HousErasmus+
Research Report

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Glossary and abbreviations

Abbreviations

EHEA – European Higher Education Area

ET2020 – Education and Training 2020 strategic framework

HEI – Higher Education Institution

IRO – International Relations Office at the HEIs

ISCED – International Standard Classification of Education. Levels 5-8 cover tertiary education

NA – National Agency

UOE – UNESCO, OECD and Eurostat joint data collection

Definitions

Credit mobility – temporary enrolment abroad in the framework of students' ongoing degree courses.

Degree mobility – foreign/international student pursuing full degree in country where they do not hold citizenship.

Exchange student – credit mobile student. Only temporary mobility periods are meant here.

Foreign student – student that is not a citizen of the country in which they study.

Free mover – student participating in temporary mobility outside an organised student mobility programme (for example Erasmus+).

International student – student who is not permanent resident of their country of study, or student who obtained their prior education in a different country.

Zero-grant student – student using Erasmus+ exchange programme infrastructure for temporary mobility abroad, but does not receive a grant from EU funds.

List of partners

• CGU – Compostela Group of Universities

• ESN – Erasmus Student Network

• EUF – European University Foundation

• UNICA – Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe

List of associate partners

• ACA – Academic Cooperation Association

• CNOUS – French Association of Student Services Organisations (*Centre national des œuvres universitaires et scolaires*)

• DSW – German Association of Student Services Organisations (*Deutsches Studentenwerk*)

• DZHW – German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (*Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung*)

• Housing Anywhere

• Uniplaces

List of Erasmus+ programme countries

Member countries of the EU

Belgium	(BE)	Greece	(EL)	Lithuania	(LT)	Portugal	(PT)
Bulgaria	(BG)	Spain	(ES)	Luxembourg	(LU)	Romania	(RO)
Czech Republic	(CZ)	France	(FR)	Hungary	(HU)	Slovenia	(SI)
Denmark	(DK)	Croatia	(HR)	Malta	(MT)	Slovakia	(SK)
Germany	(DE)	Italy	(IT)	Netherlands	(NL)	Finland	(FI)
Estonia	(EE)	Cyprus	(CY)	Austria	(AT)	Sweden	(SE)
Ireland	(IE)	Latvia	(LV)	Poland	(PL)	United Kingdom	(UK)

Non-EU programme countries

Iceland	(IS)	Norway	(NO)
Liechtenstein	(LI)	Switzerland	(CH)
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	(MK)	Turkey	(TR)

Executive Summary

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 ain 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. This executive summary gives an overview of some of the key messages identified throughout the research and provides recommendations categorised according to the challenges identified.

Key challenges

Our research shows that there is a vast diversity and fragmentation of the student accommodation market in Europe. At the same time, we could observe certain patterns that are common across Europe. Students report that the lack of affordable and adequate student housing can be a major obstacle to taking part in mobility programmes and can affect negatively those that go abroad.

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.

HousErasmus+ Research

To get a detailed picture of the current situation of student accommodation for mobile students, we have conducted a range of research activities which have resulted in this report, namely: desk research, five surveys among five different stakeholders (students, student organisations, HEIs, housing providers (public and private) and policymakers), ten study visits to ten different locations around Europe and four regional conferences. The results of these activities have been analysed and compiled into this research report. We have been looking at the situation for exchange students, trainees, as well as international students. One of the main outcomes of this mapping exercise was the understanding that the situation is heavily dependent on a very wide range of influences such as general conditions in the real estate market, patterns of renting or owning housing in different regions, legal restrictions, size of the mobility flows as well as the way of living (rather living in a student dormitory or sharing an apartment with other students). These habits differ widely across Erasmus+ programme countries and differences can be observed from country to country, from city to city in the same country and even from HEI to HEI in the same city. Despite this fact, this research has aimed at identifying certain patterns and looked into the potential root causes of the current situation and also elaborated policy recommendations based on good practices mapped during the research activities.

All in all the questions we tried to answer with this project were:

• What is the current status quo regarding accessibility and quality of accommodation for exchange students and trainees as well as international students across Erasmus+ programme countries?

• Which are the countries/regions/cities facing challenges to ensure adequate mobile student accommodation? What kind of difficulties are they and what are the potential causes?

• What are the good practices to solve the problems regarding the provision of affordable and suitable accommodation for mobile students? What must be considered in the implementation process?

Status quo
Accessibility

According to the Eurydice study 2010[1], countries which are already involved in and committed to student mobility often lack adequate housing for students. Our research has confirmed this observation and illustrated that it is a major obstacle to mobility. There is a clear need for better access to affordable and adequate student housing in Erasmus+ programme countries.

The number one obstacle to student mobility remains the additional financial burden as highlighted in a Eurostudent V study[2]. This holds true for all groups of students – those who have been abroad, those planning to go and those who are not considering going abroad.

As pointed out in the ACA paper[3] on international cooperation in education: "The single most important service offered by institutions, according to international students, is support to help them find somewhere to live, either institutionally owned or managed or located in the local private accommodation sector" which illustrates the key role of HEIs.

In our sample, almost half of the Erasmus+ mobility programme participants claim that it was difficult to find accommodation. In addition, almost half stated that their accommodation costs were higher than expected and roughly half of these students claimed that it caused difficulties in financing their exchange period. Most of these students had to turn to family support or use their personal savings. This implies that taking part in student mobility through Erasmus+ is still socially selective.

There is a lack of support from the public sector for accommodation available to mobile students for the simple reason that there is little to no awareness of the challenges faced by mobile students amongst policymakers. The positive impact of mobile students to the Higher Education environment and to society as a whole are little known outside the Higher Education sector. Another issue identified as contributing to the challenge of accommodation for mobile students is the lack of a suitable legal infrastructure that would improve the rental market and allow for equal access for foreigners. Lastly, the mapping exercise shows that not all HEIs have established effective mechanisms to ensure access to decent housing for mobile students, as stipulated by the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education 2014-2020. For Erasmus+ students, guidance provided by the host HEI regarding accommodation options is the most reliable information and most often leads to actual housing, as opposed to other information channels. This means that HEI institutions need to take full responsibility for providing solutions for mobile students to find adequate and affordable accommodation.

[1]Crosier, D., Dalferth, S., Parveva, T. (2010): *Focus on Higher Education in Europe 2010: The Impact of the Bologna Process. Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, European Commission.* Available online: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/122EN.pdf.

[2]Hauschildt, K., Gwosć, C., Netz, N., Mishra, S. (2015): Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe. EUROSTUDENT V 2012–2015 | Synopsis of Indicators. Available online: http://www.eurostudent.eu/download_files/documents/EVSynopsisofIndicators.pdf.

[3]Kelo, M., Rogers, T., Rumbley E. L. (2010): International Student Support in European Higher Education Needs, Solutions, and Challenges. Available online: http://www.aca-secretariat.be/fileadmin/aca_docs/images/members/2010_International_Student_Support_in_European_Higher_Education_-_Needs__Solutions__and_Challenges_01.pdf.

The HousErasmus+ research recognises that searching for and finding accommodation suited to each individual student are obstacles in and of themselves, and not merely the result of economic constraints. Students' expectations vary and the availability of information, cultural preparation, a suitable legal framework allowing access to accommodation and other factors play as important a role as economic issues. It would not be possible to depict a complete picture of the housing situation, if the issue of accommodation is viewed solely as a problem related to financing.

Quality

Next to the financial issues, the aspect of quality is decisive for the student experience. Throughout all research activities, it became evident that the well-being of the individual students can be affected by the housing situation. This in itself is a situation that needs mitigation, but the negative impact has cascading effects on a series of aspects, of which academic performance is probably the most important one. Half of the students who participated in this research stated that they had experienced some sort of negative impact. Typical negative effects that were mentioned are: impact on their mental or physical state (20%), financial difficulties (15%) and a negative impact on their academic performance (10%), which illustrates the urgent need of adequate accommodation as part of a quality mobility experience.

At the moment, there is no common measuring mechanism or criteria which specifies the minimum accommodation services that would lead to a qualitative and enriching mobility experience. However, various studies propose evaluation criteria regarding satisfaction with accommodation – for both public and private providers. A first step could be for HEIs to carry out self-evaluation and ascertain whether they are satisfying this demand. To this end, it is fundamental that institutions participate actively in HEI networks which aim to eliminate obstacles to mobility and establish common systems for measuring the level of satisfaction of students and implement at least the minimum services which should be offered.

Generally, mobile Erasmus+ students think that their accommodation was of good quality (70%), slightly more than two thirds think that it was a good value for money (63%) and three quarters or 75% were overall satisfied with their accommodation situation. The percentages differ substantially across countries, illustrating that even similar strategies for the provision of accommodation for mobile students does not necessarily mean equally satisfied students. Hence, the need to map the local status quo is truly a must for HEIs and municipalities. Additionally, it is of the utmost importance not to be deceived by the relatively high satisfaction scores as negative experiences tend to dominate in the narrative of students returning to their home institution and thus could have a negative impact on the image of the host HEI and also be a demotivating factor for potential mobile students, making them opt out of taking such an opportunity.

Students mention issues such as the price, services offered, commuting time, location etc. as possible quality criteria. This shows just how complex the definition of adequate housing is and in line with this observation, the project tried to highlight a holistic view on accommodation needs as a basis for accessing student mobility and having a successful mobility experience.

Throughout all HousErasmus+ research activities, stakeholders were asked to share good practices in the process of ensuring accessibility and quality accommodation for (mobile) students. We have pooled these good practices and you will find a complete overview in the chapter on recommendations and good practices. We believe that providing an overview of such practices can firstly allow stakeholders to borrow ideas and apply them in similar contexts in other HEIs/cities/countries. At the same time, this comprehensive overview of good practices shows just show creative the sector already is in trying to solve current issues. We hope that by providing such an overview we can contribute to stimulating a broader discussion on creative and innovative ideas.

Furthermore, the good practices helped us to derive recommendations for all stakeholders involved, as they allowed us to draw conclusions on questions that were generated through a quantitative analysis of the data gathered.

When looking at the good practices provided, one strategy that is commonly accepted is a more holistic approach to cooperation, involving all relevant actors: students (or their representative bodies), higher education institutions, the housing market (both public and private), as well as policymakers. Many good practices entailed some sort of collaboration between two or more of those stakeholders and often indicated that an expansion of collaboration had resulted in positive outcomes. Individual support provided by student organisations is one of the factors that is highlighted particularly when stakeholders are reporting on good practices. It is important to mention that such practices do not usually find their way into traditional research reports. One of the reasons for that might be the difficulty in generalising these support services and fact that they are usually organised by volunteers.

Looking into the future
- three scenarios

When looking at the research results, it is evident that the housing situation for mobile students is highly complex. Different ways of living, different expectations of students, the differences in maturity of the housing markets, the involvement of different stakeholders and different local circumstances are just some of the factors that make it challenging to create solutions that can be applied with a broad brush.

Nevertheless, the research identified certain patterns and trends that allow us to develop scenarios that would allow all actors to remedy the shortcomings of the current housing situation. In order to provide more than just statistics, we have designed three potential scenarios for action by stakeholders that would lead to tangible results in improving the situation.

We have divided those scenarios in more immediate action, potential long-term action and a bold look into the future and beyond the Erasmus+ programme.

Minor steps – immediate action

A first step that would lead to immediate results is for HEIs to actually understand the current situation at their institution or in their respective city. We suggest that all HEIs carry out a simple mapping exercise in order to understand what is the status quo regarding the provision of accommodation for mobile students. How satisfied are students and trainees? What are the difficulties they face? What are the specific national and local challenges to deal with? Such an exercise would ideally be conducted in collaboration with local student organisations and the municipality and the results would be discussed jointly.

One of the major obstacles for (potential) mobile students is the lack of qualitative information at an early stage of their planning process on whether and where to go on a mobility. It is important to recognise that this is a shared responsibility of all stakeholders. Both the sending and receiving institution need to provide quality information to their students, while housing providers – both public and private - need to share more key information about the accommodation itself: only 17% provided reviews from the previous tenants. HEIs should strengthen their cooperation with student organisations dealing with mobility issues, as it is one of the most efficient ways to provide information and offer peer-to-peer support to students upon arrival.

On a European level, it will be necessary to create broader awareness of the lack of access to affordable and decent accommodation as a major obstacle to mobility and the fact that it is one of the main reasons why student mobility remains socially exclusive. A first step to

remedy this situation would be to create and support platforms where all involved stakeholders could continue the discussion initiated by the HousErasmus+ project. It is in the interest of the public sector to invest resources into solving the housing issue so that equal access to higher education and mobility can be ensured. The multitude of benefits of student mobility are widely acknowledged and this research paper illustrates that accommodation is a major obstacle to overcome. The private sector can play a pivotal role in supporting the public sector and a better understanding of the accommodation market for students could create business opportunities that would otherwise go unused.

A bold vision for the future

The overall goal is to work towards a situation when finding accommodation is not one of the core obstacles to mobility. Students and trainees should be able to find affordable and adequate housing and the mobility experience should no longer be socially exclusive. In addition, the quality of accommodation allows the students to gain the most from their mobility experience abroad – academically and culturally.

When taking a bold look into the future, one could imagine a pan-European tool or platform which would allow reliable information to be circulated between HEIs and housing providers. Ideally, such information would include reports on previous student experiences. Such a platform/tool should ideally be co-managed by all stakeholders involved and integrate with a larger digital infrastructure available to students that allows for language learning, intercultural preparation, etc. Such a system should also consider the diversity of the student group (e.g. students with children or disabilities).

The calculation of Erasmus+ grants should take into account actual living costs per city/region and could base itself on established measures of living costs such as the NUTS. Additionally, countries need to make every effort to co-fund Erasmus+ grants, as the current amount is not sufficient for students from weaker socio-economic backgrounds to cover the costs of their educational experience abroad.

Innovative housing solutions need to meet the diverse needs and expectations and only good collaboration between Higher Education and the housing market (private and public) can respond to local needs and lead to much-needed innovation. Students and student representatives themselves should be at the core of discussions on accommodation for students. The positive examples highlighted in the research are proof of the positive effects that students' opinions and innovation potential can have.

Forward looking – the need for in-depth analysis and continued research

The project tried to illuminate aspects that are challenging to map. More information in these areas would help the overall understanding of the situation and therefore contribute further to evidence-based policy-making.

• There have been attempts to map the portability of national public support mechanisms when going abroad and we know that students and trainees have a chance to apply for more funding from other sources - public or private, national or regional, etc. Yet there seems to be a lack of an overview of what such additional financial resources comprise which are available to students during their mobility experience and what is the volume of such support. This makes it difficult to identify and avoid social selectivity of mobility periods. If such analyses exist on national levels, a European streamlining of such an overview would be useful.

• HousErasmus+ illustrates the current status quo regarding support given to students, which overall are well-known strategies that have been applied for quite some time. It would also be interesting to analyse more marginal and small-scale initiatives that aim for social innovations and include mobile student accommodation as a crucial element, e.g. what are the ways such strategies can foster integration, language learning, tolerance, European citizenship etc.

• A more focussed and in-depth analysis of the impact of private or public student accommodation sector domination could be an interesting reason for the HEIs and municipalities to re-evaluate their strategies when dealing with these issues. Aspects such as affordability and social inclusion should be in the foreground of such analysis.

Key findings

To summarise the research activities carried out, the following key findings illustrate the main aspects that stood out in each part of the research. You will find an overview of key findings for students, student organisations, HEIs, housing providers and policymakers. Even though some perspectives are similar, dividing the key findings by different stakeholders highlights the subtle but important differences between stakeholders.

Status quo for students

• **Around half of Erasmus+ students claim that it is difficult to find accommodation.** Almost half (45%) of students in Erasmus+ study mobility and 56% of those doing traineeships say that the housing market of their host HEI was difficult.

• **Across all chosen student target groups, almost half stated that their accommodation costs were higher than expected.** 39% of exchange students and 50% of those doing traineeships state that the cost of accommodation in their host country was higher than they had expected. Most of the students for whom extra cost made it difficult to finance their exchange period turned to family support or used their personal savings, which raises the question about social selectivity of exchange periods abroad.

• **HEIs are the main source of reliable information.** For Erasmus+ students, the information provided by their HEI regarding accommodation options is the main source of information and also most often leads to them actually finding accommodation. On average around 66% of Erasmus+ students say that the information provided by their host HEI was useful. On the other hand, social media channels, as well as general housing websites, are commonly used to look for information on housing but rarely lead to students actually finding accommodation.

• **Helping hand from the HEI.** Roughly two thirds of Erasmus+ students and trainees arrange their accommodation themselves and for around one third of those in study mobility, the host HEI arranged it for them.

• **Living in a student dormitory.** The percentage of exchange students living in dormitories depends heavily on the way of life in the specific country and can range from more than 75% to less than 10%.

• **Satisfaction with accommodation.** Around two thirds of the Erasmus+ student body claim that their accommodation was good value for money and around three quarters reported overall satisfaction with their accommodation.

• **Lack of equal treatment.** An average of 17% of respondents those in Erasmus+ study mobility report perceived discrimination when looking for accommodation and 12% of them experienced attempted fraud when looking for accommodation in their host country. Typical aspects mentioned as perceived discrimination are: less access to information, higher rents, as well as xenophobia and legal restrictions.

• **Situation is more difficult for trainees.** Bearing in mind that no substantial differences can be observed among different student target groups, Erasmus+ programme trainees assess their success in finding decent and affordable housing slightly below that of all the other groups.

Student organisations' perspective

• **Role and ambitions.** The student organisations represented in our sample were typically the local sections of ESN, as well as student support centres at HEIs and student unions. The tasks performed by these organisations with regard to mobile student accommodation comprise mainly practical and individualised support mechanisms. Lobbying for better conditions is not commonly an area of activity for the student organisations in our sample.

• **Main challenges.** Student organisations identify similar challenges as students: the lack of available and affordable housing, accessibility of reliable and useful information in the search process, and language and cultural differences.

• **Types of support strategies.** The most typical strategy is to provide individual support (e.g. in the form of a buddy system) and organising the support structures, e.g. by offering a platform of reliable information (mostly via social media).

• **Cooperation partners.** Even if HEIs are the closest and often the main or only cooperation partners at the moment, student organisations are calling for more involvement by HEIs to deal with the challenges mobile students have to face.

HEIs' perspective

• **Accommodation challenges as part of internationalisation?** Despite the fact that 90% of the HEIs claim that internationalisation is a priority for HEIs, only roughly half think that the lack of adequate and affordable accommodation is an obstacle to internationalisation, in stark contrast to our research findings.

• **Main challenges.** HEIs identify the following issues as the most important barriers to finding decent and affordable accommodation: contractual limitations for exchange students (shorter term contracts lead to higher prices), linguistic constraints, as well as lack of intercultural competences (or miscommunication) as an obstacle to finding decent accommodation.

• **Providing information.** More than two thirds of International Relation Offices do not have a dedicated person in the office to support students with their search for accommodation. HEIs state that overall there is a high demand among students for them to provide the necessary information on housing. On the whole, HEIs feel confident that they are also living up to expectations in delivering this information; however, this does not match with students' perception.

• **Recommendations.** Most HEIs call for more cooperation of all the actors involved (private entities, individual landlords, student organisations) and state that it is in the interest of municipalities to also contribute to the work of ensuring suitable accommodation for mobile students.

• **More funding.** HEIs are calling for more funding to deal with the challenges they are facing and are suggesting that the initiative could come from the EU. Similarly, the legal issues would call for a more systematic pan-European solution.

• **Outsourcing v. insourcing.** HEIs need to cope with challenges carefully by balancing insourcing and outsourcing of the accommodation provided for students. The right balance depends on the maturity of private student accommodation markets, the level of housing shortages, legal restraints mobile students might face in the local real estate market, as well as the HEI's internationalisation strategy.

Housing providers' perspective

• **Benefits of focussing on student housing.** When asking housing providers about the reasons to focus on the sector of student housing, they expressed different motivations. Both public and private providers mention the response to market demand, as well as having this task assigned by HEIs or the local municipality. Many housing providers in our sample see their work as a support measure for HEIs to build their international image, as well as facilitating cultural exchanges.

• **Cooperation partners.** Almost half the housing providers responded positively with regard to cooperation with Higher Education Institutions. Around one fifth cooperate with student organisations. Roughly one third of housing providers neither cooperate with Higher Education Institutions nor with student organisations.

• **Support mechanisms offered to students.** There is a wide variety of support mechanisms that are being offered according to the specific needs of mobile students. Some of these are more practical, like pick-up and provision of specific opening hours. Others are more aimed at improving the quality of the mobility experience, such as social, cultural and sports events. Welcoming and orientation activities, tutor and buddy programmes as well as integration and language courses help with the integration of the student.

• **Specific policies.** When discussing specific policies for mobile students housing providers highlight the existence of financial specificities. These can comprise both stricter or more relaxed conditions – higher prices and administrative fees or the possibility to rent for 5 or 10 months instead of 12 and offering double rooms to save money; this illustrates the diversity amongst housing providers and their priorities.

Policymakers' perspective

• **Mapping policymakers.** The difficulties in identifying policymakers responsible for student housing underlines the absence of the topic from policy agendas.

• **Scope of operation.** The policymaker survey demonstrates the diversity regarding the scope of activity of potential actors involved in housing issues (e.g. national, regional levels) as well as range of interests they might have in addition to legislative duties (e.g. urban planning, support for the HEI with its internationalisation strategy to provide quality housing for students, carrying out surveys to monitor quality and strategic planning).

• **Good practices.** Good practices that could be indicated are legal incentives, i.e. legislation that aims at fostering the educational and social integration of mobile students, as well as collaboration with HEIs, student organisations and other relevant stakeholders.

1. HousErasmus+ project

1.1 Project Description

The HousErasmus+ project is a two-year project (November 2015 – October 2017), co-funded under the Erasmus+ programme, Key Action 3: Forward-Looking Cooperation project. The project aims to tackle one of the main obstacles to student mobility: accommodation. With this aim in mind, HousErasmus+ provides comprehensive mapping of the national, regional and local situation of accommodation for mobile students and trainees in Europe through this research paper. Furthermore, the project enables good practice to be shared between all stakeholders involved by holding four regional conferences and implementing a large-scale campaign to raise awareness.

1.2 Partners of the project

The project is being conducted by a selected consortium of partners working in the field of Higher Education and who have a particular interest in quality mobility for students and trainees.

Partners in the project are:
• Erasmus Student Network (ESN) - Belgium
• Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA) - Belgium
• European University Foundation (EUF) - Luxembourg
• Compostela Group of Universities (CGU) – Spain

The Consortium includes partners from 2 specific domains: students (ESN) and a wide range of universities across Europe (UNICA, EUF and CGU). Each partner is involved in work packages according to their specific expertise and capacity.

In addition to the core partnership of the consortium, a range of associate partners have been invited to contribute to the project and undertake quality assurance activities by constituting the Advisory Board. Below please find a list of associate partners in alphabetical order:
• Academic Cooperation Association (ACA)
• French Association of Student Services Organisations - *Centre national des œuvres universitaires et scolaires* (CNOUS)
• German Association of Student Services Organisations *Deutsches Studentenwerk* (DSW)
• DZHW (*Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung*) - German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies
• Housing Anywhere
• Uniplaces

2. Introduction

The Erasmus+ programme and its predecessors have contributed to the internationalisation of European higher education and mobility programmes for studies and traineeships is its most important component for creating an innovative and high-quality higher education sector.

The number of students who have completed exchanges abroad is supposed to continue to grow as the benchmark in the EU's Education and Training 2020 strategy framework (ET2020) is set at a minimum of 20% higher education graduates who should spend some time studying or participating in a traineeship abroad. And if that is certainly a fact to celebrate per se, what should also be kept in mind is that quantity should not overshadow quality and the mobility experience should be accessible to a wide range of students and not just to those more fortunate in socioeconomic terms. Despite much success in making the programme more accessible, as illustrated by the latest Erasmus Impact Study[4], considerable barriers to mobility remain. Among the various obstacles to mobility dealt with, particular attention has been paid to such aspects as financial uncertainty, credit recognition and linguistic preparation. Housing issues have not yet received such attention, even though they might be directly linked to the other challenges indicated above.

To get a full picture of the housing situation for mobile students, the methodology applied to this research tried to consider all relevant perspectives that can be considered – e.g. students, student organisations, HEIs, housing providers and policymakers. When reviewing literature, it was clear that there were several ways of viewing the same phenomenon. The HEIs, students, local authorities and accommodation providers might identify similar challenges, but could also disagree on others. In addition, the perception of the importance as well as the severity of the obstacles for mobile students to find accommodation varies.

Taking the potential importance of the questions related to accommodation into account, the aim of the project is to positively impact the real needs of the actors involved – this is why it is based around both problems and good practices, with student accommodation identified and indicated by all parties which deal directly with student mobility in Europe.

[4]Brandenburg, U., Berghoff, S., Taboadela O. (2014): The Erasmus Impact Study.
Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf

3. Methodology and Design

3.1 Methodology

The project activities started off by conducting **Desk Research** to map an existing analysis and status quo in the domain of student accommodation and student mobility in order to identify potential problems and good practices. Special attention was paid to credit mobile students and trainees as well as degree mobile students in Erasmus+ programme countries. It served as a first step to create a substantiated overview of the group of mobile students/trainees, as well as political, economic, legal and cultural aspects determining the provision of student accommodation for mobile programmes. Throughout the research progress, this Desk Research was regularly consulted, adapted and extended. More precisely, after the internal preliminary report, the consortium decided to add a more in-depth analysis with additional background information on the student population and relevant processes influencing student accommodation overall.

The data consulted consists of statistical databases (mainly Eurostat, UNESCO, OECD and Eurostudent V), independent and publicly available material (research reports, policy briefs, legal documents), research papers published in professional journals, books, academic articles and conference reports.

The information collected provided the basis for creating a truer picture of the issue of mobile student accommodation across Europe, since up to this moment there was no specific data that would allow us to answer our questions about the problems faced and solutions applied.

A special focus has been placed on a review on:
• Characteristics of the real estate market across countries, regarding the most common form of housing available to students as well as price indices and percentage of budget allocated to accommodation costs.
• Aspects determining students' choice of accommodation – characteristics of students' background in choosing particular types of accommodation.
• Overview on obstacles to study mobility.
• Analysis of the legal aspects and restrictions determining available student housing options for mobile students.
• Overview of financial resources available to mobile students.
• Analysis of nationwide public and non-profit organisations dealing with the provision of affordable student accommodation.
• Insights from the private sector as to what determines investment in student accommodation.
• Potential good practices for dealing with the challenges of providing mobile student housing as an overarching interest.

The results of the initial Desk Research were included in the development of **five (5) questionnaires for different target groups:**
1. Credit and degree mobile students and trainees
2. Student organisations
3. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) – International Relations Offices (IROs)
4. Housing Providers
5. Policymakers

• The questionnaire for mobile students and trainees was aimed at finding out how they experienced their search for accommodation, the quality of accommodation services provided to them before and during their mobility period, as well as identifying the problems faced and potential good practices to be adopted.

• The student NGOs survey focussed on the involvement of student NGOs in the process of providing support services to students, as well as on identifying key problems faced by the different stakeholders and potential good practices to be adopted.

• The questionnaire for the Higher Education Institution or, to be more precise, the International Relations Office was mainly aimed at finding out how HEIs participate in the provision of student accommodation. What is their motivation and goals for the future? It also focussed on support and incentive mechanisms available, as well as the main challenges and good practices.

• The housing providers survey tried to find out what are the types of student accommodation available and patterns of work among different housing provision organisations. It also focussed on the motivation and incentives to work with (mobile) students, as well as key problems and solutions applied.

• The policymakers questionnaire aimed first and foremost at identifying different actors in the field and their reasoning when dealing with student accommodation issues.

Following the 5 online surveys, **ten (10) study visits** were conducted to gather more qualitative input through interviews with all the above-mentioned stakeholders during field visits. The study visit locations were chosen to represent the most diverse selection of cities. Following the collection of data, a preliminary research report was compiled to analyse the intermediate results and decide on aspects of the data collected that required further analysis. **Four (4) regional conferences** were intended to provide a space for sharing good practices and gaining further insights into the difficulties faced by mobile students/trainees and the potential solutions. They gave stakeholders the opportunity to share the outcomes and suggested improvements and learn from their peers. It was also a platform for discussing the preliminary research results and to develop the first recommendations, which have been integrated into this final research report for the project.

3.2 Sources of statistical data on student accommodation

Countries across the EU are working towards creating common approaches and standards in the process of data collection. However, there are still many challenges when it comes to the field of education, so often it is not easy to ensure comparability. Countries might use different criteria to collect data, for instance some categorise students according to their nationality, and others by their previous country of study or residence, or there might be no distinction between both cases. Hence it is very important to consider the metadata in order to be able to draw relevant conclusions and take the slight differences into account when interpreting data. The most common terms used are summarised in a separate glossary to avoid contradictions.

Eurostat, OECD and UNESCO databases were used as the main sources of information. In addition, Eurostudent V, as a social survey on the student population across countries, was another source of information for this research paper, as it offers comparability across countries as well as allowing possible comparisons with Eurostat indicators on national population data. The Eurostudent survey is a comprehensive and comparative survey on the social and economic conditions of student life in Europe and its 5th issue, published in 2015, covers an analysis of 30 countries in the European Higher Education Area out of 47 countries which are participating in the Bologna Process. The data collected among students took place in the spring of 2013 in most of the participating countries and the sample included all full-time and part-time students in the country in all ISCED 5, 6 and 7 programmes at 'normal' HEIs (no special institutions or distance students or ISCED 8 or PhD programme students). Certain deviations should nevertheless be taken into account, and more information about the specific conditions in the various countries can be found in the introduction to the Synopsis of Indicators publication[5]. Unfortunately, at the time of the survey, mobile students are not included in the sample, hence incoming and outgoing students are not covered in this analysis. Nevertheless, this survey offers comprehensive information on past student mobility as well as future plans. It also has a special chapter devoted to internationalisation where it portrays mobility flows and obstacles, the organisational framework and financing sources for studies and traineeships abroad.

EU projects like TENLAW, dealing with tenant rights and restrictions, as well as policy papers, gave an overview on the legal aspects of the status quo in student accommodation. Real estate agency reviews and market analyses illustrated trends in the student housing market.

3.3 Challenges and Limitations

There were several challenges and limitations during project execution that made the aim of reflecting the current status quo in mobile student accommodation more complex.

• **Diversity of the sector.** The provision of quality student accommodation differs substantially not only across countries and regions but also cities – e.g. the situation in large countries like Italy or Spain are the best examples for variations in price and accessibility on a national level. Hence, in the best case scenario, national and regional data would be the most informative source of detailed information; however, this is not possible due to the language barrier as such specific information often is available only in the national language(s) as well as the scope of the exercise. Therefore, the aim of the mapping exercises was to give a general overview on trends regarding challenges and innovations related to student accommodation for mobile students at a national level.

• **Lack of data.** Some countries/regions do not collect specific data on mobile student/trainee student accommodation at all. While student accommodation is often analysed in detail, the specific challenges faced by mobile students are not always mapped.

• **Lack of up-to-date data.** The availability of up-to-date data that could be crossed with other indicators is sometimes lacking and therefore poses a challenge, as it influences the quality of analyses and comparisons. Important updates to analyses could include, for instance, more recent data on statistics for student mobility flows (the latest validated data is from 2014 – see Erasmus+ Annual Reports).

• **Representativeness of the information available.** The availability of complete and complementary data is sometimes missing, resulting in an incomplete picture of certain important elements of the analysis, for example, the amount of funding available to students/trainees is unclear. The Erasmus+ grant is often topped up by different national or regional sources directly targeted at mobile students; also students usually have access to national public sources during the exchange period. This means considerations about the total budget at their disposal are inaccurate.

• **Time frame.** Overall statistical data from 2013 onwards was consulted, in an attempt to provide an in-depth description of the real estate market and also because the vast majority of student responses are from those who completed their studies or traineeship abroad in the period 2014-2016. However, it is acknowledged that certain patterns in national public student grants, HEI strategies and the real estate markets are cyclical or changing.

[5]Hauschildt, K., Gwosć, C., Netz, N., Mishra, S. (2015): Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe. EUROSTUDENT V 2012–2015 | Synopsis of Indicators. Available online: http://www.eurostudent.eu/download_files/documents/EVSynopsisofIndicators.pdf

• **Sample size.** It is the strength of the HousErasmus+ project that very specific target groups were mapped, e.g. housing providers or policymakers. However, it was a real challenge to gather the data and the sample is not always as large as we wished. Therefore, a rule of thumb is applied, requiring at least 30 cases in a separate category to be analysed in detail. For example, country comparisons are carried out only if the individual country is represented with enough cases.

• **Subjectivity of the assessment.** Assessment of satisfaction is a very subjective category and overall satisfaction might depend on a wide number of aspects, e.g. students' backgrounds and expectations as well as motivation; therefore, the data should be interpreted cautiously in combination with other indicators on the subject.

4. Desk Research

4.1 Key messages

• The most prominent incoming and outgoing student flows as well as trainee flows within Erasmus+ programme countries are to and from Spain, Germany, France, Italy and the UK. When looking at the proportion relative to the size of the student body per country, Luxembourg, some of the Nordic as well as Baltic countries, Spain and Slovenia stand out, having the highest percentages taking up a study-related exchange period abroad, namely, studies or traineeships. Luxembourg, Austria, the UK, and Switzerland lead the way with highest levels of international/foreign students.

• Financial challenges are the most prominent obstacles that students mention, whether they have been abroad, are currently planning to do so or are not even considering going abroad according to Eurostudent V survey. Therefore, the evidence of social selectivity in the mobility period abroad poses an urgent issue to be addressed. It would otherwise mean that not all Europeans have equal access to an opportunity to enhance their employability, broaden their horizons and experience Europe and become true European citizens.

• In around one third of the Eurostudent V survey countries, more than 25% of the student population lives in student accommodation; from Erasmus+ programme countries those countries were SK, FI, NL, LV, SE, SI, RO. On the other hand, less than 10% of the student population live in student accommodation in AT, HR, CH, MT and IT. Sharing one's accommodation with other people (not parents or partner) is the most common type of housing for students in DE, IE and SK. Living alone (regardless of the form of accommodation, e.g. in a flat or student dormitory) is, on the other hand, very common in FI or FR.

• According to Eurostudent V survey, those living in student accommodation tend to be students that are younger and have a higher study intensity and in most of the countries student accommodation is especially common among those that are dependent on public support (e.g. grants or loans).

• According to the TENLAW research report, there seems to be room for improvement in the legal infrastructure in southern as well as eastern countries that could improve the rental market and better cater for the rights of both tenants and homeowners and so address the problem of the lack of (affordable) housing in some locations.

• It is challenging to map all the financial resources available to students when going abroad, which yet again highlights the need to map the status quo in order to safeguard affordability of the mobility experience. Next to Erasmus+ grants, national top-ups and the students' own resources as well as family support might be available but are difficult to measure. The national student support mechanisms might only be available to non-mobile students and hence not be portable for exchanges abroad. This is an issue which must be investigated separately.

• Private real estate companies do acknowledge the profitability of investing in student accommodation; however, their priority is not to ensure affordable housing.

• The task of the public sector is to determine current values and wherewith take the responsibility to address social selectivity of the mobility period so that ever more European citizens have the chance to benefit from the mobility experience and the skills necessary to ensure a peaceful and prosperous future.

4.2 Definitions

An interpretation of data on education matters across different surveys and databases is often challenging as there can be lack of uniformity regarding terms and due to slightly differences in the educational systems. This results in certain indicators that are difficult to compare. Therefore, the terminology used in this research is in line with UNESCO, OECD and Eurostat (UOE)[6], as well as materials of the European Commission as the most sophisticated and up-to-date reference points.

• Mobile students: As the main target group of the HousErasmus+ project, we can differentiate between two possible categories of mobile students:
• Degree mobility – foreign/international students pursuing a full degree in country where they do not hold citizenship[7].
• Credit mobility – this concept describes temporary enrolment abroad in the framework of students' ongoing degree courses, where terms like 'home' and 'host' institutions are used to describe the origin and destination of the mobility period[8].

This distinction is most relevant throughout the paper, i.e. between temporary mobility (exchange students) and degree mobility (international/foreign students). Both focus groups will be analysed in detail and separately for some key aspects where possible, since it

[6]Eurostat, UNESCO OECD Eurostat (UOE) joint data collection – methodology: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/UNESCO_OECD_Eurostat_(UOE)_joint_data_collection_%E2%80%93_methodology.
[7]European Commission (2015): ECTS guide. Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/glossary_en.htm.
[8]Ibid.

would be valuable to gain more information about the status quo and the problems faced as well as good practices for both groups, as each might have access to different support mechanisms as well as face distinctive problems. Furthermore, the sample of exchange students will be further differentiated according to Erasmus(+) and non-Erasmus(+) students for some aspects of the research. It was done if we deemed it useful to see whether there are differences between students embarking on temporary mobility, with or without the framework of the Erasmus(+) programme.

On the whole, 'international/foreign students' for all OECD, UNESCO and Eurostat datasets means full-degree mobile students only – credit mobility is addressed separately, if at all.
To avoid confusion, however, it is useful to note how UOE differentiates even further when dealing with non-domestic students.

• International students: "students who are not permanent or usual residents of their country of study, or alternatively students who obtained their prior education in a different country"[9].

• Foreign students: students that are not citizens of the country in which they study, hence this term focuses on general immigration flows[10].

Also, real estate market analysts usually talk about full-degree mobile student flows, yet sometimes both – short time mobility (exchange studies) and students who are enrolled for the full degree in a foreign country - are taken into account when calculating the potential demand for student housing; some surveys focus explicitly on exchange students/trainees. Nevertheless, data and best practices on international/foreign students is not always a bad proxy when judging the provision of and satisfaction with accommodation for exchange students/trainees.

Another concept needing clarification is that of free-movers and zero-grant students.

• According to the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, zero-grant students are those "with a zero-grant from EU funds; these are mobile participants that do not receive an EU grant related to travel and subsistence, but they otherwise fulfil all student and staff mobility criteria and benefit from all advantages of being Erasmus+ student and staff."[11] Nevertheless, it is possible that these students might still receive other scholarships e.g. national or regional, and they are also taken into account in the Erasmus+ statistics as they are using the Erasmus+ framework, cooperation networks and the infrastructure created (e.g. Erasmus+ agreements between HEIs).

• Free-mover – "A student participating in credit mobility outside an organised student mobility programme (such as Erasmus+). A free-mover chooses a host institution and organises his/her credit mobility at that institution."[12] Hence no frameworks are used for temporary enrolment abroad.

To sum up: it is important to note the distinction between temporary mobility (Erasmus(+)) **exchange students**) and degree mobility (**international/foreign students**).

Even if in the Erasmus+ framework the distinction between traineeship and study mobility can potentially become more blurred, the definition is as follows:

• Erasmus+ traineeship/placement – According to the Erasmus+ Programme Guide[13] a traineeship (work placement) abroad is foreseen "in an enterprise or any other relevant workplace". Within Erasmus+ "a study period abroad may include a traineeship period as well. Such a combination creates synergies between the academic and professional experience abroad and may be organised in different ways depending on the context: either one activity after the other or both at the same time." The minimum duration is the same as for study mobility – 3 months, or 1 academic term or trimester and can be carried out within a maximum of one year after the student's graduation.

Apart to that, students can also organise their traineeship using other funds or do it independently, without using any programme framework.

