

Students and Higher Education Reform

Survey among students in
higher education institutions,
in the EU Member States,
Croatia, Iceland, Norway and
Turkey

Special Target Survey

Summary

Fieldwork: February 2009

Publication: March 2009

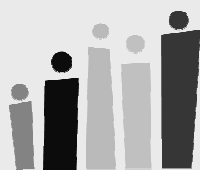
This survey was requested by Directorate-General Education and Culture and coordinated by Directorate-General Communication

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Flash Eurobarometer Series
#260

Students and Higher Education Reform *Special Target Survey*

Survey conducted by The Gallup Organization
Hungary upon the request of Directorate-
General Education and Culture



EUROBAROMETER

Coordinated by Directorate-General
Communication

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THE GALLUP ORGANIZATION

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Introduction

“Europe has around 4,000 higher education institutions, with almost 19 million students and 1.5 million staff. Some European universities are amongst the best in the world, but overall potential is not used to the full. Curricula are not always up-to-date, not enough young people go to university after finishing school and not enough adults have ever attended university. European universities often lack the management tools and funding to match their ambitions. Governments and higher education institutions are looking for ways to creating better conditions for universities.

The European Commission has published a modernisation agenda for universities which was welcomed by the Member States and main stakeholders in higher education. The modernisation agenda for universities is part of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs. The main fields of reform are:

- **Curricular reform:** The three cycle system (bachelor-master-doctorate), student-centred learning, flexible learning paths, recognition and mobility.
- **Governance reform:** University autonomy, strategic partnerships, including with enterprises, quality assurance.
- **Funding reform:** Diversified sources of university income better linked to performance, promoting equity, access and efficiency, including the possibility of introducing tuition fees, together with students’ loan facilities”.

This special target survey “*Flash Eurobarometer No 260 – Students and Higher Education Reform*” requested by the Directorate-General Education and Culture had a target population of higher education students in 31 countries: the 27 EU Member States, Croatia, Iceland, Norway and Turkey.

The objectives of this special target survey were:

- to identify opinions about access and equity in the higher education system
- to identify the purposes of higher education according to students within the system
- to assess opinions on the quality and transparency of the higher education institutions (HEIs)
- to identify students’ plans for - and obstacles to - studying abroad
- to discuss issues such as recognition of short study periods abroad and ECTS credit points
- to identify opinions about the greater cooperation of universities and businesses, and the need to foster an entrepreneurship mindset as part of higher education programmes
- to identify the post-graduation plans of Bachelor and Masters level students.

The survey’s fieldwork was carried out from 12 February to 20 February 2009. Almost 15,000 randomly-selected students in HEIs were interviewed in the 27 Member States of the EU, Croatia, Iceland, Norway and Turkey. The survey was primarily carried out by telephone with WebCATI (web-based computer assisted telephone interviewing) and a face-to-face (F2F) methodology.

Main findings

Higher education systems - opinions about access and costs

- More than four in five higher education students in the 31 surveyed countries agreed that all qualified students should have the right to study in the higher education system (88%).
- On average, half of the interviewed students were convinced that universities should have the right to select students which matched the institute's profile (50%); in contrast, 48% supported the idea that HEIs should admit all students.
- According to almost two-thirds of students (65%), higher education should be free of charge; in contrast, a third of respondents believed that student fees were acceptable when grants and loans were available (33%).
- Strong support was given to the idea of programmes focusing on skills that meet the demands of today's workplace: 9 in 10 students.

Purposes of higher education

- 97% of students believed it was important to provide students with the knowledge and skills they needed to be employable, 91% agreed that the enhancement of personal development was (very or rather) important and 87% of respondents considered that the education of people to play an active role in society was an important aim of higher education.

Quality and transparency of higher education institutions

- Most frequently, students agreed that independent reports on the quality of universities and programmes would help students to decide where to study (83%); a similar proportion agreed that students choose where to study on the basis of the quality/reputation of the institution (83%). Overall, 81% students should be involved in quality reports and rankings of HEIs.

Mobility and Recognition

- Two-fifths of students in higher education said that they had never planned to study abroad (41%), and 11% stated that they had planned to do so but gave up. One-third of students said they did intend to study in another country (33%).
- The most frequently mentioned obstacle to studying abroad was a lack of funds: a majority of 61% of those said this had been a *very big or big obstacle*.

Cooperation of universities and businesses and entrepreneurship in higher education

- A large majority of 87% of surveyed respondents (strongly or rather) agreed that it was important for HEIs to foster innovation and an entrepreneurial mindset.

Post-graduation plans

- Three-quarters of students working towards a first cycle (Bachelor) degree said they wanted to continue their studies - either to a second cycle (Masters programme) or to find work and resume their studies later on a part-time basis (75%).
- As regards second cycle students (on a Masters course), 4 in 10 planned to continue their studies after graduation (42%) and a similar number did not have that intention (44%). In addition, 14% of these students were undecided about post-graduation plans.

1. Higher education systems - opinions about access and costs

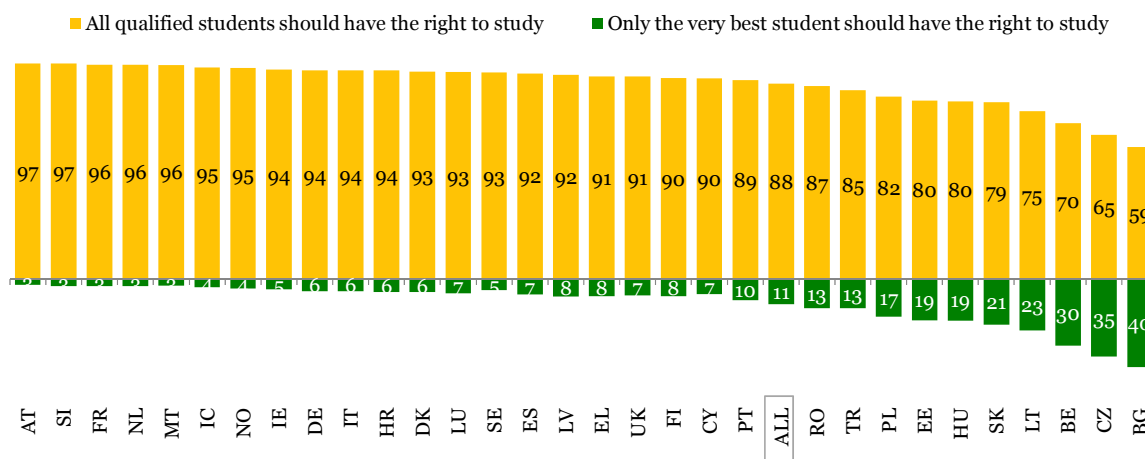
1.1 Right to study in the higher education system

Respondents were asked whether the right to study in HEIs should be granted to all qualified students or only to the very best students. More than four in five students in higher education in the 31 surveyed countries agreed that all qualified students should have the right to study in the higher education system (88%); 1 in 10 felt that this should be reserved for the very best students (11%).

In all but three countries at least three-quarters of higher education students felt that all qualified students should have the right to study in a HEI. This view was most strongly supported in Austria and Slovenia (both 97%), France, the Netherlands and Malta (all 96%); only 3% of respondents in these countries argued that only the very best students should have the right to enter such a programme.

The exceptions were Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Belgium, where from 30%-40% higher education students felt that only the very best students had the right to enter higher education.

