

At home in Europe: Accommodate international students!

Recommendation & Good Practice Booklet



Introduction

The development of the housing situation for mobile students in Europe is alarming. Due to the widely acknowledged positive impacts that student mobility has on the higher education sector and society at large, Europe has seen a rapid increase of student mobility in the past years. The European Union has set the target of having 20% of all higher education graduates take part in a mobility experience by 2020. Unfortunately, the infrastructure required to further increase student mobility is often not sufficient. Already today (2017), finding accommodation has become a major obstacle to student mobility and is a real challenge for those that decide to study or do a traineeship abroad during their studies.

The HousErasmus+ project aims to map the current housing situation in Europe and offer a platform for exchanging experience and good practices between stakeholders. With this goal in mind, the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), the European University Foundation (EUF), the Compostela Group of Universities (CGU) and the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA) have conducted a wide range of research activities to create a comprehensive overview of how students, student organisations, higher education institutions, housing providers and policymakers perceive the situation. The results of this exercise, which include different surveys, study visits and regional conferences, can be found in the full report: *At home in Europe: Accommodating mobile students*.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

We have consolidated the research findings into the 9 most pressing issues to be addressed:

- **Lack of awareness amongst stakeholders**

There is a clear mismatch of how mobile students perceive the challenges posed by accommodation and the awareness amongst Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), policymakers and housing providers.

- **Need for more cooperation**

All stakeholders involved (HEIs, student organisations, housing providers, policymakers etc.) expressed the need for more cooperation to get a better understanding of the challenges and to work on a more systematic approach to solving those challenges.

- **Lack of quality information**

Students struggle to find the necessary information on finding accommodation, leading to problems in finding accommodation. In many cases, students go abroad without having permanent accommodation arranged.

- **Quality assurance, discrimination & fraud**

Many students report discrimination and attempted fraud. Little is being done in terms of quality assurance for accommodation and the information provided to students.

- **Financial burden**

The additional financial burden of taking part in a mobility programme is still the number one obstacle to student mobility and the costs of accommodation make up a majority of these additional costs.

- **Insufficient student housing**

There is a general lack of student housing in many cities. Necessary investments in the student housing market are lacking and mobile students who have to compete with the local student population are at a disadvantage.

- **Short-term accommodation**

Short-term mobility often leads to issues with contractual arrangements for accommodation, as short-term renting is less attractive (or legally challenging) for housing providers.

- **Language barrier and cultural differences**

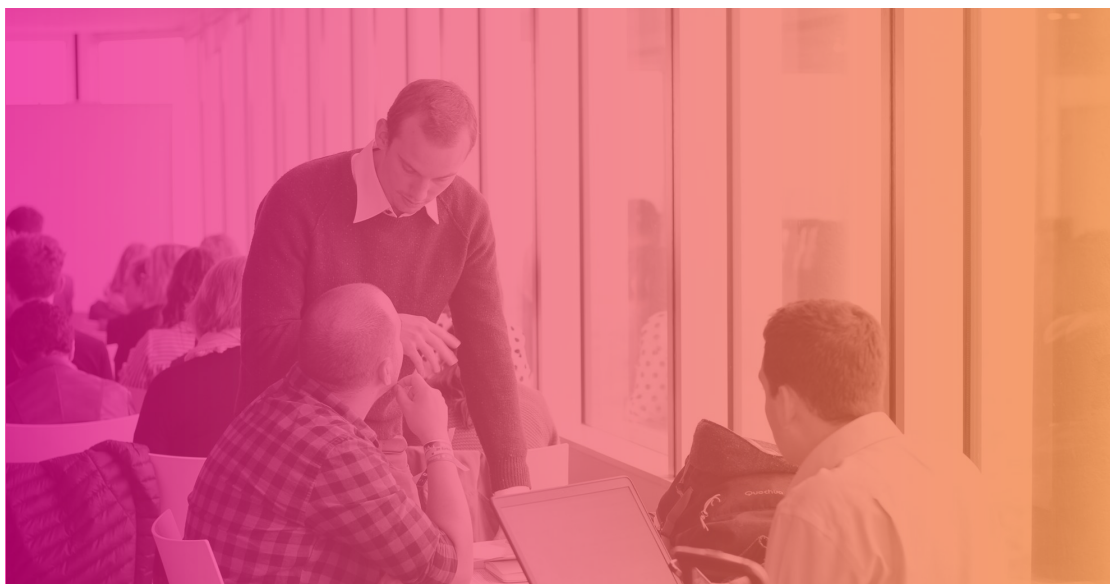
Differences in the way of living and lack of cultural awareness, as well as the language barrier amplify other challenges.