[9]OECD (2016): Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris.
Available online: http://dx.doi.org/10.187/eag-2016-en.
[10] Ibid.
[11]European Commission (2017): Erasmus+ Programme Guide.
Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf.
[12]European Commission (2015): ECTS guide. Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/glossary_en.htm.
[13]European Commission (2017): Erasmus+ Programme Guide.
Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf, page 33.

4.3 International/foreign and exchange students/trainees across Erasmus+ programme countries

Exchange students/trainees

The number of Erasmus(+) exchange students and trainees has grown significantly since the EU established the infrastructure for study and traineeship mobility and support has been promised to ensure that an increasing number of students have the chance to participate in exchanges in the future. The benchmark in the EU's Education and Training 2020 strategy framework (ET2020) has been set at a minimum of 20% of higher education graduates who should spend some time studying or participating in a traineeship abroad.

According to the latest validated data on the Erasmus+ programme from the year 2014, 291,383 students took part in study mobility between programme countries. The percentages per country can be found in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1. The Statistical Annex of the Annual Erasmus+ Reports[14] also provides detailed information about the distribution of students per country; hence it illustrates the composition of the incoming student body through Erasmus+ in every country. Overall the most prominent sending and receiving countries are Spain and Germany. In the UK, the incoming flows exceed the outgoing flow and more students are going abroad than the number of incoming students in such popular locations as France, Italy and Portugal.

As these are absolute numbers, they do not reflect the percentage of national students who have taken part in an exchange period per country. There are some European countries where a mobility period is more common than others, e.g. more than 25% of graduates in Luxembourg have taken part in an exchange[15]. According to Erasmus: Facts, Figures & Trends Estonia, Spain, Latvia, Slovenia, Finland and Liechtenstein also have a relatively high number of Erasmus students, with around 10% of graduates having taken part in an Erasmus mobility in 2012-2013. On the other hand, the smallest percentages of students taking part in Erasmus exchanges were in Poland, Turkey and the UK, despite the overall high number of mobility flows.

As for traineeships/placement abroad, France, Spain, Germany, the UK, Italy and Poland, as for study periods abroad, have the biggest outgoing student flows[16]. Eurostudent V also highlights percentages of students per selected countries and among those in this sample, Austria (14%) as well as Estonia and Denmark (10% respectively) excel with the highest percentages of students who have completed their internship/placement abroad.

Table 4.1 - Erasmus+ mobility flows, 2014

	Receiving country	Sending country
ES	42,537	36,842
DE	32,871	39,719
UK	30,183	14,801
FR	29,558	39,985
IT	21,564	31,051
PL	13,101	16,735
PT	11,459	8,034
NL	11,445	12,397
BE	10,666	8,632
SE	9,754	4,635
CZ	8,330	8,226
TR	7,925	14,665
FI	7,910	5,598
IE	7,216	3,029
AT	7,052	6,609
NO	5,610	1,723
DK	5,518	4,251
HU	5,403	4,421
EL	3,653	4,516
LT	2,615	4,417
RO	2,573	6,406
MT	2,295	331
SI	2,248	1,987
SK	1,791	3,819
EE	1,579	1,278
HR	1,541	1,679
LV	1,447	1,837
BG	1,095	2,179
CY	928	581
IS	712	340
LU	694	538
LI	55	45
MK	55	77

Data source: Erasmus+ Annual report, Statistical Annex

[14]European Commission (2014): Erasmus+ Annual report, Statistical Annex: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/statistics/ar-statistical-annex_en.pdf.
[15]European Commission (2015): Erasmus – Facts, Figures. And Trends. The European Union support for student and staff exchanges and university cooperation in 2013-2014.
Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/statistics/erasmus-plus-facts-figures_en.pdf.
[16]Hauschildt, K., Gwosć, C., Netz, N., Mishra, S. (2015): Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe. EUROSTUDENT V 2012–2015 | Synopsis of Indicators.
Available online: http://www.eurostudent.eu/download_files/documents/EVSynopsisofIndicators.pdf.

Figure 4.1 - Erasmus+ mobility flows, 2014

Erasmus+ KA1 mobility flows, 2014

Incoming students   Outgoing students
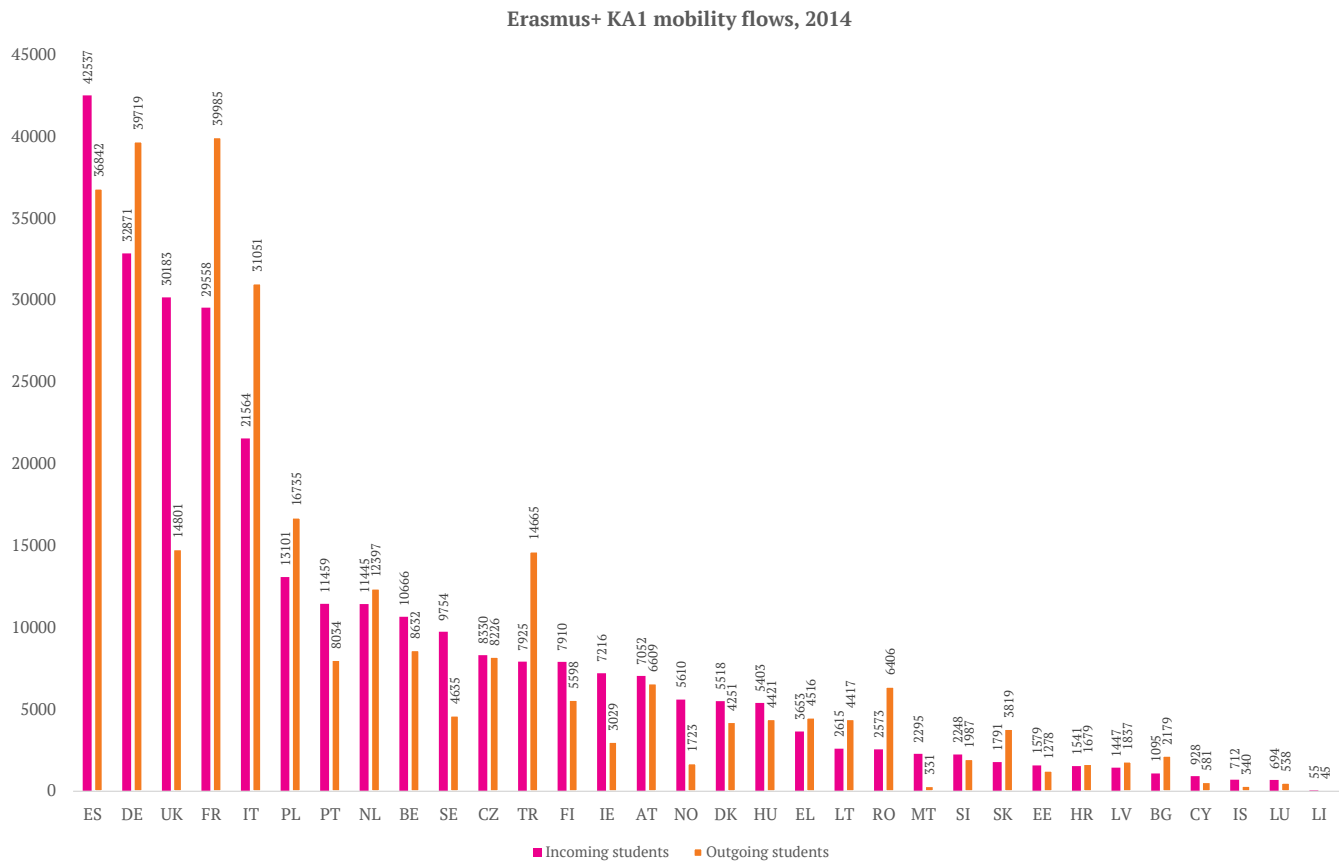
Figure 4.2 - Number of Erasmus+ trainees, 2014

Number of Erasmus+ trainees, 2014

Figure 4.3 - International student mobility rates - students with study-related experiences abroad (all types)

International student mobility rates
- students with study-related experiences abroad (all types) (in %)
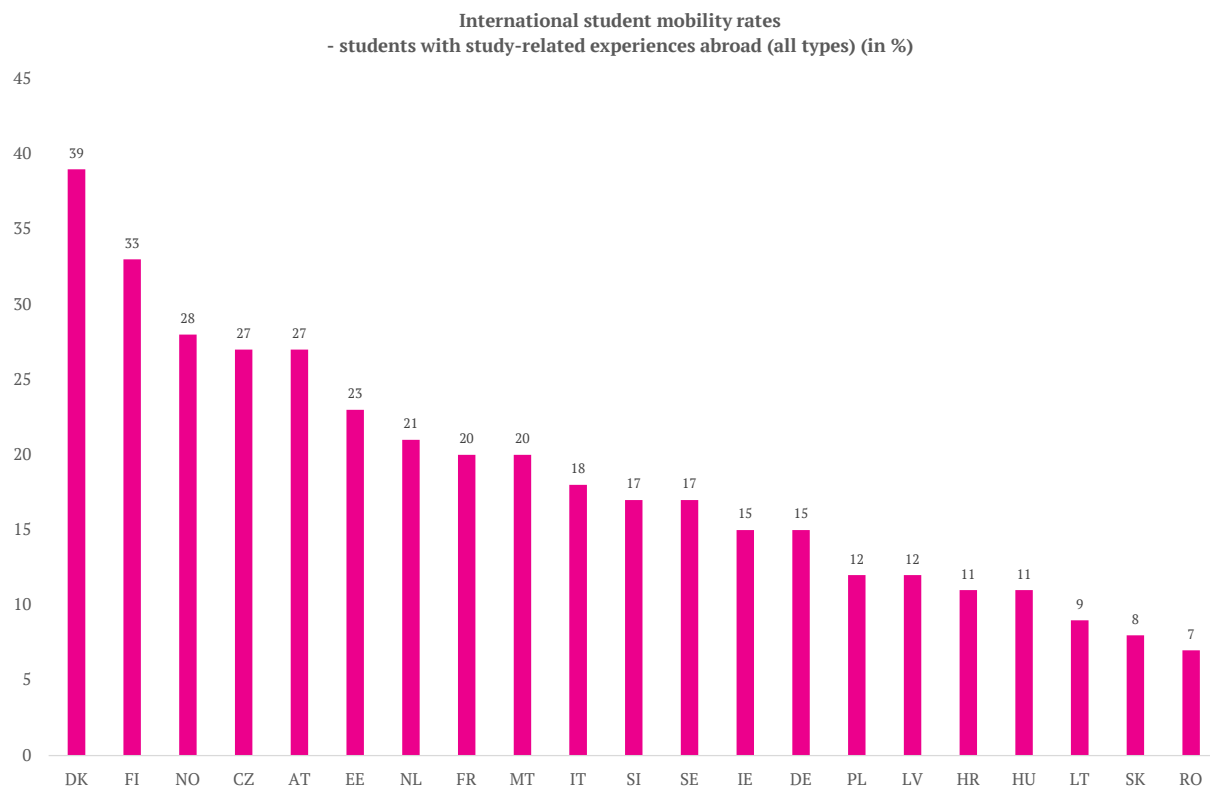
Data source: Eurostudent V

Figure 4.4 - International student mobility rates - students who realised an enrolment, internship or a language course abroad

International student mobility rates
- students who realised an enrolment, internship or a language course abroad (in %)

■ enrolment ■ internship ▬ language course
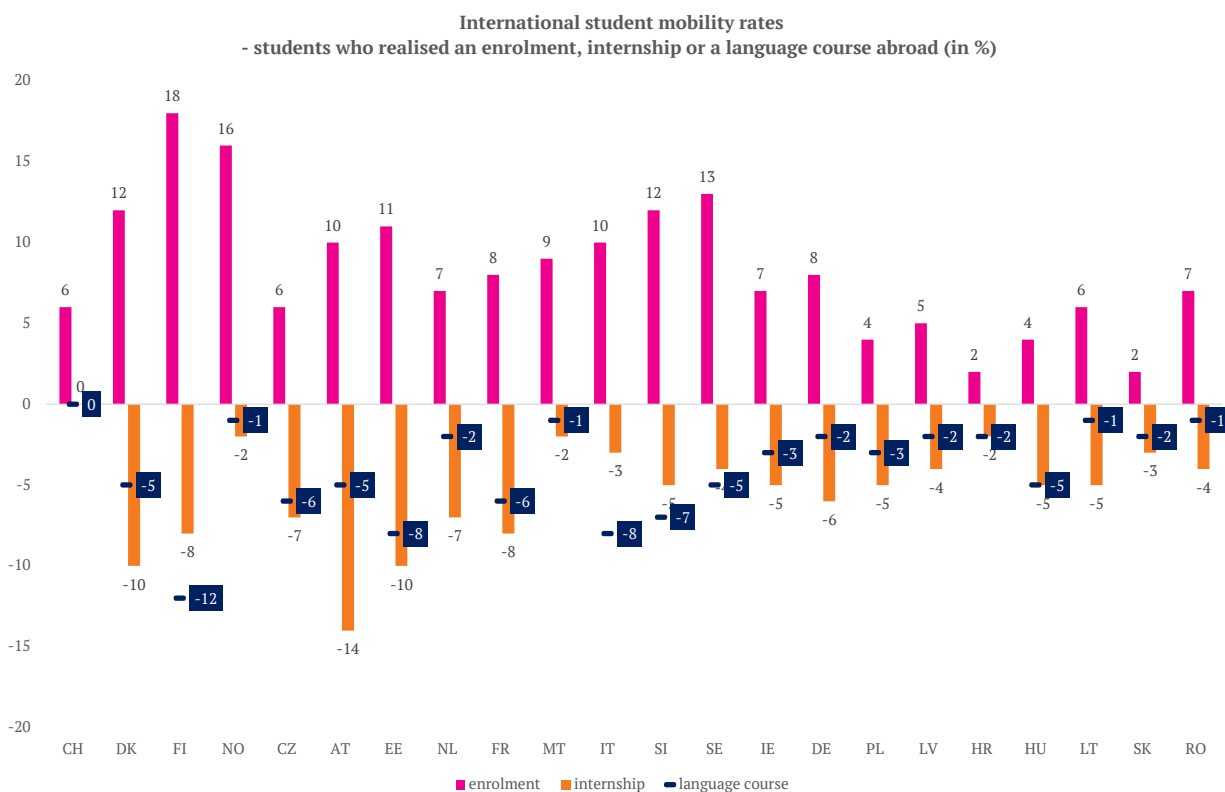
Here and henceforth, please also pay attention to the comments and notes on national deviations on each indicator from the Eurostudent V report.

Data source: Eurostudent V

To sum up, the most prominent incoming and outgoing student and trainee flows are to and from the biggest Erasmus+ programme countries in terms of population – France, Italy, the UK, Germany and Spain. Nevertheless, when looking at student activity and percentages per country, Luxembourg, some Nordic as well as the Baltic countries, Spain and Slovenia stand out in having the highest percentages of the total student population taking part in Erasmus exchanges for studies and traineeships.

International/foreign students - degree students

The percentages of incoming degree students (namely, international/foreign students) differ widely across Erasmus+ programme countries. It can be as low as 1-2% in Turkey or Poland and reaches around 20% in Austria or the UK[17]. For example, in Austria the majority of mobile degree students come from Germany[18], while the UK hosts many students from beyond EHEA[19]. This means that the mobile student body itself can be quite different in terms of composition and therefore the support mechanisms provided for accommodation that may be available to these students might differ quite substantially as well. Other relevant issues, such as language, might furthermore create differences in terms of needs and offers related to student accommodation.

There are several relevant sources of data illustrating the percentage of international/foreign students; nevertheless slight differences in methodology must be taken into consideration. The latest *Education at a Glance* issue from 2016 offers data on the percentage of international or foreign students (including students at doctoral level) in OECD countries (2014 is used as year of reference). The fact that both categories, both international and foreign students, are used stems from the fact that some countries only collect data on citizenship and do not collect other parameters of their non-domestic student body, e.g. country of certificate allowing entry to HE. According to this data, Luxembourg, Austria, the UK and Switzerland stand out with the most prominent percentages of international students. Also France, the Netherlands, Czech Republic, Belgium and Denmark have substantial percentages of incoming degree mobile students.

Obstacles to enrolment abroad

In order to understand the impact of challenges regarding student accommodation for exchange periods abroad, it is important to look at not only the feedback from those who have already completed such mobility periods, but also those still in the process of planning as well as those who do not to go abroad. The Eurostudent V survey offers an analysis of such useful focus groups and illustrates the main perceived obstacles for these groups of students.

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[17] OECD (2016): Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris. Available online: http://dx.doi.org/10.187/eag-2016-en.

[18] Zaussinger, Sarah; Unger, Martin; Thaler, Bianca; Dibiasi, Anna; Grabher, Angelika; Terzieva, Berta; Litofcenko, Julia; Binder, David; Brenner, Julia; Stjepanovic, Sara; Mathä, Patrick; Kulhanek, Andrea (2016): Austrian Student Social Survey. Available online: https://www.ihs.ac.at/de/forschungsgruppen/hochschulforschung/projekte/studierenden-sozialerhebung-2015/.

[19] HESA (2014): International students: Non-UK domiciled students studying in the UK. Available online: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/14-11-2014/international-students.

Figure 4.5 - Foreign enrolment rates and plans by educational background

Foreign enrolment rates and plans by educational background

a) Students with HE background

■ students with HE-background students who have not been enrolled abroad but plan to enrol abroad		
■ students with HE-background students who have not been enrolled abroad but plan to enrol abroad		

Data source: Eurostudent V

b) Students without HE background

■ students who have been enrolled abroad   ■ students who have not been enrolled abroad but plan to enrol abroad
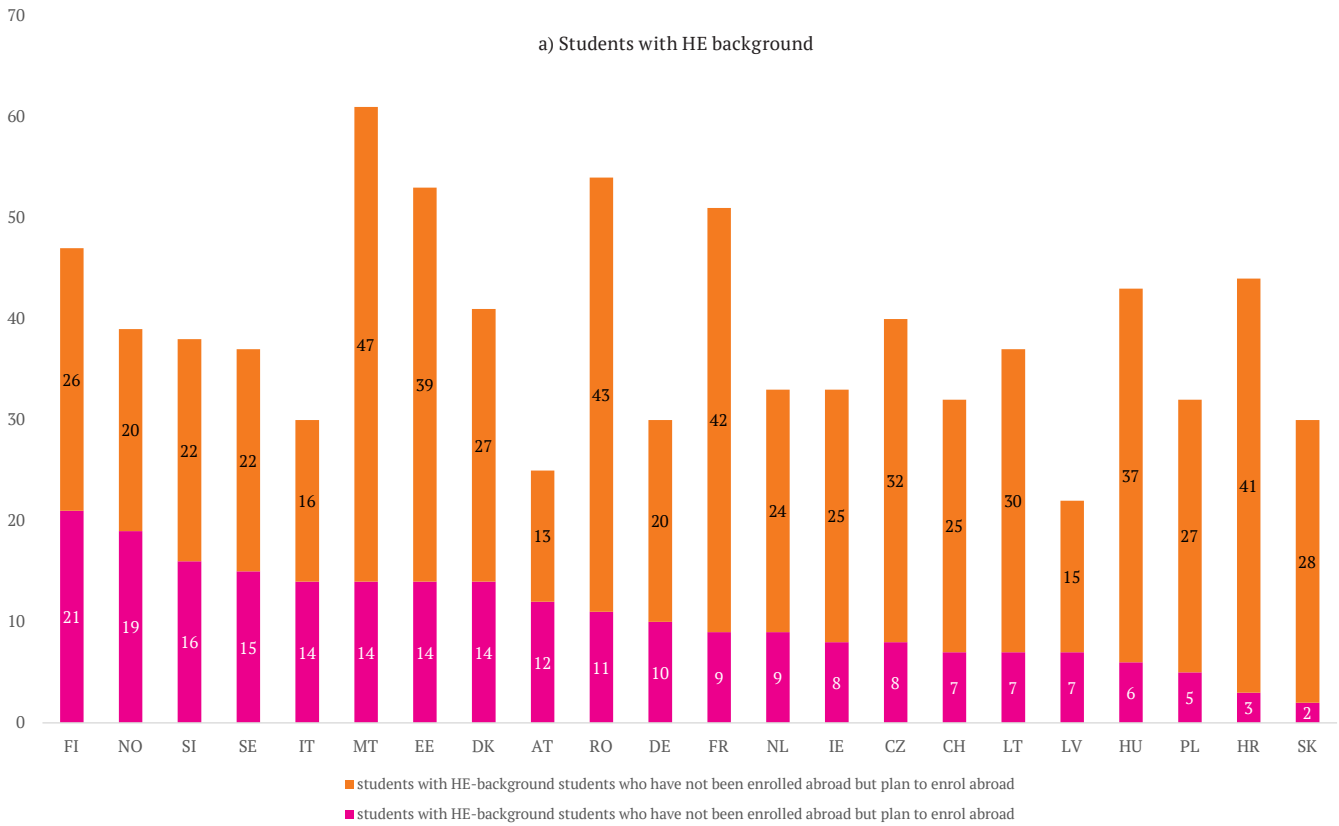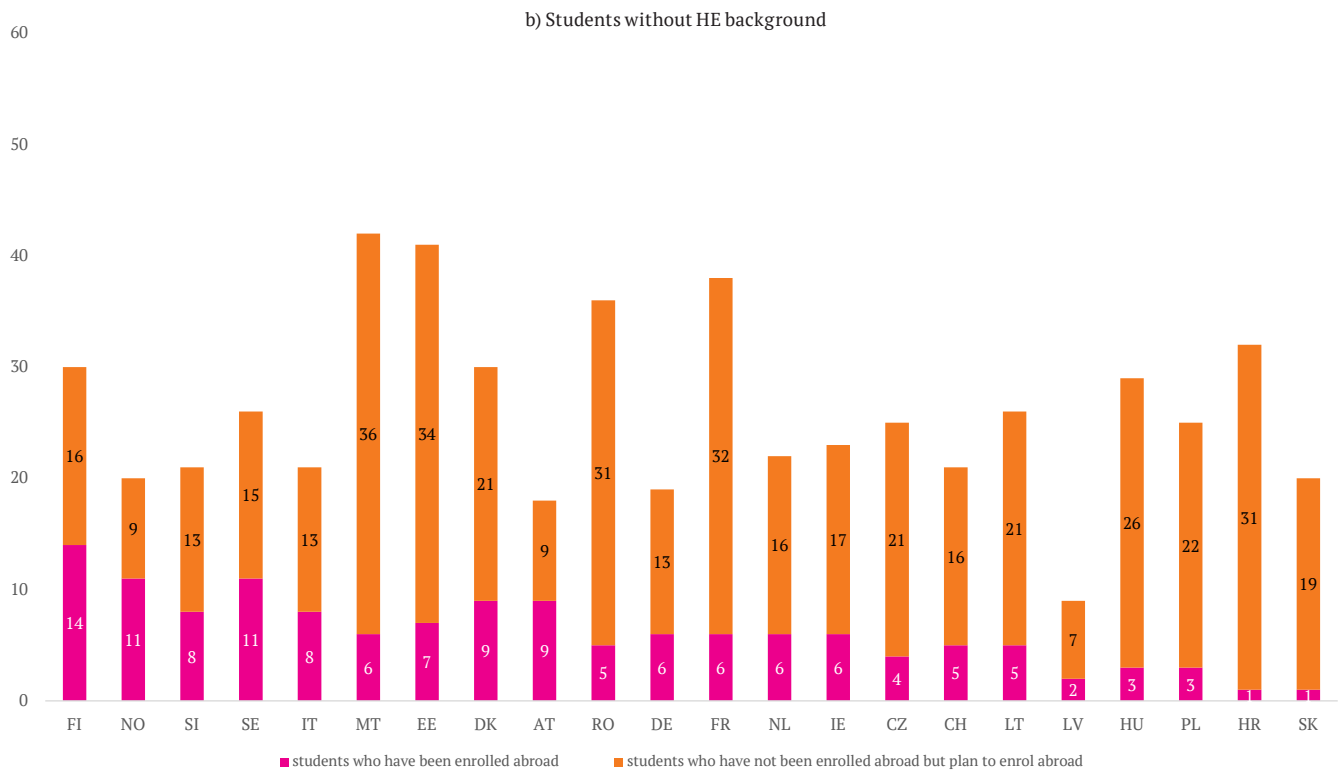
Data source: Eurostudent V

Students who have been abroad

Regarding the obstacles posed by mobility periods for those who have been abroad, the most prominent hurdle is the financial question – see Figure 4.6. The graph illustrates the percentage of students who indicated financial insecurities as an obstacle to enrolment abroad. Countries are sorted from highest to lowest percentage of students affected. More than half of the students in FR and IE indicate this aspect, yet percentages are also high in HR and AT, where more than one third of those who have been abroad mention it as an obstacle. Additional financial burdens as the least relevant issue apply only to a few students from CZ, while CH sees the additional financial burden as an issue, as just below 10% of students with exchange experience abroad indicated it as a relevant obstacle. The second most prominent issue mentioned by students is separation from their partner, children and friends. This applies especially in IE, AT, FR –

yet the average age of student body needs to be taken into account when interpreting this aspect in the countries mentioned. The third most common obstruction overall is the loss of a paid job which is particularly relevant for IE and HU students. For more details, see the Figure 4.6. To sum up, financial aspects and securities as well as personal reasons are the main obstacles to enrolment abroad.

Insufficient skills in a foreign language seem problematic particularly for Hungarian, Irish and Polish students. The lack of information provided from the home institution is the most prominent problem for students in France, Hungary, Croatia and Poland. The loss of a paid job is reported to be the most topical obstacle especially for Irish, Hungarian, and German students.

Figure 4.6 - Types of obstructions to enrolment abroad by grouped items for students who have been enrolled abroad
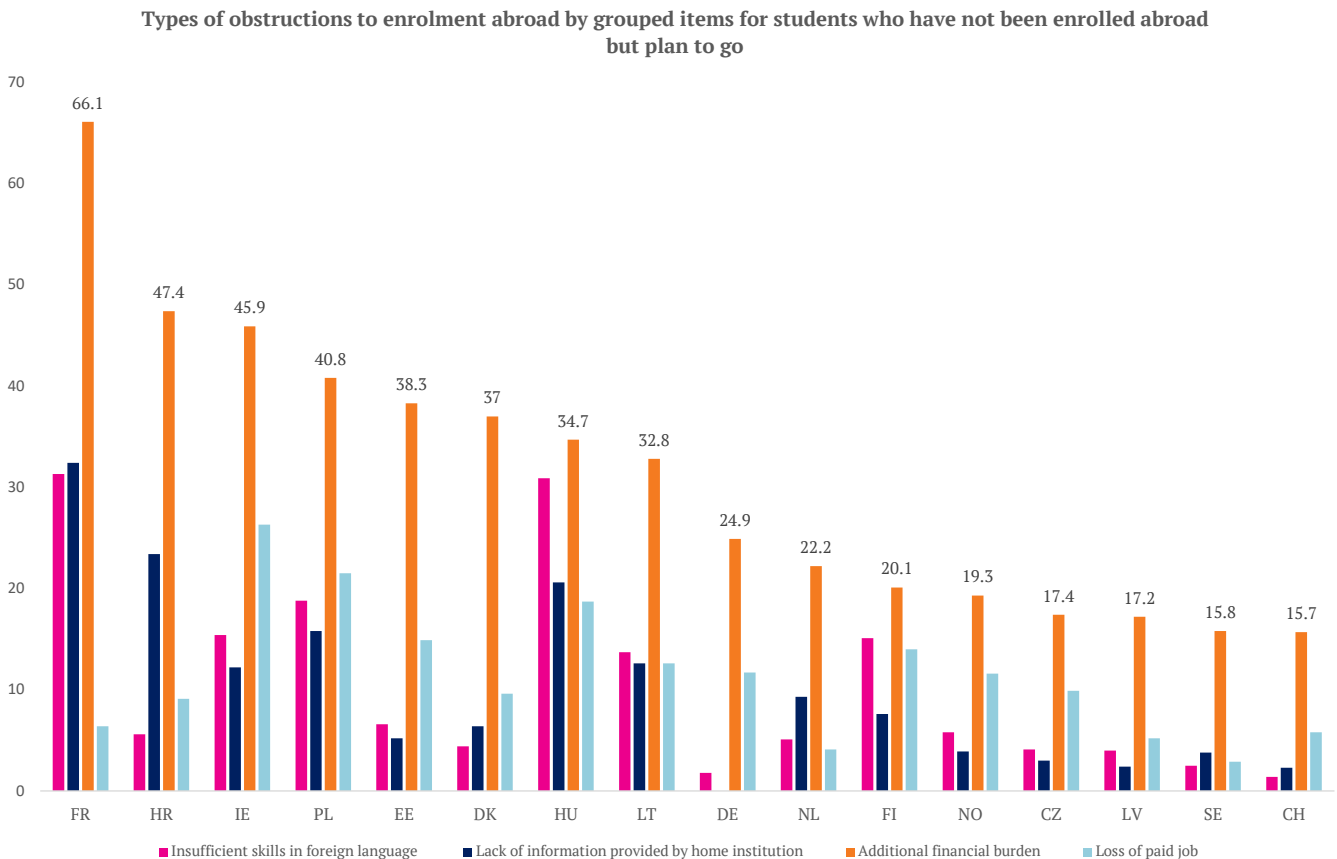

Types of obstructions to enrolment abroad by grouped items for students who have been enrolled abroad
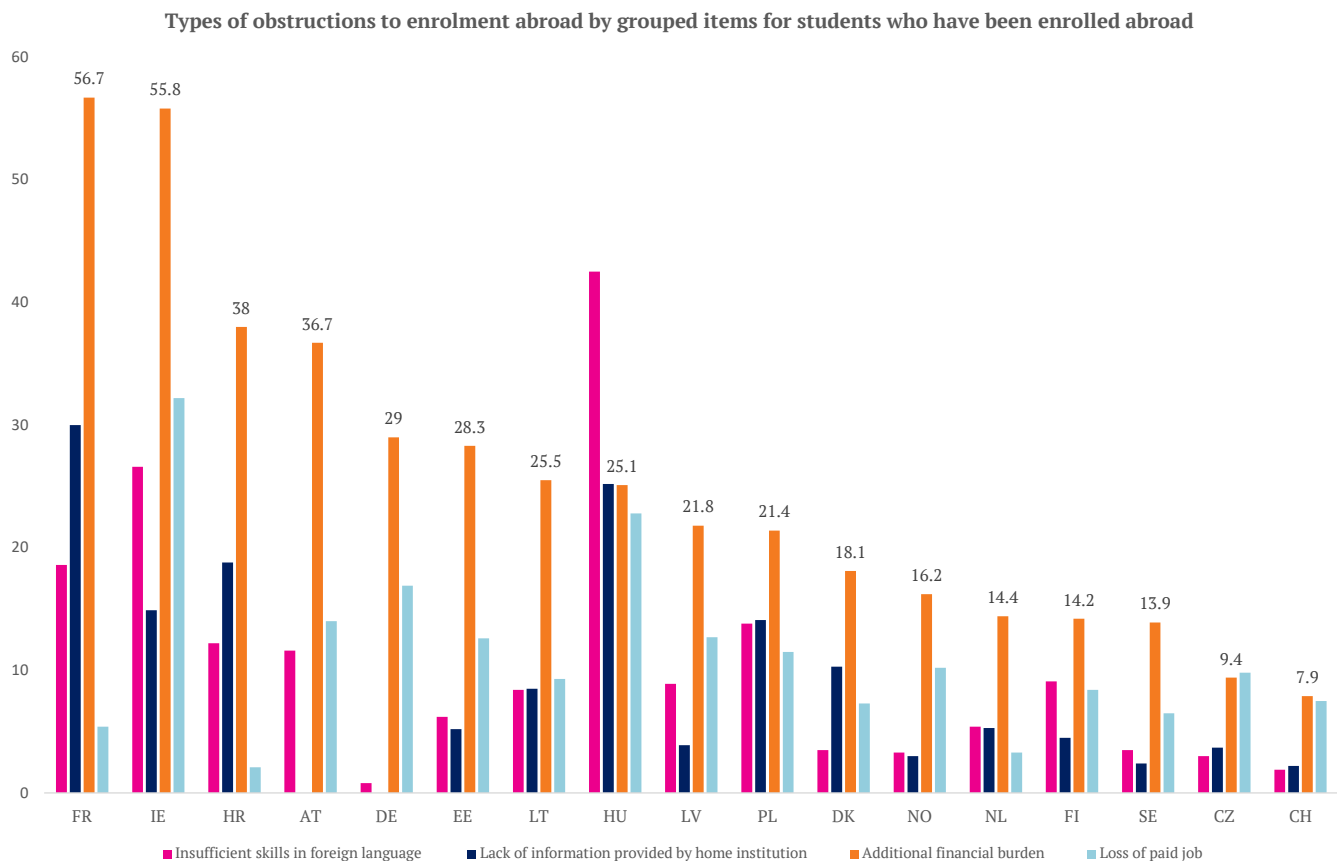
Students planning to go abroad

For those who have not yet been enrolled abroad but are planning to go, financial aspects also turned out to be the most common obstacle, while separation from the partner, children and friends is the second most common one. FR, IE and HR stand out as countries with the highest percentages of those claiming that the additional financial burden is a problematic issue; while in CZ, LV, SE, CH, the percentage of students identifying it as an obstacle is the lowest. The lack of information from the home institution (especially in FR, HR and HU) and limited admittance to mobility programmes (of home/host institution) were equally problematic for many students across sample countries – see more in Figure 4.7. Loss of a paid job is a particularly prominent obstacle for students in Ireland, Poland and Hungary.

The Eurostudent V survey shows a pattern in terms of social selectivity for students that are planning to go abroad. In their sample, students from all Erasmus+ programme countries with a higher education background (at least one parent/legal guardian having higher education – ISCED 5-8) were more likely to plan their enrolment abroad in comparison to those without a higher education background. In addition, it is said that "the percentage of students who have not yet studied abroad but plan to do so is higher among students with higher education background in all covered countries. The differences regarding planned foreign enrolments tend to be even larger than those regarding realised foreign enrolment periods.[20]" The fact that social selectivity is an issue is old news, therefore it seems it is high time to deal with this challenge and on all levels of education.

Figure 4.7 - Types of obstructions to enrolment abroad by grouped items for students who have not been enrolled abroad but plan to go

Types of obstructions to enrolment abroad by grouped items for students who have not been enrolled abroad but plan to go

Insufficient skills in foreign language — Lack of information provided by home institution — Additional financial burden — Loss of paid job

Data source: Eurostudent V

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[20]Hauschildt, K., Gwosć, C., Netz, N., Mishra, S. (2015): Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe. EUROSTUDENT V 2012–2015 | Synopsis of Indicators. Available online: http://www.eurostudent.eu/download_files/documents/EVSynopsisofIndicators.pdf, p 192.

Students not planning to go abroad

In the third group also, i.e. students who have never been enrolled abroad and are not planning to go, the financial aspect is the most commonly stated barrier in the Eurostudent V survey. The cross-country average shows 63% of students see it as (quite) a big obstacle. Separation from the partner, children, friends is the second most commonly mentioned reason (47%), insufficient language skills are an issue for around one third of students (29%) and recognition issues as well as lack of information from the home institution are issues for around 20% respectively.

Lack of information from the home institution is an especially prominent issue affecting at least 35% of the student population in IE, HR, PL and HU.

Summary

All in all, financial challenges are the most prominent aspect that all identified student groups (have been abroad, are planning to go abroad, are not considering going abroad) mention. The additional financial burden, as well as the possible loss of a paid job are the answers that illustrate issues that are more or less directly connected to accommodation, as accommodation can be one of the main (additional) cost factors when moving abroad. The high level of insecurity posed by the financial implications of moving abroad might stem from the fact that students are not well informed about possible funding opportunities, something that we will look at in the following chapters. Separation from the partner, children, friends is a secondary but still important and very commonly mentioned obstacle to mobility by all three groups of students.

4.4 Overview on the financial resources available to students

It is truly challenging to get an insight as to what the support mechanisms available to exchange students and trainees are. Next to the Erasmus+ programme grant, they might get a top-up from national sources and students' usual public support mechanisms, grants or loans: these might be portable, or students might use their own savings or family assistance. Hence, it is difficult to objectively analyse the potential mismatch between costs and financial means at students' disposal. It is also challenging as there is a lack of comprehensive and comparative surveys that would address the issue of accommodation costs in relation to the total budget when on exchange. This sub-chapter will try to answer the question on which financial resources are available to students, by analysing funding opportunities available through Erasmus+, the portability of national support mechanisms available to students, as well as looking into surveys that illustrate sources of funding for mobility periods abroad among European students.

Erasmus+ grants

The Erasmus+ Programme Guide states that the amount of a EU grant to contribute (not cover) to the costs for travel and subsistence during the period of study or traineeship abroad are "defined by the National Agencies in agreement with National Authorities, and/or the higher education institutions on the basis of objective and transparent criteria[21]". Programme countries are divided into three groups and the EU grant will be determined as follows:

Country clusters for Erasmus+ grants

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

• mobility towards a country with similar living costs (e.g. Group 2 to Group 2): students will receive the medium range EU grant; (in a range between 200 and 450 EUR per month).
• mobility towards a country with higher living costs: students will receive the higher range EU grant;
(in a range between 250 and 500 EUR per month).
• mobility towards a country with lower living costs: students will receive the lower range EU grant;
(in a range between 150 and 400 EUR per month).

When deciding upon the funding allocated to students, National Agencies have to take into account the availability of other sources of co-financing which students might have available (national, regional etc.), as well as the general demand for exchange studies/traineeship abroad.

Students pursuing traineeship/placement abroad receive slightly higher grants than those in study mobility. Trainees "receive an additional top-up from the EU grant with an amount between 100 and 200 EUR per month. The precise level is determined by National Agencies and/or higher education institutions according to the level of demand and level of co-financing for this type of mobility". It is important to note that the same level of top-ups should be maintained for all students at a given HEI, regardless of the contribution they might receive for the host enterprise. Trainees receive more funding as their arrangements to go abroad tend to be more challenging due to the shorter mobility periods as well as a lack of connection with the host HEI and therefore potentially access to student dormitories and other cheaper housing options that are reserved for students only.

In addition, for both groups, i.e. study and traineeship/placement mobilities, there is additional support available for specific target groups (e.g. students from disadvantaged backgrounds) and destination regions, etc.

The Erasmus+ Annual Report Statistical Annex[22] gives data on the average grant per student in all Erasmus+ Programme countries. Even knowing the average duration of studies abroad this information still lacks objectivity, as a more substantiated overview of additional funding available is missing. A comparison taking into account purchasing power standard (PPS, where price level differences between countries are taken into account) would also be necessary to get an objective picture on which financial resources are available to match students' needs.

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[21]European Commission (2017): Erasmus+ Programme Guide.
Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf.
[22]European Commission (2014): Erasmus+ Annual report, Statistical Annex: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/statistics/ar-statistical-annex_en.pdf.

Make-up of sources of funding for enrolment abroad

The Eurostudent V survey has an overview on primary sources of funding for temporary enrolment abroad[23] and, as one of the conclusions states, "unfortunately the study points out that studying abroad remains socially selective"[24]. As seen in Figure 4.8, public sources (including EU funding) are predominantly the most important source of funding in EU countries that joined the EU more recently (countries joining in 2004 - Latvia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia and also Romania which joined in 2007), which could be linked to the fact that the new Member States had access to more funding in the beginning to level out the differences in the newly enlarged EU. Nordic countries stand out with a substantial percentage of public sources available for funding of student mobility. However, a general tendency that the state and not parents take care of funding of education can be observed, and as mobility can be considered as an integral part of education, this trend is not surprising. Some researchers go even further when analysing the trends and state that there seems to be different approaches towards ways of offering support to students and, in line with Schwarz and Rehburg, that goes hand in hand with different ways students can be perceived, namely: "students as investors (in the UK), as dependent family members (Italy), as teenagers in training (France) or as citizens with their own responsibilities (Norway)"[25]. Therefore there is a diversity of cooperation partners that HEIs are looking for to support students and the bottom line is whether such models are able to address local challenges and social selectivity?