Right to study in the higher education system



Q1A. I would like to ask you a few questions on your opinion about the higher education system in general.
Which statement do you agree with more?
% Base: all respondents, by country

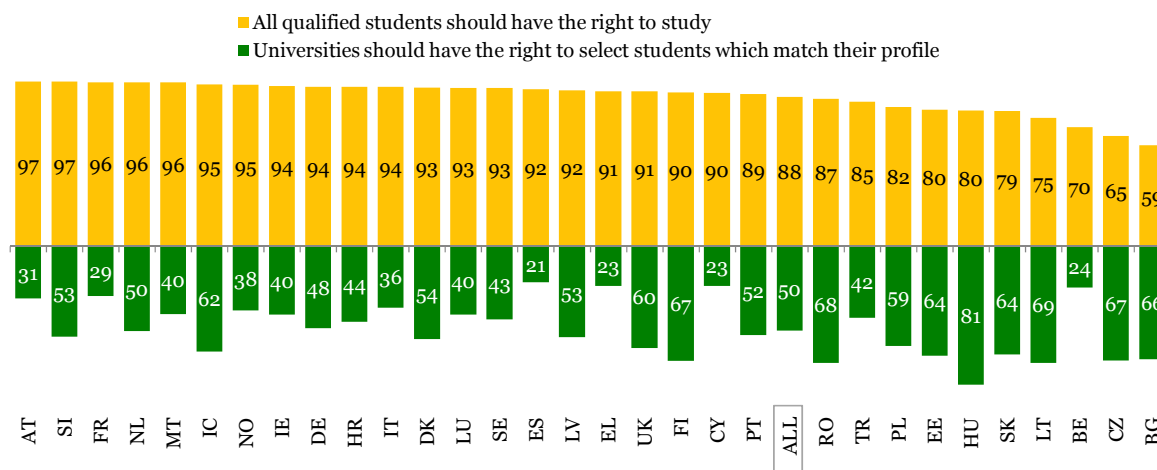
1.2 Admittance to the higher education system

Opinions regarding the admittance to the higher education system were balanced and showed that, on average, half of the interviewed students were convinced that universities should have the right to select students which matched the institute's profile (50%); in contrast, 48% supported the idea that HEIs should admit all students.

Approximately three-quarters of respondents in Spain and Belgium (both 76%), Greece (75%) and Cyprus (74%) thought that all students should be admitted to the higher education system; less than a quarter of interviewees in these countries felt that universities should have the right to be selective in choosing their students (21%-24%). Students in higher education in Hungary clearly defended the right of universities to select students who matched their desired profile (81% vs. 17% in favour of admittance for all). Approximately two-thirds of respondents in Lithuania (69%), Romania (68%), the Czech Republic and Finland (both 67%), and Bulgaria (66%) took a similar position.

In all countries, the right of all qualified students to study was defended by more than half of higher education students (between 59% and 97%); on the other hand, the right of universities to select students who matched their profile was supported by lower ratios of respondents - between 21% and 81% depending on the country. On average, 88% of interviewees agreed with education for all qualified students, and half agreed with criteria for student selection by the faculty (50%).

Right to study and admittance in the higher education system



Q1A-B. I would like to ask you a few questions on your opinion about the higher education system in general.
Which statement do you agree with more?
%, Base: all respondents, by country

There were large variations between the other EU countries. For example, in Spain and Greece, 9 in 10 interviewees defended the right of all qualified students to study in the higher education system (92% and 91%, respectively) and approximately one-fifth believed that universities should have the right to select students who matched their profile (21% and 23%, respectively; 68-71 percentage points differences). In contrast, in Lithuania and Slovakia, roughly three-quarters of respondents opted for the proposition that all qualified students should have the right to study (75% and 79%, respectively) and approximately two-thirds agreed with criteria for student selection at university (69% and 64%).

1.3 Costs of higher education

According to almost two-thirds of students currently in the higher education system (65%), higher education should be free of charge; a third of respondents believed that student fees were acceptable when grants and loans were available (33%). In 25 of the surveyed countries, a majority of respondents opted for the proposition that higher education should be free of charge. In sharp contrast, students in the Netherlands (61%), Luxembourg (60%), Iceland (55%) and Belgium (51%) thought that student fees were acceptable when combined with grants and loans; in these countries, only 37% - 49% of interviewees supported the idea of free higher education. Greece had the most students in favour of free higher education (94%).

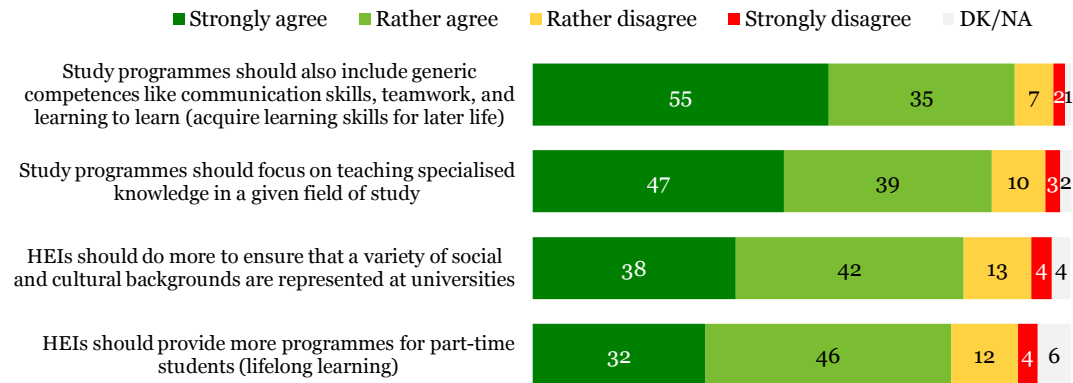
1.4 Higher education institutions and their study programmes

Students were asked to what extent they agreed that there should be more part-time courses, a greater variety of courses to meet varied social/cultural backgrounds, a focus on specialised courses and courses that include modules that meet the demands of today's workplace.

Strongest support went to programmes that include generic competences (to meet the demands of today's workplace): on average, 9 in 10 students agreed. Also strongly supported, by 86% of respondents, was the proposition that study programmes should focus on teaching specialised knowledge in given fields of study. Approximately one in eight students disagreed (13%). Overall, 8 in 10 students agreed that HEIs should do more to ensure that a variety of social and cultural

backgrounds were represented at universities (80%) and approximately three-quarters considered that HEIs should offer more programmes for part-time students (78%).

Higher education institutions and their study programmes

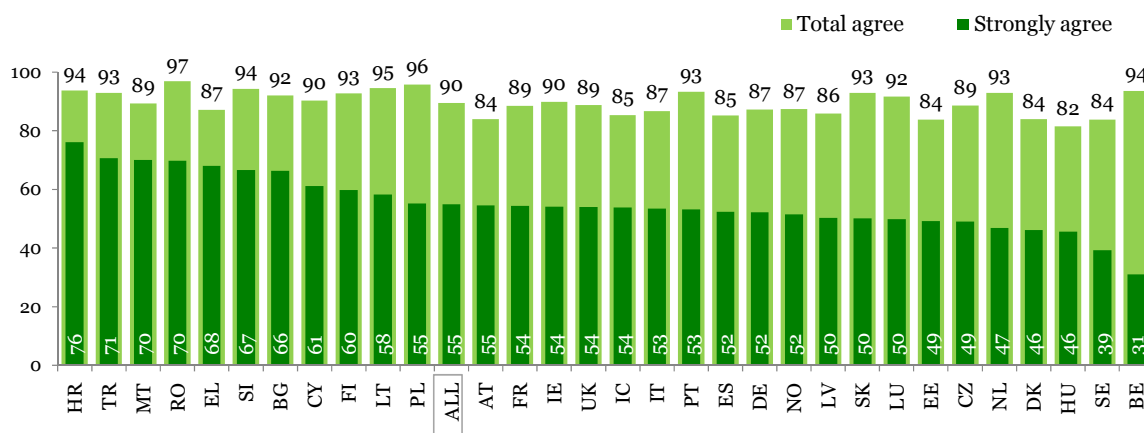


Q2. How much would you agree or disagree with the following statements?
%, Base: all respondents

1.4.1 Should there be more opportunities to acquire skills to meet the demands of today's workplace - communication skills, teamwork, and learning to learn?