- **Trainees are facing most challenges**

The fact that students that go abroad for a traineeship do not have a receiving Higher Education Institution makes them a particularly vulnerable target group.

Based on the research conclusions, you will find a list of good practices that different stakeholders developed to tackle these challenges. Additionally, we derived challenge-specific recommendations for each of the stakeholders.

As the research shows, the housing situation for (mobile) students in Europe is highly diverse. We have, therefore, tried to formulate some general recommendations that can be applied by as many actors as possible. We complemented these with very precise and specific recommendations that make suggestions for concrete steps to be taken to improve the situation. In many cases the implementation of a sub-set of recommendations might already lead to the desired results. We hope that by dividing the recommendations according to identified problem areas, all stakeholders will find appropriate solutions for the problem areas they have identified themselves. As is evident, the lack of general awareness of the challenges, as well as the lack of cooperation are amongst the first issues to be tackled. Stakeholders obviously need to work together to remedy a sometimes difficult situation and the recommendations given should be seen as a starting point for a discussion that needs to take place in every city that wants to welcome mobile students and trainees.



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1. Problem faced: Mobile student accommodation issues are not high in the priority agenda

Almost 90% of HEIs state that internationalisation is a high priority but only half of them think that the lack of adequate and affordable accommodation is an obstacle to internationalisation. Eurostudent V research shows that finances are the main obstacle to mobility and that accommodation is the key expense students have when going abroad. When looking at why students decide not to go abroad, financial insecurities are the main barrier, which means that the lack of affordable and adequate housing is a real obstacle to internationalisation and makes student mobility socially selective.

Good practices

- Many HEIs reserve a certain number of beds/rooms in student dormitories for mobile students to ensure sufficient access to student accommodation.
- Some HEIs like the University of Aarhus cover the costs for the period when the student dormitories stay empty throughout summer months, ensuring housing providers do not lose rent due to short-term stays of mobile students.
- In Aarhus, Denmark, one fourth of all student accommodation built is subsidised by the municipality, which provides 10% of the building costs.
- The German student service organisation *Deutsche Studentenwerke (DSW)* has extensive cooperation with e.g. Poland to be able to foresee and address the needs of a substantial number of Polish students in Germany. Poland does not have a nation-wide student service provider like *DSW*, therefore cooperation is carried out with HEIs or via the Polish Rectors Conference, etc.

Recommendations

It is necessary to raise awareness about the added value of mobility programmes and obstacles to this experience. Mobility programmes aim to deepen the understanding of Europe and can lead to better intercultural dialogue, language learning and promote crucial academic and non-academic skills and competences necessary for the future labour market. The mismatch of perceived obstacles and the awareness of the real obstructions/hurdles to mobility need to be addressed.



Student Organisations

- Student organisations need to articulate the needs of students and be at the forefront of creating awareness about accommodation as a major obstacle to mobility by advocating those needs to both HEIs and policymakers.

Higher Education Institutions

- HEIs need to recognise that access to affordable and satisfactory accommodation is an integral part of a successful internationalisation strategy, as it directly impacts the mobility experience of students at their institute.
- HEIs should take stock of the housing situation for mobile students so they can provide sufficient support and adapt their strategic development (e.g. internationalisation strategy) accordingly.
- In case such mapping exercises result in major discrepancies between the needs and the available housing for mobile students, HEIs should take the responsibility to create awareness amongst policymakers and advocate more support from the responsible municipality/ ministry.

Housing Providers

- Public or semi-public housing providers should support HEIs in their efforts to advocate more support from the responsible municipality/ ministry.

Local/regional/ national policymakers

- Policy should support HEIs in mapping the current housing situation for (mobile) students.
- In case students are facing housing issues, the relevant policymaker should take on the responsibility to devise policy measures that remedy the identified challenges. In cooperation with HEIs, these challenges can be identified more accurately and solutions should be discussed jointly with the support of student organisations and housing providers,

EU and Erasmus+ framework

- Accommodation needs to be recognised as one of the main obstacles to mobility. This should reflect in a clearer articulation of the issue in all European communication (e.g. Include information about affordable and satisfactory student accommodation as a structural necessity in the next communication on the modernisation of higher education in the EU)
- Draw up more precise guidelines on accommodation for students linked to the Erasmus+ programme (e.g. include a more detailed description of the issue in the Erasmus Charter on Higher Education (ECHE) and all related guidelines/actions)
- Communicate the issue to National Agencies (NA) and include the discussion on accommodation for mobile students in the working groups of National Agencies (e.g. working group on ECHE and regular National Agency meetings organised by DG EAC).