Figure 4.8 - Primary source of funding for (most recent) enrolment abroad

Primary source of funding for (most recent) enrolment abroad
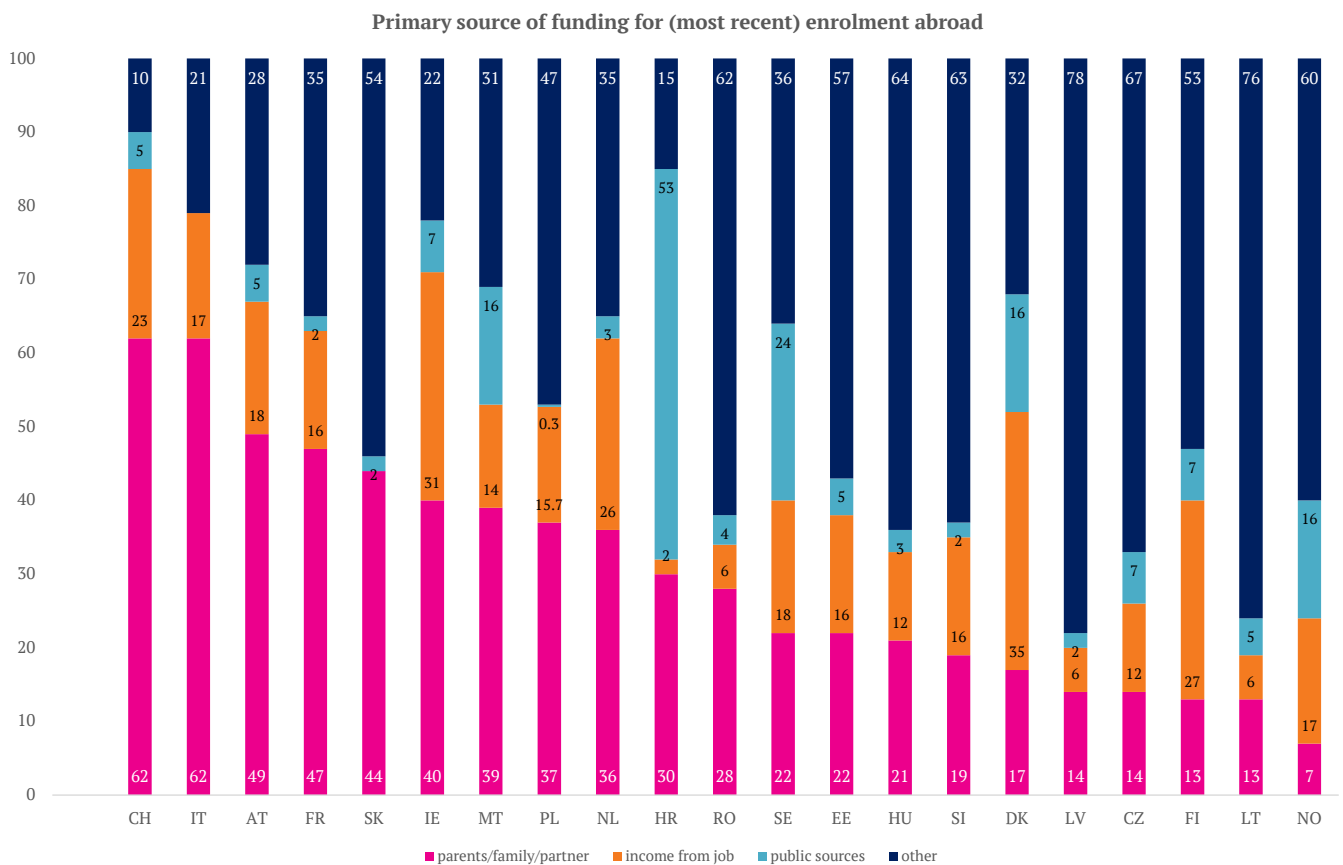
Data source: Eurostudent V

[23]The data for Eurostudent V survey includes all student mobilities – also those with other programme frameworks or independently organised – the Erasmus students are still dominating the sample in programme countries (Italy and Sweden being exception).It is not know when the enrollment abroad took place but students who took part in the survey are currently enrolled and shared this data about the most recent enrolment abroad.

[24]Hauschildt, K., Gwosć, C., Netz, N., Mishra, S. (2015): Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe. EUROSTUDENT V 2012–2015 | Synopsis of Indicators.
Available online: http://www.eurostudent.eu/download_files/documents/EVSynopsisofIndicators.pdf, p. 9.

[25]Schwarz and Reheburg (2004): Study Costs and Direct Public Student Support in 16 European Countries — Towards a European Higher Education Area? European Journal of Education, Vol. 39 (4), pp. 521-532.

Portability of National Public Student Support

The Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) has created an overview about the portability of state grants and loans when students go abroad[26]. 31 counties were analysed and in 25, students have the possibility of full or partial portability of state grants and/or loans. In 12 countries of these 25, it is reported that state grants and/or loans are portable for both degree and credit mobility; those are the Nordic countries, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and Belgium (both its Flemish and French speaking communities).

It is also stated that "in Central and Eastern European countries, where student loans are available, loans tend to be more portable than grants, with or without restrictions on the types of mobility or the study destinations. Social or merit grants disbursed by higher education institutions are either not portable or portable only for credit mobility."[27] The report continues that "despite contradictory information gathered from different sources, it seems rather clear that student financial support from Portugal, Spain, most parts of the UK, Greece, Latvia and Bulgaria is not portable for outward mobility" . This means that despite a relatively high number of countries already allowing (partial) portability of grants and loans, more could be done.

It is worth mentioning that with the introduction of Erasmus+ in 2014, the Erasmus+ Master Degree Loan scheme[28] was launched. Erasmus+ Master Degree Loans are EU-guaranteed loans with favourable payback terms that are supposed to help students to finance a Master course in any Erasmus+ Programme country. As the loan scheme is still being set up for most European countries, a European-wide solution is still missing[29]. The authors would like to recognise the different opinions on whether a loan scheme rather than additional grants are the most suitable tool for creating socially inclusive funding opportunities for students interested in studying a Master degree abroad.

Summary

It is challenging to map all the financial resources available to students when going abroad. The Erasmus+ programme offers grants to exchange students, which can be seen as one of the main resources available to mobile students in Europe. Next to these grants, national top-ups and the students' own resources as well as family support might be available but are difficult to measure. The national student support mechanisms might only be available to non-mobile students and social selectivity could lead to a situation where not all groups of students have access to mobility. This is a major problem and means that not all Europeans have equal access to an opportunity to enhance their employability, broaden their horizons and experience Europe and become true European citizens. Or course funding is not the only tool and, as Eurostudent V also rightfully continues, "by looking more closely at the obstacles to mobility it finds that there are financial barriers, but also attitudinal and informational barriers"[30] which opens up the Pandora's box of other 'homework' for HEIs and policymakers that potentially has not been done to enable qualitative exchange experiences for a wider scope of EU students.

The Erasmus+ Master Loan Scheme, which is still being rolled out, represents the most relevant pan-European financial resource available to degree students.

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[26]Queenie K.H. Lam, Danja Oste (2013): Portable state grants and loans: An overview and their contribution to outgoing student mobility.
Available online: http://www.aca-secretariat.be/fileadmin/aca_docs/images/members/ACA-2014_Portable_State_Grants_and_Loans_PDF.pdf.
[27]Ibid.
[28]See: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities-for-individuals/students/erasmus-plus-master-degree-loans_en.
[29]ESU (2013): ESU non-paper on the Erasmus Loan Guarantee Facility for Master Students,
https://www.esu-online.org/?policy=esu-non-paper-on-the-erasmus-loan-guarantee-facility-for-master-students.
[30]Hauschildt, K., Gwosć, C., Netz, N., Mishra, S. (2015): Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe. EUROSTUDENT V 2012–2015 | Synopsis of Indicators.
Available online: http://www.eurostudent.eu/download_files/documents/EVSynopsisofIndicators.pdf, p. 9.

4.5 Characteristics of national real estate markets

Patterns of ownership of accommodation

To understand the differences in culture related to accommodation, this sub-chapter looks at the characteristics of domestic real estate markets across EU countries. Eurostat provides annual reports on a range of indicators, e.g. tenure status (owning or renting a property), housing quality and affordability[31] based on data from population registers or general censuses[32].

According to the latest statistics available from 2015, certain patterns across European countries can be observed. Overall, 43% of the EU-28 population lived in an owner-occupied home without an outstanding loan or mortgage and around one third (27%) lived in an owner-occupied home with a loan or mortgage. Hence, around 70% of the EU-28 citizens owned their accommodation, yet the percentage varies considerably across countries being just around half in DE (52%) and AT (56%), and slightly above 60% in DK, FR and the UK.

An important pattern to note is that the percentage of the population owning their accommodation, yet having an outstanding loan or mortgage is well above average in SE, IS or NL at 60%, whereas it is 30% in DE or AT and just 0.9% in RO or 3% in BG.

Another aspect worth mentioning is that in almost all the 2004 enlargement countries[33] the percentage of people owning their accommodation and having a substantial loan or mortgage is increasing in comparison to that in 2009.

In the former Eastern bloc countries trends are more diverse and both decrease as well as increase in comparison to the time immediately before the financial crisis occurred. Aspects like maturity of the real estate market as well as severity of the financial crisis go hand in hand with these tendencies and need to be looked at in detail.

Regarding the countries with the biggest percentage of the population owning their accommodation, RO (96%), HR (90%), SI (89%), LT (89%) stand out, yet according to TENLAW[34] – a research project on Tenancy Law and Housing Policy in Multi-Level Europe, this could be linked to tenancy laws and regulations as well as the overall effectiveness of the legal infrastructure that does not encourage rental markets: often it makes more sense for the landlord to simply leave the housing space empty instead of going for a high risk and rent it out.

Even though the financial crisis has certainly left its mark, the structures of owning or renting accommodation seem relatively stable for the time frame 2010-2015 across all countries in the sample. The UK, BG and the three Baltic countries EE, LV and LT have seen the biggest decrease in the percentage of people owning their accommodation at around 4-7%. On the other hand, slightly more people now own their accommodation in LU (5% increase), PL, FR and HR (around 2% respectively).

Summary

To sum up, the majority - around 70% - of EU-28 citizens own their accommodation, yet this percentage is smaller in Member States with higher GDP. The percentage of the population owning their accommodation yet having an outstanding loan or mortgage on it tends to be higher in countries with higher GDP.

Regarding the countries with the biggest percentage of the population owning their accommodation RO (96%), HR (90%), SI (89%), LT (89%) stand out, yet according to TENLAW[35], this could be linked to tenancy laws and regulations as well as the overall effectiveness of the legal infrastructure that does not encourage rental markets and often it makes more sense for landlords to simply leave the housing space empty instead of going for a high risk and rent it out. Eastern Europe and Spain in particular are said to be facing this issue.

Patterns of price levels of accommodation

Regarding affordability of living space, Eurostat has devised an indicator that illustrates the percentage of the population spending 40% or more of their equalised disposable income on housing. The housing cost overburden rate is the percentage of the population living in households where the total housing costs ('net' housing allowance) represent more than 40% of disposable income ('net' housing allowance). In 2015, on average 11% of the EU population spent at least 40% of their income on accommodation, 7% among owner occupied dwellings and 27% of those renting at the market price and 12% among those renting at a reduced price.

The lowest percentage of the population where housing costs are more than 40% of total income were in MT, CY, IE and FI: in all of these countries the percentage was lower than 5%[36].

On the other extreme, in GR 41% of the population spend at least 40% of their income on accommodation which especially affects tenants renting at the market price. Also in DE, RO, BG, NL, and DK the percentage is relatively high (around 15%) and is particularly affecting

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[31]For more information please consult EU statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC) - http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.

[32]More information on metadata could be found here: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/EU_statistics_on_income_and_living_conditions_(EU-SILC)_methodology_%E2%80%93_sampling#Sampling_frame

[33]On 1.05.2004 ten new countries join the EU: Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

[34]ZERP (Zentrum für Europäische Rechtspolitik - ZERP - Zentrum für Europäische Rechtspolitik) (2015): European Policy Brief. Available online: http://www.tenlaw.uni-bremen.de/.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Eurostat (2017): Housing statistics. Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Housing_statistics#Housing_affordability.

tenants renting at the market price. Slovakia is an exception where it is rather people who own their property but have an excessive loan or mortgage who more often spend such a substantial percentage of their income on accommodation. What would nevertheless be a valuable aspect to bear in mind is the percentage of the shadow economy across different countries[37], as that would directly influence the comparison of percentages of total income.

When looking at the student population, the Eurostudent V survey illustrates the percentage of students' expenses for accommodation out of the total income at their disposal[38]. Only in some countries (the minority of cases) do domestic students show larger percentages, spending at least 40% on accommodation costs. In 2013, FR, FI and SE were the countries where ordinary domestic students spent the greatest percentage of their income on accommodation (at least 40%) Expenditure on transportation costs (commuting between 'home' and the HEI) are also added to the graph as an illustrative addition to key living costs that often go hand in hand.

When comparing spending of the general student population compared to that of international[39] students, countries like CZ, LT, HU and HR have international students spending higher percentages of their income on accommodation, while in countries like DK, PL and LV, international students spend less than the general student population.

Figure 4.9 - Expenditure on accommodation and transportation costs as a percentage of total expenditure among all students (in %) in 2013

Expenditure on accommodation and transportation costs as share of total expenditure among all students (in %) 2013

- Expenditure on accommodation as share of total expenditure of all students, in %
- Expenditure on transportation as share of total expenditure of all students, in %

Data source: Eurostudent V

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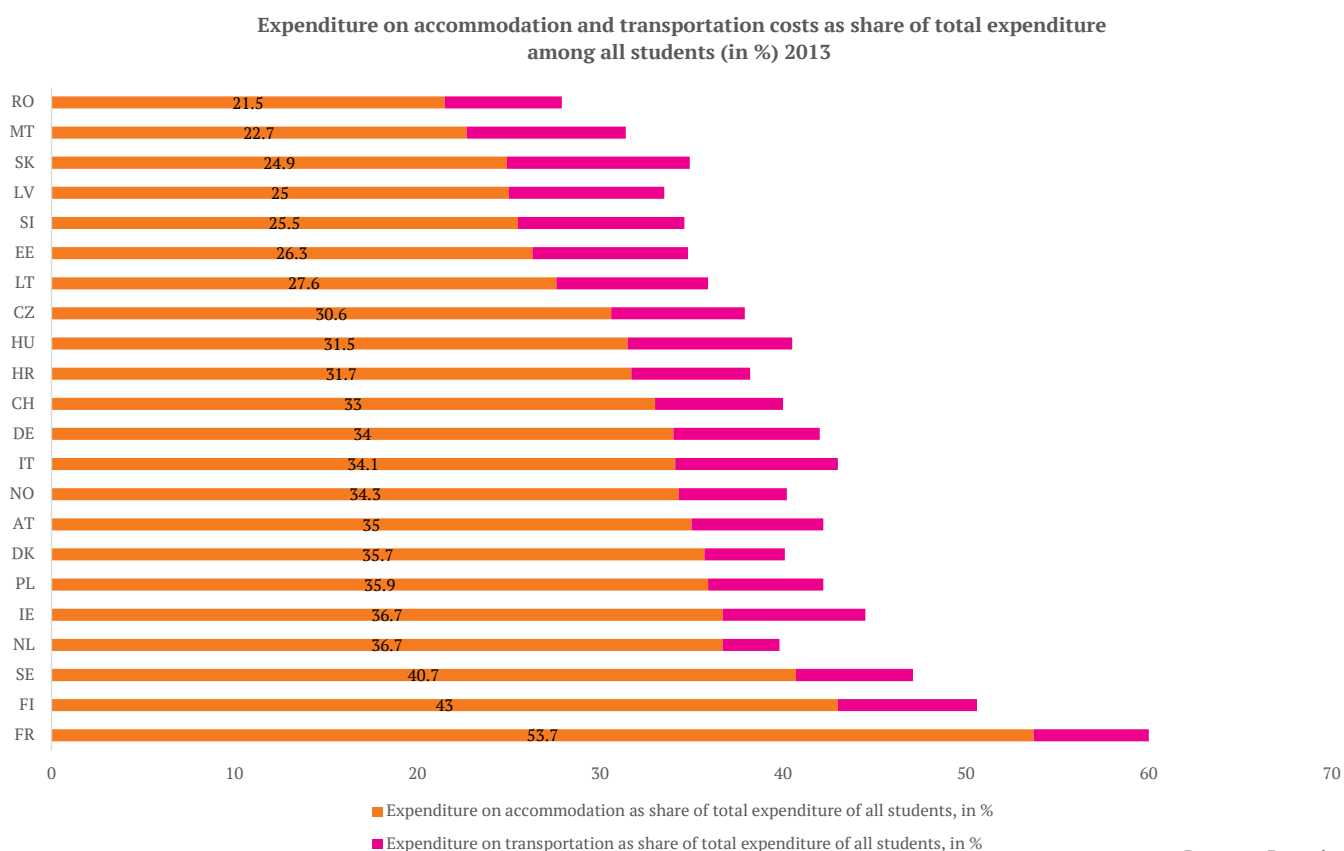
[37]Schneider, F., Buehn, A. (2012): Shadow Economies in Highly Developed OECD Countries: What Are the Driving Forces? http://ftp.iza.org/dp6891.pdf.

[38]Total income includes transfers in kind (e.g. someone else paying their rent directly to the landlord). Transfers in kind according to Eurostudent V "are students' living and study-related costs that are paid by the students' parents, other relatives, or their partner. The key criterion for transfers in kind is that the payments go directly to the students' creditors, i.e. the respective money is intangible for the students." - p 118

[39]The term 'international students' and not 'international/foreign' as according to the conventions of Eurostudent V survey International students are studying in the country of the survey and have left the school system for the first time outside the country of the survey. That means the status as international student is not related to place of birth, nationality or citizenship.

Figure 4.10 - Expenditure on accommodation and transportation costs as percentage of total expenditure among international students (in %) in 2013

Expenditure on accommodation and transportation costs as percentage of total expenditure among international students (in %) in 2013

- ■ Expenditure on accommodation as share of total expenditure of international students, in %
- ■ Expenditure on transportation as share of total expenditure of international students, in %

Data source: Eurostudent V
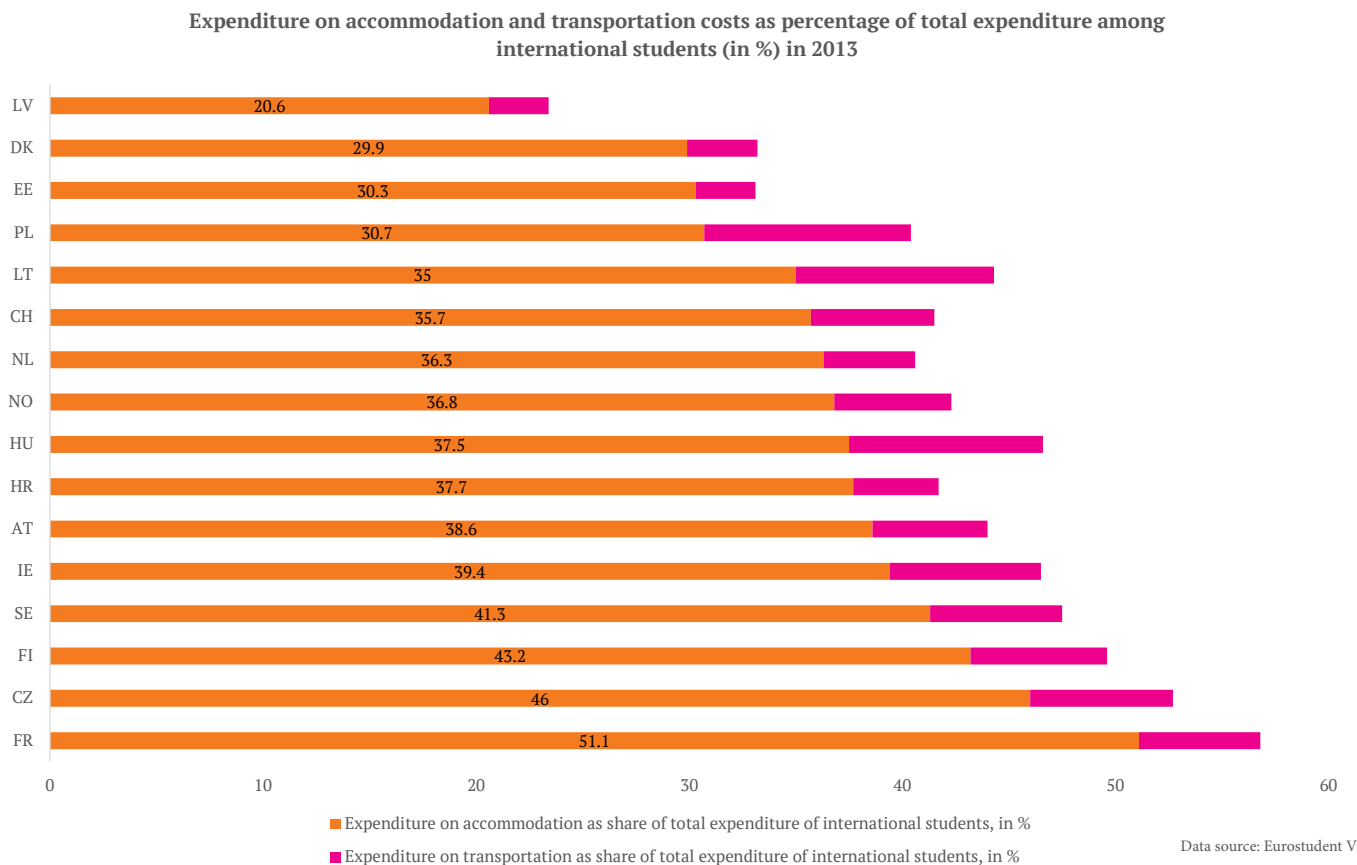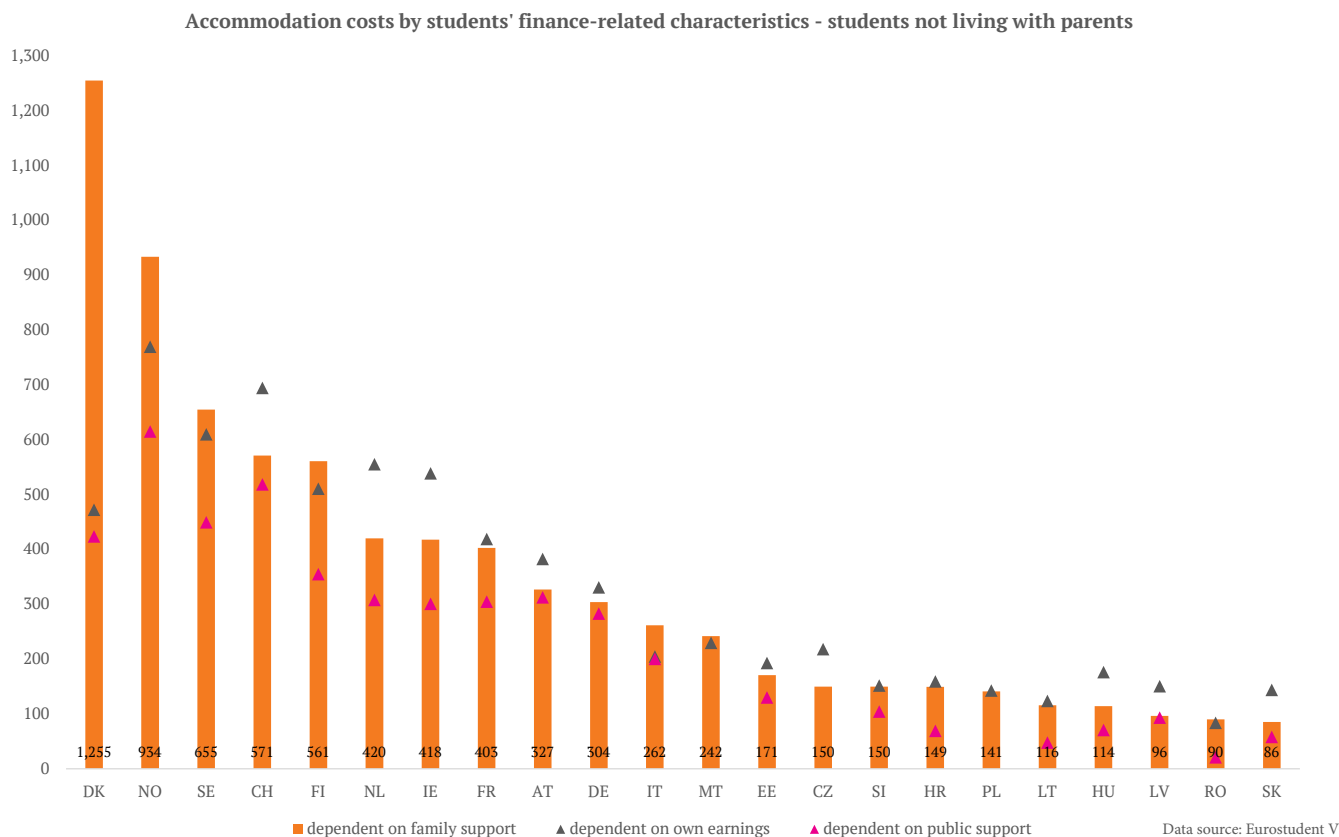
Figure 4.11 - Accommodation costs by students' finance-related characteristics - students not living with parents

Accommodation costs by students' finance-related characteristics - students not living with parents

- ■ dependent on family support ▲ dependent on own earnings ▲ dependent on public support

Data source: Eurostudent V

Summary

In 2015, on average 11% of the EU population spent at least 40% of their income on accommodation. Mostly affected are those renting at the market price, as almost one third (27%) spend at least 40% of their income on accommodation. Around 7% among those who own their own accommodation spend an equivalent percentage.

Among Eurostudent V countries, France, Czech Republic, Finland, Sweden, Ireland and Austria are the countries where international students spend the highest percentage of their income on accommodation.
The data cannot be directly compared but it still raises interesting questions as to whether students have enough support and how fortunate or unfortunate are international/foreign students in comparison to domestic ones. This reveals quite diverse scenarios across the sample. It also highlights the need to take stock at a local level to really map the problem areas.

4.6 The Case of Student Accommodation

Analysis of student housing patterns

A general trend that can be observed across all countries participating in the Eurostudent V survey report is that the majority of the students do not live with their parents. Exceptions to this are countries like Italy and Malta, where living with parents is the prevailing form of accommodation. In Austria, Estonia, as well as the Nordic countries, living with partner/children is a more common form of living, yet students' average age in countries mentioned above should also be taken into account, as students tend to be older than their peers in the rest of the Europe.

Sharing one's accommodation with other people (not parents or partner) is the most common type of housing in Germany, Ireland and Slovakia. Living alone, on the other hand, (regardless of the form of accommodation – e.g. in a flat or student dormitory), is very common in Finland or France, whereas France is the only country in the sample where it is the most common form of accommodation, regardless of the age group.

Figure 4.12 - Students' housing situation

Students' housing situation
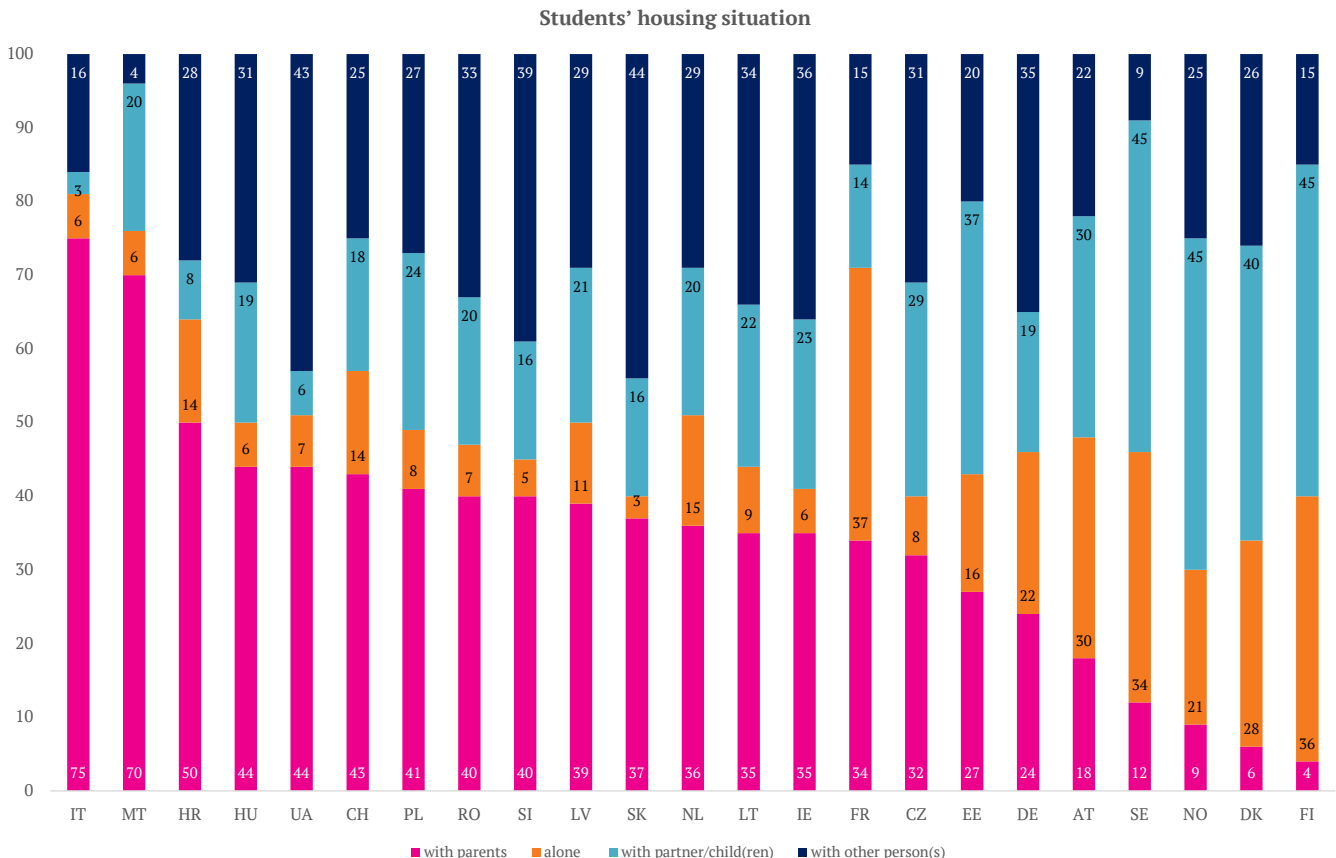
Data source: Eurostudent V

In around one third of the Eurostudent survey countries more than 25% of the student population lives in student accommodation (i.e. halls of residence), and in 2013 those countries were SK, FI, NL, LV, SE, SI, RO – see Figure 4.13.

Figure 4.13 - Percentage of students living in student accommodation
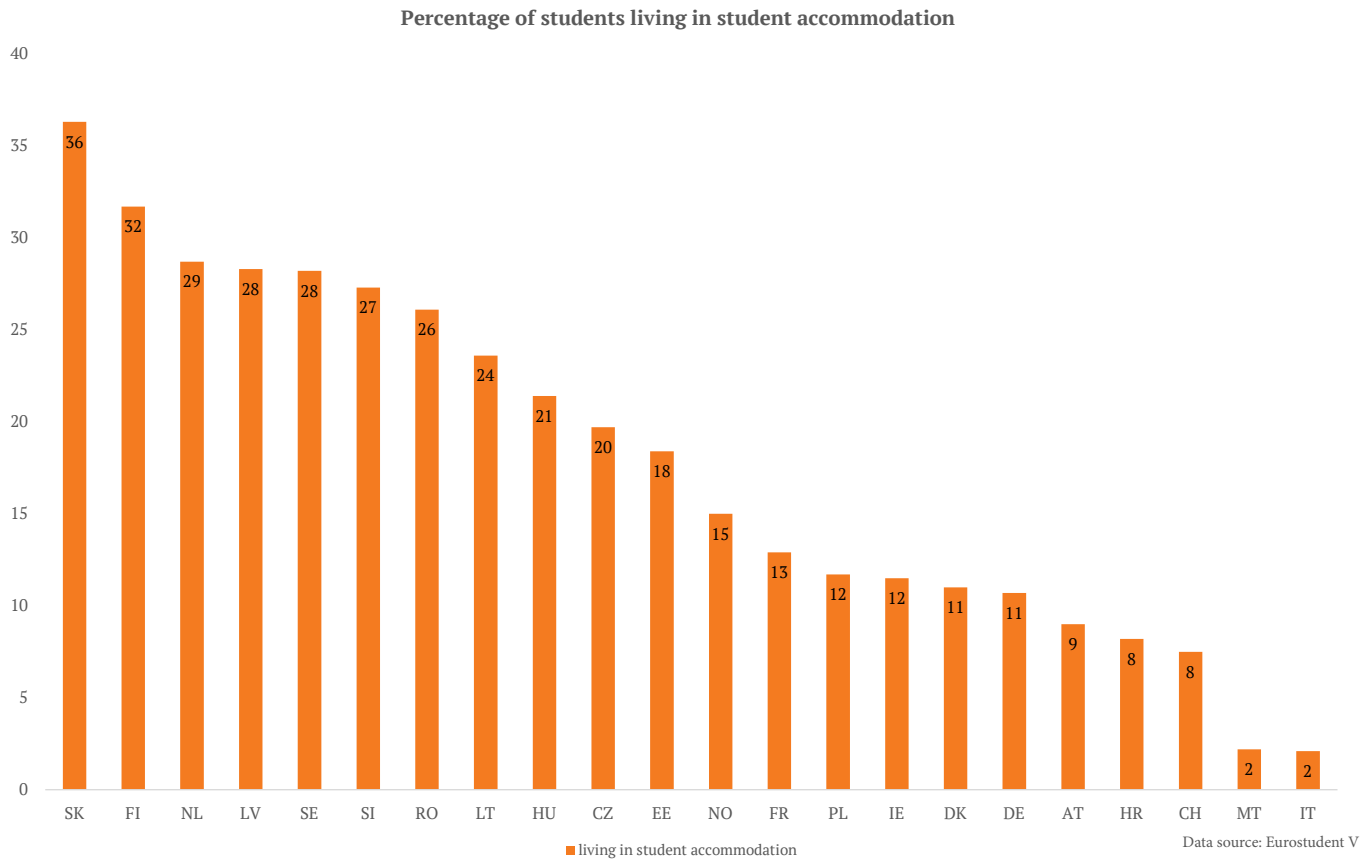
Percentage of students living in student accommodation

Data source: Eurostudent V

living in student accommodation

On the other hand, less than 10% of the student population live in student accommodation in AT, HR, CH, MT and IT. What should be noted is that, apart from AT and CH, all other countries with such a small percentage of students living in student housing have a substantial percentage of students who live with their parents. At the same time, the student population in AT and CH is relatively older than in other countries mentioned.

Younger students especially live in student accommodation. One of the most common attributes of this age group is that they have a higher study intensity (spending more than 40 hours per week on study-related activities). In addition, in most of the countries, student accommodation is especially common among those that are dependent on public support[40].

The student population living in a student accommodation is rather diverse across the countries. In half of the sample countries, where student accommodation is widely used, there is a tendency of slightly more students without a higher education background living in dormitories than those with a higher education background. The most prominent differences can be observed in LV and SI. There are hardly any differences visible in AT, DK, IT and PL, while in countries like FI, NL and SE there is a considerable difference with around 10 percentage points with more students with a higher education background living in student dormitories.

In the following three graphs, the percentage of students living in different types of accommodation are illustrated, taking a closer look at those depending on family support, public support or self-earned income and according to the percentage of students living in student accommodation. As mentioned above, students who depend on

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[40]Dependency on public support means that this source of income provides to more than 50% of students total income. Total income is the financial resources available to students including transfers in kind (according to Eurostudent conventions "transfers in kind are students' living and study-related costs that are paid by the students' parents, other relatives, or their partner. The key criterion for transfers in kind is that the payments go directly to the students' creditors, i.e. the respective money is intangible for the students." For more information see Eurostudent report.) Students with a mixed budget (i.e. no source providing more than 50 % of total income) are not assigned to a group of dependency on income source.

public support more often live in student accommodation in the vast majority of Eurostudent V survey countries. Student accommodation is usually the cheapest form of housing available to students, yet it should not be forgotten that it also fulfils the function of supporting the academic and cultural integration and is usually the easiest option to arrange for mobile students, as it requires little knowledge of the local housing market. This means there is different motivation in living in this form of accommodation that will be looked into in the analysis of the surveys in chapter 5.