Considering the proportion of respondents who *strongly agreed* that communication skills, teamwork and “learning to learn” should be part of study programmes, we noticed variations of up to 45 percentage points between EU countries. While less than two-fifths of respondents in Belgium and Sweden (31% and 39%, respectively) strongly supported such programmes, three-quarters of interviewees in Croatia strongly agreed (76%). A high demand for opportunities to acquire such skills was also seen in Turkey, Malta and Romania: 70%-71% of students in these countries strongly agreed that study programmes should develop generic competences to meet the demands of today's workplace. Overall 9 out of 10 students across all countries agreed with this statement.

Study programmes should also include generic competences like communication skills, teamwork and learning to learn (acquire learning skills for later life)



Q2. How much would you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Base: all respondents
%, "Total agree" = "Strongly agree" + "Rather agree", by country

1.4.2 Should there be courses with more specialised knowledge in given fields of study?

In all surveyed countries, at least two-thirds of respondents agreed that study programmes should focus on teaching specialised knowledge in a given field of study. The backing for this proposal ranged from 67% in Denmark to 95% in Latvia, with 85%, on average, agreeing in the 31 countries.

On average, 47% of higher education students *strongly demanded* more specialised courses. In Belgium, Denmark and Finland such a request was not as frequent as in other Member States: between 20% and 29% of interviewees in these three countries *strongly agreed* that study programmes should focus on teaching specialised knowledge. In contrast, in Romania (68%), Latvia and Croatia (both 66%), and Bulgaria (65%) roughly two-thirds of students strongly agreed with this statement.

1.4.3 Should there be a variety of social and cultural backgrounds within universities?

Opinions as to whether HEIs should do more to ensure that a variety of social and cultural backgrounds were represented in universities varied considerably between individual countries. The highest ratios of students in the system who *strongly agreed* with such an opinion were recorded in Greece (63%), Turkey (62%) and Malta (58%). At the opposite end of the distribution, less than one in four students in Finland (13%), the Netherlands (17%), Belgium and Norway (both 22%), and Sweden (24%) strongly believed that more efforts were necessary to ensure the existence of a variety of social and cultural backgrounds within universities. In all countries, at least half of the students (totally) agreed with the statement under consideration (with 80% agreeing on average).

1.4.4 Should there be more programmes for part time students?

As with a call for more diversity, the suggestion to have more “lifelong learning” (more part-time courses) was backed by over three-quarters of students (78% totally agreed). Sweden (64%), Germany and the Netherlands (both 66%) recorded the lowest total level of support for such programmes. The highest overall demand for such “lifelong learning” courses was recorded in Portugal (95%).

1.4.5 Analysis by socio-demographic segments – main findings

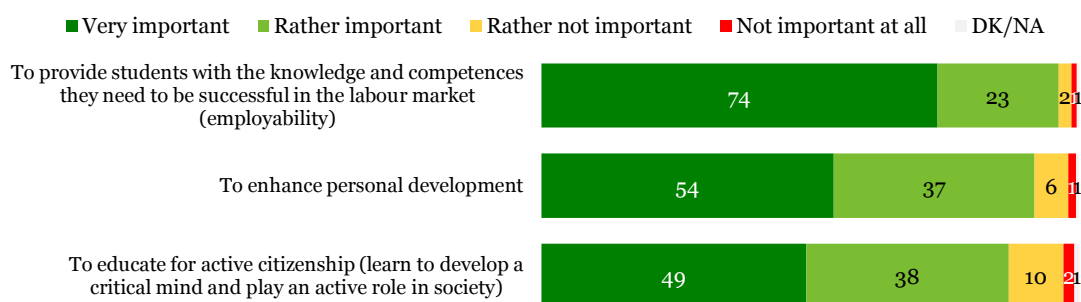
Women were more likely to strongly agree that study programmes should include opportunities to acquire communication skills, teamwork, and learning to learn abilities (58% vs. 51% of men) to meet the demands of today’s workplace.

Part-time Masters level students were more liable to strongly request specialised courses (54% vs. 45%-47% of all other types of students). Engineering students were less likely than several of their counterparts to strongly believe that HEIs should make efforts to ensure access for a variety of social and cultural backgrounds (e.g. 33% vs. 40%-43% of students in the fields of languages, other social sciences, teacher training or other humanities). Higher levels of strong support for more programmes for part-time students were shown by those aged over 25 (strongly agree: 39% vs. 30%-31% of other age groups) and by part-time Masters level students (45% vs. 32%-35% of all other types of students).

2. Purposes of higher education

Students were asked about three objectives of higher education: to improve students' employability, to enhance personal development and to educate people to play an active role in society. Overall, all three objectives were considered as important: 97% of interviewees believed it was (very or rather) important to provide students with the knowledge and skills they needed to be successful in the labour market, 91% agreed that the enhancement of personal development was (very or rather) important and 87% of respondents supported the education of people to play an active role in society.

Purposes of higher education



Q2.1. According to you how important is each of the following purposes of higher education?
%, Base: all respondents

Individual country results showed eight countries giving 99%-100% support for the importance of providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in the labour market: Belgium, Bulgaria, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Finland, Lithuania and Poland. The lowest levels of support were seen in Austria and Greece (90% and 91%, respectively).

The country data showed large variations between the most and least likely students saying that enhancing personal development was a *very important* objective of higher education: while 8 in 10 respondents in Turkey held this opinion (81%), only 29% of students in Belgium agreed (a 52 percentage points difference). Between 70%-78% of students in Greece, Croatia, Cyprus and Malta also said enhanced personal development was a *very important* goal of higher education.

On the subject of students being educated to become active citizens, the results showed greater variations between countries. For example, while roughly three-quarters of students in Germany (74%), Denmark (75%) and Finland (78%) considered it was important for people to develop a critical mind in order to play an active role in society, many more, 93%-95%, respondents in Portugal, Turkey, Romania and Malta supported the proposition.

2.1 Analysis by socio-demographic segments (main findings)

Looking at socio-demographic groupings, the results regarding the need to provide students with the knowledge to be successful in the labour market showed that more women (77% vs. 70% of men), more students aged 18-22 (75%-76% vs. 70% of those aged over 24), and more students who had completed one year in the higher education system (77% vs. 72%-73% of those who had finished at least three years) believed that this objective was a *very important* one.

Women were more liable to see the enhancement of personal development as being a very important goal of higher education (57% vs. 51% of men). The same held true for students in the field of other social sciences when compared to students in almost all the other fields (61% vs. 49%-56% of all other fields except other humanities).

When the views about educating people to play an active role in society were considered, women were more likely to consider this purpose as being very important (52% vs. 46% of men). Engineering students were the least likely to see the benefit of providing an education that developed citizens to play an active role in society (41% vs. 47%-57% of students in all other fields).

3. Quality and transparency of higher education institutions

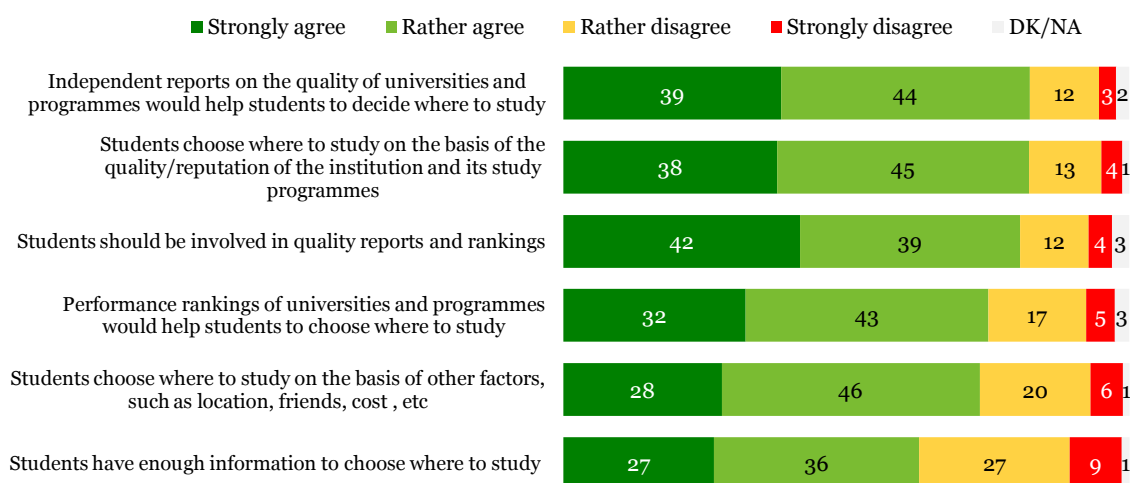
Most frequently, students (strongly or rather) agreed that independent reports on the quality of universities and their programmes would help students to decide where to study (83%); a similar proportion agreed that students choose where to study on the basis of the quality/reputation of the institution and its study programmes (83%).