2. Problem faced: Stakeholders indicate a lack of support and cooperation from other relevant actors involved

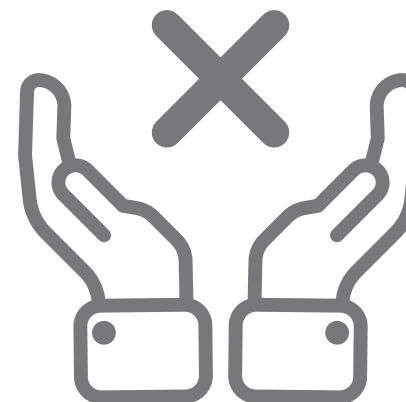
In the HousErasmus+ research, each stakeholder reported that they see a chance for other actors to contribute to improving the situation for mobile students. For example, student organisations would expect more involvement from HEIs, while HEIs would wish for more support from policymakers, etc.

Good practices

- The municipality of Aarhus, Denmark, organises regular meetings (1-2 times per year) where all involved stakeholders (representatives of local HEIs, students, student accommodation providers, student organisations) are present and discuss the housing situation. This is the basis for decisions taken on subsidies provided by the municipality, decisions on how much new student housing needs to be built and also feeds into the strategic decision-making processes of HEIs and student organisations.
- In Manchester, England, a common student accommodation quality label has been developed and monitored in cooperation with the municipality and HEIs.
- In countries like Germany and France, nation-wide public or semi-public student service organisations have been established to handle student accommodation with the support of public funds. *The Deutsche Studentenwerke - DSW* (Germany) and the *Centre national des œuvres universitaires et scolaires - CNOUS* (France) act as umbrella organisations that organise regular peer-learning and capacity building activities amongst their members. Furthermore, they have been cooperating with each other for over 60 years to exchange ideas and exchange good practices across national borders, contributing further to finding solutions to the accommodation issue for mobile students.
- In Zagreb, members of the Erasmus Student Network are doing their traineeship at the university's international relation office with the objective of supporting mobile students with accommodation issues

Recommendations

There needs to be more synergies between all relevant stakeholders to be able to address the challenges in a more systematic and effective way. It does not mean shifting responsibility to someone else but coming together and agreeing on common goals and ways to reach them.



Student Organisations

- Student organisations should involve themselves in the development of their HEI's internationalisation strategy.
- Student organisations working on housing issues should showcase their work and the complementarity that a peer-to-peer approach can have to the services provided by HEIs. This will ultimately lead to more recognition of the organisation's work by the HEI and therefore prepare the ground for more structured relations with the international relation office of their HEI.
- Student organisations not working on housing issues should discuss how they can best support their HEI with these matters.

Higher Education Institutions

- HEIs are in the best position to bring together a wider range of local cooperation partners such as student organisations, housing providers and policymakers, as they are central to ensuring equal access to quality education and mobility opportunities.
- HEIs should be open to collaborating closer with both private and public housing providers but need to ensure that information shared with students by those 3rd party providers is of sufficient quality and affordability of the student housing is safeguarded.
- HEIs should work closely together with student organisations to ensure efficient complementarity of services offered, reaping the benefits offered through the peer-to-peer approach of student organisations. Having regular meetings and involving them in strategic development gives a sense of ownership and shows recognition of volunteer work.
- When possible, HEIs should consider creating traineeship positions or student jobs to work on housing issues in the period where the issue is most pressing (usually just before and at the beginning of the semester, when most students arrive).

Housing Providers

- Public or semi-public housing providers, such as student service providers, should organise themselves in umbrella organisations to share practices and learn from each other's experiences. Just as the DSW and CNOUS, they should also strive to collaborate with similar organisations or relevant partners in other countries.
- Private housing providers that work independently of HEIs should strive for closer collaboration and a better understanding of students' needs. Student accommodation is a new emerging market that offers many business opportunities if those needs are addressed.

Local/regional/national policymakers

- Policymakers at a national and local level need to map whether there are specific regulations that hinder cooperation between different stakeholders in the field of student accommodation, e.g. can HEIs cooperate with private housing providers? If such obstacles that negatively influence the provision of mobile student accommodation are identified, common solutions or alternative strategies in collaboration with other stakeholders should be aimed at.