Figure 4.14 - Students' accommodation types among those depending on family support

Students' accommodation types among those depending on family support

Legend: with parents, alone, with partner/child(ren), with other person(s)
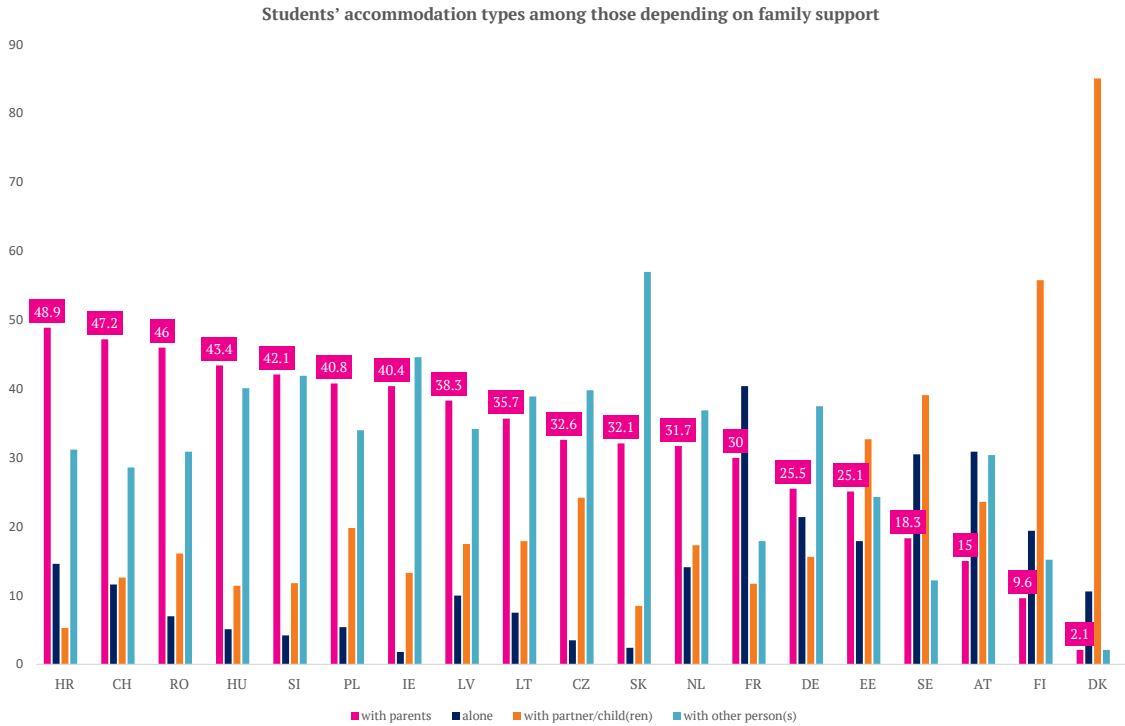
Figure 4.15 - Percentage of students depending on family support and living in student accommodation

Students depending on family support and living in student accommodation
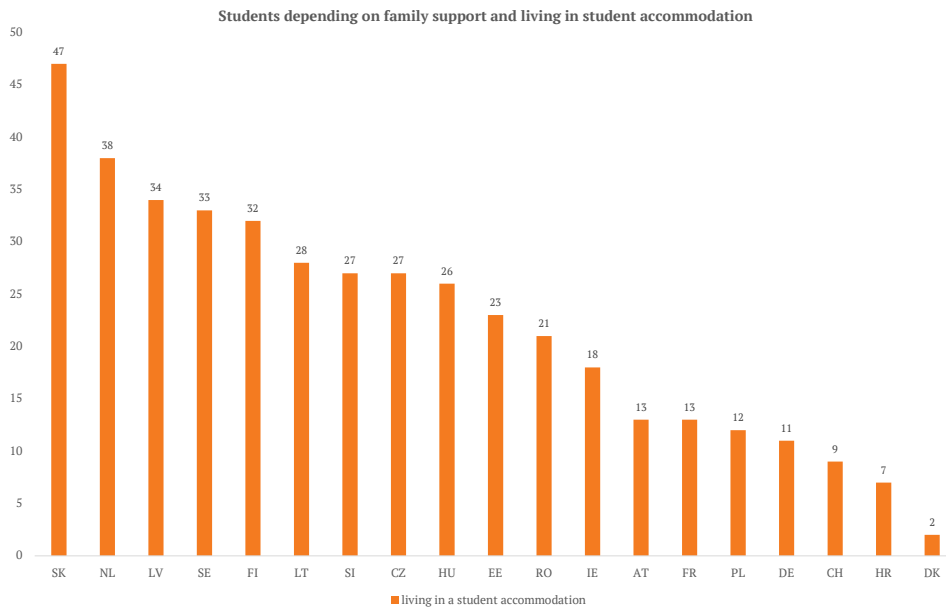
Legend: living in a student accommodation

Figure 4.16 - Students' accommodation types among those depending on public support

Students' accommodation types among those depending on public support

with parents ■ alone ■ with partner/child(ren) ■ with other person(s)

Data source: Eurostudent V
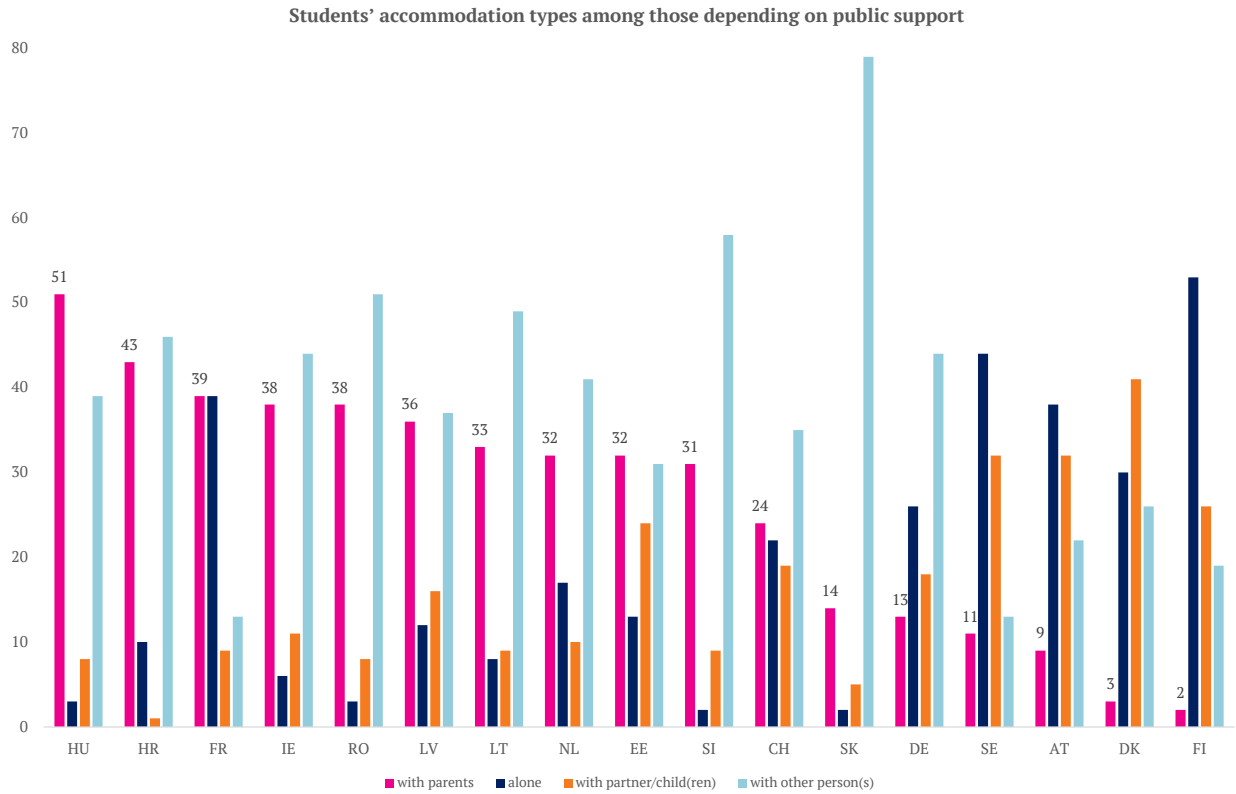
Figure 4.17 - Percentage of Students depending on public support and living in student accommodation

Students depending on public support and living in student accommodation

Data source: Eurostudent V
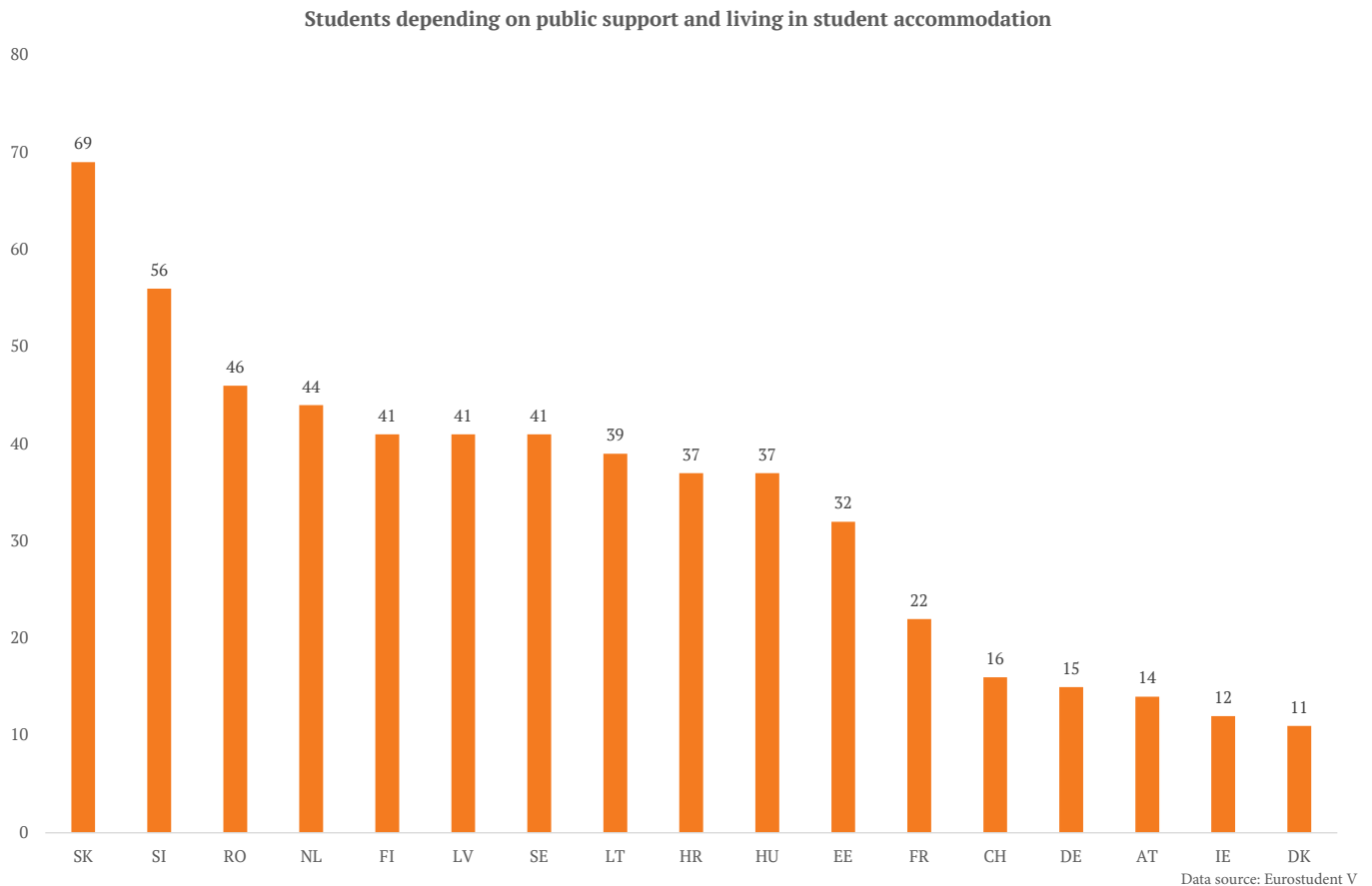
Figure 4.18 - Students' accommodation types among those depending on own earnings

Students' accommodation types among those depending on own earnings

■ with parents   ■ alone   ■ with partner/child(ren)   ■ with other person(s)
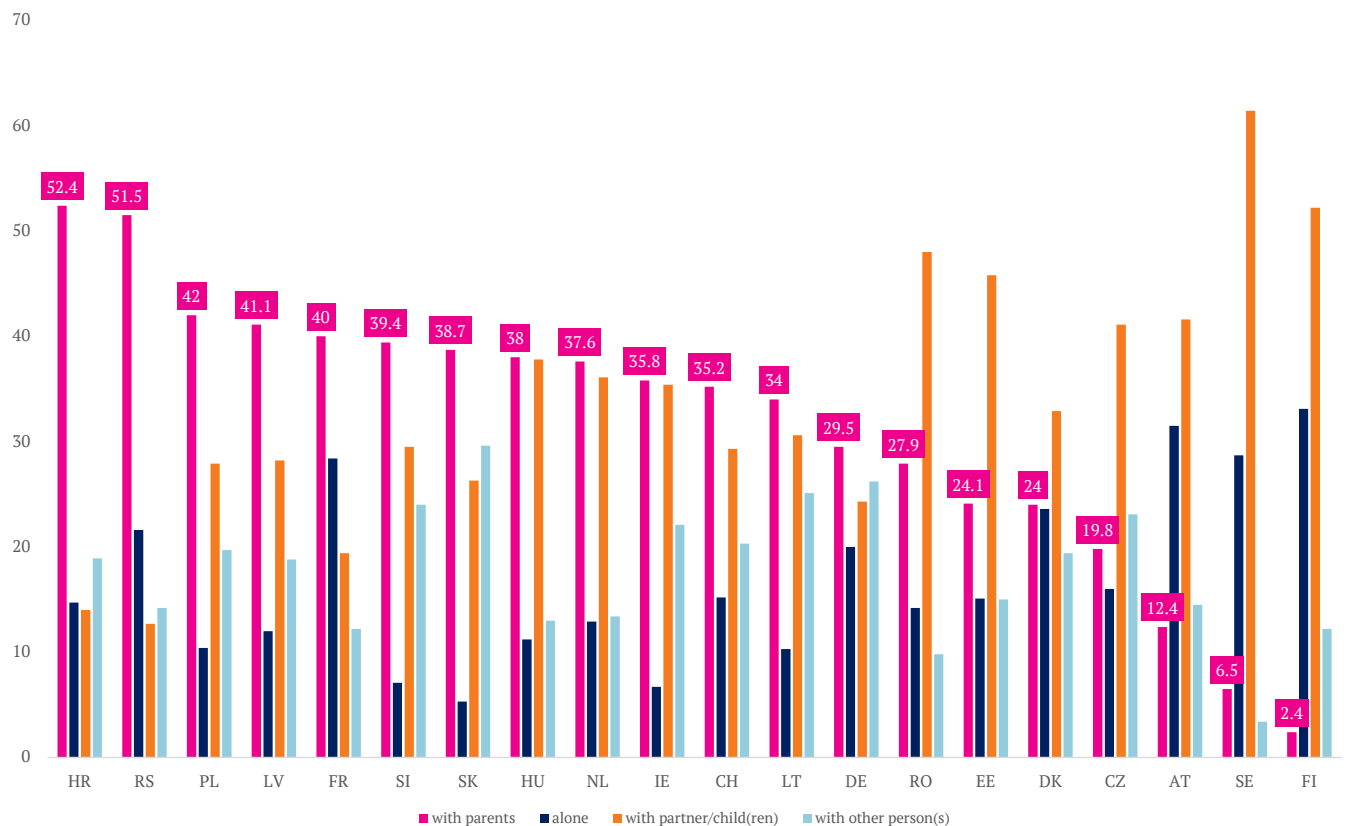
Data source: Eurostudent V

Figure 4.19 - Percentage of Students depending on own earnings and living in student accommodation

Students depending on own earnings and living in student accommodation

■ living in a student accommodation

Data source: Eurostudent V

37
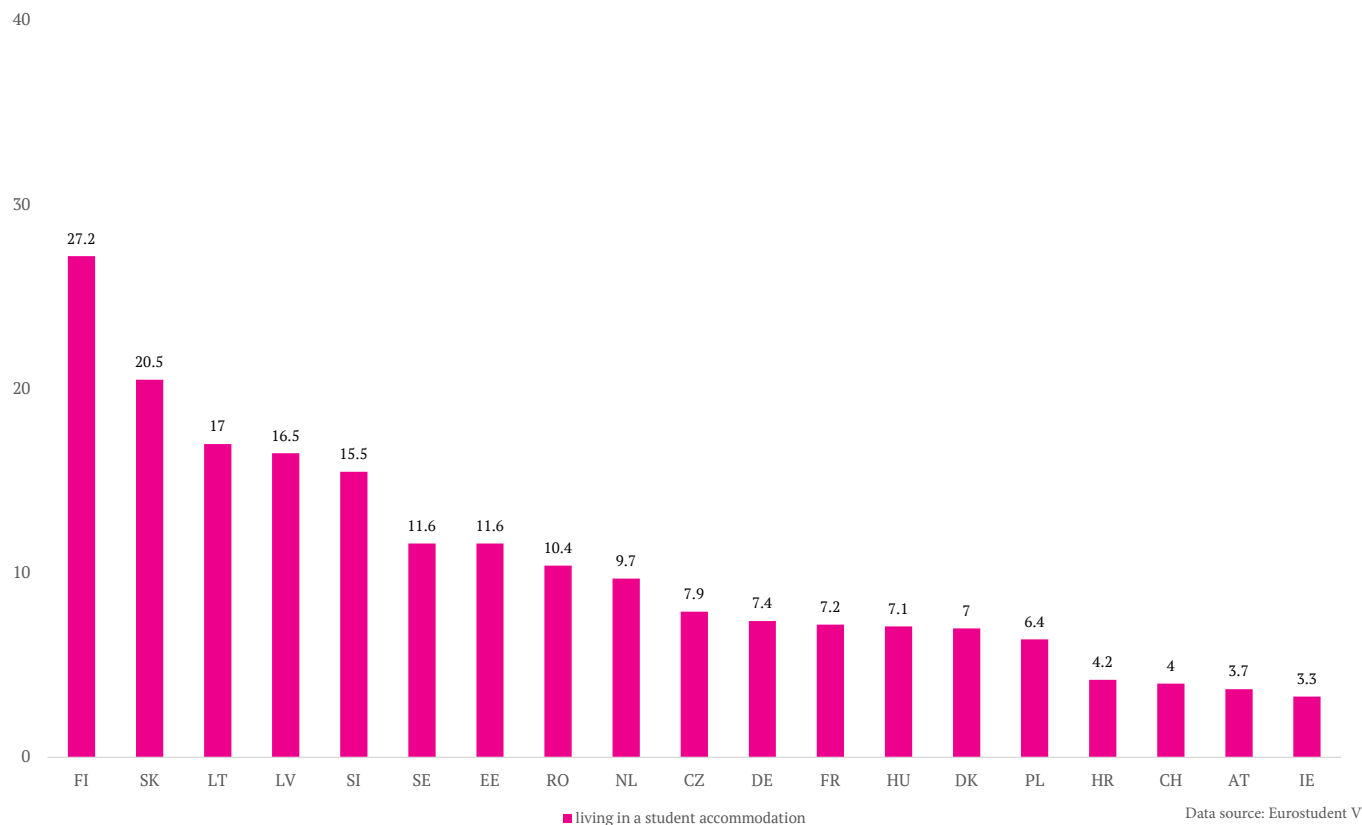
Figure 4.20 - Housing patterns of international degree mobile students

Housing patterns of international degree mobile students

Legend: with parents, alone, with partner/child(ren), with other person(s)

Data source: Eurostudent V
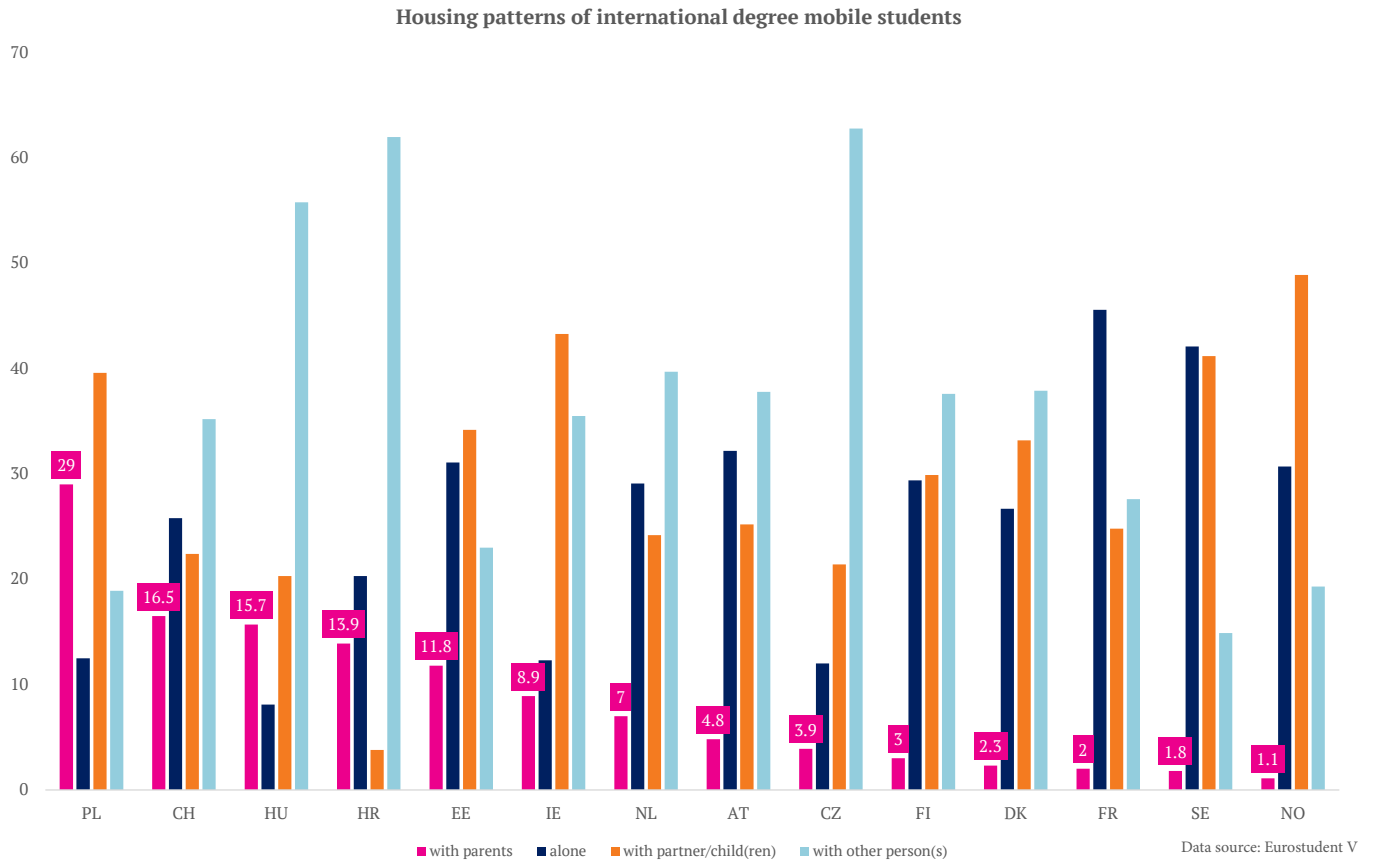
Figure 4.21 - International degree mobile students living in student accommodation

International degree mobile students living in student accommodation

Values: FI 58, NL 46, SE 45, NO 44, HU 40, CZ 36, PL 32, EE 29, FR 24, HR 23, CH 20, AT 14, DK 13, IE 11

Legend: living in a student accommodation

Data source: Eurostudent V
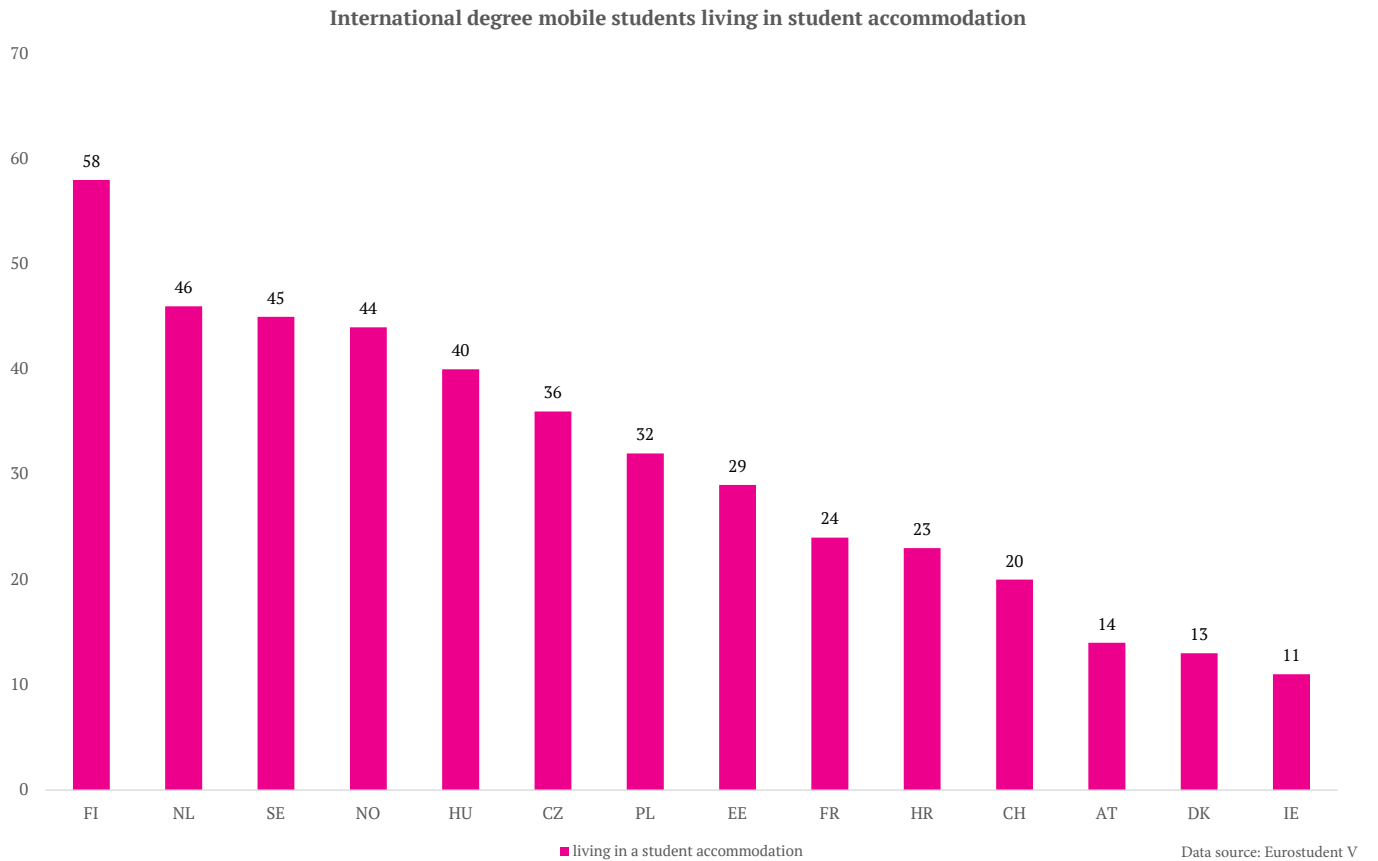
When it comes to an assessment of satisfaction with accommodation (satisfaction with location, cost, and overall condition), students living in student accommodation are less satisfied with their housing than those living alone, with their partner/child or with their parents. Countries where student satisfaction with student accommodation is above average are FI, SI, NL, IT, IE, SE, NO, CH, DK, EE. Students in RO and LT are the least satisfied.

Figure 4.22 - Percentage of students living in student accommodation (in %)

Percentage of students living in student accommodation (in %)

students living in student accommodation in % | student accommodation (very) satisfied | student accommodation (very) satisfied sample average

Data source: Eurostudent V
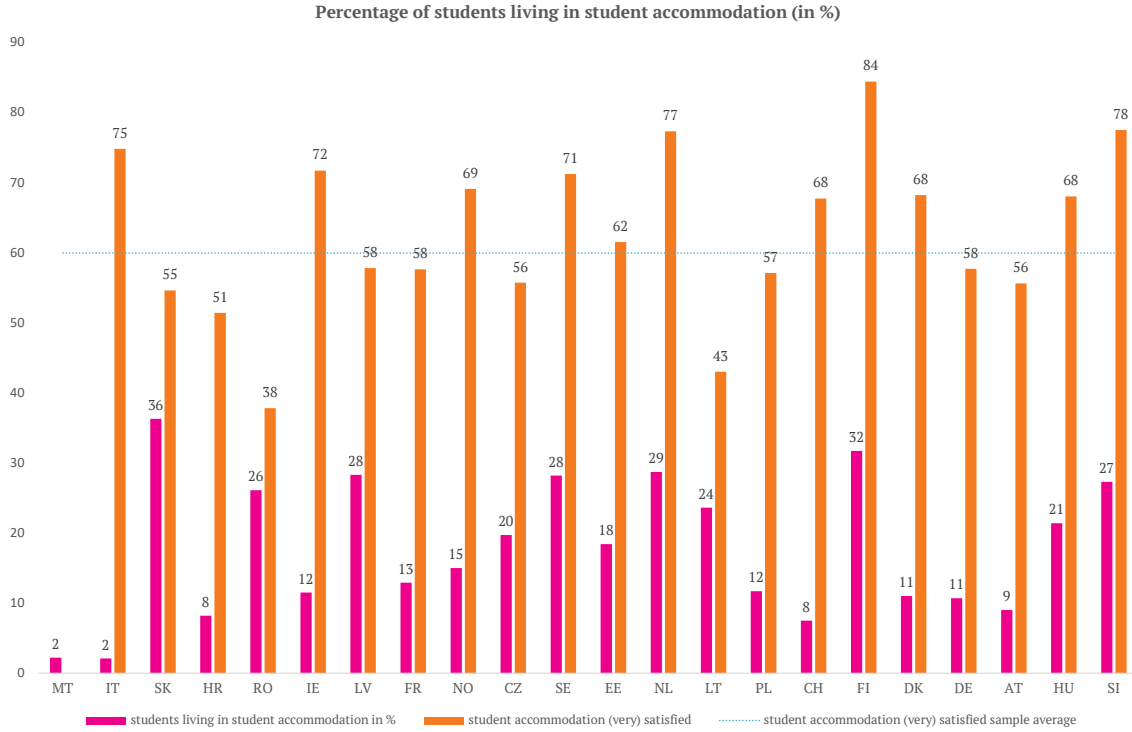
Figure 4.23 - Accommodation costs of students living in student accommodation

Accommodation costs of students living in student accommodation

Monthly amounts in Euro | country average
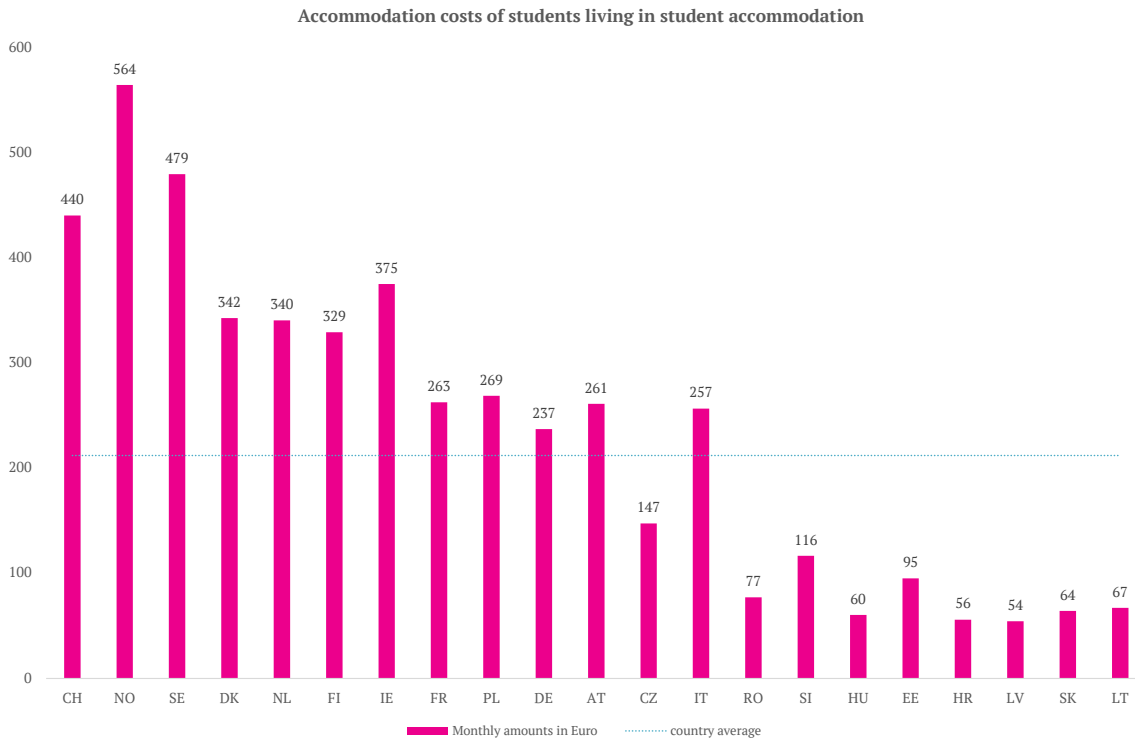
Data source: Eurostudent V

When looking at general housing prices, the Eurostat quarterly analysis of the Housing Price Index shows that after the crisis in 2008/2009, housing prices are growing again on average and so is the overall investment into student housing in the EU.

Summary

The Eurostudent V survey illustrates that the majority of the students do not live with their parents. Exceptions are countries like Armenia, Georgia, Italy and Malta, where living with parents is the prevailing form of accommodation. In Austria, Estonia as well as the Nordic countries, living with the partner/children is a very common form of living. Sharing one's accommodation with other people (not parents or partner) is the most common type of housing in Germany, Ireland and Slovakia. Living alone (regardless of the form of accommodation – e.g. in a flat or student dormitory) is, on the other hand, very common in Finland or France. Age could indeed be an important factor influencing housing patterns.

In around one third of the Eurostudent survey countries more than 25% of the student population lives in student accommodation; these countries were SK, FI, NL, LV, SE, SI, RO. On the other hand, less than 10% of the student population live in student accommodation in AT, HR, CH, MT and IT.

Those living in a student accommodation tend to be students that are younger and have a higher study intensity, and in most of the countries student accommodation is especially common among those that are dependent on public support.

In RU and FI more than half of international students live in student accommodation. On the other hand, in RS, BA and ME the percentage is less than 10%. In countries like CZ, HR, HU and RU more than half of international students live with other people, yet in all these countries the percentage of international students living in student accommodation is still higher than that of the whole student population which is around 30% in RU, approximately 20% in CZ and HU, and only 8% in HR.

4.7 Legal aspects as potential obstacles or opportunities for student accommodation

The EU co-funded TENLAW project[41] is an analysis of tenancy laws in EU, which illustrates that in several European countries there are still drawbacks in terms of real access to renting property. "The main reasons are not well-functioning private-law and court systems or Rule of Law, which result in low interest in renting from both owners and possible tenants. As both parties involved are exposing themselves to high risk, and therefore especially in Spain and Eastern Europe, accommodation might be left empty by the landlords"[42]. In the policy recommendations, therefore, the need for more balanced security mechanisms for the tenants and landlords are voiced.

The EU institutions do not have the necessary authority to act, as most determining aspects are in hands of the Member States and their private law infrastructures. Due to increased student mobility, the question of a pan-European housing market is increasingly becoming a question of the basic principles, values and rights that the EU stands for. As one of the advisory board members of the TENLAW project, the European University Institute stated in 2015:

„The complete neglect of this area by the European Union (EU) may once have been justified on account of its small impact on the Common Market. This is no longer defendable in terms of the extension of the European constitution to non-economic values and rights, brought about by the Nice Charter of Fundamental Rights and the current Constitutional Convention, as well as the Tampere Conclusions of establishing an 'area of freedom, security, and justice'" [43].

The project results are described on 850 pages with 27 country profiles and some of the questions each country researcher team had to answer are:
• "What bases for discrimination in the selection of tenants are allowed/prohibited? What about, for example, status as a foreigner, student, unmarried partner, or person with a short-term work contract?"
• "Main current problems of the national rental market from the perspective of tenants"
• "In the case of apartments shared among students (in particular: may a student moving out be replaced without permission of the landlord)"

Problems in the real estate market
In general, it was highlighted that there is a lack of (affordable) housing in some locations – mostly high GDP countries and capital cities. And each EU Member State is dealing with specific challenges in the field of legal infrastructure, but as general issues regarding rental markets are:

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[41] Project provided the first large-scale comparative and European law survey of tenancy law and 27 research institutions from all over Europe were involved in the analysis.
[42] ZERP (Zentrum für Europäische Rechtspolitik - ZERP - Zentrum für Europäische Rechtspolitik): (2015) European Policy Brief. http://www.tenlaw.uni-bremen.de/.
[43] See: http://www.eui.eu/DepartmentsAndCentres/Law/ResearchAndTeaching/ResearchThemes/ProjectTenancyLaw.aspx.

• Loopholes in regulations and laws, as well as the lack of a legal infrastructure that does not allow the rental market to flourish.
• Lack of legal advice available to both tenants and landlords.
• Lack of investment in social housing for various reasons: not a priority for the public sector, lack of incentives for the private sector, etc.
• Illegal aspects – shadow economy, illegal fees being charged, etc.

Discrimination

Whereas in some countries there are regulations specifically dealing with aspects of discrimination, in most countries, however, official regulations are still being formed. The common aim of those regulations is to protect a wider range of potential victims of discrimination. Students are not usually considered a target group that requires protection from discrimination and are thus not mentioned particularly in such regulations. Priority is given to groups from different ethnical or religious backgrounds or with different sexual orientations, as they seem to be a more pressing issue to deal with. For example, this is illustrated by the example of Croatia:

"Discrimination on bases of nationality (against foreigners) and marital status (unmarried partner) is prohibited. However, rejecting a student or a person with a short-term employment contract as a tenant would not be in breach of anti-discrimination legislature if this status indicates that the tenant might have real problems with paying the rent or the expenses"[44].

Flat sharing among students

The TENLAW project also looked at how subletting is regulated. This is particularly interesting for the student population, as flat sharing and communal living are common forms of accommodation. The question whether a student moving out may be substituted by someone else without permission of the landlord was analysed. Often there are no specific regulations about it, yet when the contracts are more detailed, generally landlords are not so eager to give such power away. Only in some countries were researchers able to show that in practice landlords are willing to accept a replacement tenant put forward by a person wishing to leave.

Public actors
- diverse profile of student support services

Since CNOUS and DSW being the associate partners in the project, they are often mentioned as an example of structures for public actors operating as student service and accommodation providers. However, they are not the only such type of structure in Erasmus+ countries. Different models exist and some European countries have this type of nationwide structure dealing with the questions of student services and student accommodation in particular.

Together with Belgian student service organisations, both CNOUS and DSW are also founding members of the European Council for Student Affairs (ECStA[45]) which works towards offering a platform to share information and experiences of student service organisations across Europe. ECStA has carried out an overview of the European organisations participating in this network and has drawn the conclusion that there is no single model of how such a structure could be established and its scope of operations. It was identified that following models exist:
o national organisations responsible for all sectors (e.g. DSW in Germany or CNOUS in France)
o national organisations responsible for only one specific sector (e.g. the Swedish or Finnish Student Housing Associations, or the Studienbeihilfebehörde in Austria)
o local organisations responsible for all sectors (Belgium, Portugal)
o organisations that are part of a university (e.g. departments for student affairs in the UK and Ireland)"[46]

Therefore, the capacity and scope of action is very different and not all organisations have student and in particular mobile student accommodation as the key focus. Countries that do have such nationwide housing providers with a certain capacity are mostly Western and Nordic countries and the British Isles, indicating that it is not common practice in Europe as a whole, leading to the question whether this is a good practice to potentially borrow and what are the preconditions for these structures to be established.

CNOUS and DSW have enjoyed long-term cooperation for more than 60 years and regular peer learning activities are carried out as well as staff and student exchange programmes in addition to other activities aimed at sharing experiences and increasing the capacity to deal with the challenges faced.

Private actors
- why invest in student accommodation?

Looking through the reports carried out by property market analysts, private investment in student accommodation is overall seen as growing and having huge potential in mainland Europe especially, as up to now the opportunities have not been used to the fullest[47]. At the same time these reports tend to focus only on handful of countries that promise the biggest returns and the reasons why they are interesting in terms of investment are not always immediately replicable for other countries.

[44]See: http://www.tenlaw.uni-bremen.de/Brochures/CroatiaBrochure_09052014.pdf.
[45]European Council for Student Affairs: http://ecsta.org/.
[46]ECStA (2005): Comparison of Student Service Organisations in Europe.
Available online: http://ecsta.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ECStA_2005_Report_Comparison_of_the_Student_Service_Organisations_in_Europe.pdf.
[47]Reviews from 2015- 2017 from such property market investment analysts as Catella, Savills, Taylor Wessing, Bouwfonds REIM, REFIRE – de, Knight Frank, Jones Lang LaSalle.

There are many arguments in favour of seeing investment in student accommodation as a booming area (and not only in the countries with English programmes and big international/foreign student inflows):

• This field of the property market is counter-cyclical, as the best strategic decision for young people during the crisis most often is to (continue to) study[48]; hence it is potentially a secure income during a financially difficult time (provided that students do have income).