Overall, 81% of respondents in higher education believed that students should be involved in quality reports and rankings of HEIs. From all the statements presented to the students, this was the one that was most frequently “strongly” supported: two-fifths of respondents *strongly agreed* with the involvement of students in quality reports and rankings of HEIs (42%).

Three-quarters of students agreed that performance rankings of universities and programmes would help students to choose where to study (75%) and a similar number agreed that students choose where to study on the basis of other factors, such as location, friends, cost, etc. (74%).

Having in mind all of the six statements presented to students, they were the least likely to agree that students have enough information to help them to choose where to study (63%). More than a third of respondents did not feel that the available information was sufficient for choosing a HEI (36%).

Quality and transparency of the higher education institutions

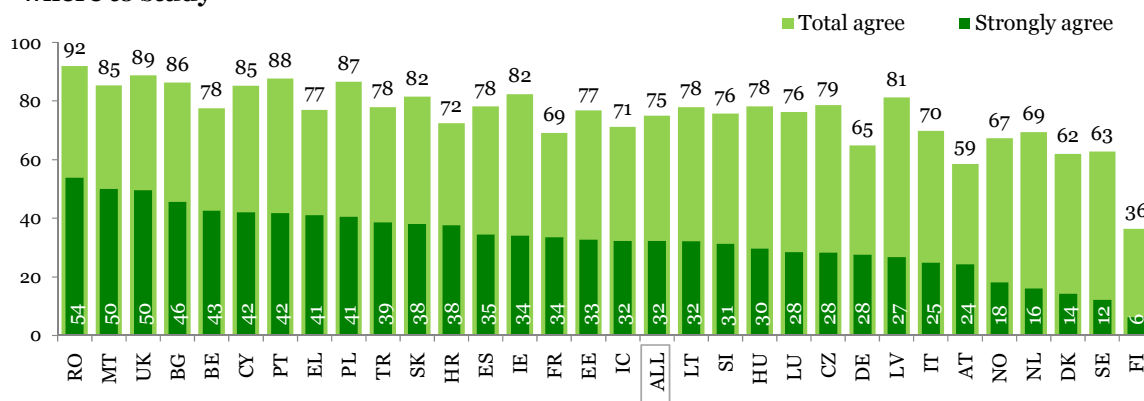


Q3. To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements?
%, Base: all respondents

The need for independent performance rankings

Fifty-four percent of students in Romania and just 6% of those in Finland strongly agreed that universities’ performance rankings would help students to choose where to study; considering all six statements, these results showed one of the highest variations between students giving the strongest levels of support - a difference of 48 percentage points. Malta and the UK (both 50%), and Bulgaria (46%), were the closest to Romania in terms of supporting performance rankings. In contrast, besides Finland, examples of countries where less than one-fifth of interviewees strongly believed that universities’ performance rankings would help in the decision-making process were Sweden (12%), Denmark (14%), the Netherlands (16%) and Norway (18%). (Charts for all six statements are available in the Analytical Report).

Performance rankings of universities and programmes would help students to choose where to study



Q3. To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: all respondents

%, "Total agree" = "Strongly agree" + "Rather agree", by country

Quality of the institution

An analysis of country data showed that in Spain (62%), Croatia (63%) and Austria (65%), less than two-thirds of respondents (strongly or rather) agreed that an institution's quality or reputation was at the basis of a student's choice of where to study. On the other hand, the ratio of those who held that opinion reached 95% in the UK and 94% in Poland and Latvia. Overall, 82% strongly or rather agreed.

Importance of other factors in the choice of university

In all surveyed countries, at least half of the respondents stated that factors such as location, friends and cost were considered in choosing where to study. Feelings that considerations other than the quality of higher institutions were important were the most prominent in Poland (89%), Ireland (85%) and Luxembourg (84%). This proposition found the lowest level of support in Malta and Estonia (both 58%) and Hungary (61%). Eight of the 11 countries showing a low level of support were among those who joined the Union in the post-2004 period. Overall, 74% strongly or rather agreed.

Information available to students

Looking at the percentages of students who either "strongly and rather agreed" that students had sufficient information to make a choice, the individual countries showed quite large variations. While four in five students in the UK (82%), Estonia (81%) and the Czech Republic (80%) agreed that such information was sufficient, just a third of students in Greece felt the same way (33%). Overall, just 63% of students strongly or rather agreed.

Independent performance rankings

Looking at all six statements discussed in this chapter, opinions about the role of independent reports on the quality of universities and their programmes showed the least variation between individual countries (a difference of 24 percentage points - "strongly agree + rather agree" responses). These reports would be considered extremely helpful by half of the students in Romania, the UK and Iceland (50%-51% *strongly agreed*). The least likely to *strongly* believe in the proposition were respondents in Denmark (25%), the Netherlands and Belgium (both 27%). Roughly two-thirds of students in Belgium (68%) and Turkey (69%) agreed that such reports would help them to decide where to study, and about 9 in 10 in the UK and Portugal (92%), Romania, Slovenia and Poland (all 89%) held a similar opinion. Overall, 83% strongly or rather agreed.

Active role for students in quality reports and rankings of HEIs

This proposition garnered the most support in Slovenia (61% strongly agreed and 93% strongly or rather agreed), Slovakia (55%, 92%) and Romania (54%, 89%). On the other hand, only 11% of students in Finland strongly agreed and 46% of the respondents in the same country strongly or rather agreed that students should be involved in quality reports and rankings. Considering all six propositions, these results showed the highest variation (50 percentage points) between individual countries giving the strongest levels of support. In addition to Finland, less than a third of students in several countries *strongly* supported the involvement of students in quality reports and rankings: Italy (30%), the Netherlands, France and Belgium (all 31%), Latvia and Lithuania (both 32%).

3.1 Analysis by socio-demographic segments (main findings)

Part-time students at the Masters level were more likely to strongly agree that students choose a university based on its quality or reputation (46% vs. 36%-39% for all other types of student). Looking at fields of study, we found that medical students were more likely than some of their counterparts to consider that an institution's quality or reputation was at the basis of a student's choice of where to study (for example 41% vs. 35% of students in other humanities).

When choosing where to study, factors such as location, friends or cost were emphasised less by students in the fields of engineering, business and economic studies, and medical students in comparison to their counterparts (26% vs. 30%-33% in all other fields). Part-time students seemed more likely to strongly agree that students were in possession of sufficient information to enable them to choose where to study (32%-34%% vs. 24%%-27% of full-time students).

The over 24 year-olds were the least likely to strongly believe that performance rankings of universities and programmes would be of help in choosing an HEI (27% vs. 32%-35% of all other age groups). Involvement of students in quality reports and rankings was strongly supported by students in the field of health studies (47%% vs. 38%-43%% in all other fields).