EU and Erasmus+ framework

- The Erasmus+ framework should provide a platform to bring together key actors like NAs, Ministries, HEIs and student bodies to discuss accommodation issues for mobile students.
- Creating a working group that would address post-2020 Erasmus+ scenarios could be a first step.
- When addressing internationalisation topics, National Erasmus+ Agencies should make the topic of student housing provision a central element of their communication and work with HEIs.

3. Problem faced: There is a lack of information available to mobile students regarding accommodation options

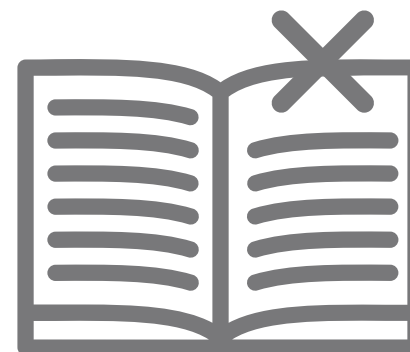
According to our research, almost half of the Erasmus+ students (45%) and 56% of trainees using the Erasmus+ programme framework claim it was difficult to find accommodation. Around 2/3 of all Erasmus+ students have to find accommodation by themselves. 1 out of 3 students needs to move at least once during their mobility period. An alarming 1 out of 4 students goes abroad without having permanent accommodation arranged.

Good practices

- Buddy systems, where mobile students are paired with local students, can be a good way to receive support from a peer before arriving in the host country.
- Erasmus fairs, where (potential) outgoing students can meet with current mobile students at their home institution, can be very efficient ways to create a space where students can exchange experiences and ask questions.
- HEIs collecting student reports and making them available to (potential) mobile students can help acquiring a better understanding of the accommodation situation at other HEIs. Combined with previously mentioned practices, they can be an effective way to turn past experience into concrete individual support for (potential) mobile students.
- Lists of local landlords (often provided by student organisations) is a very efficient way of finding accommodation.
- Welcome kits sent to students before their arrival and explaining the local housing market in detail. The Erasmus+ App provides top tips to students with a category on accommodation, allowing peer-to-peer support for students.

Recommendations

There is a need for more systemic ways to provide exchange students with useful and reliable information that helps them prepare for their mobility. Erasmus+ App has already been launched and more digital innovations are underway. Therefore, now is the time to prototype innovative solutions that help inform students so that they can factor in accommodation availability as early as possible in the decision making process.



Student Organisations

- If capacity allows, student organisations should support HEIs in providing lists of e.g. local private landlords and facilitate communication between mobile students and landlords. Quality assurance mechanisms should be included in this approach.
- Student organisations should (possibly in cooperation with HEIs) survey mobile students about their experiences and provide useful information to future mobile students.

Higher Education Institutions

- Our research shows that HEIs are the most relied on and most efficient channel for finding accommodation. They should therefore take full responsibility for ensuring access to up-to-date and reliable information on affordable and suitable housing opportunities. When outsourcing information provision, the HEI should still monitor the quality of the information provided.
- Information about the general housing market, as well as about specific offers on affordable and satisfactory housing should be offered as early as possible, so that students can use the information in their decision-making process and plan their mobility period well in advance.
- Sending HEIs should share responsibility by providing the necessary information e.g. by sharing previous students' experience with (potential) mobile students, by providing general information on living in different countries/cultures and by monitoring the quality of their cooperation with other HEIs and potentially intervening when repeated issues with provision of accommodation occur with one of their partner HEIs.
- HEIs should provide a support infrastructure to Erasmus+ trainees, e.g. by centralising information on accommodation in initiatives such as "Study in city XYZ". Trainees are a particularly vulnerable target group, as they do not have a receiving Higher Education Institution and therefore often lack the necessary information.

Housing Providers

- Student service organisations should identify the specific needs of mobile students and adapt the information provided about accommodation offers accordingly (e.g. information about areas in the city, way of life, etc.).
- Private accommodation providers should seek closer collaboration with Higher Education Institutions and ascertain that the information shared about accommodation is of a sufficient quality.

Local/regional/national policymakers

- Initiatives such as "Study in XYZ" (often organised by national agencies responsible for higher education) should include information on the general culture and way of life and possibly link this to reliable and up-to-date information on accommodation for students.

EU and Erasmus+ framework

- The initiative *Study in Europe*, which aims at attracting talent from outside Europe, should include information the general culture and way of life and potentially connect to the nation-wide provision of information on accommodation.