• The average number of students in Europe is increasing and the current EU policies are targeted at promoting tertiary education. ET2020[49] benchmarks aim at reaching at least 40% of people aged 30-34 who have completed some form of higher education and at least 20% of higher education graduates who have had a period of higher education-related study or training (including work placements) abroad. Nevertheless, the situation might differ from country to country and the most prominent growth in the number of students can be observed in Germany and France.

• European HEIs, as well as an increasing offer of degree programmes in English as well as in other widely-spoken languages (French, Spanish, Portuguese), attracts also students from outside Europe and EHEA.

• In many countries, a poor rate of student accommodation provision has been identified: either there is a lack of student housing or students' needs are not met as different surveys across countries have illustrated[50] – e.g. relevant facilities are missing (facilities such as student accommodation with suitable facilities for studying) or students would rather live alone instead of sharing their living space. The quality standards and the level of expectations also seem to be growing.

Many potential challenges are identified:

• Often the situation in the property market and trends in student inflows do not just depend on the region but also differ from city to city; this is closely linked to the internationalisation strategies and the success of the HEIs located there. Therefore, it creates a challenging situation for potential investors and might place more responsibility on the infrastructure in the public sector and the HEI itself.

• General trends in real estate markets must also be taken into account and the "high land prices in top tier cities are a major barrier to new development, as is the competing demand for land from a range of other asset classes, particularly residential."[51] This illustrates the need for cooperation between the key actors involved – HEIs, municipality/state as well as the private sector - to find the best possible solutions and the need for (social) innovations in the field.

• It is also clear that that, depending on the particular target student body at each HEI, there could be space for different kinds of student accommodation. One the one hand HEIs should ensure access and (public) support for students for whom accommodation costs and availability might be the overwhelming obstacle to higher education. On the other hand, more specialised services should be provided for those who have more specific housing needs and expectations. The world housing report also remarks that "to date, most private operators have successfully targeted the premium market. There is huge untapped demand at the lower price points, but high development costs impede this in many cities."[52]

This highlights the importance of sound public policy in ensuring affordable and good quality student housing.

• Global real estate services providers state in their regional analysis and in the latest reports focussing on European market that 2015 was a record year for investment in student housing globally. However, the investment in mainland Europe is still moving at a slow pace. Their analysis also states that the provision rate (beds/enrolled students) is as low as 2%[53] in Italy (especially Rome) and only 24% in the UK which is acknowledged as the most mature market. The latest world student housing report by Savills of 2016/2017 acknowledges that the most impressive growth in the student accommodation market can be observed in Germany and the Netherlands and that cross-border investment is reaching new heights. These annual reports are broken down by regions – see Table 4.3 for a 2016/2017 overview of the big players that have invested the most within the last years.

[48]And not just because of the lack of jobs, as for example Austrian National Social Survey illustrated – entering labour market at the time of crisis is later on still reflected in the salary discrepancies in comparison to those who entered the labour market later and hence their entering wage was and stays higher. See: Zaussinger, Sarah; Unger, Martin; Thaler, Bianca; Dibiasi, Anna; Grabher, Angelika; Terzieva, Berta; Litofcenko, Julia; Binder, David; Brenner, Julia; Stjepanovic, Sara; Mathä, Patrick; Kulhanek, Andrea (2016): Austrian Student Social Survey. Available online: https://www.ihs.ac.at/de/forschungsgruppen/hochschulforschung/projekte/studierenden-sozialerhebung-2015/
[49]For more information see: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework_en.
[50]Savills (2016): World student housing report 2016/2017. Available online: http://www.savills.co.uk/research_articles/188294/207929-0; Taylor Wessing (2016): Trends in the student accommodation sector Setting the building blocks for a fruitful future. Available online: http://classof2020.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Trends-in-the-student-accommodation-sector-2016-TaylorWessing.pdf etc.
[51]Savills (2016): World student housing report 2016/2017. Available online: http://www.savills.co.uk/research_articles/188294/207929-0
[52]Ibid.
[53]Data from 2013 - Spotlight: European Student Housing Summer 2013 http://www.savills.co.uk/research_articles/141280/168958-0

Table 4.3 - Overview of the student housing supply

Supply	USA	Australia	UK	Germany	France	Spain	Netherlands
Purpose built student housing beds	2,400,000	90,000	550,000	290,000	375,000	90,000	113,000
National provision rate (beds/enrolled students)	12%	6%	24%	11%	15%	6%	16%
Typical monthly rates (room)	$570	AU$1,200	£450	€250 (public) €500 (private)	€ 370	€650 (public) €800 (private)	€ 350
Typical monthly rates (studio/apartment)	$1000	AU$1,600	£700	€ 500	€ 460	€ 420	€ 600
Key operators (university or public/ semi-public)	Universities	Universities	Universities	*Studentenwerk*	CROUS	Universities	Housing associations such as Duwo
Key operators (private)	American Campus Communities, Campus Crest Communities, Education Realty Trust	UniLodge, CLV, Urbanest	Unite Students, UPP, Vero	Youniq, Twenty First Student Living, The Fizz	Suitétudes, Campuséa, Dometude	RESA, The Student Housing Company	The Student Hotel The Student Hotel (hotel consent), Camelot

Summary

The private real estate companies do acknowledge the profitability in investing in student accommodation and the most suitable countries and cities have been mapped. The favourable conditions are mainly due to the growing number of students as well as the success of HEIs in attracting degree mobile students as well as loopholes in national real estate markets to ensure mobile student accommodation opportunities create good market conditions. However, it is important to note that profitability does not necessarily mean affordability for students, potentially leading to a distorted situation when the majority of students' needs are not truly met. There seems to be a gap in the available research in bridging this gap between profitability and affordability.

Nevertheless, the reasons why substantial and international investment is reaching the market is often not replicable at all in other, smaller countries and cities where student numbers are not growing that much or are decreasing and the language of instruction does not attract more degree mobile students. The HousErasmus+ project is now there focussing on mapping the problem areas and looking for sustainable solutions.

5. Analysis of online questionnaires

5.1 Key messages

• Roughly two thirds of Erasmus+ students and trainees arrange their accommodation themselves and for around one third of those in study mobility the host HEI arranges it for them.

• HEI offered services prove to be the most frequently used channel of information for students and also turns out to be the most prolific source which actually leads to accommodation. Social media as well as general websites for accommodation prove to be used very often but do not lead so often to accommodation.

• The vast majority (more than two thirds or 66%) of students state that the information provided by their HEI was useful.

• Across all chosen student target groups around half stated that their accommodation costs were higher than expected and half of these students stated that they experienced difficulties in financing their exchange period.

• The smaller target groups, namely students doing an independently organised exchange periods or those using other programmes than Erasmus+ (e.g. national programmes, bilateral agreements, etc.) after the big flows of Erasmus+ students and trainees, do not seem to show much difference from Erasmus+ programme students/trainees in their assessment of the situation when looking for accommodation abroad.

• Bearing in mind that no substantial differences can be observed among different student target groups, Erasmus+ programme trainees assess their success in finding decent and affordable housing as slightly below that of all the other groups.

5.2 Introduction

The following analysis covers the diverse target groups of those studying or on a placement/internship or completing a degree abroad. The focus is mainly the Erasmus+ programme countries and the analysis tries to get a deeper understanding of patterns of finding accommodation, the needs and expectations of students in terms of quality accommodation; however, it also focuses on the practical problems faced in the process of looking for and finding accommodation, as well as some of the most efficient solutions encountered.

Mobile students often face challenges that make them different from domestic students – they often look for short term housing (exchange students), while not having the possibility to actually visit the apart-

ment before their arrival in the host country. As outlined in the Desk Research, the financial capacity of exchange and degree mobile students can differ quite substantially from that of the national student population. Another relevant challenge is that students do not necessarily speak the local language. In addition, the often fragmented housing market in Europe poses challenges due to different national legislation and ways of living. This analysis tries to shed some light on the above-mentioned aspects as defined by the Desk Research and explore possible solutions.

In total, 8,156 individuals answered the students' questionnaire. The majority of responding students (80%) went on exchange studies through the Erasmus+ programme, 7% were on placement/internships organized through the Erasmus+ programme and 5% were on exchange studies organised through another programme as well as degree programmes. The sample collected is very diverse and students from 4 continents are represented, yet the main analysis will focus on Erasmus+ programme countries. Hence the following target groups will be analysed separately:

• Erasmus+ students – studies abroad (to and from Erasmus+ programme countries)
• Erasmus+ students – traineeship/placement abroad (to and from Erasmus+ programme countries)
• Credit mobile students through a programme other than Erasmus+ (to and from Erasmus+ programme countries)
• Degree students – Denmark as a case study
• Students on an independently organised traineeship (to and from Erasmus+ programme countries)
• Non-EHEA students doing any study-related mobility within Erasmus+ programme countries.

5.3 Erasmus+ Student Surveys – within Erasmus+ programme countries

Key messages

• The vast majority of Erasmus+ students - almost three quarters - tend to arrange their accommodation for their entire stay before going abroad.

• Almost two thirds find a place to stay themselves, yet the percentage of those dealing with housing challenges independent of the HEI and other support organisations can range up to 90%.

• For around one third of Erasmus+ students the host HEI arranges accommodation for them and in some countries the percentage is more than three quarters.

• Most mobile students tend to live in shared flats (44%) or student dormitories (34%) rather than in private accommodation (20%) or other forms of housing.

• As sources of information students use to find accommodation, it is mainly the services offered by the HEIs as well as general websites for finding housing in the country; social media channels are also mentioned.

• HEI accommodation services prove to be the most successful pathway to actual accommodation and the least successful are social media channels as well as general websites for accommodation services in a country.

• Slightly more than two thirds of students are satisfied with the information that their hosting HEI gave them about housing.

• Almost half of the respondents say that the housing market in their host country was difficult. At the same time, mobile students are generally satisfied with their accommodation.

• An average of 17% of the respondents reported perceived discrimination when looking for accommodation, and 12% of respondents experienced attempted fraud when looking for accommodation in their host country.

• On average, 39% of exchange students state that the cost of accommodation in their host country was higher than they had expected. Almost half of the students state that it was hard to finance their stay abroad due to the extra costs.

• The size of the IRO or maturity of the private student accommodation market, with many tailor-made offers for students as well as availability of the student dormitories, does not necessarily lead to students being more satisfied with accommodation options – each national case is quite unique and only an overall view can identify success and the issues to be solved.

• In general, students tend to be content with their accommodation – quality, value for money etc. Yet the fact that exchange studies prove to be socially selective needs to be taken into consideration. And not only the problems of those already abroad needs to be addressed, but also students who see the obstacles to going abroad as too great to even consider. And a chance to find affordable and decent accommodation is surely one of the main concerns.

Demographics

In order to focus on the most recent status of housing for exchange students, as well as to take into account the introduction of the Erasmus+ programme, we looked only at answers of students that were on an exchange in the last three years, 2014-2016. In our sample 50% of students did their exchange period in 2015, 38% in 2016 and the

remaining 12% in 2014. We further narrowed down the sample by focussing only on students that came either from or to Erasmus+ countries. This means that altogether 5705 responses were analysed of Erasmus(+) programme students completed their exchange studies within Erasmus+ programme countries. The data was weighted by incoming and outgoing student flows of 2014 – the latest validated data from the European Commission at the present moment. This allows us to create a balanced picture of the sample and compare different countries with each other.

Length of stay
Regarding the length of stay, 55% of Erasmus+ credit mobile students stayed abroad up to 5 months and an additional 15% stayed 6 months, i.e. the majority stayed for one semester. The remaining 30% stayed between 7 to 11 months, out of which 16% stayed for 10 months (2 academic semesters).

Figure 5.1 - Length of Erasmus+ study mobility abroad
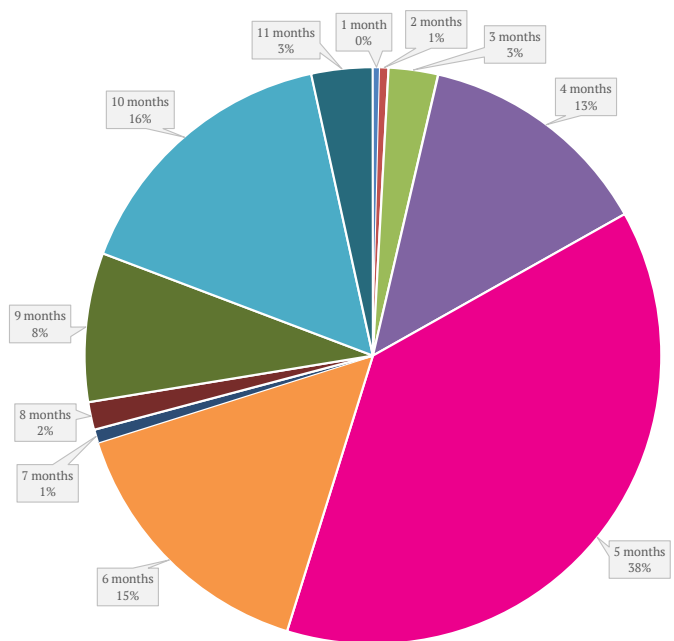
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Sex
The majority of the respondents are female at 68%, 32% are male and 1% either prefer not to assign themselves to one particular gender or identify themselves with another category. According to Erasmus: Facts, Figures and Trends 2013/2014, 60%[54] of all those participating in study mobility under Erasmus+ programme were females.

As for the home country, the biggest percentage of the students in our sample comes from Spain with 14% of the whole student population, followed by the UK and Germany with 12% respectively as well as France (10%) and Italy (9%).

[54]European Commission (2015): Erasmus – Facts, Figures. And Trends. The European Union support for student and staff exchanges and university cooperation in 2013-2014. Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/statistics/erasmus-plus-facts-figures_en.pdf.
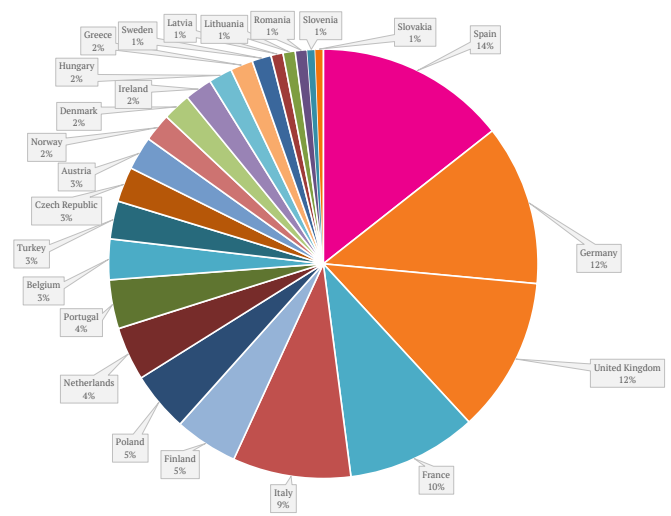
Home and host country

As for the home country, the biggest percentage of the students in our sample comes from Spain with 14% of the whole student population, followed by the UK and Germany with 12% respectively as well as France (10%) and Italy (9%).
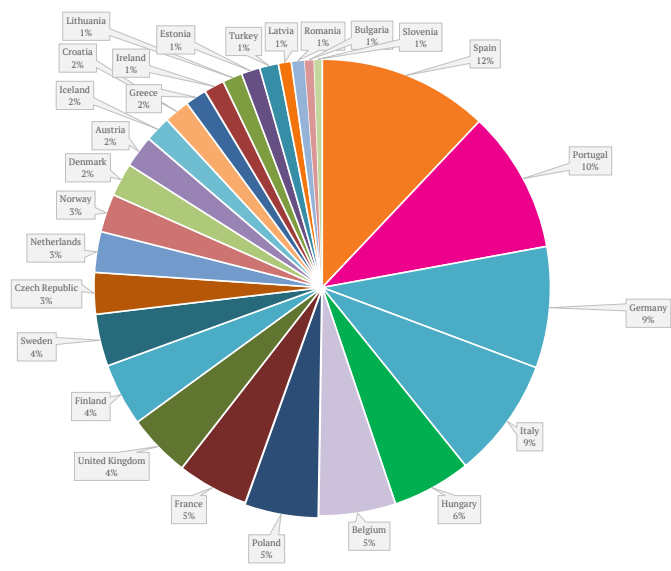
Figure 5.2 - Sending (home) country of Erasmus +study mobility abroad

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

The most popular study exchange destinations are Spain (12%), Portugal (10%), Germany (9%), and Italy (8%).

Figure 5.3 - Receiving (host) country of Erasmus + study mobility period

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

More than half of the students are doing their exchange period in a city with up to 300,000 inhabitants, 37% in a city between 100,000 and 300,000 inhabitants and 20% in a city below 100,000. Only 19% spent their exchange period in a city with a population of more than one million.

Especially in Bulgaria, Austria and Hungary, around half of the exchange students tend to be in big cities with more than one million inhabitants and in Turkey the percentage is as high as 75%. However, in Sweden, Norway and Croatia the trend is the opposite and a relatively large percentage of all incoming students tend to be found in small cities – roughly 40% are in a city with a population of less than 100,000 and in Slovenia this percentage is almost two thirds.

Figure 5.4 - Size of the city in the receiving (host) country during Erasmus+ study mobility period
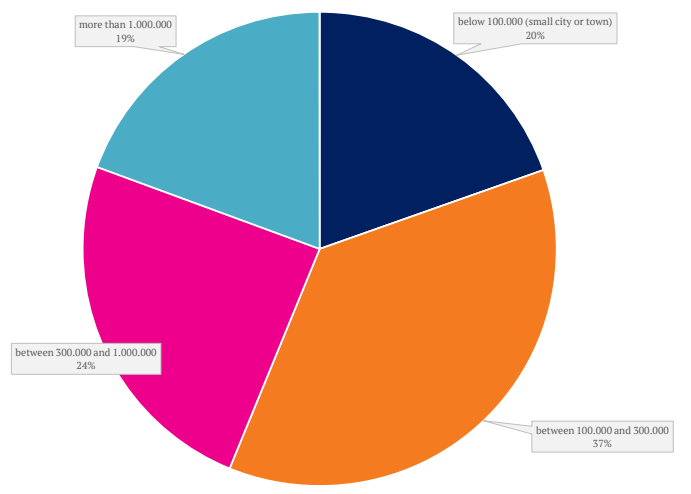
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Accommodation arrangements

Figure 5.5 illustrates that the vast majority of respondents (72%) arranged accommodation for their entire stay before going abroad. Another 10% arranged accommodation for the beginning of their stay, but not for their entire stay abroad. Only a few respondents (3%) had accommodation arranged in advance but not from the first day of their stay abroad. Almost every sixth respondent (16%) did not make any accommodation arrangements prior to departure.

Students from Finland, Bulgaria well as the Netherlands stand out, with more than 80% of students from these countries having their accommodation already arranged prior their arrival in the host country. The UK has the highest percentage of outgoings (20%) who made arrangements for the first days/weeks only. Of Greek, Italian and Portuguese students 22-20% made no arrangements prior their departure for their Erasmus+ destination country. Also students from the UK, Germany and Belgium have a relatively high percentage of 19% not arranging accommodation prior to departure.

Regarding the patterns in host regions, more than 90% of incoming students have their accommodation arranged prior to their arrival in Austria, Finland, Norway, Slovakia and Czech Republic. In contrast only around half did so when going to Spain or Portugal, with a comparatively high percentage of around one third of students who do not make any arrangements for accommodation when doing an exchange in these countries. There is no clear pattern for the destinations where students arrange their accommodation only after arrival in the home country.

Figure 5.5 - Accommodation arrangements

No
16%

Yes, but not from the first day
2%

Yes, but only for the first days/weeks
10%

Yes, for the entire stay
72%

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016
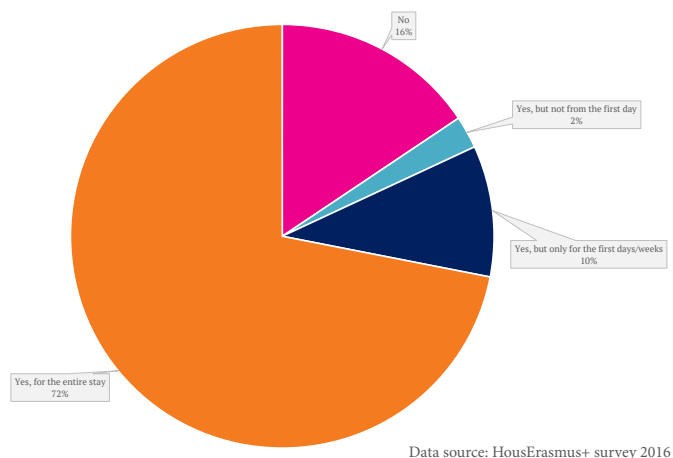
Who arranges the accommodation?

Figure 5.6 shows that more than half of respondents (58%) arrange their accommodation themselves and for around one third the host HEI dealt with these issues.

The percentage is particularly high in Ireland and Spain, with more than 90% of incoming students dealing with it on their own. In Iceland, Belgium and Greece it is also quite high, reaching almost 80%. On the other end, just around 10% of incoming students to Romania and Bulgaria state that they had to organise their place to stay themselves.

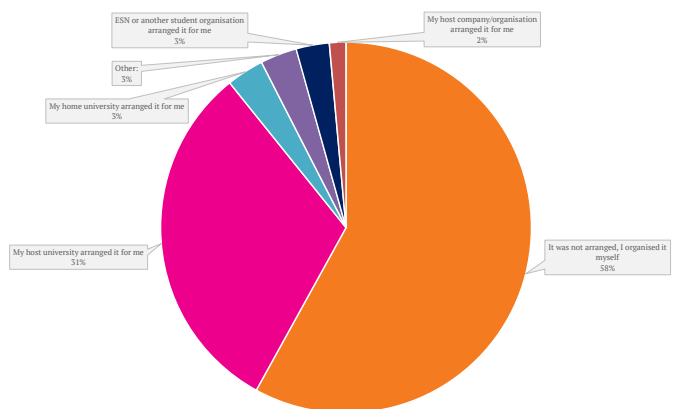Hence, the highest percentage of incoming students that had their accommodation organised by their host HEI is in Bulgaria (83%), Romania, (69%), Czech Republic and Denmark (64% respectively), followed by Poland (59%). At the same time, only a fraction of students say that their host HEI organised accommodation for them in Spain, Ireland and Iceland.

Student organisations such as ESN arranged accommodation for around 3.3% of respondents. This percentage is particularly high in Turkey at 13%, Croatia (12%), and Portugal (7%).

Figure 5.6 - How was the accommodation arranged before going abroad

ESN or another student organisation arranged it for me
3%

My host company/organisation arranged it for me
2%

Other:
3%

My home university arranged it for me
3%

My host university arranged it for me
31%

It was not arranged, I organised it myself
58%

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

In the survey for HEIs, the question was asked how many people on average are involved directly or indirectly in support for mobile students and whether there is a dedicated person dealing with incoming student accommodation. In the 6 most popular exchange destination countries – Spain, France, Italy, Germany, the UK and Poland, no clear pattern could be observed between the percentage of students that claim their host HEI took care of their accommodation arrangements and the number of staff members responsible for accommodation in IROs. This can be attributed to the fact that student accommodation is a more complex issue that that is also dependent on other factors, such as the sort of information or services provided, overarching problems or a favourable situation in the local housing market, whether the HEI has outsourced these tasks to other organisations, the language barrier in the host city or the intercultural environment to begin with, etc. Interestingly, services of Higher Education Institutions are still one of the main methods for students to actually find accommodation, as outlined later in this chapter.

However, when it comes to the question whether IROs feel that they provide all the information about accommodation to the mobile students, HEIs in Spain and the UK show slightly less confidence than other countries named above. While the average is around 80% and even around 90% in Poland and Germany, only around 60% in the UK and Spain (totally) agree that IROs provide all information about accommodation to the mobile students. In similar vein, these two countries also state that there is a lower percentage of students asking for information on accommodation. However, Spain and the UK are also the countries that more often have IROs that claim it is not their responsibility to provide such information in the first place. That could also be the reason why IROs in both countries are not so self-critical as to whether they offer enough support for mobile students regarding housing. Yet the question stays open - do students receive enough support and how valid are the reasons for IROs to consider them less responsible for providing information on accommodation to students?

Table 5.3 - Strategies for accommodation arrangements during the Erasmus+ study mobility period - breakdown by host countries

	ESN or another student organisation arranged it for me	It was not arranged, I organised it myself	My home university arranged it for me	My host company/organisation arranged it for me	My host university arranged it for me	Other
Ireland	0%	94%	2%	0%	2%	2%
Spain	2%	92%	0%	1%	2%	3%
Iceland	0%	83%	3%	0%	8%	6%
Greece	3%	76%	2%	0%	19%	0%
Italy	6%	75%	3%	2%	11%	3%
Belgium	0%	75%	0%	0%	22%	2%
Austria	0%	74%	3%	5%	13%	4%
Portugal	6%	69%	3%	1%	16%	4%
Latvia	0%	66%	5%	0%	22%	7%
Slovenia	3%	63%	0%	3%	32%	0%
Croatia	12%	61%	2%	0%	21%	5%
United Kingdom	0%	59%	3%	1%	35%	2%
Hungary	4%	56%	4%	0%	34%	2%
Turkey	13%	52%	3%	3%	21%	8%
France	2%	47%	4%	1%	43%	4%
Sweden	1%	43%	3%	3%	48%	1%
Germany	2%	43%	3%	4%	45%	3%
Netherlands	1%	42%	5%	6%	46%	1%
Estonia	0%	40%	4%	2%	53%	0%
Finland	4%	37%	4%	7%	41%	7%
Norway	3%	29%	3%	7%	55%	4%
Denmark	0%	29%	2%	4%	64%	1%
Lithuania	5%	29%	10%	0%	57%	0%
Poland	4%	29%	3%	2%	59%	2%
Czech Republic	1%	27%	5%	2%	64%	0%
Romania	2%	13%	13%	0%	69%	2%
Bulgaria	0%	10%	5%	0%	83%	3%

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

In the survey for HEIs, the question was asked how many people on average are involved directly or indirectly in support for mobile students and whether there is a dedicated person dealing with incoming student accommodation. In the 6 most popular exchange destination countries – Spain, France, Italy, Germany, the UK and Poland, no clear pattern could be observed between the percentage of students that claim their host HEI took care of their accommodation arrangements and the number of staff members responsible for accommodation in IROs. This can be attributed to the fact that student accommodation is a more complex issue that that is also dependent on other factors, such as the sort of information or services provided, overarching problems or a favourable situation in the local housing market, whether the HEI has outsourced these tasks to other organisations, the language barrier in the host city or the intercultural environment to begin with, etc. Interestingly, services of Higher Education Institutions are still one of the main methods for students to actually find accommodation, as outlined later in this chapter.

However, when it comes to the question whether IROs feel that they provide all the information about accommodation to the mobile students, HEIs in Spain and the UK show slightly less confidence than other countries named above. While the average is around 80% and even around 90% in Poland and Germany, only around 60% in the UK and Spain (totally) agree that IROs provide all information about accommodation to the mobile students. In similar vein, these two countries also state that there is a lower percentage of students asking for information on accommodation. However, Spain and the UK are also the countries that more often have IROs that claim it is not their responsibility to provide such information in the first place. That could also be the reason why IROs in both countries are not so self-critical as to whether they offer enough support for mobile students regarding housing. Yet the question stays open - do students receive enough support and how valid are the reasons for IROs to consider them less responsible for providing information on accommodation to students?

Figure 5.7 - Percentage of HEIs that are tasked with supporting students in their accommodation arrangements

IROs tasked to support with accommodation

Country	No	Yes
United Kingdom	32%	
Poland	3%	
France	6%	
Italy	6%	
Germany	6%	
Spain	19%	

■ No ■ Yes
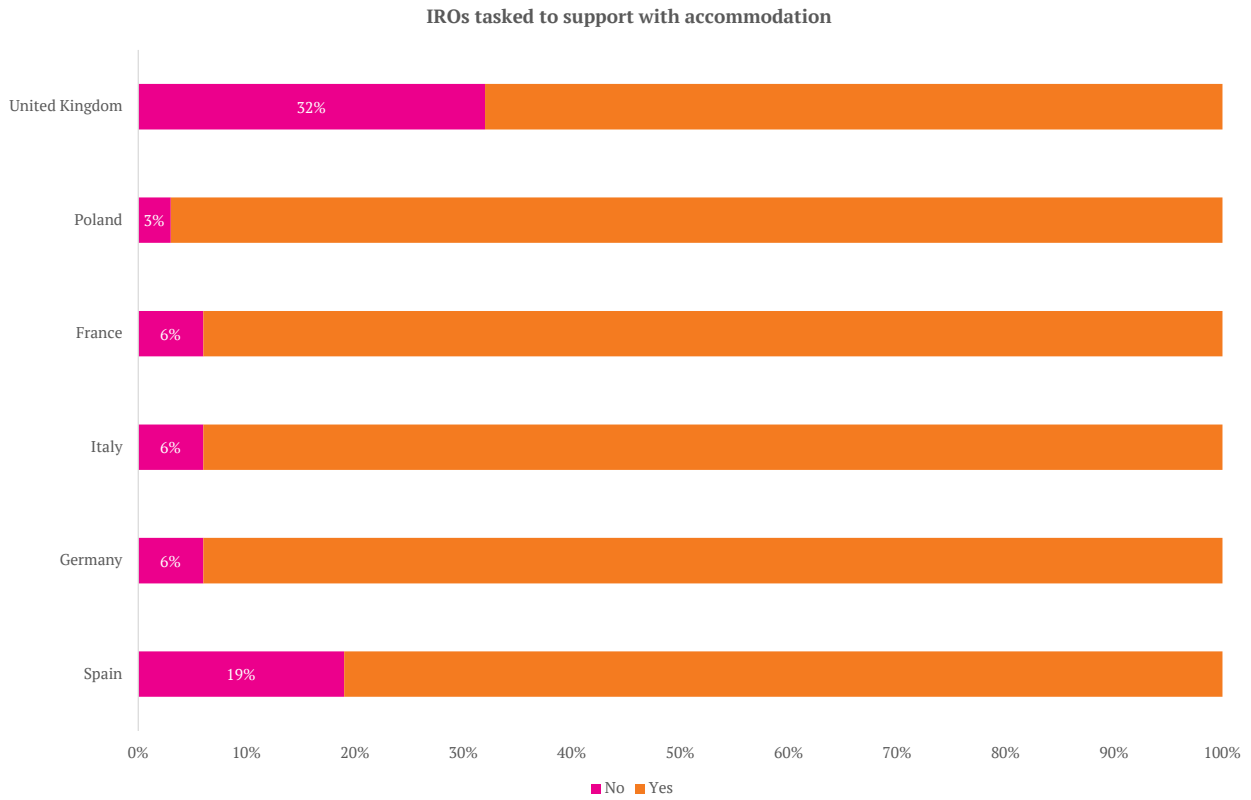
Figure 5.8 - IRO self-assessment whether they can meet the demand for housing for international students

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

IRO can meet the demand for housing for international students

Country	(Totally) agree	Neither agree or disagree	(Totally) disagree	I don't know
Italy	34%	32%	32%	2%
Germany	38%	14%	49%	
France	43%	16%	41%	0%
United Kingdom	44%	9%	44%	3%
Spain	52%	21%	26%	1%
Poland	73%	14%	11%	3%

■ (Totally) agree ■ Neither agree or disagree ■ (Totally) disagree ■ I don't know

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

49
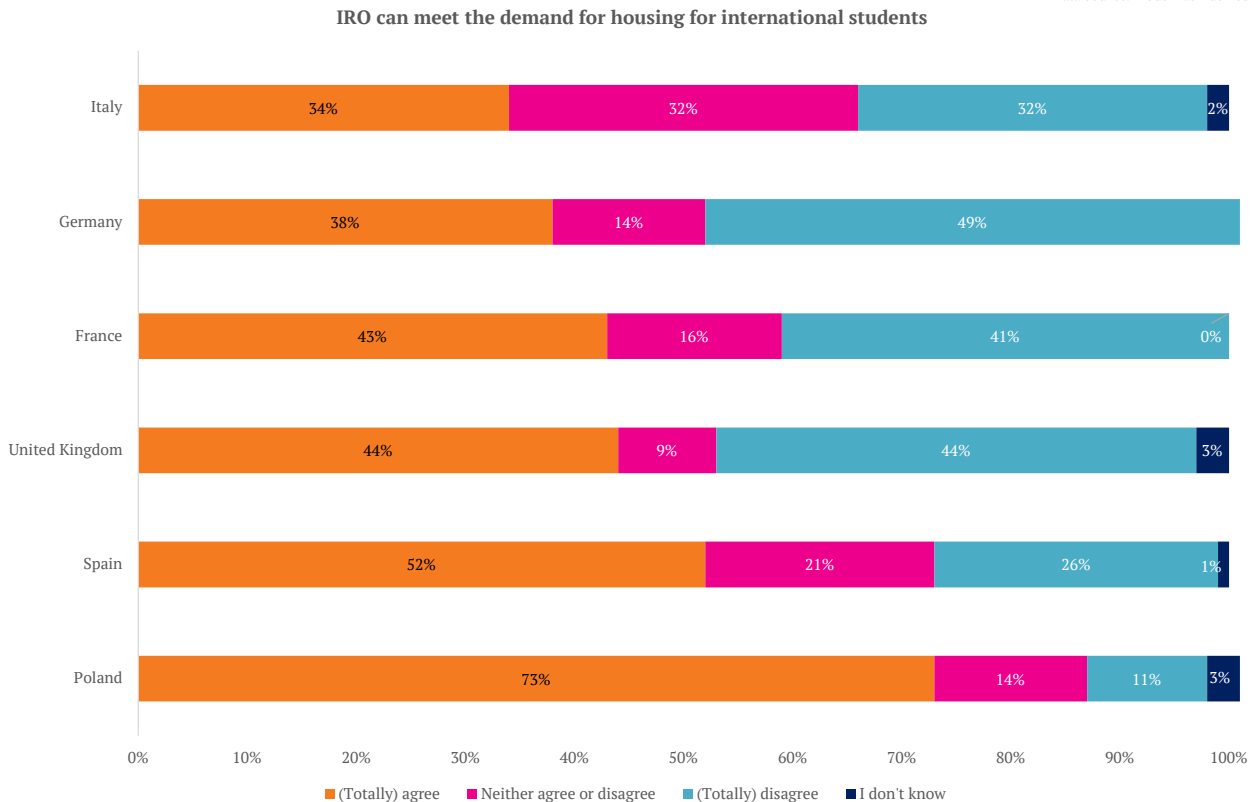
Sources of information

Students who arranged accommodation themselves were also asked which sources of information (or which combination thereof) they used to look for accommodation. Accommodation services by HEIs (52%) was mentioned as the most common source. A general website for finding accommodation in the host country as well as social media channels were given by 43% of students. Friends or other personal connections are named in 33% of the cases. Another 16% used housing/real estate agencies or a list of local landlords (6%), while local newspapers are of little importance (1.3% of respondents use them as a source of information). Denmark, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Norway and Finland stand out with more than 80% of incoming students using HEI offered accommodation services as source of information. However, only around one third of the student body did so in Spain, Turkey, Italy, Croatia or Portugal.

The usage of social media ranges from around 10% of students in Norway or Belgium to above 60% in Turkey, Croatia, Latvia and Estonia and almost 80% in Greece.
Around half of the students looked for information on accommodation via friends/personal connections in Turkey, Portugal and Iceland.

In Iceland, the percentage of students who looked for information in general housing advertisement websites is particularly high – above 80%. In Spain and Greece the percentage is also relatively high at around 60%, while it is only around 10% in Bulgaria and Romania.

Information leading to finding accommodation

While respondents use multiple sources of information to look for accommodation, it is crucial to understand which source of information led to respondents actually finding accommodation. HEI accommodation services are not only the most often used source of information but also prove to be the most commonly named way of finding accommodation – 38% of incoming students name it. General websites for finding accommodation (19%), friends or other personal connections (13%) and social media channels (15%) are additional relatively successful means for finding accommodation. Housing/real estate agencies (7%), a list of local landlords (1.6%) and local newspapers (0.2%) only help a smaller part of respondents to find accommodation.

In conclusion, this means that around one third of all students have their accommodation arranged by their host HEI; more than half of those dealing with accommodation questions on their own consult the HEI accommodation services and almost 40% actually find their housing in this way – illustrating that HEIs are the most important source when arranging housing in the host country. This category includes the HEIs housing infrastructure as well as nationwide student support services that are closely linked to the HEI.

Figure 5.9 - Sources of information students use to look for accommodation and channels that led to accommodation (among Erasmus+ study mobilities)

Sources of information students use to look for accommodation and channels that led to accommodation
(among Erasmus+ study mobilities)
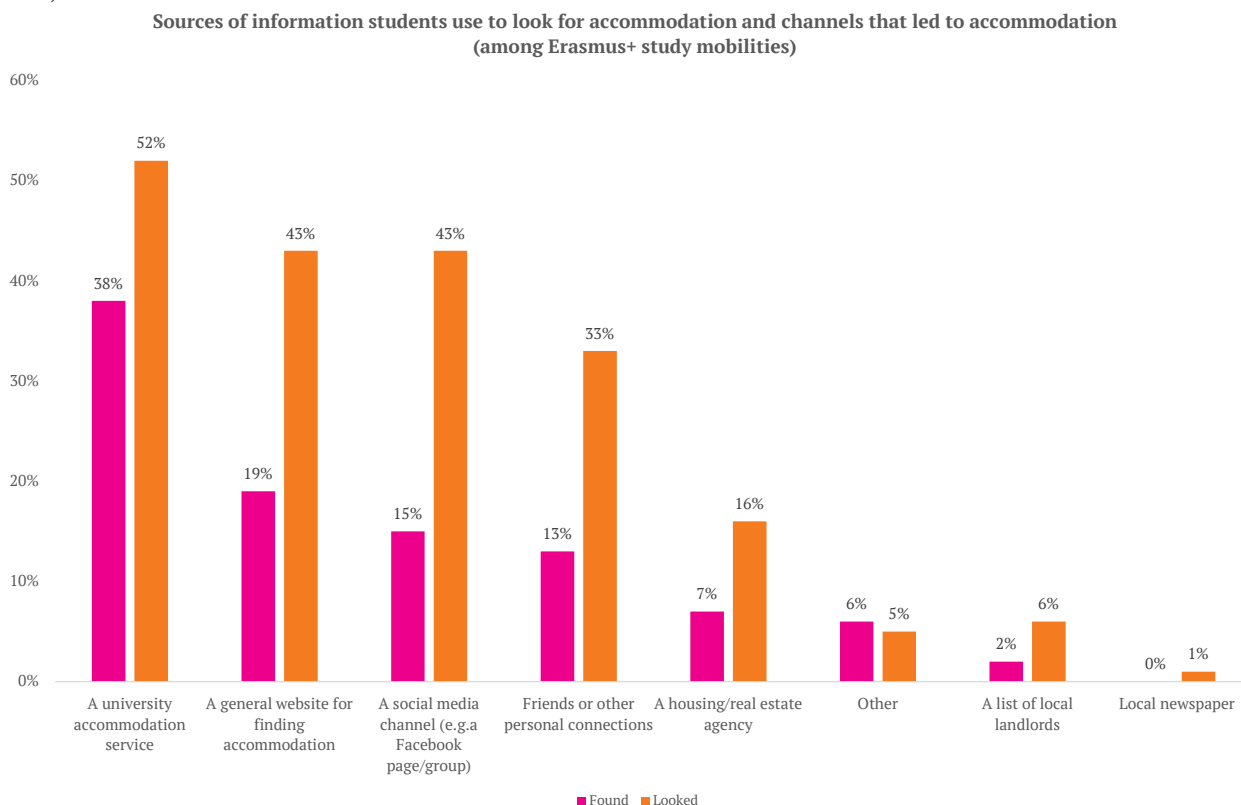
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

When looking at the characteristics of the different countries, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Denmark stand out because HEI accommodation services have resulted in finding student housing for more than 70% of students and in all cases it was also by far the most common way of looking for information.