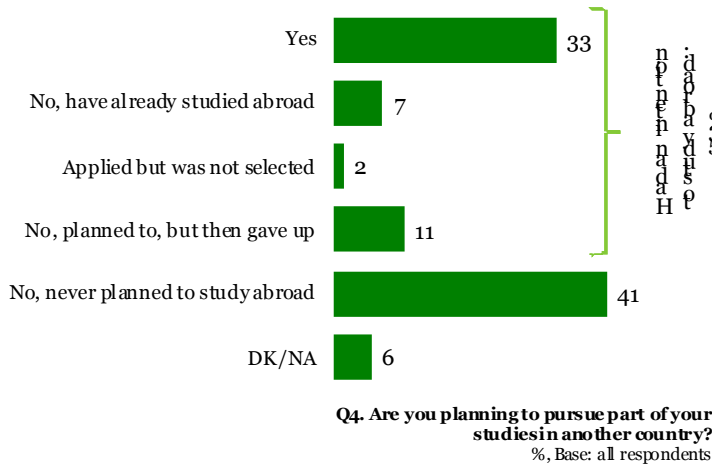
4. Mobility and Recognition

4.1 Planning to study abroad

Asked if they planned to pursue studies in another country, the majority of higher education students surveyed said they had, or had previously had, an intention to study abroad (53%): intend to study in another country (33%), planned to but have now given up (11%), have already studied abroad (7%) and applied but had not been selected (2%). Two-fifths of respondents stated that they had never planned to study abroad (41%).

Individual country results showed large variations in the proportion of those who declared their *intention of doing part of their studies in another country*. Those most likely to have this in mind were students in higher education in Luxembourg (71%) and Cyprus (58%). In all other countries, less than half of the interviewees were planning to study abroad: ranging from students in Poland (12%) and Croatia (18%) to just under half (48%) of higher education students in Turkey.

Planning to study abroad

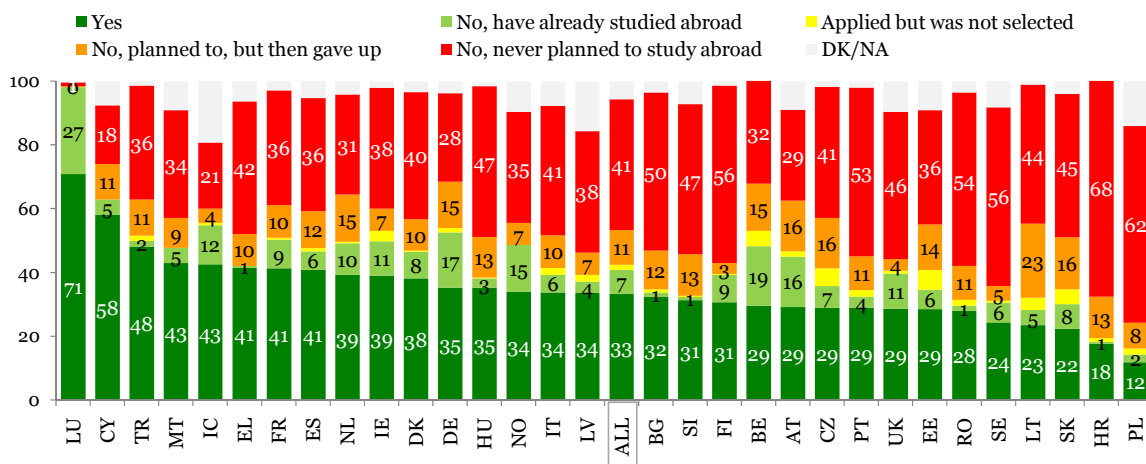


Students in Croatia (68%), and Poland (62%) were the ones most likely to say they *had never planned to study abroad*.

Almost a quarter of respondents in Lithuania had abandoned their plans to study abroad (23%). Relatively higher ratios of students who had given up any plans to study in another country were found in Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Austria (all 16%), the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium (all 15%).

Republic and Austria (all 16%), the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium (all 15%).

Planning to study abroad



4.1.1 Planning to study abroad; socio-demographic analysis – main findings

The answers on whether respondents had planned, or not, to pursue part of their studies in another country varied significantly by socio-demographic segments. Younger students and those who had

spent fewer years in higher education were more likely to be planning to pursue part of their studies in a foreign country: 43% of the 18-20 year-olds vs. 21% of the over 25 year-olds; 44% of those who had completed one year vs. 21% of those who had completed five years or more.

Respondents' plans to study abroad also varied by field of study. For example, language students were more liable than their counterparts to have planned studies abroad (45% vs. 27%-39% of all other fields) or to have already studied abroad (13% vs. 6%-9% of all other fields).

4.2 Obstacles to studying abroad

The most frequently mentioned obstacle was a **lack of funds**: a majority of 61% of those who abandoned plans to study abroad or who had never thought of doing this said lack of funds had been a *very big or big obstacle* (30% said a lack of funds had been a *very big obstacle*; 31% a *big one*).

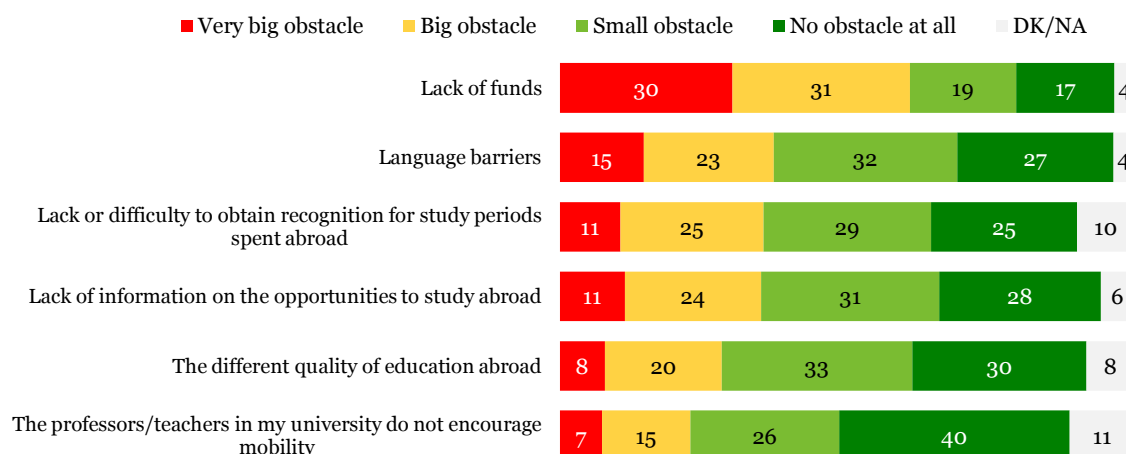
Language barriers represented the second most frequently mentioned obstacle to any ambitions to study abroad: overall, 38% of students mentioned language barriers as an obstacle - 15% saw this as a *very big obstacle* and 23% felt it was a *big obstacle*.

Difficulties in obtaining recognition for study periods spent abroad (36%) as well as a **lack of information about opportunities to study abroad** (35%) were *very big or big* impediments for approximately a third of respondents. One in 10 students could not say if the recognition of study programs had been an obstacle (10%).

Roughly a quarter (28%) of students who were asked this question saw the **different quality of education abroad** as an *obstacle* (8% perceived it as a *very big obstacle*; 20% as a *big one*). Six out of 10 respondents considered that the different quality of education abroad was just a *small obstacle or not an obstacle at all* to their aim of studying in a foreign country (63%).

Students in higher education with no plans of going abroad for educational purposes (because they had abandoned the idea or because they had never planned to do so) least frequently **blamed their professors/teachers for not encouraging them** to follow such a path (22%).