4. Problem faced: Quality assurance for student accommodation is often missing. Cases of discrimination and attempts of fraud are frequently reported by students

According to our research, the success rates in finding accommodation by using key information sources other than HEIs' accommodation services are relatively low: using social media and general housing websites often seems to be disappointing, as they lead significantly less often to actually finding accommodation, even though they are widely used. In addition, almost one fifth of all Erasmus+ programme students and trainees report that they experienced some sort of discrimination while trying to find accommodation and around 12% of the mobile students and 18% of mobile trainees have experienced attempted fraud.

Good practices

- Some HEIs carry out surveys as often as every semester to make sure the accommodation search and services provided live up to standards.
- The use of 3rd party online platforms that provide quality assurance mechanisms (such as visits to apartments) substantially lower the risk of fraud and ensure that students get a full picture of the accommodation they are booking without having to visit it themselves. However, when offered by private providers, such services usually come at a cost for the student.
- The *UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA)* has created a handbook for practitioners managing accommodation for international students. It was compiled in cooperation with HEIs and student unions and covers a wide variety of topics, namely, things that should be taken into consideration before departure, how to welcome mobile students, what their needs are, support mechanisms available for students and especially for those from disadvantaged groups etc.

Recommendations

The European landscape of student accommodation needs to change in order to take into account new quality assurance mechanisms, such as student reviews, and create accessible and high-quality information on accommodation. Furthermore, mobile students having to arrange their accommodation online rather than during site-visits makes them particularly prone to attempted fraud. Creating awareness of the possibility of such attempts and providing reliable information sources are necessary to avoid such issues.



Student Organisations

- Student organisations can support mobile students before their arrival by visiting apartments.
- Student organisations should take on the co-responsibility to inform students of potential fraud, legal infrastructure, cultural differences, specificities of searching for accommodation, etc.
- Providing buddies with training on the aforementioned issues could further improve the peer-to-peer services offered by student organisations.

Higher Education Institutions

- Securing up-to-date, detailed and reliable provision of information is of the utmost importance for HEIs as this is the channel of information students rely on the most.
- In cases where HEIs outsource the provision of accommodation, regular monitoring of the information provided is necessary.
- Assistance with legal issues for the particularly vulnerable group of mobile students, as well as support in cases of attempted fraud and discrimination should be part of every HEI's services.

Housing Providers

- Only 17% of all surveyed housing providers offer student reviews. Especially for 3rd party providers establishing a reliable feedback mechanism can allow mobile students to make better informed decisions.

Local/regional/ national policymakers

- Map potential discrimination cases and invest in awareness creation and prevention.
- Have detailed regulations against discrimination, as well as clear protection mechanisms for tenants and landlords, as the lack of such infrastructure does not encourage renting.
- Create awareness about the benefits of attracting international talent and the benefits they bring to local society.
- Establish mechanisms that allow mobile students to report attempted fraud and take responsibility to take legal action or support students in doing so in cases where fraud is experienced.
- Tax vacant locations/accommodation as an incentive to use space.

EU and Erasmus+ framework

- Existing European-wide tools such as the Erasmus+ App could be used as a platform to streamline the provision of information on accommodation, create peer review systems and offer general information on the legal and cultural differences concerning accommodation in each country.
- Discussions should be organised among stakeholders in order to negotiate certain quality assurance benchmarks together.
- The Erasmus+ programme offers Organisational Support (OS) to Higher Education Institutions to manage the framework in which student mobility can take place. The provision of OS funding should be linked to the provision of quality information and support with student accommodation, e.g. by including elements regarding the provision of accommodation in the respective chapter on organisational support in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide.
- National agencies should be encouraged to monitor the implementation of mobility processes by Higher Education Institutions. By committing to provide quality mobility as outlined in the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE), HEIs bear the responsibility and should be held accountable. Accommodation should be the focus of the monitoring process by national agencies as established with the introduction of Erasmus+.

5. Problem faced: A need for more student housing due to growing numbers of mobile students

Benchmarks for ET2020 foresee a general growth in the student population, as well as an increase in the mobile student body. The establishment of degree programmes in commonly spoken languages increases the number of mobile students within the European Higher Education Area, as well as the number of students coming to Europe from non-EHEA countries. This will create additional pressure on the often overburdened accommodation market for students.