Iceland presents a potential mismatch, with the majority (41%) reporting to have used HEI accommodation services as source of info, yet only 5% found their place to stay this way – and the majority of incoming students in Iceland in the end found their housing via general websites for accommodation searches (34%) as well as friends (27%).

Similarly, quite substantial differences can be observed in Estonia and the Netherlands; nevertheless the HEI accommodation services were still the most common channel to actually find a place to stay in the end.

Figure 5.10 - Overview of the effectiveness of HEI accommodation services - percentage of students who used this source of information and those who found accommodation in this way

Overview of the effectiveness of HEI accommodation services - percentage of students who used this source of information and those who found accommodation in this way
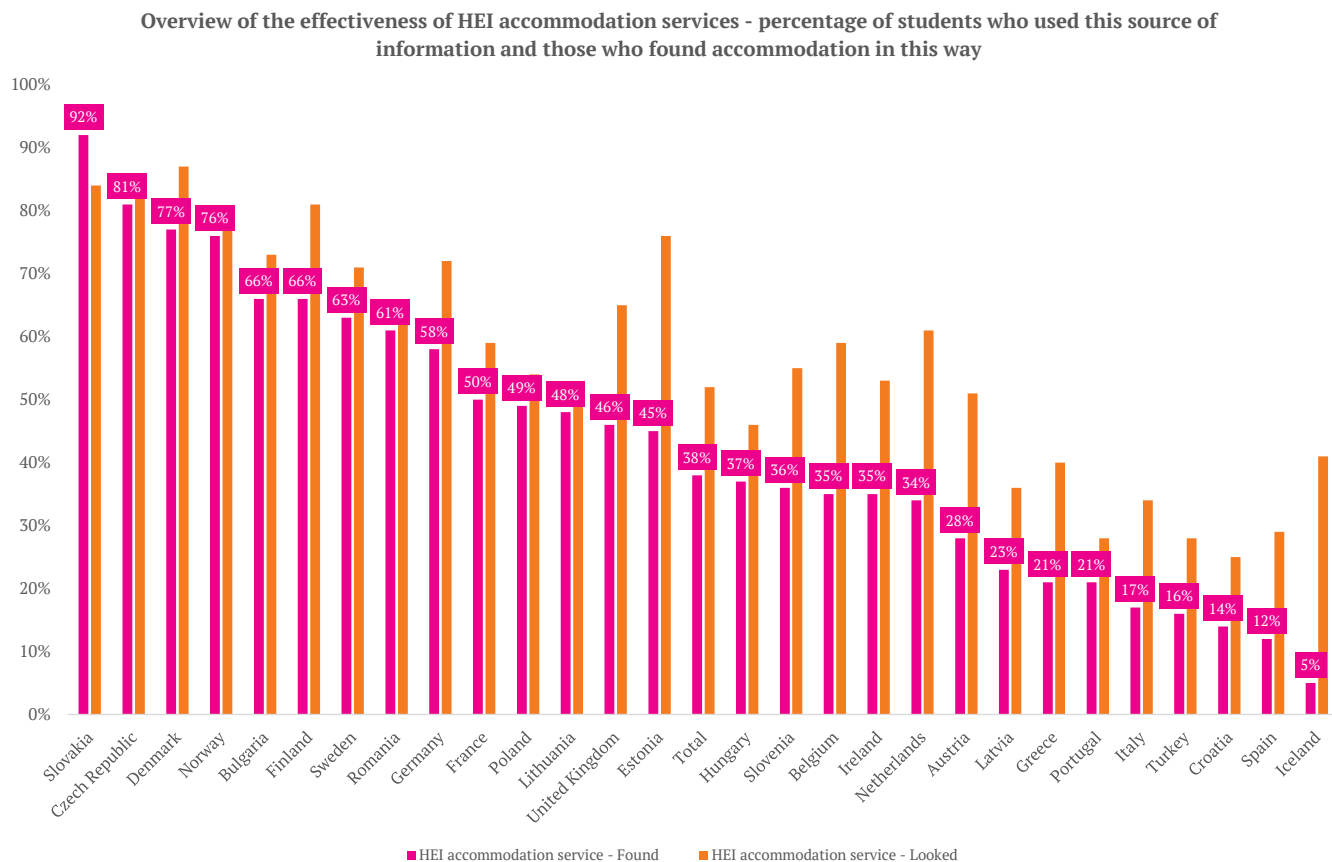
Regarding the usage of general websites for accommodation search-es, Iceland, Spain, Italy and Germany seem to be the locations where the percentage of students who found a place to live in this way is the highest. At the same time Iceland, Greece and Denmark report the highest percentage of unsuccessful attempts.

Figure 5.11 - Overview of the effectiveness of general websites for finding accommodation - percentage of students who used this source of information and those who found accommodation this way

Overview of the effectiveness of general websites for finding accommodation - percentage of students who used this source of information and those who found accommodation this way

A general website for finding accommodation - Found
A general website for finding accommodation - Looked
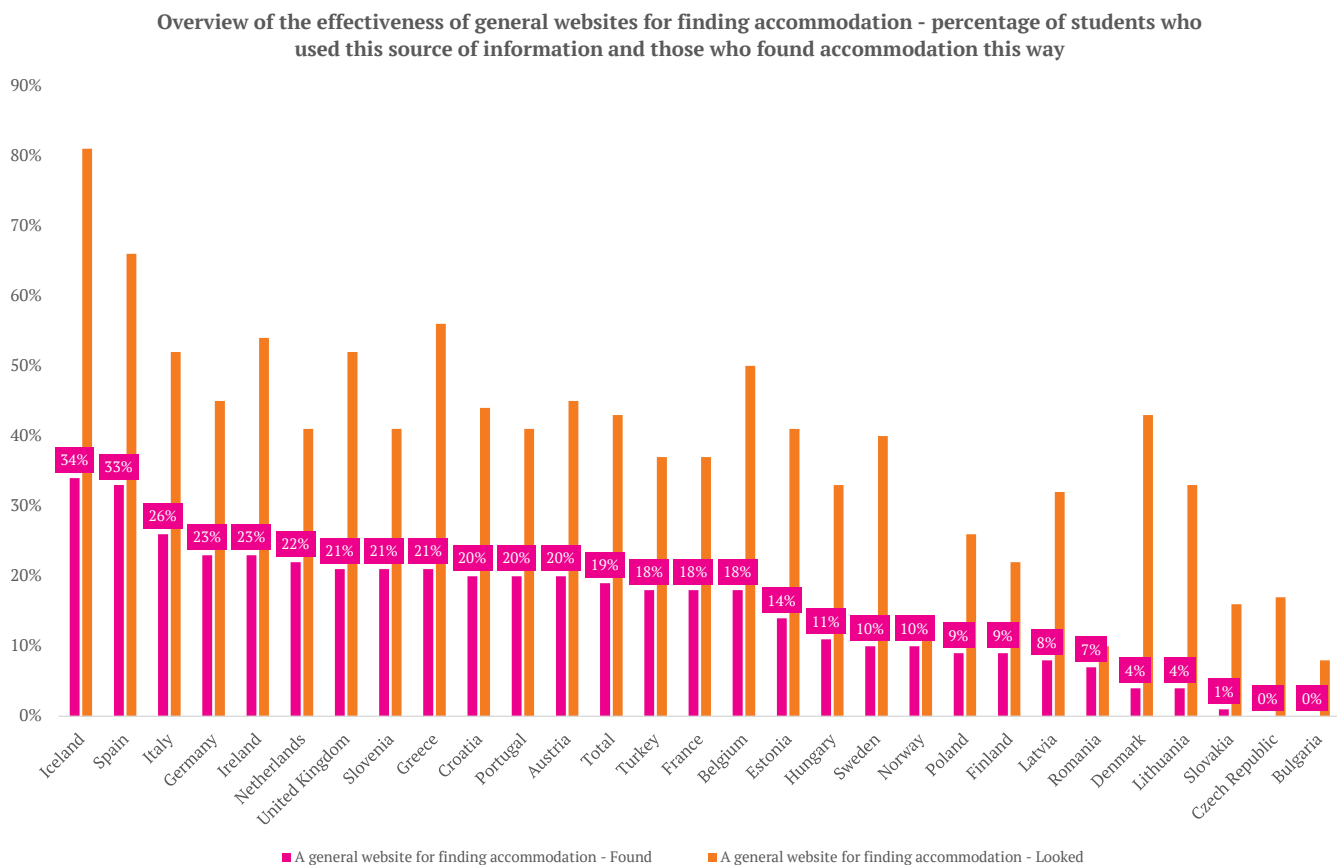
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

The most prominent mismatch between the percentage of students who used particular information channels to look for accommodation and actually found accommodation through the information acquired this way include both social media (especially in Iceland, Turkey, Estonia and Slovenia) and general websites for finding accommodation in the country (especially in Iceland, Spain and Italy). There is a multitude of possible reasons – language barriers, legal constraints when entering the real estate market under the same conditions as locals, potential scams etc. Information provided by friends and personal contacts can also often turn out to be unsuccessful (in particular in Croatia, Turkey, Portugal and the Nether-lands), all of which illustrates the need for more systematic solutions.

Figure 5.12 - Overview of the effectiveness of social media platforms in finding accommodation - percentage of students who used this source of information and those who found accommodation this way
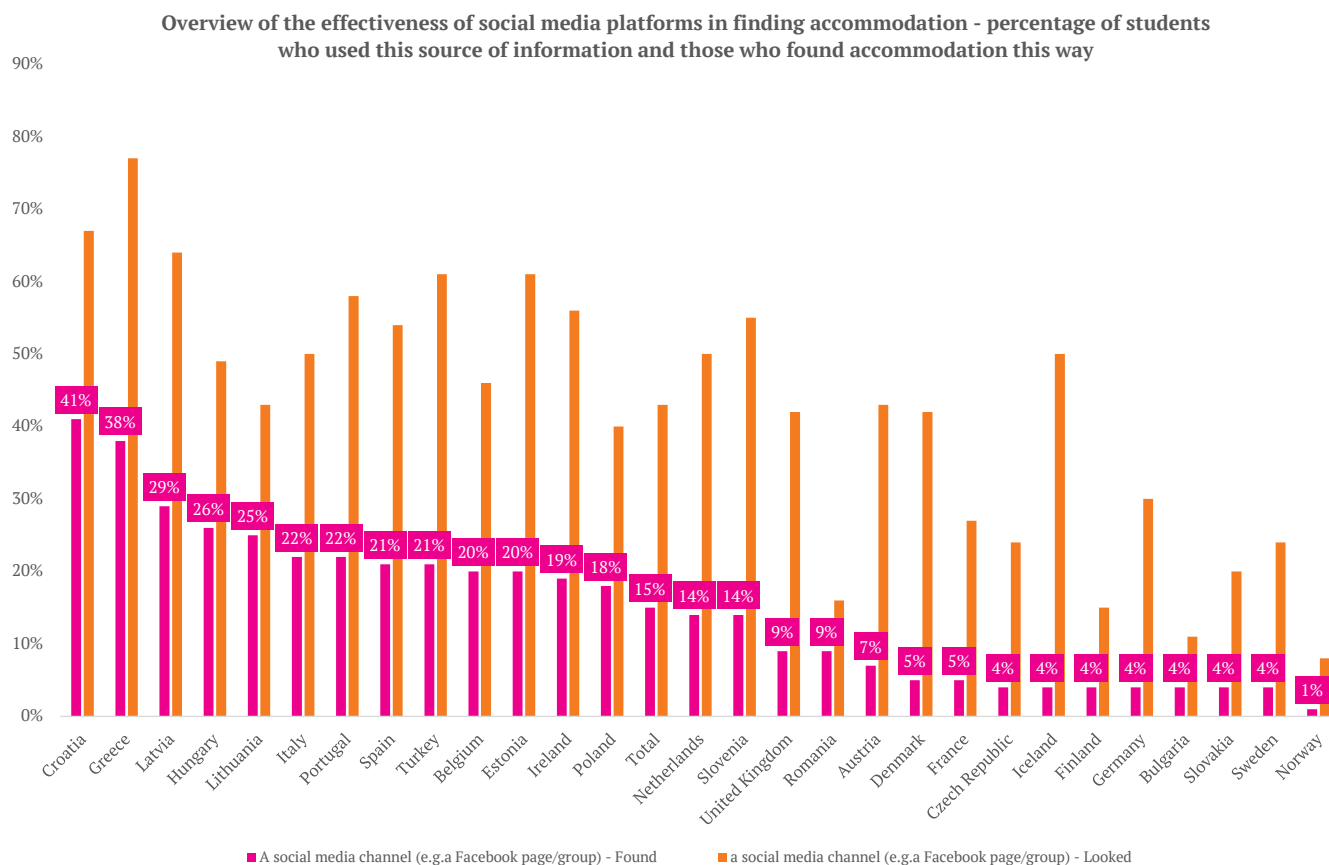

Overview of the effectiveness of social media platforms in finding accommodation - percentage of students who used this source of information and those who found accommodation this way

■ A social media channel (e.g.a Facebook page/group) - Found   ■ a social media channel (e.g.a Facebook page/group) - Looked

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Arranging accommodation after arrival in the host country

As figure 5.5 illustrates, a substantial percentage of respondents – around one fifth – did not have permanent accommodation arranged before going abroad. Hotels as well as staying with friends are the most prominent types of accommodation when arriving in the host country without pre-arranged accommodation. Airbnb and similar services, staying with local students, couchsurfing or guest families are also named as options when respondents first arrive; however, these are fairly rare solutions.

The average number of days staying in temporary accommodation upon arrival is 9.3 across the sample. Around 3.6% had to stay longer than a month and 1.3% had to stay longer than two months in such accommodation.

Of all incoming students, 23% had to move once during their stay abroad while 7% had to move twice or more times during their stay abroad. This is still quite high percentage of students who potentially had a stressful time managing their exchange experience, which makes it more challenging to perform well academically.

When comparing the group of students who had made arrangements prior to arrival to those who had to look for housing after reaching their host city, the latter group is less likely to use HEI offered accommodation services. It is likely that accommodation services by HEIs are offered only during certain periods prior to arrival and thus HEIs have only a limited capacity to support students with finding accommodation after their arrival. Another possible reason is that the support service was unsuccessful in helping the student to find accommodation. As a consequence, students that look for housing only after their arrival rely on general websites as the most successful way for finding accommodation (29%), as well as social media channels and friends or other personal connections (around 20% respectively).

Usefulness of the information from the host HEI

In their survey about support available to international students in Europe, ACA emphasises that "The single most important service offered by institutions, according to international students, is support to help

them find somewhere to live, either institutionally owned or managed or located in the local private accommodation sector"[55] highlighting the importance of HEI support. In our sample, 66% of respondents find that the information their hosting HEI provided on housing was useful. 30% of them totally agree with this statement and 36% agree somewhat. Students doing their exchange period in Norway, Finland, Estonia and Bulgaria were particularly satisfied with the information provided, as the percentage of those (totally) agreeing is above 90%. However, in countries like Turkey, Portugal, Greece, Spain and Italy only roughly half of the students (totally) agree that the information from the host HEI was useful. In Iceland and Portugal, also students are not so satisfied with the information provided.

Figure 5.13 summarises students' opinions on the usefulness of information provided by the host HEI. The host countries are sorted according to the percentage of students (totally) agreeing that the information provided by the HEI was useful. It matches with the national percentages of the student population that succeeded in finding a place to stay through HEI information sources – students going to Southern European countries seem to be rather dissatisfied and, in line with this, generally find their accommodation through other channels. Nordic countries, as well as some of the bigger enlargement Member States – Estonia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania and Slovenia - match high rates of students successfully using HEI accommodation services and also their satisfaction with the quality of information.

Figure 5.13 - Assessment of how usefulness of the information from host HEI/organisation - breakdown by countries

Assessment of how usefulness of the information from host HEI/organisation - breakdown by countries
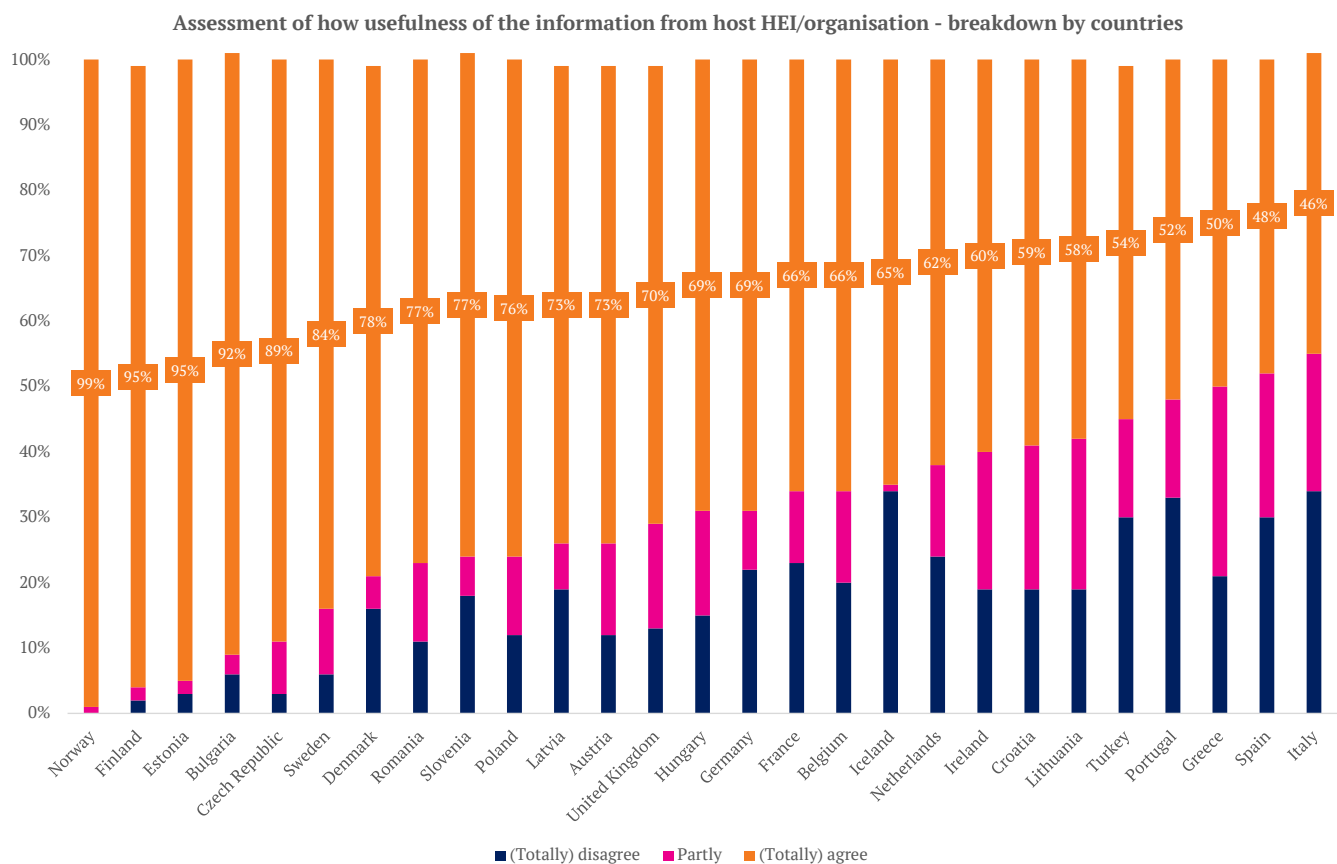
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

[55]Kelo, M., Rogers, T., Rumbley E. L. (2010): International Student Support in European Higher Education Needs, Solutions, and Challenges. Available online:
http://www.aca-secretariat.be/fileadmin/aca_docs/images/members/2010_International_Student_Support_in_European_Higher_Education_-_Needs__Solutions__and_Challenges_01.pdf.

Most credit mobile Erasmus+ students tend to live in shared flats when they go abroad (44%), followed by dormitories provided by HEIs (34%) rather than in private accommodation (20%) or other forms.

Figure 5.14 - Form of accommodation - breakdown by host countries

HOST	A family members accommodation	A private accommodation (independent of university)	A shared accommodation (independent of university)	A University residence / university dormitory / any other facility provided by host university	Other
Czech Republic	0%	8%	8%	84%	0%
Norway	1%	2%	18%	79%	0%
Bulgaria	0%	0%	21%	78%	1%
Denmark	1%	4%	35%	60%	0%
Finland	0%	6%	37%	56%	1%
Germany	1%	18%	26%	56%	0%
Poland	0%	13%	30%	54%	1%
Sweden	1%	18%	24%	54%	2%
Lithuania	0%	14%	35%	51%	1%
France	2%	25%	24%	47%	0%
Romania	0%	34%	17%	47%	1%
Estonia	0%	27%	24%	42%	7%
United Kingdom	3%	14%	41%	42%	0%
Hungary	0%	19%	46%	35%	0%
Netherlands	0%	26%	33%	34%	5%
Slovenia	0%	27%	32%	32%	9%
Belgium	2%	25%	40%	32%	1%
Latvia	0%	41%	30%	24%	5%
Ireland	6%	10%	59%	22%	2%
Austria	7%	18%	42%	22%	11%
Croatia	0%	23%	62%	13%	2%
Turkey	0%	29%	58%	12%	1%
Greece	0%	39%	50%	11%	0%
Portugal	0%	22%	59%	11%	7%
Italy	0%	26%	62%	11%	0%
Spain	0%	19%	75%	4%	1%
Iceland	0%	38%	61%	1%	1%

The biggest percentage of exchange students living in student dormitories in the Czech Republic, Norway and Bulgaria is around 80%. This matches the countries with high percentages of exchange students stating that their host HEI arranged accommodation for them. However, student dormitories are used by only a fraction of students in Spain or Iceland – 4% and 1% respectively, whereas Spain, Italy, Iceland and Croatia also have a high percentage of incoming students living in shared flats – 60-70%. Iceland stands out with a high percentage of students living in private accommodation (organised independently of the HEI) – almost 40%.

Comparing this with the official data from Eurostat on the differences between tenants and home owners, an interesting trend can be observed. The countries where a substantial share of students live in private (shared) accommodation rather than student dormitories are not the same countries where it is more common for the non-student population to live in rented accommodation. So it might indicate that it is not just the size of the market but its availability, i.e. legal infrastructure that protects both tenant and the landlord and therefore encourages the process.

Figure 5.15 - Form of accommodation - breakdown by home countries

HOME	A family members accommodation	A private accommodation (independent of university)	A shared accommodation (independent of university)	A University residence / university dormitory / any other facility provided by host university	Other
Turkey	0%	12%	22%	66%	0%
Croatia	0%	13%	26%	62%	0%
Romania	1%	19%	31%	48%	1%
Lithuania	0%	18%	35%	45%	2%
Bulgaria	0%	34%	23%	43%	0%
Czech Republic	0%	21%	36%	42%	1%
Spain	1%	18%	38%	41%	1%
Hungary	1%	18%	39%	40%	0%
Estonia	0%	0%	60%	40%	0%
Slovakia	0%	20%	40%	40%	0%
Greece	1%	19%	38%	40%	1%
Ireland	0%	23%	38%	38%	0%
Portugal	1%	20%	40%	38%	1%
Italy	1%	18%	43%	37%	1%
France	1%	17%	46%	34%	1%
Slovenia	0%	25%	43%	33%	0%
Austria	2%	19%	40%	32%	6%
Netherlands	0%	15%	54%	31%	0%
Sweden	0%	46%	23%	31%	0%
Belgium	1%	15%	53%	30%	0%
Poland	1%	20%	46%	30%	2%
Latvia	0%	16%	55%	29%	0%
Norway	1%	33%	37%	28%	1%
Germany	0%	14%	57%	28%	1%
Finland	0%	23%	44%	28%	5%
United Kingdom	1%	23%	45%	24%	7%
Denmark	0%	37%	58%	5%	0%

There is a visible trend that students from programme countries that have recently joined (Croatia, Romania, Lithuania, Bulgaria), as well as from Turkey are more likely to live in student dormitories when abroad than students coming from other countries.

Figure 5.16 Form of accommodation by size of the host city

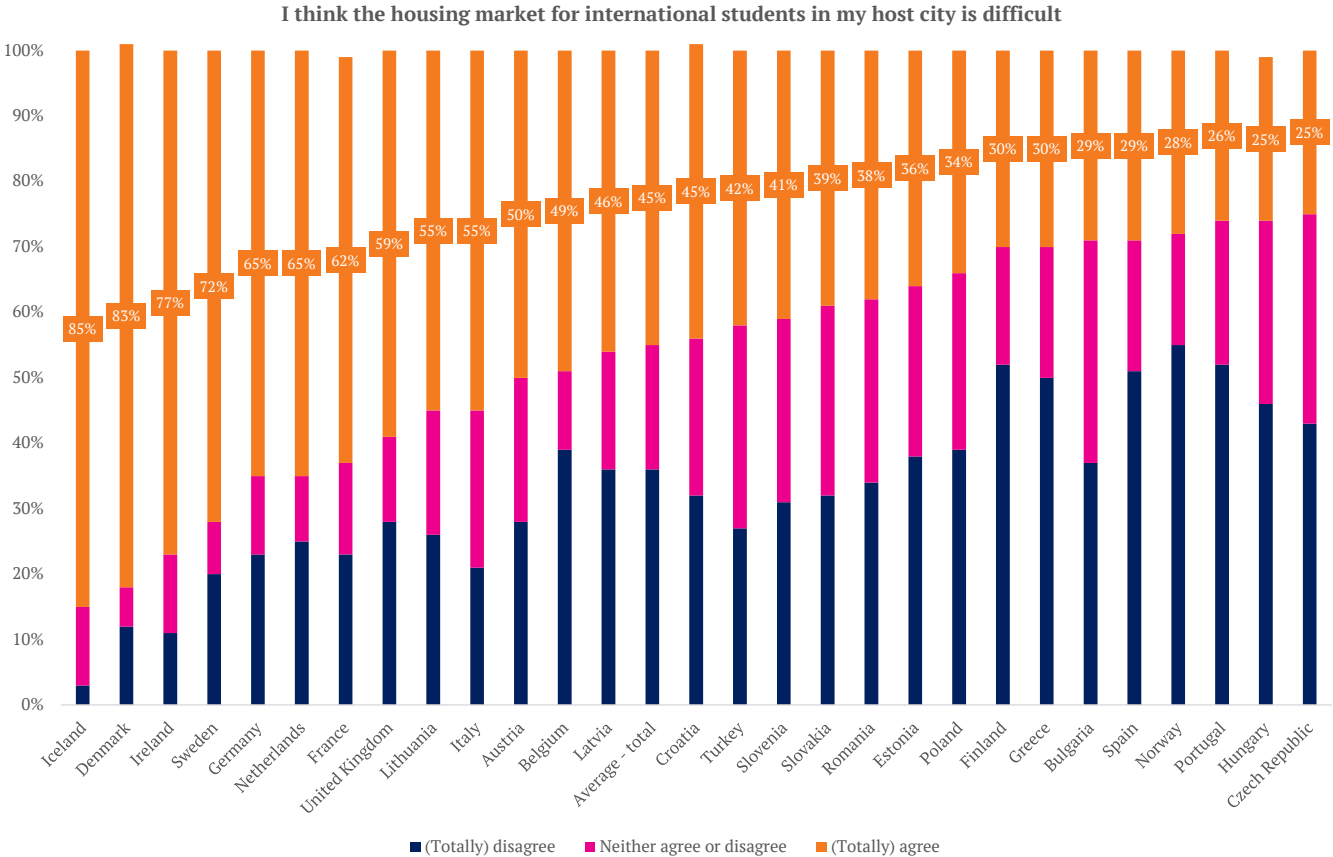|	below 100.000 (small city or town)	between 100.000 and 300.000	between 300.000 and 1.000.000	more than 1.000.000
A family members accommodation	0%	1%	1%	2%
A private accommodation (independent of university/organisation)	20%	16%	21%	23%
A shared accommodation (independent of university/organisation)	40%	42%	44%	51%
A University residence / university dormitory / any other facility provided by host university/organisation	39%	38%	32%	23%
Other	1%	3%	2%	1%

We compared how this sample of students feels about equal access to the housing market with the perception of HEIs and focussing on the 6 host countries best represented in our sample (Spain, France, Italy, Germany, the UK and Poland). Perceptions diverge quite substantially. While HEIs feel that home owners in France and Germany are the most reluctant to rent to foreigners, students see France and Germany as the countries (amongst the 6 chosen ones) with the most equal access to housing. This difference might stem from the fact that the student experience might be a factor in the perception of equal access. Generally, students evaluate access more positively than HEI institutions.

Assessment of the housing market

Slightly less than half of respondents say that the housing market in their host city was difficult (45% of respondents (totally) agree). Only 15% totally disagree and state that it was not difficult to find a place to live. This highlights that finding accommodation is considered an obstacle to mobility beyond the simple question of funding.
When looking at the data divided per host country, we get the following results - see Figure 5.17:

Figure 5.17 - Students' assessment whether housing market in the host city was difficult for mobile students - breakdown by host countries

I think the housing market for international students in my host city is difficult

■ (Totally) disagree ■ Neither agree or disagree ■ (Totally) agree

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Students are faced with difficulties more often in countries like Iceland, Denmark, Ireland and Sweden, while, students who did their exchange period in Spain, Norway, Portugal, Hungary and Czech Republic claim that the accommodation market was less difficult.

Considering that Spain and Portugal are countries where only a fraction of students found their accommodation with the help of HEIs, one can assume that other models of finding accommodation can be as effective and in chapter on recommendations we try to highlight country-specific practices concluded from qualitative data collected throughout the research. Another relevant observation is that, while the housing market is considered challenging in countries like Denmark or Sweden, HEIs are often named as the source of information and as the main method of finding housing. This indicates that HEIs have a particularly important role to play in assuring affordable and adequate housing in these countries.

Quality of accommodation

Accommodation of good quality can be an indicator of mobile students´ satisfaction for their period abroad. It is important to mention that almost 70% (totally) agree that the quality of their accommodation was good (33% of respondents agree totally, 37% agree somewhat), and only 5% of them totally disagree that the provided quality was good.

Generally, mobile students think that their accommodation was of good quality, yet the percentages differ from around 80% agreeing that this was the case in Sweden, Norway, Germany, Slovenia and Finland to just around 50% in Lithuania and Slovakia.

Figure 5.18 - Students' assessment whether accommodation was of good quality - breakdown by countries
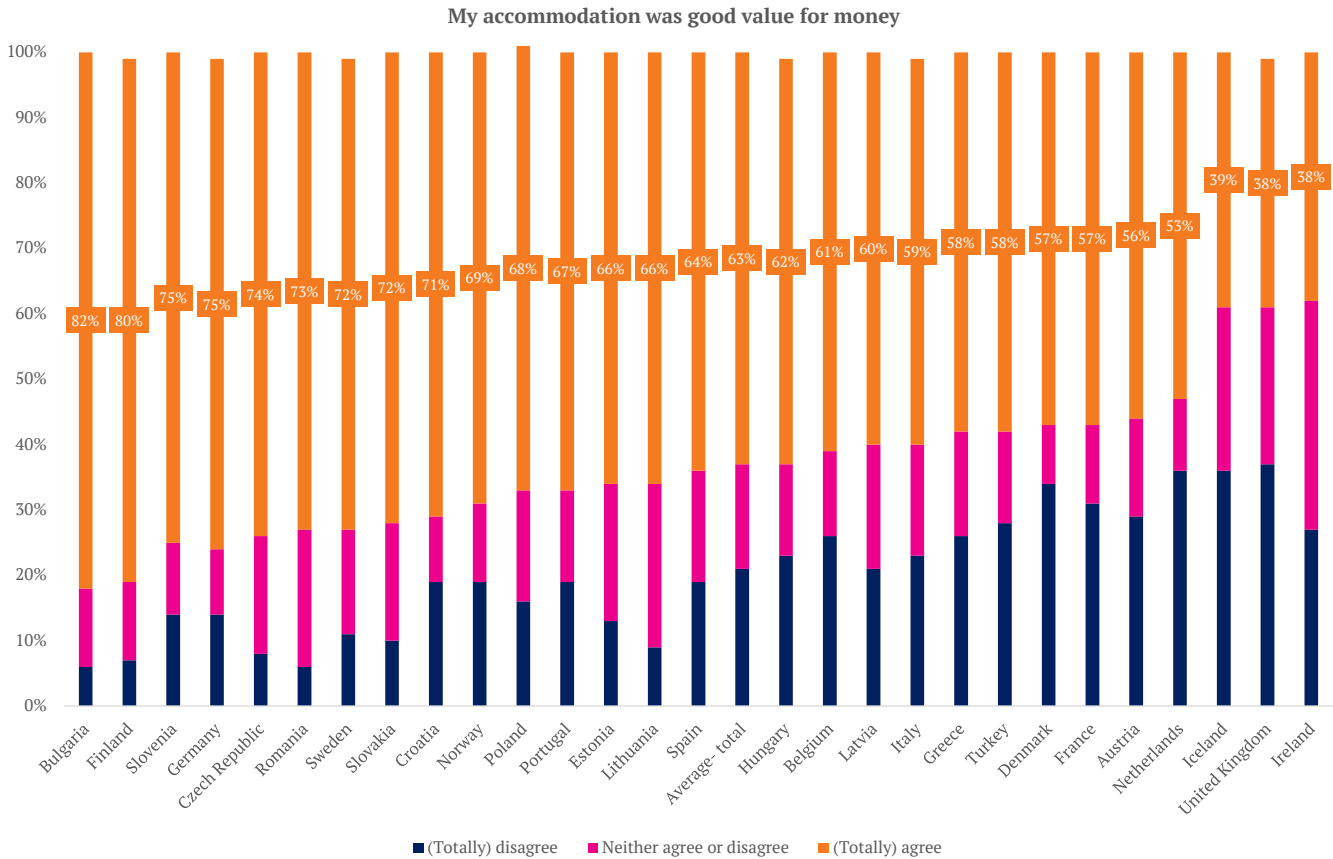

My accommodation was good quality

■ (Totally) disagree   ■ Neither agree or disagree   ■ (Totally) agree
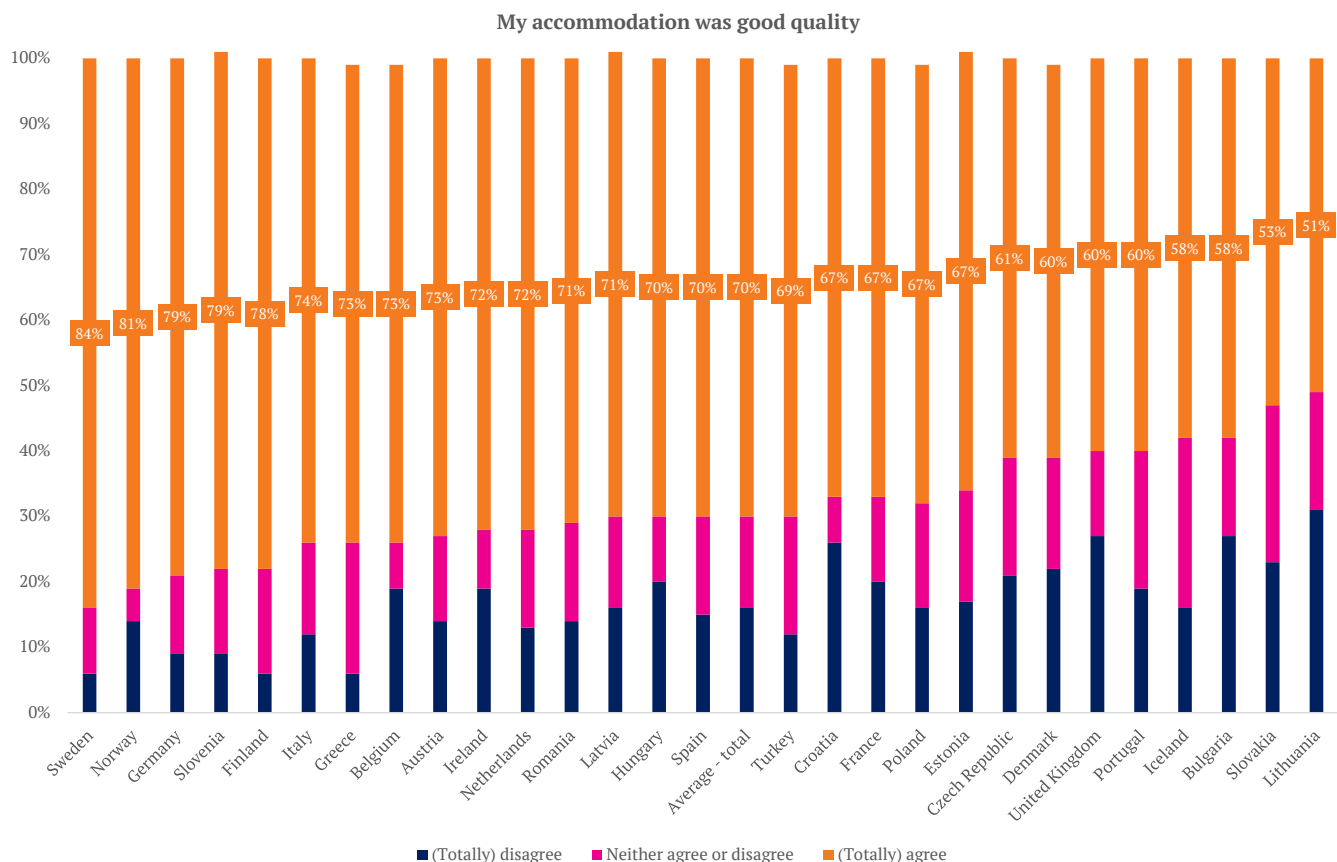
Value for money

63% of respondents (totally) agree that they managed to find accommodation that can be considered good value for money. In comparison, 21% (totally) disagree or disagreed somewhat. This shows that, even though students are generally satisfied with their quality of accommodation, they tend to be less satisfied with the amount of money they have to pay to get this quality.

Figure 5.19 - Students' assessment whether accommodation was good value for money - breakdown by host countries

My accommodation was good value for money

■ (Totally) disagree   ■ Neither agree or disagree   ■ (Totally) agree

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

When looking at specificities in the country comparison, Iceland, the UK and Ireland stand out as locations with the lowest share of students agreeing that accommodation was good value for money – just around 40%. Iceland and the UK are also amongst the countries where HEIs are not overly involved with supporting students in their search for accommodation. Additionally, the UK is considered as the most mature market, which might also mean one of the most competitive markets, as student accommodation is provided mostly by private providers. One has to factor in that both Iceland and the UK are also relatively expensive countries in terms of accommodation.

This raises the question of the benefits and the best ways to incorporate the private sector into the student accommodation market and how HEIs can best cooperate with the private sector, as both countries have clearly not lived up to students' expectations.

On the other hand, around 80% of the students who did their exchange in Bulgaria, Finland, Slovenia and Germany (totally) agree that their accommodation was good value for money. There is no observable pattern as to why these countries rate so high in terms of satisfaction and a more in-depth look into the characteristics of national housing markets would be necessary.

Overall satisfaction with accommodation

In general terms, mobile students are satisfied with their accommodation abroad, as represented by 75% of all answers.