Obstacles to the ambition of studying abroad



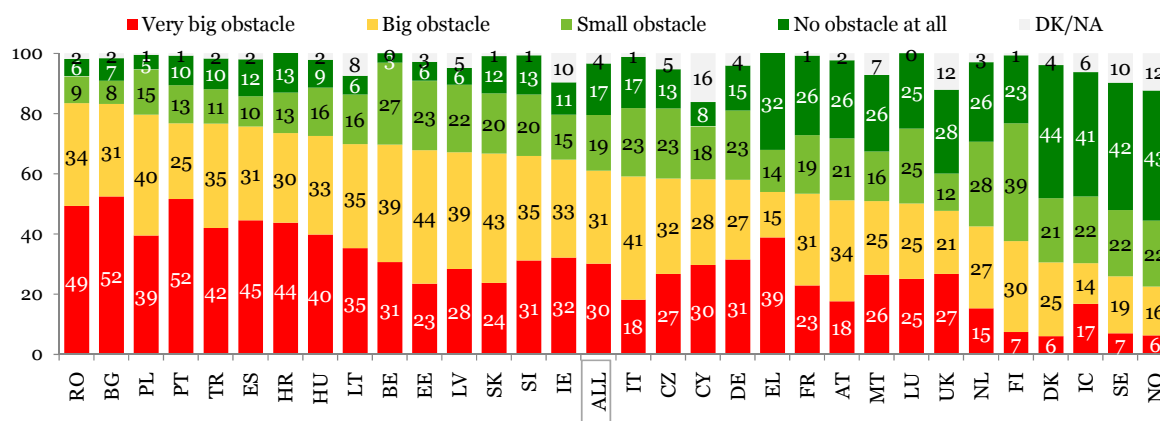
Q5. Please tell me whether the following issues represented a very big, big, small, or no obstacle at all to your ambition of studying abroad?
%, Base: who planned to, but then gave up or who never planned to study abroad

Comparing country results, students in Turkey led the pack in considering that a lack of opportunities to study abroad, difficulties related to recognition of study periods spent abroad, language barriers and a lack of encouragement from their professors were all serious obstacles to their plans to study abroad.

Lack of funds

Considering all six issues that could be obstacles, we observed the largest variation between individual countries in regard to a lack of funds and language barriers (bearing in mind that the ratios of those who said that these two represented a very big or big obstacle, differences between countries reached 61 percentage points). For example, in Romania and Bulgaria, 83% of students who abandoned their plans to study in another country or who had never had such plans said a **lack of funds** represented a *very big or big obstacle*; on the other hand, just 22% of such students in Norway had a similar problem.

Lack of funds



Q5. Please tell me whether the following issues represented a very big, big, small, or no obstacle at all to your ambition of studying abroad?

%, Base: who planned to, but then gave up or who never planned to study abroad, by country

Lack of recognition of study periods spent abroad / different quality of education

In 5 of the 31 countries surveyed, we saw that for half or more of students without plans to study abroad (because they abandoned them or never had any), the **lack or difficulty to obtain recognition for study periods spent abroad** was a *very big or big obstacle*; these countries were Turkey (59%), Spain (57%), Poland (53%), Bulgaria (52%) and Romania (50%). At least three-quarters of respondents in Finland (82%), Denmark (76%), and Luxembourg (75%) said recognition for study periods in a foreign country was a *small obstacle or not an obstacle* at all.

In all countries but one (Poland), less than half of such students considered **the different quality of education abroad** to be a *very big or big obstacle* to their hopes of studying abroad.

Lack of information

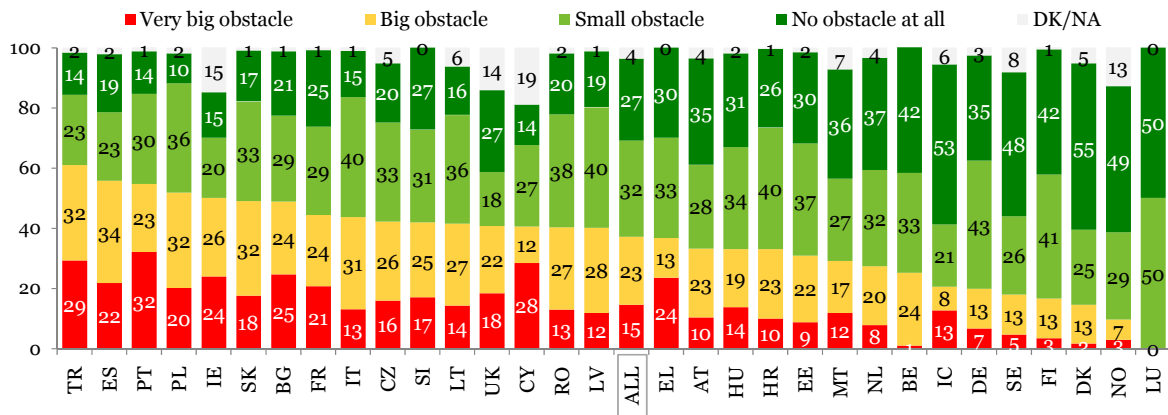
Over half of students who abandoned their idea of studying abroad or who had never planned to take this option in Turkey (60%), Portugal and Poland (both 56%), and Romania (54%) said the **lack of information about opportunities to study abroad** had been a *very big or big obstacle* to them. On the other hand, less than one in five respondents in Ireland (9%), Finland (13%), Norway (14%) and Sweden (19%) saw this as an obstacle (*very big or big*). Lack of information was *not at all an obstacle* for approximately half of respondents in Denmark (53%) and Sweden (51%).

Language barriers

As mentioned earlier, the largest variations between countries concerned the issue of **language barriers** (and a lack of funds). There was a difference of 61 percentage points between the highest and lowest ratios of students who declared that language difficulties represented a *very big or big obstacle* to their ambition of studying in another country (the highest rate in Turkey: 61% vs. the lowest in Luxembourg: 0%). Besides Turkey, other countries in which the majority of respondents pointed out language barriers as a (*very big or big*) obstacle were Spain (56%), Portugal (55%), Poland (52%) and

Ireland (50%). On the other hand, less than a fifth of those respondents who abandoned/never had the idea of studying abroad noted language difficulties as a *very big or big* obstacle in Luxembourg (0%), and all of the Nordic countries - Norway (10%), Denmark (15%), Finland (16%) and Sweden (18%).

Language barriers



Q5. Please tell me whether the following issues represented a very big, big, small, or no obstacle at all to your ambition of studying abroad?
%, Base: who planned to, but then gave up or who never planned to study abroad, by country

Lack of encouragement from professors

The ratio of those who said that a **lack of encouragement to study abroad by their university professors** had been a *very big or big impediment* to their hopes of studying in a foreign country ranged from no respondents in Luxembourg to 42% in Turkey: the lowest variation between countries considering all of the six issues surveyed). In Greece (38%), Spain and Portugal (both 36%) we also found high proportions of respondents who considered this to be a *very big or big obstacle*.

Results by field of study

Engineering students were often more likely than other students to agree that *lack of information about the possibilities of studying abroad* and a *lack of funds* represented very big or big obstacles to their ambition to study abroad (39% vs. 29% of medical students); 65% of engineering students noted a lack of funds vs. 55% of medical students. Engineering students and those in other hard sciences were more likely than most of their counterparts to say *language barriers* represented an obstacle (41% vs. 23%-39% of students in all other fields). As for the role of professors (not giving sufficient encouragement), there were fewer differences.

4.3 Recognition of short study periods abroad

Recognition of short study periods abroad



Q6. How much would you agree or disagree with the following statements?
%, Base: all respondents

Two-thirds of respondents *strongly agreed or rather agreed* that short study periods abroad were in most cases fully recognised by the home university upon return (67%). One-fifth of students *disagreed* (20%) and one in seven (14%) couldn't say. In all countries, at least half of higher education students believed that short study periods abroad were in most cases fully recognised by their home universities upon return. The lowest figures in agreement were seen in Sweden (50%), Croatia (51%), Hungary

and Germany (both 53%). Those in Slovenia were the most likely to agree that recognition of courses taken abroad was not a problem (87%), as were students in Luxembourg (83%) and Cyprus (82%).