Good practices

- In some countries, the municipality offers subsidies for building new student accommodation (e.g. Aarhus, Denmark) to cope with the increasing number of (mobile) students.
- HEIs and student organisations are finding additional student accommodation by providing innovative solutions such as living with elderly in exchange for free or highly reduced accommodation costs (e.g. *CONVIVE programme* in Spain).
- Provision of temporary accommodation at the beginning of the semester (e.g. living in containers in Stavanger).
- Incentives for Erasmus+ students to choose less popular destinations, as otherwise the big flows to popular destinations puts an additional strain on the housing market for students (e.g. in Denmark students are encouraged to choose places other than Copenhagen or Aarhus).
- In Bergen, rooms that were traditionally designed for single occupation were split into a room where two students can be accommodated. The resulting decrease in price was received very well by students and it created much needed additional beds (initially 60 beds, now 120).
- In Brussels, Belgium, an old military district that is no longer in use is being transformed into student accommodation.

Recommendations

Financial support mechanisms targeting the provision of student accommodation is a necessary investment for a better HE landscape and helps to avoid social selectivity in access to education and mobility. In many cities private investment would find new business opportunities if the housing market for mobile students were understood and cooperation between stakeholders worked more efficiently.



Student Organisations

- As in the example of Helsinki, student organisations can partner up to create non-profit foundations managing accommodation themselves to provide tailor-made services and quality as well as affordable accommodation to students.

Higher Education Institutions

- HEIs should look for European funding opportunities (e.g. Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnerships) to test innovative solutions to tackling the housing issue.
- HEIs should cooperate with the municipality to find unused public spaces that could be transformed into student accommodation. This can also be done in collaboration with other stakeholders.

Housing Providers

- Student accommodation is potentially a profitable market and should therefore be considered as a possible market for investment. It is countercyclical, meaning that during economically difficult times the best strategic decision for young people during the crisis most often is to (continue to) study.

Local/regional/ national policymakers

- Public investment in the creation of public or semi-public student service organisations, such as in the cases of France (CNOUS) and Germany (DSW) can lead to good results.
- Subsidies and tax incentives for investments to create accommodation for students should be considered as an option to support the internationalisation efforts of HEIs and to reap the full benefit of the acknowledged advantages the local community gains from hosting mobile students and trainees.
- If agreements are made with the private sector to increase the provision of student housing, the affordability of student accommodation should be safeguarded.

EU and Erasmus+ framework

- Consider measures to balance mobility flows and encourage mobility to less popular destinations. This could help to overcome the already overburdened housing markets in some of the most popular host cities.
- Extend European funding opportunities and priorities, so that housing issues can be tackled (e.g. include priority on student housing in Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership and European Structural Funds) and communicate the possibility to the Higher Education sector.

6. Problem faced: Financial burden of the exchange period

Exchange studies are socially selective as highlighted by different research projects. Uncertainty about the additional financial burden when going abroad as well as the potential loss of a job at home are the main obstacles mentioned by those who have completed their credit mobility period or are just planning it, according to the Eurostudent V research. It also shows that students spend a high percentage of their disposable income on accommodation. In addition, 40% of the mobile students in our sample state that they faced higher accommodation costs than expected and most need to turn to family assistance or use personal funds to cover the extra costs.

Good practices

- Stipends offered to students, such as the *Caisse des Allocations Familiales (CAF)* in France, can help students cover their accommodation costs.
- The EU co-funded *#europelhome* and *#empl-oi* projects have piloted initiatives where studies and traineeships abroad can be combined and thus allow students to have an additional income during their mobility period.
- Specifically created scholarships for international/foreign students, such as the *Stipendium Hungaricum* in Hungary have been created to attract international talent. Many countries have created such initiatives, often also focussing on specific academic disciplines.
- Portability of national public student support in the form of grants or loans. Unfortunately, it is not a common practice in all European countries to enable mobile students to take their usual support mechanisms with them while abroad, although some already have regulated this support infrastructure in a way that encourages the mobility experience.
- Top-ups to the Erasmus+ grant from national sources. In line with the Erasmus+ Programme Guide mobile students, in addition to the Erasmus+ grant, can also receive “regional, national or any other type of grant, managed by another organisation than the national agency (e.g. ministry or regional authorities)” and it is also a practice widespread across countries, although it is hard to map this diverse additional support in order to get a clearer overview of the status quo of financial support available as well as identifying whether there are any systemic problems.

Recommendations

To solve the obstacle to mobility related to insufficient funding available to students to cover accommodation costs, a mind-shift in terms of public investment into student mobility is necessary.



Student Organisations

- Provide student support e.g. through student guides (publications sent to incoming students before the beginning of the semester) that offer recommendations for students on how to save funding on services other than accommodation (e.g. discounts on food, transport, etc.).
- Support students in finding additional sources of income (e.g. student jobs).

