surveys students at Higher Education Institutions, with an average response rate of 15,000 answers. Starting in 2005, the ESNsurvey is the biggest regular European research project planned and carried out entirely by students for students. So far, the ESNsurvey has investigated upon the following topics – Experience of Studying Abroad (2005), Exchange Students' Rights (2006), Generation Mobility (2007), Exchanging Cultures (2008), Information for Exchange (2009), E-Value-ate Your Exchange (2010), Exchange,

Employment and Added Value (2011), Exchange: Creating Ideas, Opportunities and Identity (2013), International Experience and Language Learning (2014), Local integration, economic impact and accompanying measures in international mobility (2015), and International Friendliness of Universities (2016).

2. **SocialErasmus** (socialerasmus.esn.org) gives international students an opportunity to help local communities in several ways through the interaction between students and local communities. At the same time, international students gain experience, knowledge, openness and discover their love for Europe! Erasmus in Schools, a sub-programme within SocialErasmus connects international students with local schools with the goal of promoting mobility and intercultural dialogue at an early age. ESN's local sections organise visits to elementary and secondary schools so that international students can do a wide range of activities that include country and culture presentations, language sessions and mobility promoting activities.
3. **ExchangeAbility and MappED!** (exchangeability.esn.org) are complementary programmes aimed at improving the conditions for students with disabilities going on an exchange and making ESN more accessible as an organisation. Sections are encouraged to engage students with disabilities at their universities in the work for international students. Through participation and involvement in different activities, students with disabilities are given an opportunity to experience the international and intercultural atmosphere associated with the exchange programmes. The long term goal of the programme is to encourage an increasing number of students with disabilities to go on an exchange. MappED! (mapped.eu) is a service which aims at providing equal opportunities to students with disabilities for their participation in the Erasmus+ programme. The platform provides students with information on the accessibility of university facilities as well as surrounding locations, through a web platform supported by a mobile application. Through a new project (EPFIME) that started in

April 2019, coordinated by the Flemish organisation [SIHO](#), all the content of MappED! will be merged into [inclusivemobility.eu](#), and extended with information about policies, grants and much more with the aim of providing a centralised source of information on inclusive mobility.

4. **ESNcard** ([esncard.org](#)) is the membership and discount card of ESN. ESN sections distribute the card to their volunteers and international students. The card offers a range of discounts at the local, national and international levels. Annually, ESN issues about 150.000 cards.
5. **ESNblog** ([esn.org/blog](#)) is a platform aimed at giving a voice to the Erasmus Generation. The blog covers topics of interest to the international student community, particularly those who have been abroad as part of a mobility programme. This ranges from blog articles offering advice on living abroad, to discussions on how studying and living abroad can improve one's employability.

Contact: if you have any questions or would like to know more about ESN, please contact us directly at **secretariat@esn.org**. You can also find us at our office on Rue Joseph II, 120, 1000 Brussels, Belgium, or on our website [esn.org](#).

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