An examination of responses by socio-demographic groups showed that, within age groups, students aged 18-20 were more convinced of the recognition of short study periods abroad (70% vs. 64% of over 25 year-olds). A similar trend was seen between part-time students at the Bachelor degree level with their counterparts in full-time education (59% vs. 67%-70% of all full-time students). Language students were the most likely to state that there were no problems with short study periods in another country being fully recognised on return by the home university (74% vs. 64%-70% of other students).

4.4 ECTS credit points

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a standard for comparing the study attainment and performance of higher education students across the EU and other collaborating European countries. The present survey asked respondents about ECTS credit points and whether or not they could be obtained by both “mobile” and “non-mobile” students. There were very few differences in the overall opinions about the two statements. Six out of 10 interviewees (60%) *strongly agreed or rather agreed* that **most mobile students obtained ECTS credit points for their study period abroad** and 58% *agreed* that **most non-mobile students obtained ECTS credit points for studies completed at their institution**. Approximately a quarter of respondents did not know whether they agreed or disagreed with the two above-mentioned statements (27% in both cases).

Students in Belgium, Slovenia and Luxembourg were the most likely to strongly or rather agree with both statements. For example, 91% of students in Belgium, 85% in Slovenia and 83% in Luxembourg agreed that most non-mobile students obtained ECTS credit points for studies completed at their HEI, and over three-quarters of interviewees in those countries (strongly or rather) agreed that most mobile students obtained ECTS credit points for their study periods abroad (95% in Belgium, 85% in Slovenia and 84% in Luxembourg).

The lowest ratios of those who stated that ECTS credit points could be obtained for studies completed at their own institution were found in Greece (36%), Sweden (37%) and Finland (39%). Less than half of respondents in several countries agreed that most mobile students obtained credit points for courses taken in another country: Sweden (39%), Germany and Spain (both 42%), Norway, the UK and Greece (all 45%), Finland and Italy (both 48%)

5. Cooperation of universities and businesses and entrepreneurship in higher education

As specified in the final report¹ for the *Best Procedure Project* conducted by the European Commission's Expert Group, Europe needs to stimulate the entrepreneurial mindsets of young people in order for the Lisbon strategy for growth and employment to succeed.

A large majority of 87% of surveyed respondents (strongly or rather) *agreed* that **it was important for HEIs to foster innovation and an entrepreneurial mindset among students and staff**, and that there should be **a possibility to undertake work placements in private enterprises as part of a study programme**. Overall, just 1 in 10 students in higher education *disagreed* with these two statements (both 11%). Half of those interviewed *strongly* supported the idea of work placements in private enterprises as part of their courses (51%).

Three-quarters of interviewees (strongly or rather) *agreed* that **HEIs should provide tailor-made study programmes for enterprises to help upgrade their workforce** (76%), and one-fifth of respondents *disagreed* (20%). Of the four issues surveyed, respondents were least likely to *agree* that **enterprises should be more involved in higher education management, curricula design and funding** (71%). A quarter of interviewees *disagreed* with such an opinion, and 4% did not say.

5.1 The possibility to undertake work placements in private enterprises

Students in Romania (96%), Belgium (95%), Finland and Luxembourg (both 93%) were the most likely to be in favour of the possibility of undertaking work placements in private enterprises as part of their course. On the other hand, students in Denmark (72%), Croatia (73%), Greece and Austria (both 77%) and Germany (79%) were less convinced. In all countries, at least a third of students *strongly agreed* that work placements in private enterprises as part of their course would be beneficial.

5.2. The importance of fostering innovation / entrepreneurial mindset

Considering the “total agree” ratio, for the four statements, the smallest variation between countries was seen in regard to the question concerning the importance of HEIs fostering innovation and an entrepreneurial mindset among students and staff: a 23 percentage point difference between countries with the highest and the lowest level of agreement (the highest: 97% in Poland and Romania vs. the lowest: 74% in Croatia).

An examination of the proportions of those who were very much in favour of an entrepreneurial education showed a different hierarchy of countries. For example, those students least likely to *strongly agree* that it was important for HEIs to foster innovation and an entrepreneurial mindset were found in the Netherlands (32%), Denmark (33%), Germany and Estonia (both 34%). In contrast, Iceland (73%), Bulgaria (71%), Slovenia and Romania (both 69%) and Malta (67%) had the highest levels of *strong agreement* in favour of fostering innovation and an entrepreneurial mindset.

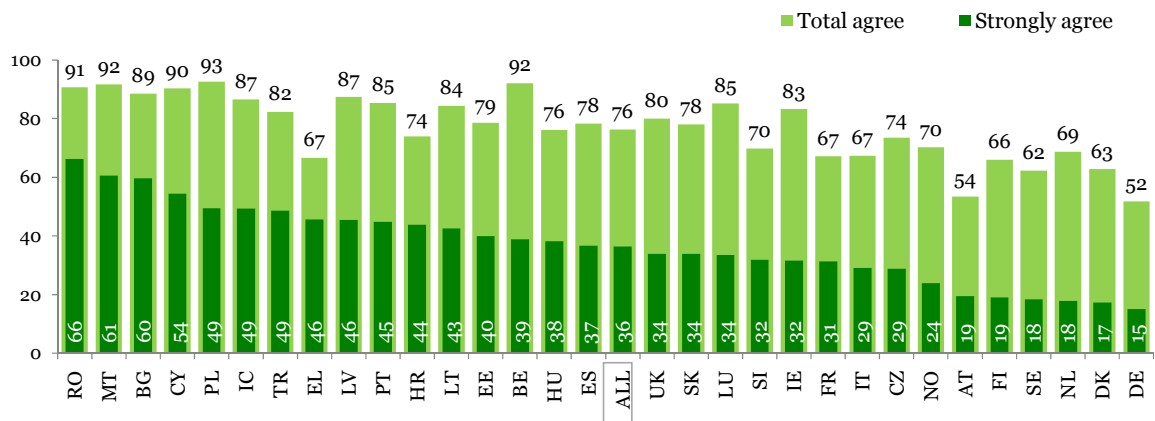
5.3 Provision of tailor-made study programmes for enterprises

Students in Poland (93%), Belgium and Malta (both 92%), Romania (91%) and Cyprus (90%) were most in favour of providing tailor-made study programmes for enterprises to help upgrade their workforces. At the other end of the distribution were Germany and Austria, where only half of the students were in agreement (52% and 54%, respectively).

¹ Source: Best Procedure Project: “Entrepreneurship in higher education, especially in non-business studies”. (Final version March 2008) - European Commission, Enterprise and Industry Directorate General.

While two out of three respondents in Romania (66%) were *strongly* in favour of helping enterprises to upgrade their workforce through tailor-made courses, just 15% of students in Germany strongly backed this approach; these results showed a large variation of 51 percentage points between individual countries. In addition to Germany (who also had lowest “total agree” ratio), less than one in five interviewees in Denmark (17%), the Netherlands and Sweden (both 18%), Finland and Austria (both 19%) *strongly agreed* that HEIs should provide tailor-made study programmes for enterprises. In contrast, besides Romania, more than half of students in Malta (61%), Bulgaria (60%) and Cyprus (54%) strongly believed in the approach.