Higher Education Institutions

- Sending institutions should see themselves as responsible for providing precise information about the portability of local/regional/national grants.
- The use of the Operational Support (OS) received from the Erasmus+ programme to organise mobility should be used to guarantee access to satisfactory and affordable housing for all Erasmus+ students. Decisions on the exact use of this funding should be based on a mapping the current housing situation of mobile students.
- Adapt curricula to allow students to combine studies and a paid traineeship. This would allow students who would otherwise not go on mobility because of losing their student job at home to take part in a mobility experience.

Housing Providers

- The private housing market could provide low-cost student accommodation as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to improve the accessibility to mobility for students from a lower socio-economic background.

Local/regional/national policymakers

- National policymakers should ensure the portability of national student support grants and loans for students.
- Providing public funding and subsidising student accommodation should be combined with rent caps. Such housing could be reserved for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

EU and Erasmus+ framework

- The current calculation of Erasmus+ grants based on living costs does not take into account the real costs of students (e.g. same grant allocation for students studying in Portugal and Luxembourg). We suggest that Erasmus+ grants are calculated based on regional costs rather than national costs. Existing statistics e.g. from *Nomenclature des unités territoriales statistiques (NUTS)* could be used to make such calculations.
- Include support for finding satisfactory accommodation as one of the main aspects for the Erasmus+ Organisational Support in the Erasmus+ programme guide and all related documents.
- Potentially increase Erasmus+ organisational support if a certain share is earmarked to deal with accommodation.
- Implement a scheme in the Erasmus+ programme that allows students to combine academic studies with traineeships abroad, thus allowing for additional income.

7. Problem faced: It is difficult to find accommodation for shorter periods of time than a full year

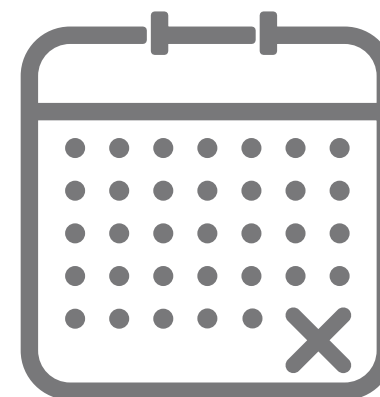
Rental periods of less than a full year are not common practice and thus can prove a real obstacle for mobile students. A majority of Erasmus+ students go abroad for one semester (usually 5-6 months) and among trainees a substantial share go abroad just for 3 months. A majority of students goes abroad during the first semester of the academic year, which leads to bigger demand for accommodation by mobile students in this period.

Good practices

- Some HEIs like the University of Aarhus cover the costs for accommodation for the whole year and therefore also for the months where the accommodation is not occupied. This allows students to rent it for shorter periods of time.
- Student organisations owning and managing student accommodation (such as in Helsinki) are prime examples of how accommodation is adapted to students' needs and can take into consideration the particular profile of mobile students.

Recommendations

Changes in both legal frameworks, as well as the organisation of mobility are necessary to resolve the issue.



<p>Student Organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No recommendations to be given.
<p>Higher Education Institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEIs need to be more flexible in the design of curricula to enable mobility experience. The introduction and broadening of mobility windows would allow students to study for a full year abroad. This has widely acknowledged benefits and therefore should be encouraged. • Renting student accommodation for the whole year and making it available to mobile students is a good option to avoid short-term contracts. To avoid additional costs during summer months, the organisation of summer schools or summer language courses should be encouraged and could lead to almost full occupation throughout the whole year. • Encourage Erasmus+ traineeships in summer months, where accommodation is usually more affordable and available. • Maintain the student status of graduates going on an Erasmus+ traineeship.
<p>Housing Providers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create partnerships with HEIs to guarantee long-term rents despite the fact that mobile students stay only for a short period of time.
<p>Local/regional/national policymakers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise sub-letting regulations for student accommodation to allow a more flexible sub-letting environment. • Create tax-incentives for renting to (mobile) students.
<p>EU and Erasmus+ framework</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer additional incentives for students wanting to study for 2 semesters. The benefits of having longer term mobility experience are widely acknowledged.

8. Problem faced: Trainees suffer most under challenges experienced with accommodation provision

According to our survey, half of trainees state that costs were higher than expected (in comparison 39% for mobile students studying abroad). Furthermore, 64% of trainees state that it was hard to finance their stay abroad (49% for mobile students studying abroad). Trainees generally report more challenges when looking for affordable and satisfactory housing, despite the fact that according to the current Erasmus+ Programme Guide they can receive higher grants. This highlights the important role that receiving HEIs play in welcoming students that include a mobility period for their studies. Such support is usually not available to students going abroad on a traineeship.