Almost 90% of students who went on an exchange to Finland and Greece claim to be (totally) satisfied with their accommodation. On the other hand, just around two thirds say the same after their mobility period in the UK or Iceland.

Discrimination and Attempted Fraud

Discrimination

The HousErasmus+ survey for students also aimed to find out if students face discrimination and, if so, to what extent and what types of discrimination they face when going abroad.

The majority of Erasmus+ exchange students do not perceive any discrimination against them when looking for accommodation. Nonetheless, 17% of respondents report some sort of discrimination when looking for accommodation.

There is a large difference in reported levels of discrimination depending on the host countries. The following graph shows reported percentages of discrimination by host country. The fewest negative experiences are reported from Norway and Finland, followed by Denmark, Austria and Croatia - not more than 10%. Except for Austria, these are also the countries where a substantial percentage of accommodation is arranged via the HEI, leading to the assumption that discrimination is less likely when HEIs take responsibility for arranging accommodation. In contrast, roughly one third of the incoming student body reported facing some sort of discrimination when looking for accommodation in Turkey, Lithuania, Greece and France.

Figure 5.20 - HEIs assessment whether national and international students have equal access to HEI housing - breakdown by host countries

National and international students have equal access to HEI housing	(Totally) agree	Neither agree or disagree	(Totally) disagree	I don't know
Poland	86%	8%	3%	3%
United Kingdom	65%	12%	21%	3%
Italy	60%	20%	12%	8%
Spain	58%	23%	15%	4%
Germany	56%	17%	24%	4%
France	47%	24%	20%	8%

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Figure 5.21 - Share of students who have faced discrimination against mobile students - breakdown by countries

Did you feel discriminated as a foreigner when looking for accommodation?

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Looking at the forms of discrimination students face, almost 48% say they have more difficulties in finding accommodation than local students in a similar situation. 31% of students feel they have to pay higher rents than their local peers, 13% say they are treated in a less friendly manner, and 9% report other forms of discrimination, such as xenophobia, problems finding a landlord willing to rent for a short period of time, having less rights than local students etc.

Attempted Fraud

On average 12% of respondents experienced attempted fraud when looking for accommodation in their host country.

Again, the numbers vary considerably. The graph below shows the percentage of students who experienced attempted fraud or were cheated, starting with the countries with the most incidents reported. While less than 2% of students hosted in Slovakia and Norway experience attempted fraud, around 20% of students trying to find accommodation in Turkey or Sweden and almost one third in Ireland report negative incidents.

Figure 5.22 - Share of students who have faced attempted fraud while looking for accommodation - breakdown by host countries

Fraud while looking for accommodation

■ Yes

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016
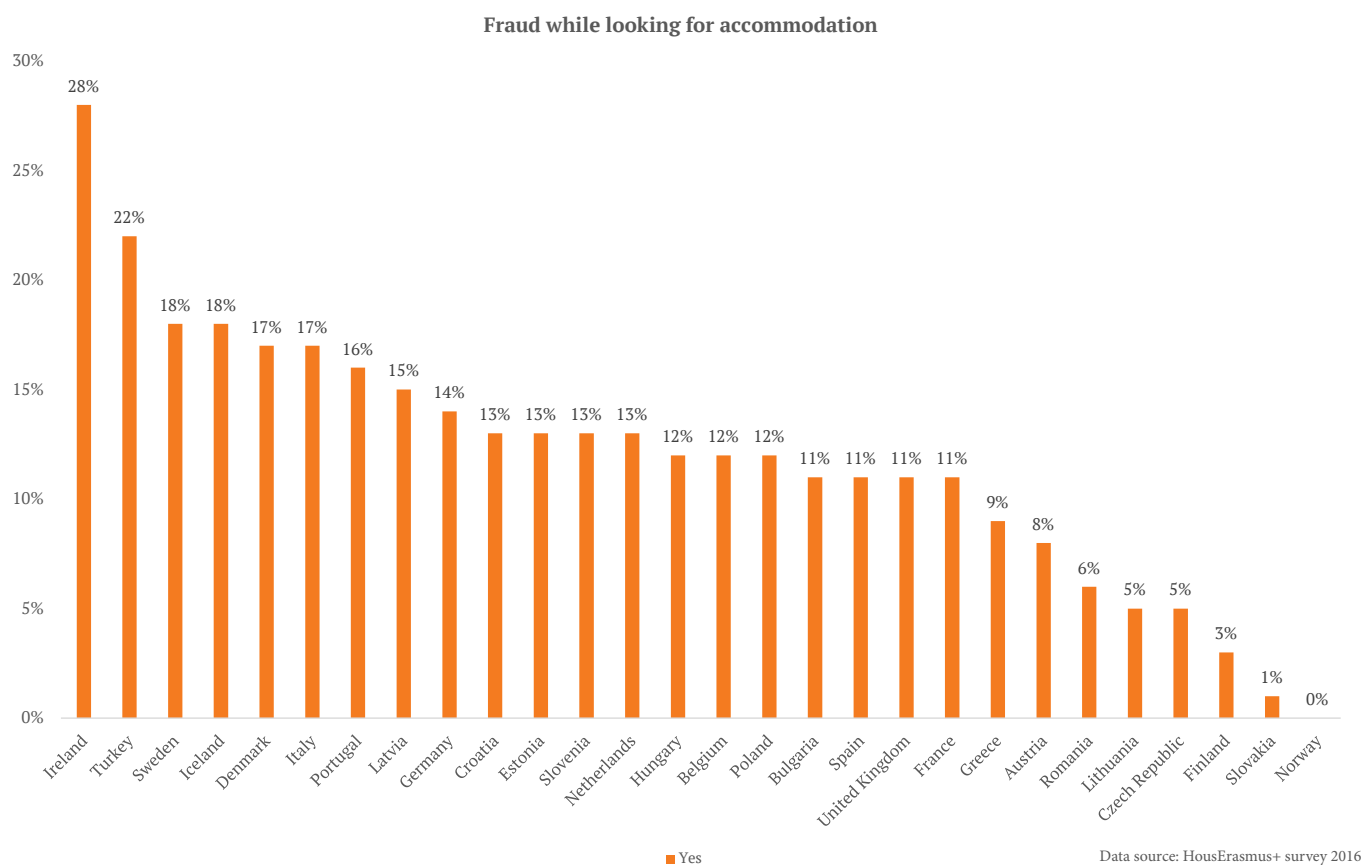
Many describe incidents of advertisements for accommodation which does not exist in reality, but which is being promoted on social media, e.g. in Facebook groups for exchange students. Another large group describes being asked for deposits in return for receiving the key for a room or apartment via mail. It seems that most of the respondents describe attempted fraud rather than actually becoming a victim. Many of the complaints regarding "being cheated" refer to being asked for a higher rent than initially agreed upon, or having to rent a room which does not live up to the described standards.

Financing accommodation

On average, almost 40% of exchange students state that the cost of accommodation in their host country was higher than they had expected. Results vary considerably, depending on the host country, with Bulgaria and Slovakia being the least expensive, and Iceland, the UK and Ireland the most expensive destinations. It needs to be pointed out that this is a subjective assessment about the expectations of price levels, not the range of costs itself, which might also be an indication of a lack of information and preparation.

When asked whether the extra cost made it difficult to finance their stay abroad, around half of the students replied that it indeed was; more than 60% of those stating that costs were higher than expected were staying in Norway, Denmark, France and the UK. Students doing their Erasmus+ credit mobility in Bulgaria, Greece and Croatia reported the least difficulties.

Figure 5.23 - Share of students for whom the cost of accommodation in their host country was higher than they had expected - breakdown by host countries

Was the cost of your accommodation abroad higher than you expected? - host country
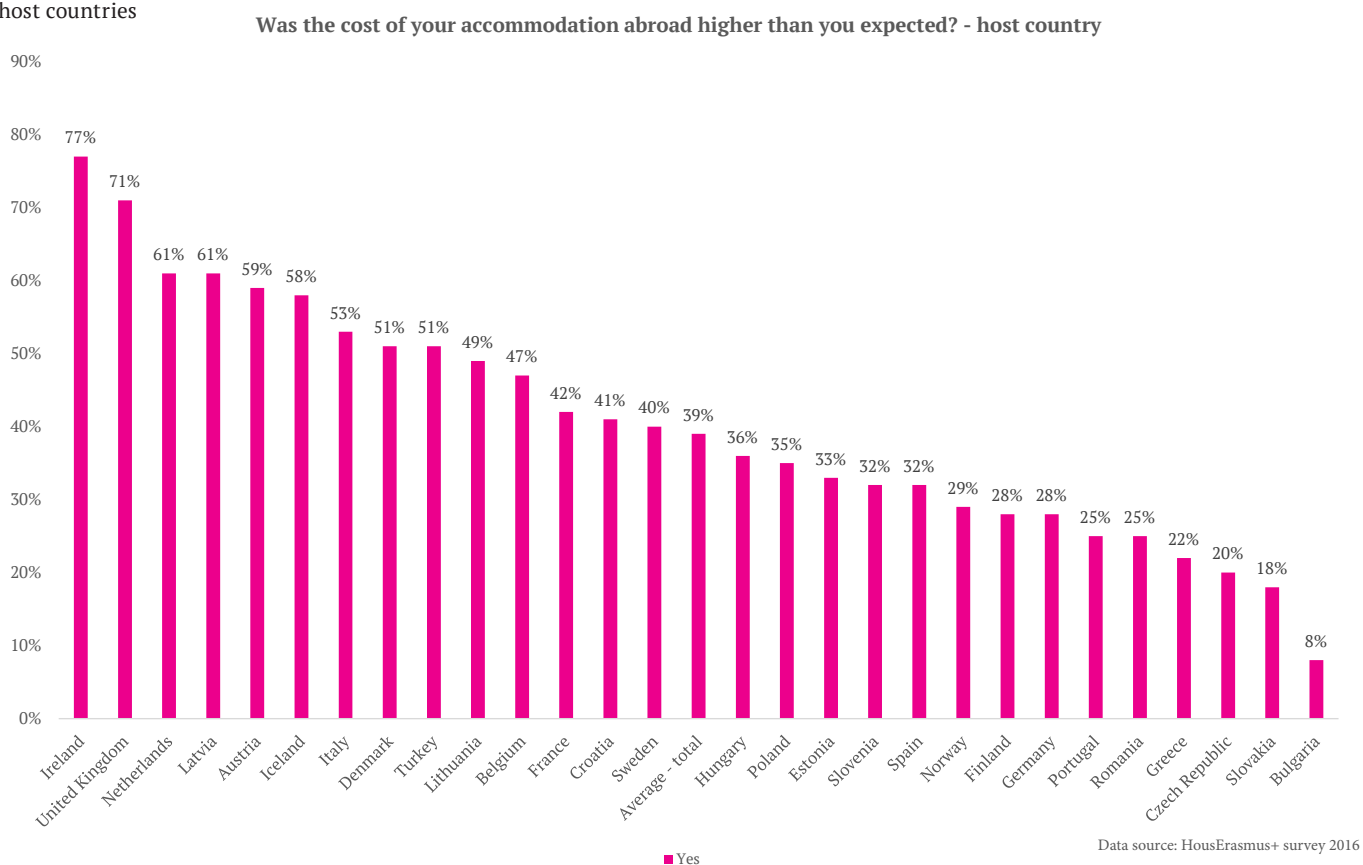

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Figure 5.24 - Share of students for whom the cost of accommodation in their host country was higher than they had expected - breakdown by home countries

By home country - was the cost higher than expected?

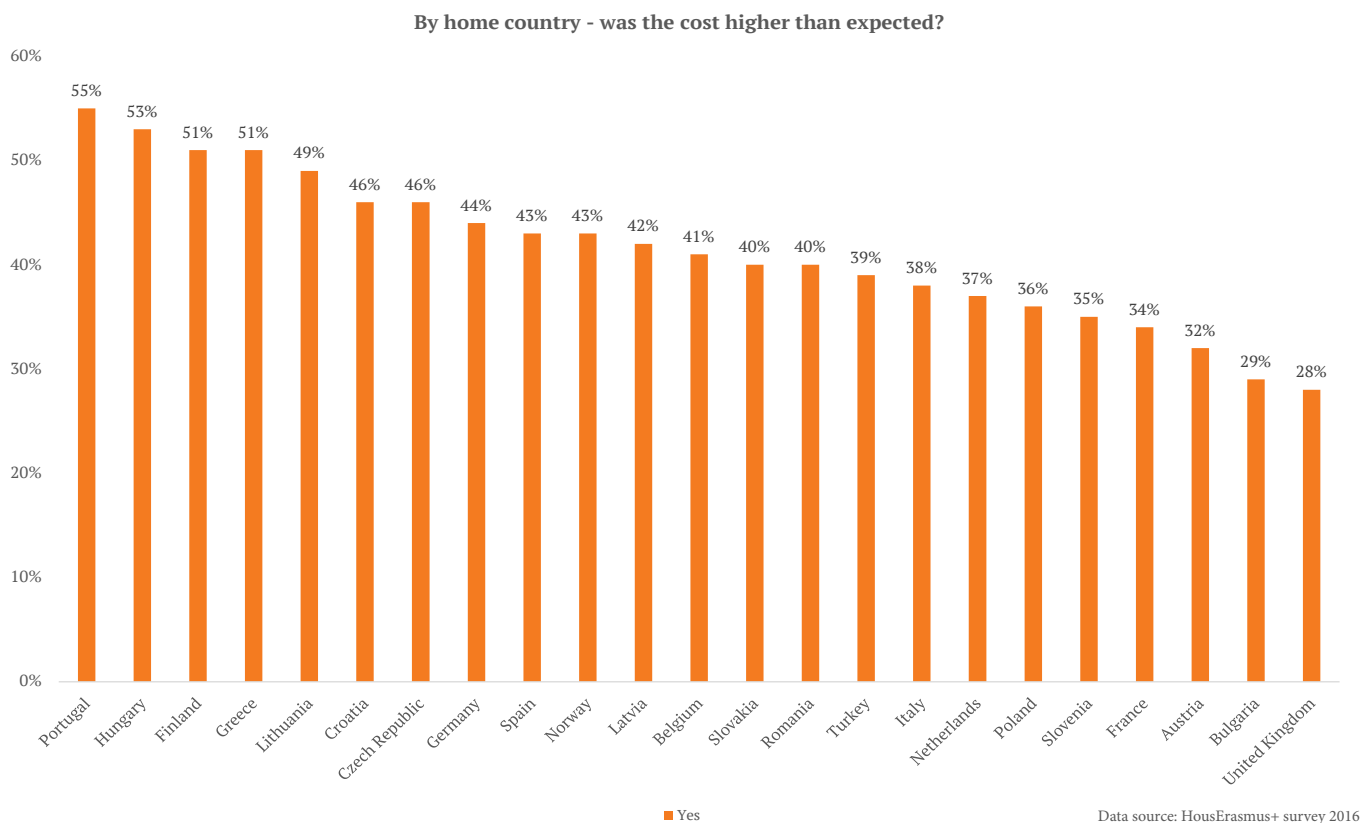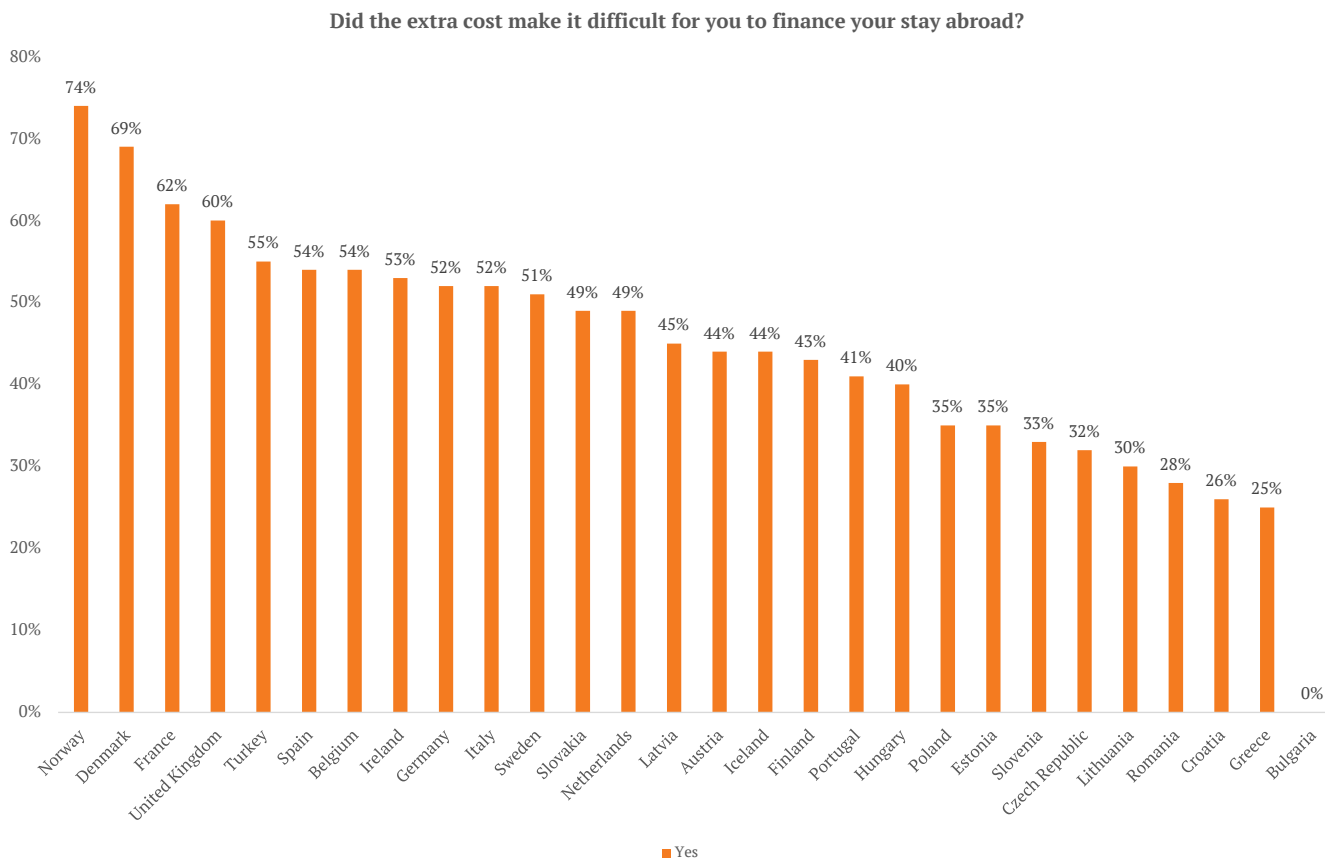Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Figure 5.25 - Share of students for whom the extra cost of accommodation made it difficult to finance their stay abroad - breakdown by host countries

Did the extra cost make it difficult for you to finance your stay abroad?
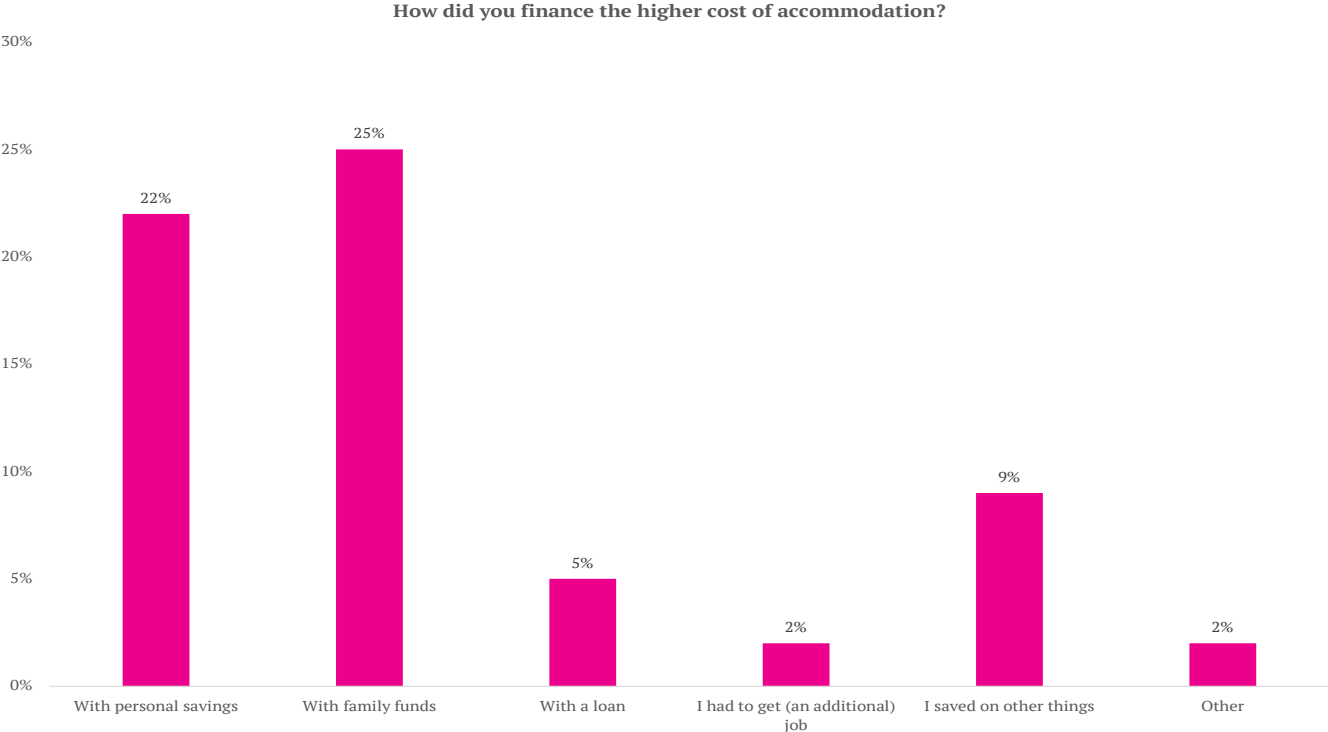

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

How do exchange students finance the additional cost of accommodation? Most respondents (25%) have to turn to family support, stating they make use of family funds, 22% use their personal savings, 9% save on things such as food or clothing whilst abroad, 7% take on an additional job or take out a loan and 2% report other sources of financing, such as scholarships or grants from HEIs or regional and national funding.

The Eurostudent V survey illustrated potential worries that mobility activities could be socially selective. Therefore, the fact that in a large majority of survey countries students used sources from family or partner to fund their enrolment abroad highlights the need to look into the support mechanisms available and discuss access to the exchange experience. Also, according to Eurostudent V, financial insecurities are the top worries for students who are still planning to go abroad as well as for those who are not even considering an exchange experience.
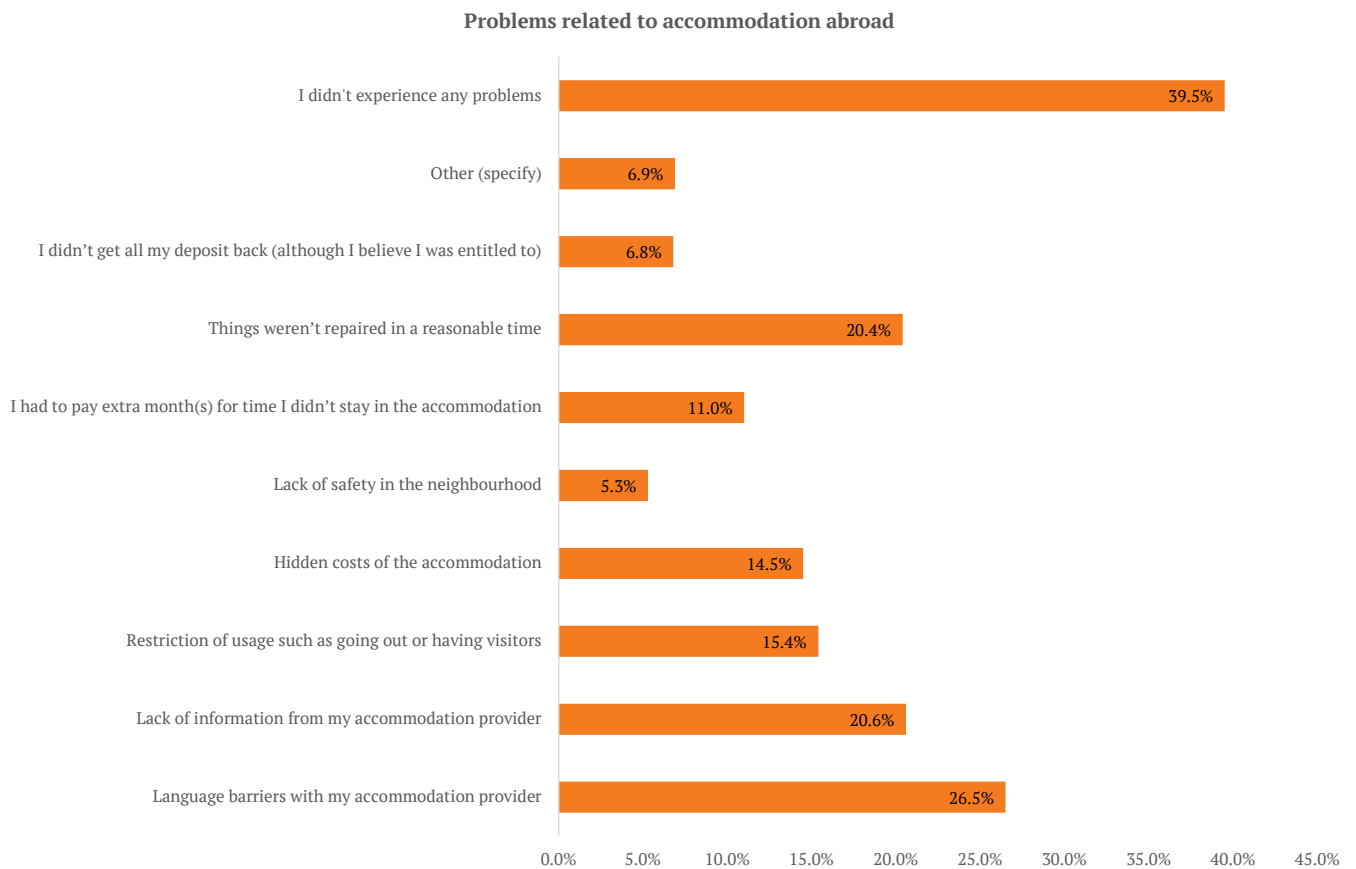
Figure 5.26 - Sources of funding to finance the higher costs of accommodation among Erasmus+ study mobility students

How did you finance the higher cost of accommodation?

Problems related to accommodation abroad

Figure 5.27 - Problems related to accommodation abroad

Problems related to accommodation abroad

Problem	Percentage
I didn't experience any problems	39.5%
Other (specify)	6.9%
I didn't get all my deposit back (although I believe I was entitled to)	6.8%
Things weren't repaired in a reasonable time	20.4%
I had to pay extra month(s) for time I didn't stay in the accommodation	11.0%
Lack of safety in the neighbourhood	5.3%
Hidden costs of the accommodation	14.5%
Restriction of usage such as going out or having visitors	15.4%
Lack of information from my accommodation provider	20.6%
Language barriers with my accommodation provider	26.5%

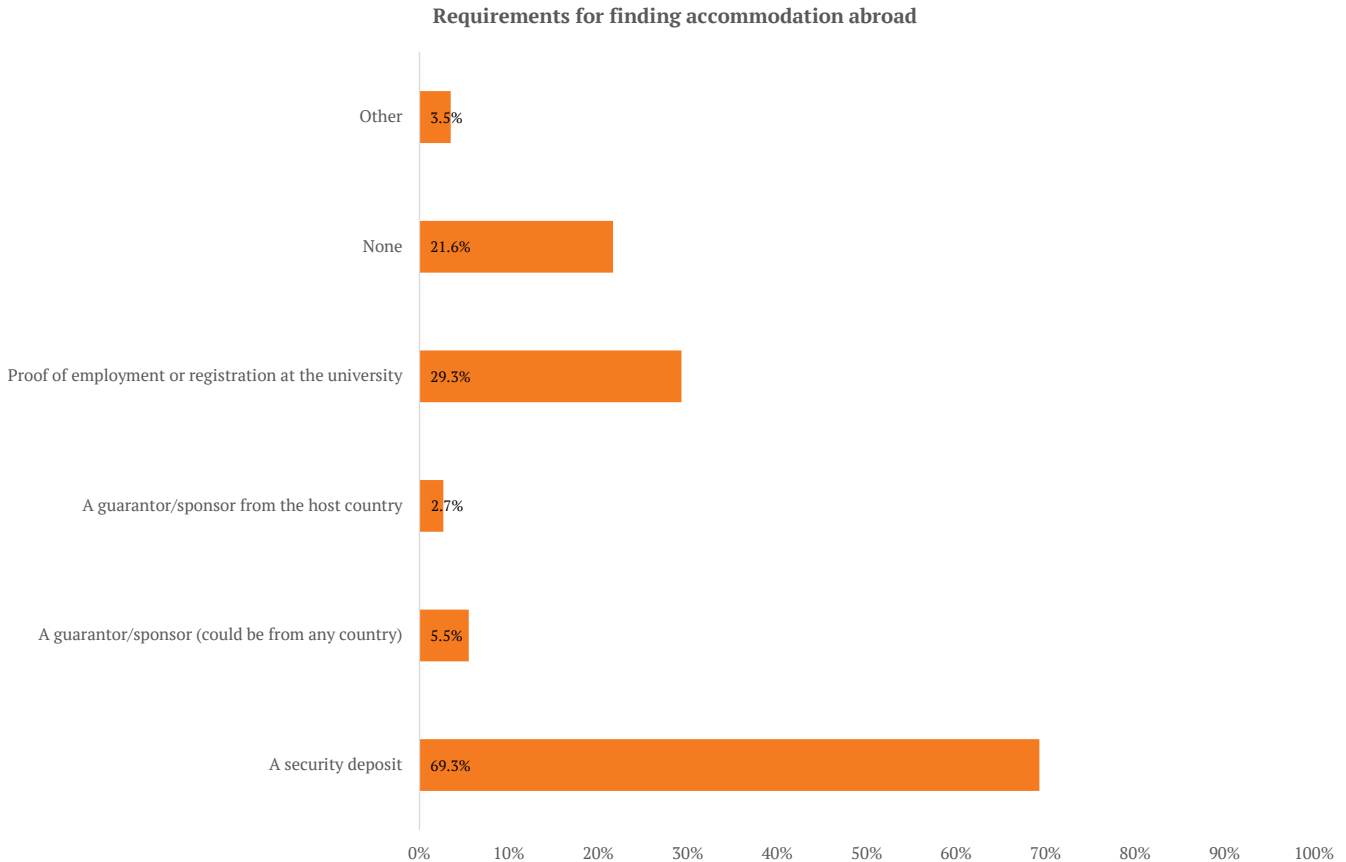Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

60% of all the Erasmus+ exchange students experience some sort of problem with their accommodation while being abroad. The most common issue was the language barrier with the accommodation provider and is particularly prevalent in study locations where the native tongue is one of the minor EU languages – e.g. Poland or Czech Republic. Yet roughly 30% faced a language barrier in Spain, France and Italy as well.

The second most common issue is the lack of information from the accommodation provider, which has been an issue for one fifth of exchange students. In our sample, this was an issue slightly more often in Austria, Belgium and Portugal than in other countries.

The hidden costs were a problem for 14% of the student body and in particular for the students going to Portugal and Spain who encountered this issue more often. Nevertheless, the cultural aspect of typical ways the private property market functions might not be well known and it is difficult to differentiate between intentionally misleading information and intercultural misunderstanding of the customs in another country.

Around 11% encountered issues when they needed to pay for their accommodation for additional months (beyond their stay abroad). This issue has been encountered especially in Germany, Italy and Belgium. Assumingly, landlords are trying to cover the costs of the short-term stays of exchange students by charging additional months or students need to pay for summer months despite not being present.

Students also elaborated on other problems they have faced (if not mentioned above). Some of those issues were e.g. various technical defects, difficulties in finding common grounds with the landlord or flatmates and issues with contracts. A lack of counselling, no contract templates or legal restrictions are some of the most frequently mentioned challenges. Regarding possible negative consequences resulting from the problems with accommodation, half of the students answered that it had no negative impact. However, if negative effects were mentioned, students most commonly talk about their mental or physical state (14%) as well as financial difficulties (11%) and the negative impact on their academic performance (8%), which illustrates the need of a positive accommodation experience as part of a quality mobility experience.

Figure 5.28 - Requirements for finding accommodation abroad

Requirements for finding accommodation abroad

Requirement	Percentage
Other	3.5%
None	21.6%
Proof of employment or registration at the university	29.3%
A guarantor/sponsor from the host country	2.7%
A guarantor/sponsor (could be from any country)	5.5%
A security deposit	69.3%

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Summary

• More than 5,705 students were analysed who completed their exchange studies via Erasmus+ from and to Erasmus+ programme countries in of the period 2014-2016. The majority are female and a typical respondent stayed for one semester.

• The biggest percentage of the students in our sample came from ES with 14% of the whole student body, followed by the UK and DE with 12% respectively as well as FR (10%) and IT (9%). The most popular study exchange destinations are ES (12%), PT (10%), DE (9%) and IT (8%).

• More than half of students spend their exchange in a small or medium sized city with less than 300,000 inhabitants. Only 19% spent their exchange period in a city with population of more than one million.
• The vast majority of respondents (72%) have accommodation for their entire stay arranged before going abroad. Another 13% have accommodation arranged for the first days/weeks only.

• More than half of respondents (58%) arrange their accommodation themselves and for around one third (31%) the host HEI arranges it for them. Yet in some countries the percentage of those dealing with

their accommodation issues themselves can be as high as around 90% (SP, IE); above 60% of students have their accommodation arranged by their HEI in DK, RO, CZ, BG and SK.

• As sources of information which students use to find accommodation, services offered by the HEI as well as general websites for finding accommodation in the country and social media channels are the most common options. DK, SK, CZ, NO and FI stand out with more than 80% percent of students using HEI offered accommodation services as source of information, while only around one third of the student body did so in SP, TK, IT, HR, or LV. And HEI accommodation services are not just the most frequently used source of information; they also prove to be the most frequently named way of finding accommodation – in particular in SK, CZ, DK, NO where to the figure stands at 70% of the student body. On the other hand, less than 20% found their accommodation via HEI services in IT, TK, HR, SP and IS.

• The most considerable mismatch between the percentage of students who were looking for information via a certain channel and those who actually found their accommodation this way, is found

67

using social media channels as well as general websites for accommodation services in a country. This could be due to potential scams as well as the language barrier.

• According to 66% of respondents, the information that their hosting HEI provided them on accommodation was useful and the students spending their exchange period in NO, FI, SE, BG are particularly satisfied, with the percentage of those (totally) agreeing above 90%.

• When going abroad, most credit mobile students tend to live in shared flats (44%) or student residences (34%) rather than in private accommodation (20%) or other forms. The biggest percentages of exchange students living in a student dormitory are in SK, CZ, NO and BG – around 80%. However, just a fraction of students in SP, CY or IS use student dormitories – 4-1%.

• Almost half of the respondents say that the housing market of their host HEI was difficult (45% of respondents agree totally or agree somewhat). The percentage is as high as 70% in IS, DK, IE and SE. At the same time, mobile students generally think that their accommodation was of good quality.

• An average of 17% of respondents report discrimination when looking for accommodation; in particular in TK, LT and GR the percentage is above 25%. The problematic aspects mentioned are access to information, higher rents as well as xenophobia and legal restrictions.

• On average 12% of respondents experienced attempted fraud when looking for accommodation in their host country. In IE and TK the percentage of the people affected is higher than 20%. Many describe incidents of accommodation advertisements on social media which do not exist in reality, or students are asked for deposits in return for receiving the key for a room or apartment via mail. It seems that most of the respondents describe attempted fraud rather than actually becoming a victim. Many of the complaints regarding "being cheated" refer to being asked for a higher rent than initially agreed upon, or having to rent a room which does not live up to the described standards.

• On average, 39% of exchange students state that the cost of accommodation in their host country was higher than they had expected. Results vary considerably, depending on the host country, with BG and SK at the least expensive end and IS, UK and IE at the financially demanding end of the scale. Almost half of students state that it was hard to finance their stay abroad due to extra costs.

5.4 Students on an internship/ placement via the Erasmus+ programme

Key messages

• Similarly, as among those on study mobility, the vast majority of the trainees have normally already arranged their accommodation prior to arrival to their host country (around 70%) and do so mostly themselves. A slightly higher percentage of trainees than students arranged their accommodation independently (68% in contrast to 58% among Erasmus+ mobile students for a study period).

• For 13% of the trainees, the host organisation/company took care of accommodation arrangements.

• Similar to Erasmus+ study mobility, social media turns out to be used frequently, but leads to actually finding accommodation less frequently. Trainees also turn more often to friends and personal contacts than do students that embark on a study mobility.

• Half of the trainees state that costs were higher than expected, which is more than on a study exchange – 39%. In line with this data, 64% of the trainees state that it was hard to finance their stay abroad – among study mobility students the share was 49%. Combined with other aspects of assessment, trainees report more challenges to find affordable and decent housing, underlining the fact that not having a receiving HEI creates additional barriers.

• As for the strategies to cover these additional costs, personal funds as well as support from the family are the most common ways of dealing with the extra financial burden. It is also the case for study mobility students, although personal funds are a more prominent source of finance among trainees.

Introduction

546 students who completed a traineeship/placement with Erasmus+ programme (2014-2016) were analysed in this sample. However, the comments of all trainees will be taken into consideration, with the aim of finding more good practices with dealing with accommodation issues for mobile students.

To guarantee a representative sample, a country-specific analysis was conducted only for countries where a minimum of at least 30 individual cases could be analysed. This is the case for the following host countries: France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the UK.

Demographics

Home and host country

The majority of the students looking for traineeships/placements abroad come from France, Spain, Belgium, Italy and Poland.

As to the host country, most students in our sample head to Spain, the UK, Germany, Portugal, France and Belgium. Similar to the patterns observed in the case of mobility for studies, the biggest countries with more widely-spoken languages dominate the choice of destination.

Sex

Females in general tend to be slightly overrepresented in the tertiary education sector[56] and also seem to be more active in taking part in mobility programmes. According to *Erasmus: Facts, Figures and Trends* 2013/2014 issue, 62%[57] of all those participating in traineeships were females (but it should be borne in mind that female-dominated fields of study (e.g. social sciences) also make up the biggest share of trainees). In our sample, there is a high percentage of 71% of female students taking part in Erasmus+ traineeship/placement programme.

Length of stay

The most common length of traineeships/placements is 3 months and for 23% of trainees their mobility period lasted this long. The vast majority of trainees (85%) stayed in the host country for a period of up to 6 months. The remaining 15% had an Erasmus+ traineeship period that was longer than half a year. This highlights the fact that trainees tend to look for short-term accommodation and several stakeholders have already stated that this can be more complicated. This is especially true if housing is needed for a period of time that is less than a half a year or shorter than a semester.

City size

Regarding the size of the city for traineeship/placement destinations abroad, as for study mobility students roughly half of outgoings are located in a city with a population of less than 300,000 inhabitants. However, there is slightly higher percentage of trainees than those in study mobility who spend their exchange period in a city with population of more than one million – 28% v. 19% respectively. Especially trainees in Germany (53%), Spain (41%) and France (38%) tend to do their internship/placement in a city of at least one million inhabitants. In Italy and Portugal, more than 40% of trainees are in a city with a population between 100,000 and 300,000. In the UK, the sample is evenly distributed among all possible city sizes. One can argue that bigger cities usually host more international companies and thus might be more likely to take on trainees from abroad. As a consequence, one needs to consider that large cities, which usually face bigger accommodation challenges, will become more popular as the number of international trainees increases.