HEIs should provide tailor-made study programmes for enterprises to help upgrade their work force



Q6. How much would you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: all respondents

%, "Total agree" = "Strongly agree" + "Rather agree", by country

5.4 The involvement of enterprises in higher education management, curricula design and funding

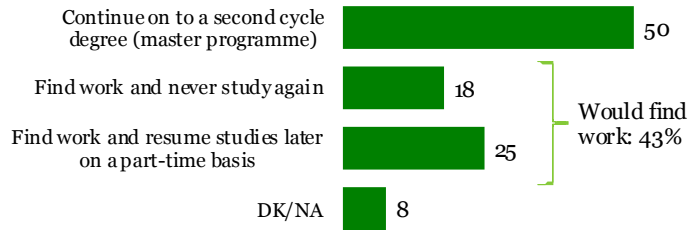
In both cases – whether we looked at the “total agree” or “strongly agree” ratios - the greatest differences between individual country results were seen when we asked whether enterprises should be involved in the higher education system (a 51 percentage points difference in both cases). No matter which ratios were considered, students in Romania were the most supportive of the idea that enterprises should be more involved in higher education management, curricula design and funding (92% “strongly or rather agreed”; 64% “strongly agreed”). On the other hand, interviewees in Germany were among those who were the least supportive of such an opinion: 41% “strongly or rather agreed”, and only 16% “strongly agreed” with this concept.

6. Post-graduation plans

6.1 Future plans for Bachelor level students

When asked about their post-graduation intentions, 50% of students working towards their first cycle (Bachelor) degree said they wanted to directly continue their studies in a second cycle (Masters programme), and a total of 43% stated that after graduation, they intended to find work: 25% would “find work and resume their studies later”, and 18 % intended to find work and never study again.

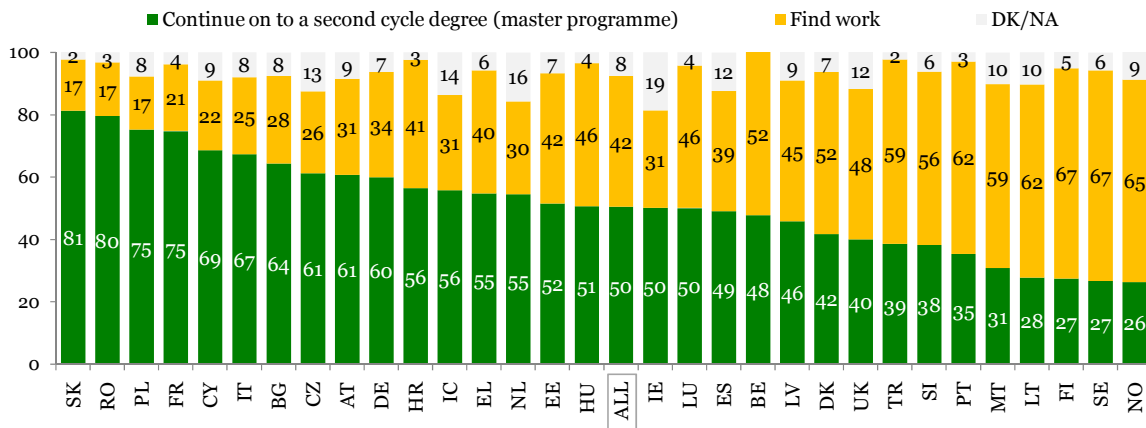
Future plans for BA students



Q7A. What are your plans after graduation?
%, Base: BA students

Three-quarters or more of Bachelor level students in Slovakia (81%), Romania (80%), Poland and France (both 75%) would like to continue their higher education to a second cycle degree (Masters programme); only 17%-21% of interviewees in these countries intended to find work. In contrast, plans to continue studies were the least common among students in Norway (26%), Sweden and Finland (both 27%), and Lithuania (28%); a majority of 62%-67% in these countries planned to look for work (Finland and Sweden - both 67%; Norway 65%; Lithuania and Portugal – both 62%).

Future plans for BA students



Q7A. What are your plans after graduation?
%, Base: BA students, by country

Taking into account the options of whether to resume studies later on a part-time basis or not (after finding work), there was also a considerable variation in country data. In most countries, those who would “find work and never study again” were outnumbered by those who would “first get a job and resume their studies later”; the biggest differences between these two groups were recorded in Malta (47% of Bachelor level students planned to resume their studies vs. 12% who did not plan to study again), Lithuania (45% vs. 17%), Latvia (36% vs. 9%) and Iceland (28% vs. 2%).

6.1.1 Analysis of post-graduation plans by socio-demographic segments – main findings

The socio-demographic analysis focused on students who intended to continue on to a second cycle degree (Masters programme) vs. those who intended to find work (either intended to “find work and never study again”, or planned to “find work and resume studies later on a part-time basis”).

The intention to study further varied significantly by **age**. Those most likely to have plans to *continue higher education to a second cycle degree* were Bachelor level students aged 18-22 (56% vs. 35% of

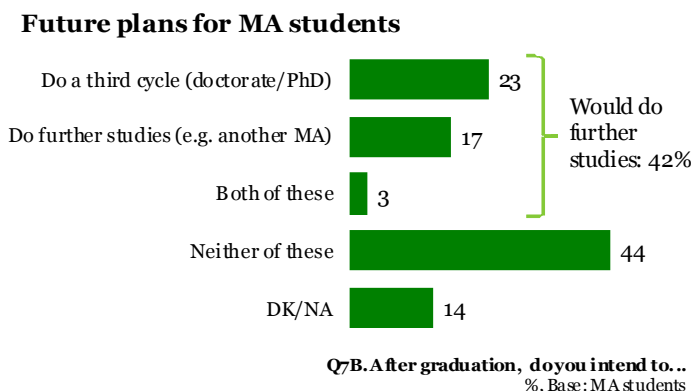
the over 24 year-olds). The oldest respondents were the ones being the most likely to have the intention to *find work* (56% aged 25+ vs. 36%-51% of all other age groups). Full-time Bachelor level students were more likely than those studying part-time to say that they would *continue on to a Masters programme* (51% vs. 39% of part-time Bachelor level students).

The field of study had a strong impact on the future plans of Bachelor level students. For example, law students were the most likely to plan to *continue their studies to a second cycle (Masters programme)* (61% vs. 32%-57% of all other fields of study), while those in health studies (primarily nursing) were the most likely to plan to *find work* (61% vs. 32%-50% of all other fields of study).

6.2 Future plans for Masters level students

As regards second cycle students (on a Masters course), 4 in 10 planned to continue their studies after graduation (42%) and a similar number did not (44%). One in seven (14%) were undecided on their plans.

Almost a quarter of Masters students had thought of enrolling for a third cycle in order to get a PhD (23%; this ratio represented over half of those planning further studies), while 17% said they would either take another Masters course or a similar degree.



The highest proportion of Masters students planning to *continue their studies* after graduation was in Turkey: 73% (57% would take a Doctorate/PhD; 10% another Masters degree; 6% both). Other countries where over six in 10 Masters students planned further studies were Estonia (66%), Bulgaria (63%) and Belgium (61%). In contrast, roughly a quarter or less respondents in Cyprus (17%), Luxembourg (22%), Norway and Finland (both 27%) planned to continue their studies.

Masters students were most interested (% sum of “do a third cycle (doctorate/PhD)” and “both of these”) in a Doctorate/PhD in Turkey (63%), Greece (54%) and Slovenia (43%). On the other hand, Masters students in Bulgaria (48%), Malta (36%) and Spain (29%) were the most likely to plan further studies such as another Masters course (% sum of “do further studies - e.g. another Masters course” and “both of these”).

6.2.1 Analysis by socio-demographic segments – main findings

The likelihood of *planning further studies* (a doctorate/PhD, or another Masters degree, or both of these) decreased with **age**: 37% of the over 24 year-olds vs. 43%-51% of all other age groups planned further studies. Similar to Bachelor level students, full-time **Masters students** were more likely to *continue their higher education* than part-time Masters students (43% vs. 35%).

Masters students who had been on their course for just **one year** were more likely than those who had completed five years of study to say they *intended to stay on in higher education* (51% vs. 39%).

Masters students’ plans varied greatly by the respondents’ **field of study**. For example, engineering students were the least likely to intend to go on to further study: 32% vs. 71% of medical students who had plans to *do a Doctorate, another Masters course or both of these*.