Good practices

- Companies/Organisations providing accommodation for incoming trainees or providing quality information (e.g. peer reviews and contacts of previous trainees).

Recommendations

Trainees do deserve special attention and more support in overcoming the challenges they are faced with in their search for accommodation. Young people going on European Voluntary Service (EVS) have their accommodation guaranteed. A compromise solution should be looked into at a European policy level.

Companies should be encouraged to provide similar support to trainees as Higher Education Institutions.



<p>Student Organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for solutions on how to contact and provide services to trainees coming to the city where the student organisation is located.
<p>Higher Education Institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEIs need to look for ways to share the infrastructure available to students with trainees as well. That could mean providing a platform with the relevant information online and possibly collaboration between stakeholders to create awareness of such platform. • Students should be given more flexibility to give them the chance to do study and traineeship periods abroad simultaneously. • The sending institution should collect experience reports of previous students and trainees going to the relevant country/city and make them available to outgoing trainees.
<p>Housing Providers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No recommendations to be given.
<p>Local/regional/national policymakers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional support mechanisms for students that chose to do a traineeship abroad should be considered, taking into account the great added value it can bring to the local community and labour market.
<p>EU and Erasmus+ framework</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recommend closer cooperation between DG EAC and DG EMPL to improve traineeship status and support Erasmus+ trainees with additional resources. Additionally, discussions should be held on how to create a framework for finding accommodation abroad for trainees, possibly building on the existing infrastructure.

9. Problem faced: Language barrier and cultural differences are an obstacle in the process of acquiring housing

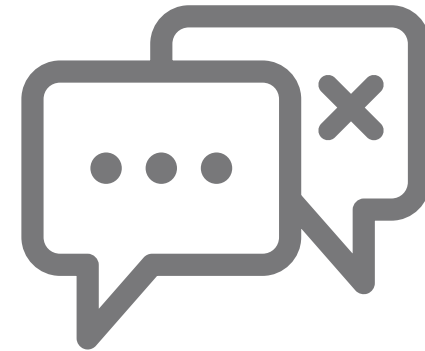
The language barrier for mobile students is mentioned as one of the key problems, next to the lack of information and financial constraints. Also, intercultural (mis)communication is highlighted as a challenge to interaction with accommodation providers as well as peers regarding student accommodation.

Good practices

- Some public housing providers (such as *Deutsche Studentenwerke*) have specially assigned persons in dormitories to facilitate intercultural dialogue, to be there for counselling and to support students with their everyday challenges while abroad.
- In Italy, one housing provider offers language courses as part of their student accommodation offer.
- During the regional conference in Paris, a participant reported of mobile students giving language course to families and in return, the families hosting them during their stay.

Recommendations

Language learning as well as intercultural communication are key to a successful mobility experience, therefore both sending and receiving institutions should offer support and guidance with these aspects. To successfully overcome housing issues, it is crucial to provide such services sufficiently in advance of the mobility period.



Student Organisations

- (Co-)organise intercultural training for outgoing students and facilitate cultural exchanges between potential local mobile students and current mobile students at the HEI.
- Encourage local students planning to go abroad to take part in language cafés/language tandem learning organised by the student organisations.

Higher Education Institutions

- (Co-)organise intercultural training for outgoing students and facilitate cultural exchanges between potential local mobile students and current mobile students at the HEI. (Not to forget the importance of such activities on return.)
- Provide information in widely spoken language and adapt information according to the needs of mobile students (e.g. they might need additional information as they are not familiar with the local culture and customs).

Housing Providers

- Provide information in widely spoken language and adapt information according to the needs of mobile students (e.g. they might need additional information as they are not familiar with the local culture and customs).

Local/regional/ national policymakers

- Provide templates for contracts in different languages and make documentation in widely spoken languages acceptable for legal documents.

EU and Erasmus+ framework

- The language learning process needs to start before the mobility period and also the fostering of intercultural skills. The Erasmus+ framework should encourage learning languages and taking part in intercultural skills courses and encourage these as early as possible.

This Recommendation & Good Practice Booklet has been developed in the framework of the EU co-funded HousErasmus+ project. The recommendations and good practices you will find in this booklet are aimed at following stakeholders concerned with European accommodation for international students:

- Student Organisations
- Higher Education Institutions
- Housing Providers
- Local/regional/national policymakers
- EU and Erasmus+ framework



This booklet is based on the full research report: *At home in Europe: Accommodate international students!*

Find out more at houserasmus.eu