[56]Eurostat (2017): Tertiary education statistics. Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tertiary_education_statistics
[57]European Commission (2015): Erasmus – Facts, Figures. And Trends. The European Union support for student and staff exchanges and university cooperation in 2013-2014. Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/statistics/erasmus-plus-facts-figures_en.pdf.
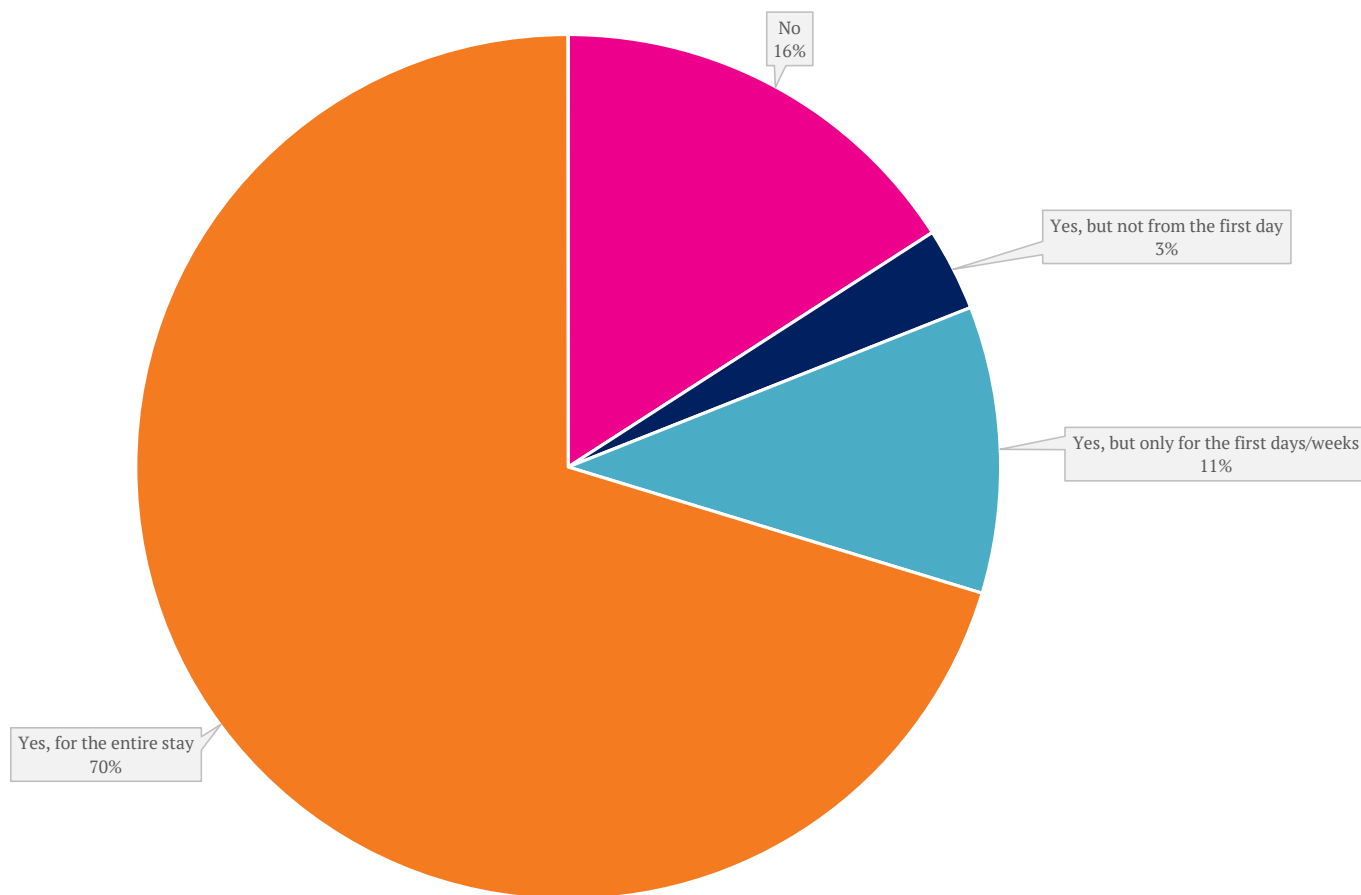
Accommodation arrangements

Finding accommodation

With 70%, the vast majority of trainees arranged their accommodation prior to arrival to their host country and an additional 14% made some plans regarding accommodation. Again, the percentage of Erasmus+ trainees matches the numbers for study mobile students, with a similar percentage of 72% of those who made accommodation arrangements beforehand.

In France (24%) and Spain (18%) in particular there is a higher percentage of trainees who have a place to stay only for the first days/weeks, i.e. slightly less than those who already have accommodation upon arrival. Italy, Portugal and the UK also have quite a high percentage of students who arrive with no plans regarding accommodation – 19-18%. If accommodation is not pre-arranged, trainees tend to stay in a hostel or with friends.

Figure 5.29 - Accommodation arrangements among students on a traineeship/placement with Erasmus+ programme
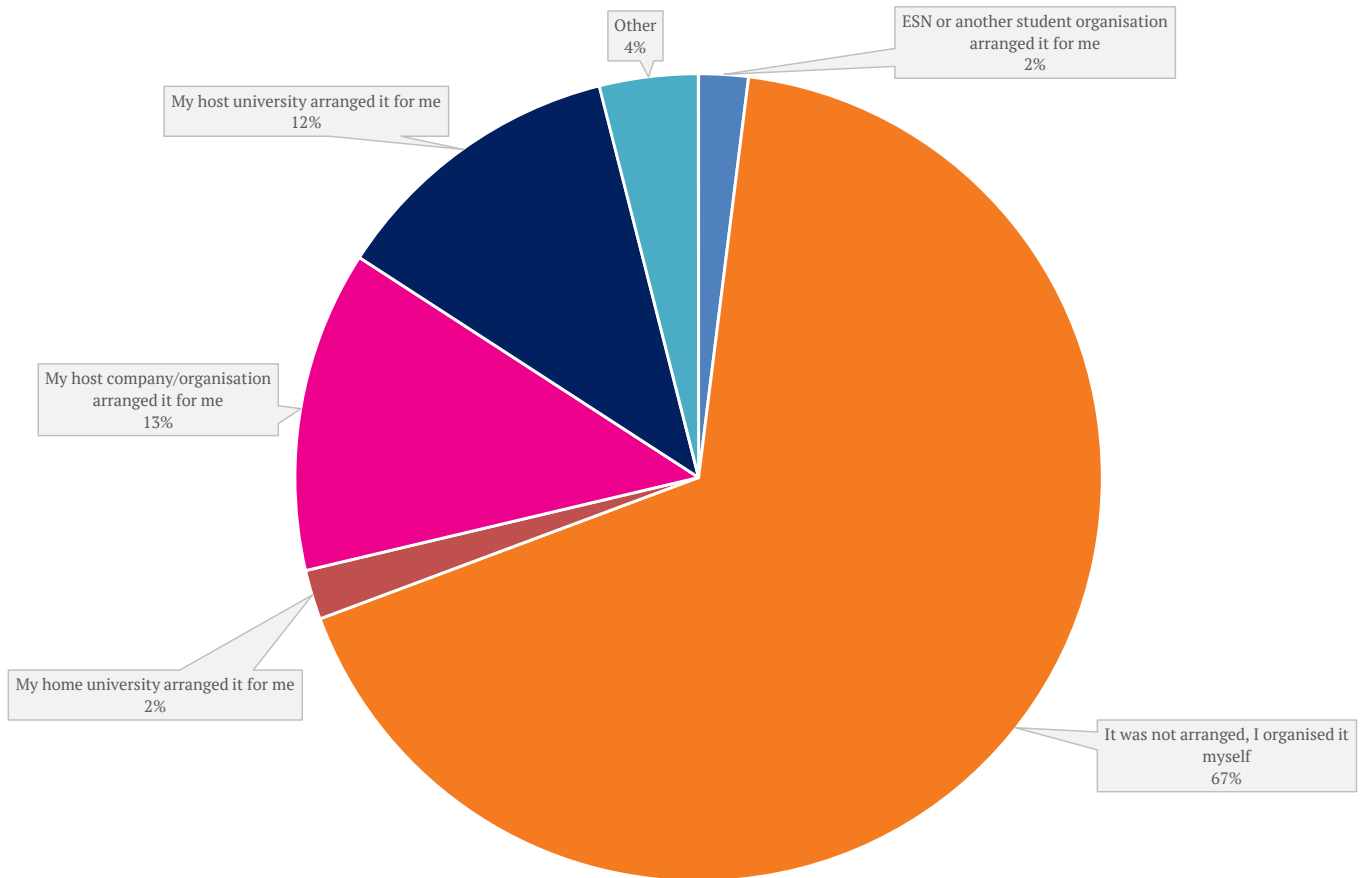

No
16%

Yes, but not from the first day
3%

Yes, but only for the first days/weeks
11%

Yes, for the entire stay
70%

Who arranges accommodation?

More than two thirds of trainees responded that they arranged their accommodation themselves – 68% in contrast to 58% among Erasmus+ mobile students for a study period. For 13% the host organisation/company took care of accommodation arrangements and in particular trainees going to Portugal have a high percentage of trainees who state that their host organisation helped them with practical arrangements – 22%.

Figure 5.30 - Strategies for accommodation arrangements during Erasmus+ traineeship mobility period
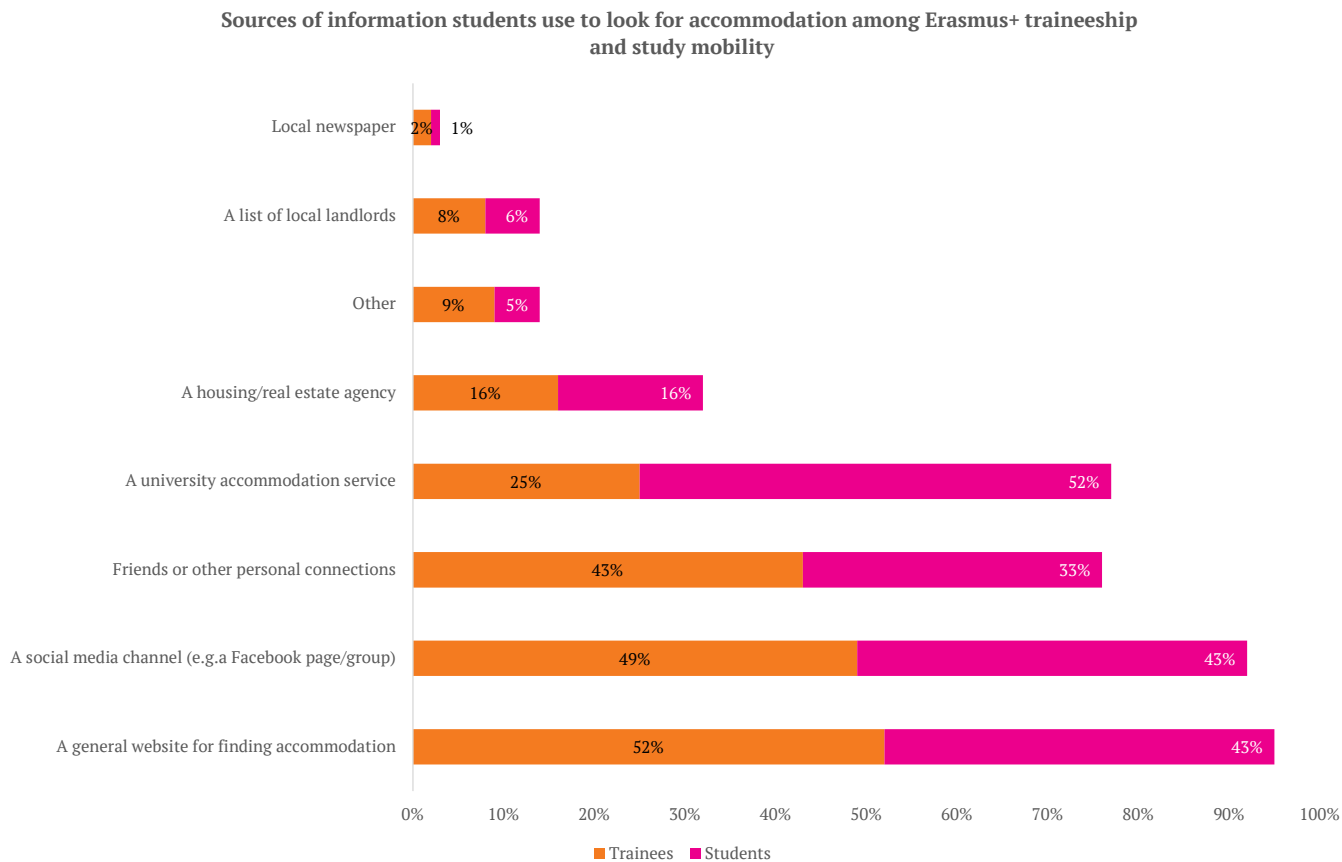

Other
4%

ESN or another student organisation arranged it for me
2%

My host university arranged it for me
12%

My host company/organisation arranged it for me
13%

My home university arranged it for me
2%

It was not arranged, I organised it myself
67%

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Sources of information used to find accommodation

Around half of the Erasmus+ trainees claim to have used general websites to search for accommodation as well as social media platforms when looking for a place to stay: slightly more than 40% got information from friends and personal contacts. In comparison, those who went abroad on Erasmus+ mobility for their studies used general websites to search for accommodation and social media platforms less often – just 19% and 14%. Similarly, friends and personal contacts are used by just 13% of the mobile students.

Figure 5.31 - Sources of information students use to look for accommodation among Erasmus+ traineeship and study mobility

Sources of information students use to look for accommodation among Erasmus+ traineeship and study mobility

Source	Trainees	Students
Local newspaper	2%	1%
A list of local landlords	8%	6%
Other	9%	5%
A housing/real estate agency	16%	16%
A university accommodation service	25%	52%
Friends or other personal connections	43%	33%
A social media channel (e.g.a Facebook page/group)	49%	43%
A general website for finding accommodation	52%	43%

■ Trainees ■ Students

Information that led to accommodation

The most commonly used sources of information – general websites for accommodation searches as well as social media platforms – that are used roughly by half of the trainees, show slightly different success rates. While around 30% found a place to stay via general housing search websites, only 16% did so via social media platforms. As with students going abroad for studies, social media turns out to be used frequently, but less frequently actually leads to finding accommodation. It could potentially be due to the language barrier, attempted fraud or too much competition for the accommodation advertised. Also, a slightly higher percentage of trainees found their accommodation via friends and personal contacts than mobile students – 22% v. 13%.

Regarding country specific characteristics, in the UK, Spain, Portugal and France the percentage of trainees who used general websites for looking for information is around 30-40%, however, in Italy the figure is just 19% but almost 60% in Germany.
Italy is the only traineeship country (out of the 5 most popular host destinations analysed in detail here - France, Spain, Belgium, Italy and Portugal), where a general accommodation search website is not the most common way of finding accommodation as more than one third of trainees find it via friends and personal connections.

Form of accommodation

As for the form of accommodation, the preferred types mirror those among study mobility students, with the exception of student dormitories, which are, as anticipated, not as common a solution among trainees. As the trainees do not have a host HEI and student dormitories are often closely linked to HEIs, it is less likely for them to get access to this type of accommodation. Slightly over half of trainees (53%) had a shared accommodation and around one fifth (23%) were in private accommodation – both independent of an HEI or organisation. The data for study mobility revealed 44% in shared accommodation and 20% in private accommodation respectively. At the same time, less Erasmus+ trainees than students live in student dormitories – 15% v. 34%.

Figure 5.32 - Form of accommodation

Your permanent accommodation during your stay abroad was...
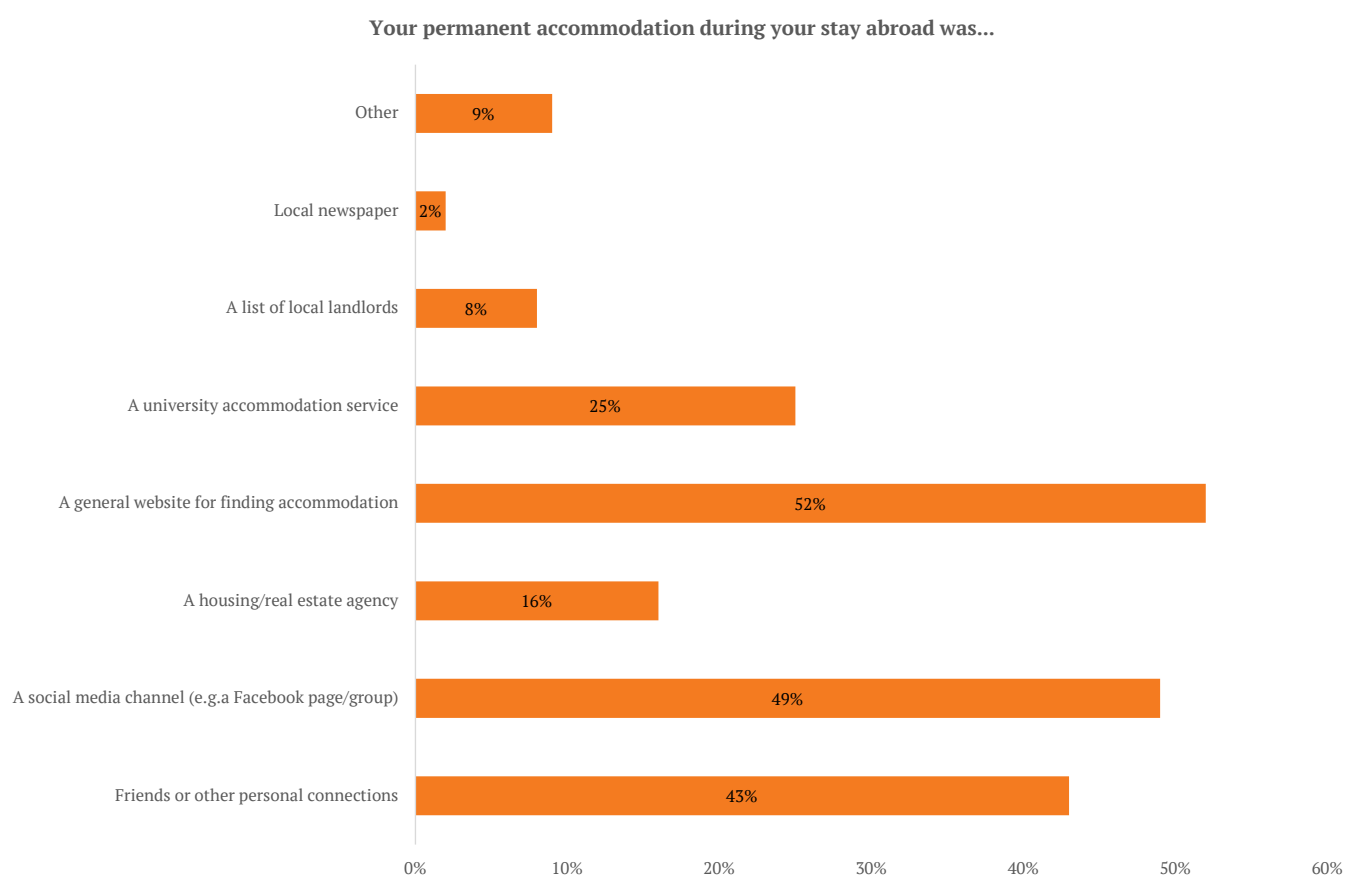
Assessment of the housing market

In comparison with the study mobility students, trainees describe a more challenging situation to find affordable and decent accommodation during their exchange period.

Around one third of trainees (27%) state that the accommodation market was not difficult and more than half (56%) say that it was actually difficult; this figure is higher than the percentage among study mobility students – 45%.

Almost three thirds (74%) of trainees state that their accommodation was of good quality (70% among study mobility). Regarding value for money, 58% (totally) agree to that this was the case (63% among study mobility students). Around 60% of those doing traineeships in Italy and Spain (totally) agree that their accommodation was good value for money, roughly 70% in Portugal and Germany and as high as 76% in France; however, the figure was only 36% in the UK. The majority of trainees (75%) were satisfied overall with their accommodation (the exact percentage also among study mobility students). As many as 91% are satisfied in Germany, yet the UK displays comparatively lower satisfaction levels, as is the case among study mobility students.

Discrimination and Attempted Fraud

No substantial differences can be observed when comparing mobile trainees and students regarding their perception of discrimination encountered and attempted fraud. Around 18% of trainees state that they faced discrimination while looking for accommodation. The percentage among study mobility students is similar – 17%. Likewise, 18% of trainees claim that they faced an attempted fraud. For those in study mobility the share is 12%. Again, it is necessary to stress that attempted fraud does not mean that the student actually became a victim of fraud.
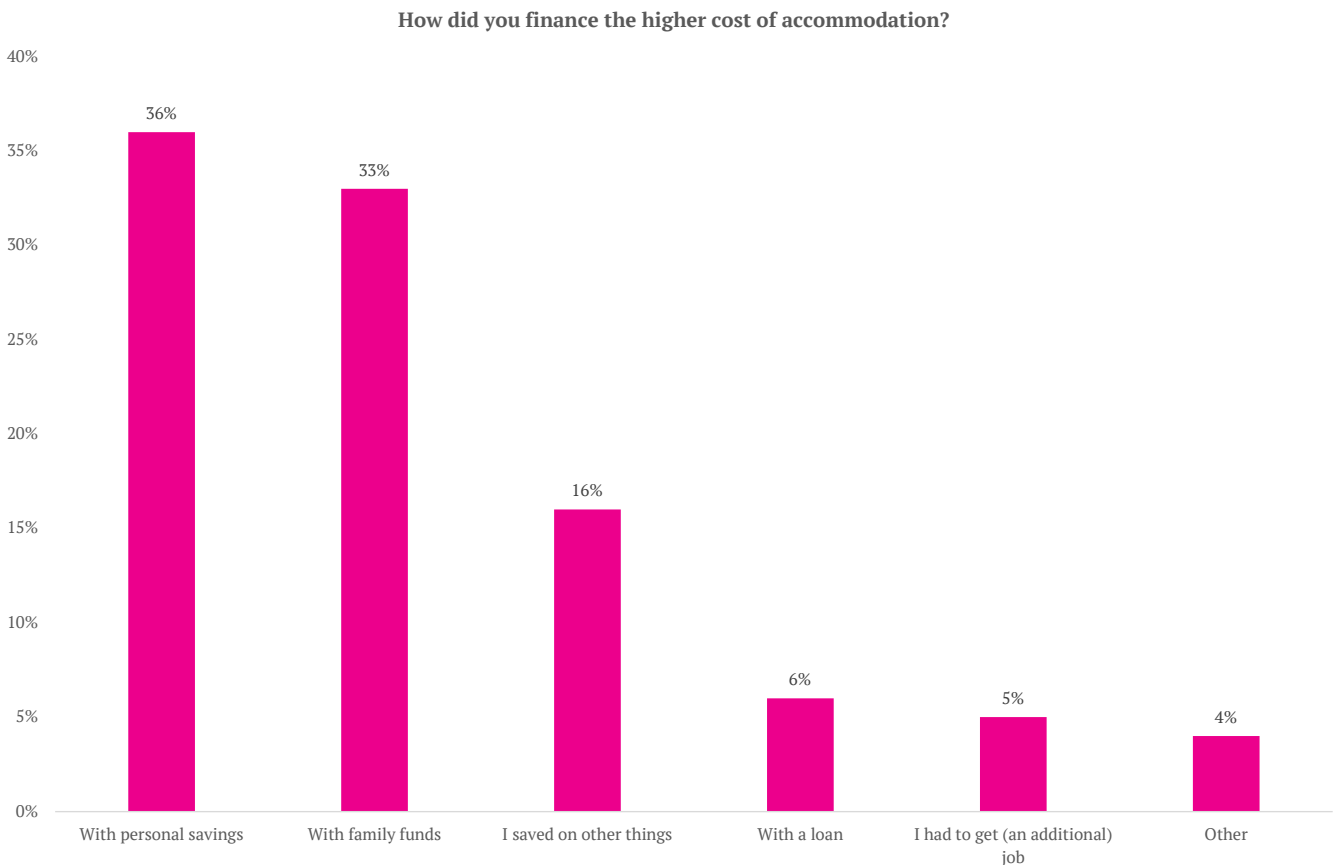
Financing the cost of accommodation

Regarding financial matters, trainees face a slightly more challenging situation than those on study mobility and where they need additional funding, they are more likely to use personal funds or turn to their family for assistance.

Half of trainees state that costs were higher than expected, which is more than students on a study exchange (39%) In Italy and the UK, 64% claim that the costs for housing were higher than expected. In France and Spain, the percentage is slightly above 40%.

In line with this data, 64% of trainees claim that it was hard to finance their stay abroad – among study mobility students the percentage was 49%. As for the strategies to cover additional costs, personal funds as well as support from the family are the most common ways of dealing with the extra financial burden. It is also the case for study mobility students, although personal funds are a more prominent source of finance among trainees.

Figure 5.33 - Sources of funding to finance the higher costs of accommodation for Erasmus+ traineeship mobility participants

How did you finance the higher cost of accommodation?

Source	Percentage
With personal savings	36%
With family funds	33%
I saved on other things	16%
With a loan	6%
I had to get (an additional) job	5%
Other	4%

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Problems faced with accommodation abroad

Around half of trainees (53%) stated that they did face some kind of problems with their accommodation abroad (60% among study mobility students). Around one fifth of trainees claim that they were faced with a lack of information from their accommodation provider as well as experiencing some sort of language barrier. At the same time, trainees seem to deal with their challenges slightly better than mobile students in all categories covered but especially with language barriers. According to *Erasmus: Facts, Figures and Trends* 2013/2014 issue, trainees are slightly older when going abroad – 23.4 (students) v. 23.9 (trainees) years of age[58]. The maturity of trainees could therefore be one indication of why they cope better with challenges experienced abroad.

As for the effects of the problems faced, 13% stated that this had a negative impact on their mental and physical state (14% among those in study mobility) and 5% reported negative effects on their work performance (7% of those mobile for studies reported a negative impact on their academic performance due to accommodation problems). 13% also claimed financial difficulties as a consequence of accommodation issues (10% for mobile students).

Figure 5.34 - Comparison of problems faced by Erasmus+ study and traineeship mobility participants

Did you experience any of the following problems with your accommodation abroad?
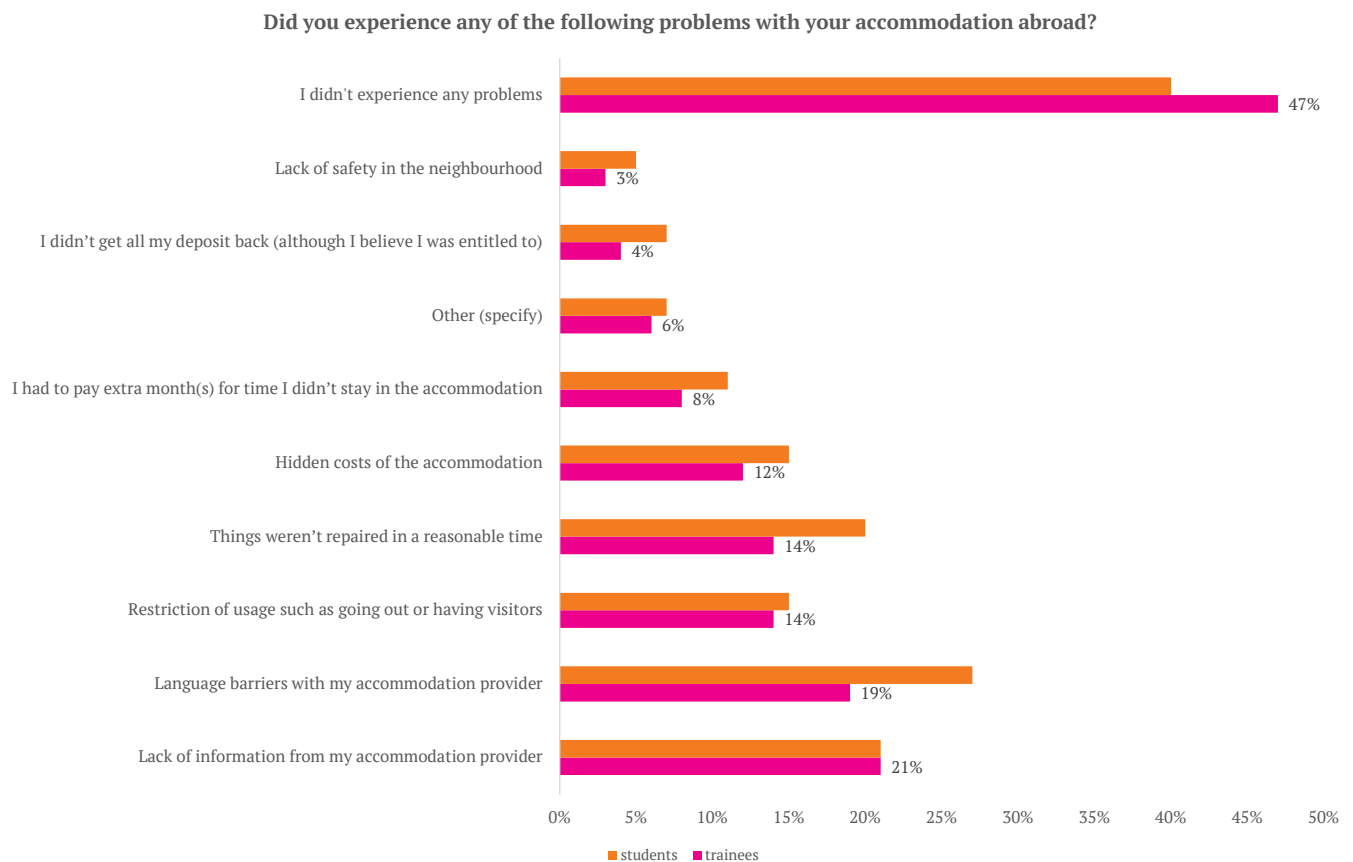
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

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[58]European Commission (2015): Erasmus – Facts, Figures. And Trends. The European Union support for student and staff exchanges and university cooperation in 2013-2014. Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/statistics/erasmus-plus-facts-figures_en.pdf.

Summary

• 5464 trainees who completed their mobility in Erasmus+ programme countries in the period 2014-2016 were analysed. Most of them come from FR, ES, BE, IT and PL. The most popular traineeship/placement destinations are ES, UK, DE, PT, FR and BE.

• Most commonly the traineeship/placement lasts 3 months (for 23% of trainees). Slightly more than half of all trainees (54%) stayed in the host country for a period of less than 5 months, 18% stayed for 5 months and 12% for 6 months.

• Roughly half of the traineeships/placements are located in cities with a population of less than 300,000 inhabitants. There is a slightly higher percentage of trainees than students pursuing their mobility period in a city with population of more than one million – 28% v. 19%.

• Similar to study mobility, only 70% of trainees have their accommodation already arranged before their arrival in the host country. 14% have made some plans regarding accommodation for the first days/weeks. The remaining 16% go abroad without any sort of accommodation arranged.

• The vast majority of trainees arrange their accommodation themselves – 68% in contrast to 58% among Erasmus+ study mobility students. For 13% the host organisation/company took care of accommodation arrangements.

• The most popular channels for looking for information on accommodation are general websites for accommodation searches and social media platforms (used by around half of the trainees), followed by friends and personal contacts (40%). These channels show slightly different success rates – while around 30% found a place to stay through general housing websites, only 16% did so via social media platforms. As among mobile students, social media turns out to be used frequently, but less often leads to actually finding accommodation. Trainees also more often turn to friends and personal contacts than do study mobility students.

• Slightly over a half of trainees were in shared accommodation and around one fifth were in private housing – both independent from an HEI or organisation.

• More than half of trainees (56%) claim that the accommodation market was difficult. Three quarters (74%) state that their accommodation was of good quality and 58% say it was good value for money. Three quarters of the trainees were satisfied with their accommodation.

• Around 18% of trainees state that they faced some sort of discrimination when looking for accommodation. Similarly, 18% trainees claim that they encountered attempted fraud.

• Half of trainees state that costs were higher than expected, which is more students on an exchange (39%). In Italy and the UK, 64% respectively claim that the costs for accommodation were higher than expected.

• In line with this trend, 64% of trainees report that it was hard to finance their stay abroad – among study mobility students the percentage was 49%. Trainees reported more challenges to find affordable and decent accommodation than students that embark on a study mobility.

• As for the strategies to cover these additional costs, personal funds as well as support from the family are the most common ways of dealing with the additional financial burden. It is also the case for study mobility students, although personal funds are more prominent source of financing among trainees.

• Around half of trainees (53%) report that they faced some kind of problems with their accommodation abroad (60% among study mobility students). Around one fifth of trainees claim that they were faced with a lack of information from their accommodation provider; also the language barrier was an issue.

5.5 Other study programmes - Credit mobility via a different programme than Erasmus+

Accommodation arrangements and satisfaction

If we look only at the students from and to Erasmus+ programme countries that completed their mobility exchange through programmes other than Erasmus+ (e.g. national programmes, bilateral agreements etc.), 163 responses were recorded. The sample is relatively small compared with Erasmus+ students and does not allow for a country specific analysis. When comparing students that embarked on credit mobility via programmes other than Erasmus+ and Erasmus+ students, the results do not substantially differ and thus a further description of the results can be omitted.

Degree students

332 responses of degree mobile students within Erasmus+ programme countries were recorded. In our sample, the majority started their degree mobility within the period 2014-2016; 40% are male and 60% are female.

The majority of students come from Germany, the Netherlands, France and Romania. As the most popular host country, Denmark stands out, hosting 35% of all degree mobile students, hence a separate analysis will be carried out just for Denmark.

Figure 5.35 - Composition of degree mobile students by host country

Composition of degree mobile students by host country
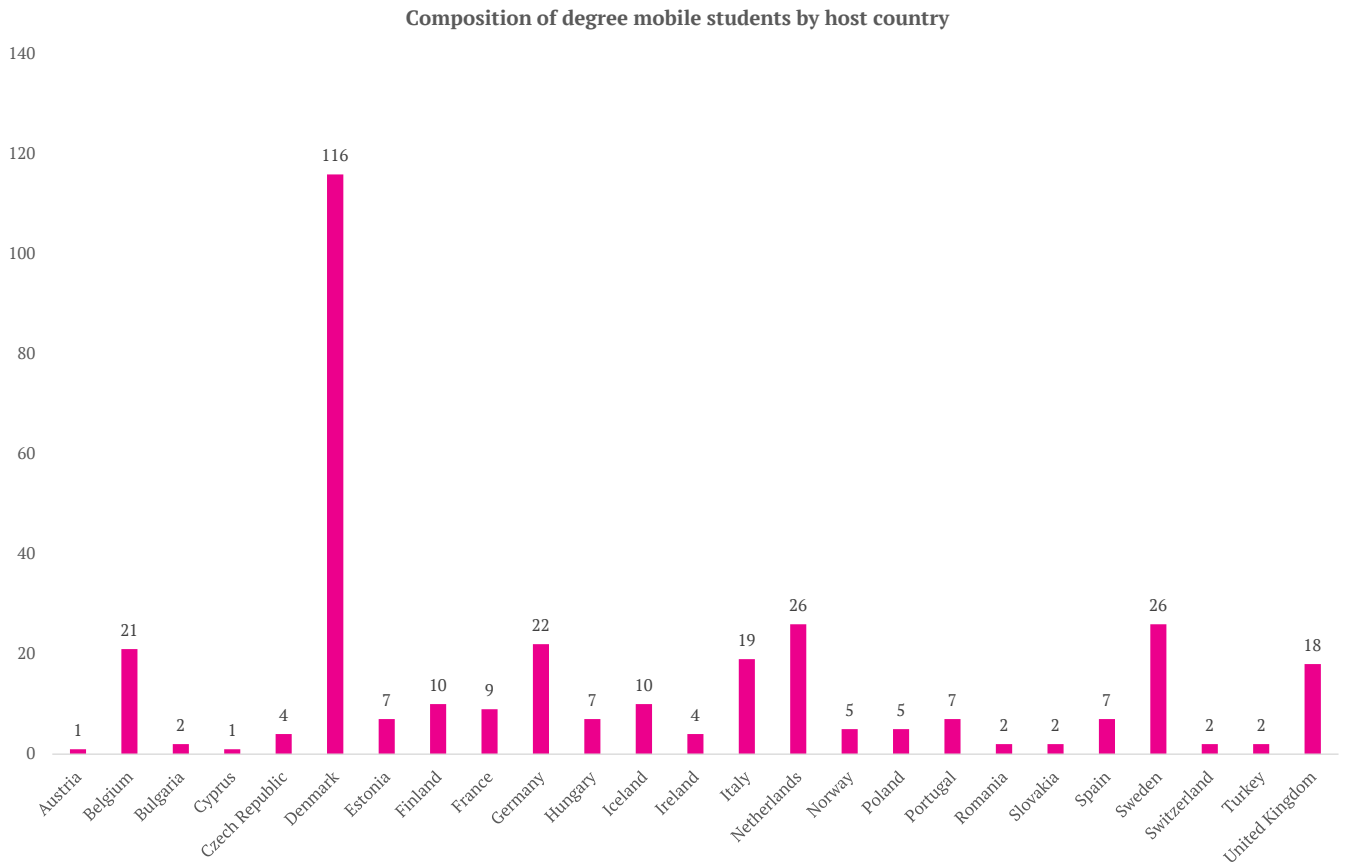
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Case study – Denmark

116 students who are completing their degree mobility in Denmark responded; of these, 58% are female, 80% enrolled within the last three years and half of them study in a city with less than 300,000 inhabitants and 18% in a city with a population of more than one million (and therefore in the metropolitan region of Copenhagen, since it is the only city in Denmark with a population of more than 1 million).

Only Erasmus+ Programme countries were analysed, as the number of responses from partner countries or EHEA was too small and presumably too diverse to include in this sample.

As a contrast to Erasmus+ student and trainees, of which on average around 70% arranged their accommodation before arrival, just 40% already did so for degree mobility to Denmark and an additional 35% had made some arrangements for the first couple of days/weeks only. In comparison, 80% of credit mobile students to Denmark already arranged their accommodation before arrival.

The support offered by HEIs in arranging accommodation for degree mobile students is substantially lower (30%) than is the case for credit mobile students (55%). This observation is in line with the statements gathered during the study visit, where degree mobile students describe a lack of support from institutions compared with their fellow exchange students.

Around half of students have to deal with the challenge of finding accommodation on their own. As for the sources of information, only minor differences between credit and degree mobile students can be observed – the latter being more active in using non-HEI channels such as friends and personal contacts or social media and general websites to search for accommodation.

Hence, less degree mobile students assess the information given by the HEI as useful – 45%, in comparison to 78% among credit mobile students coming to Denmark. As many as 33% totally disagree that the information was useful. In line with that, 80% of degree students (totally) agree that the housing market for degree mobile students is difficult in Denmark, yet 83% exchange students to Denmark stated the same. Two thirds or 60% of degree mobile students state that their accommodation was of good quality (exactly the same number for credit mobile students to Denmark). However, regarding value for money and overall satisfaction, the degree mobile students coming to Denmark report slightly lower levels of satisfaction than those on credit mobility.

Figure 5.36 - Accommodation arrangements for degree mobile students in Denmark

Accommodation arrangements for degree mobile students in Denmark
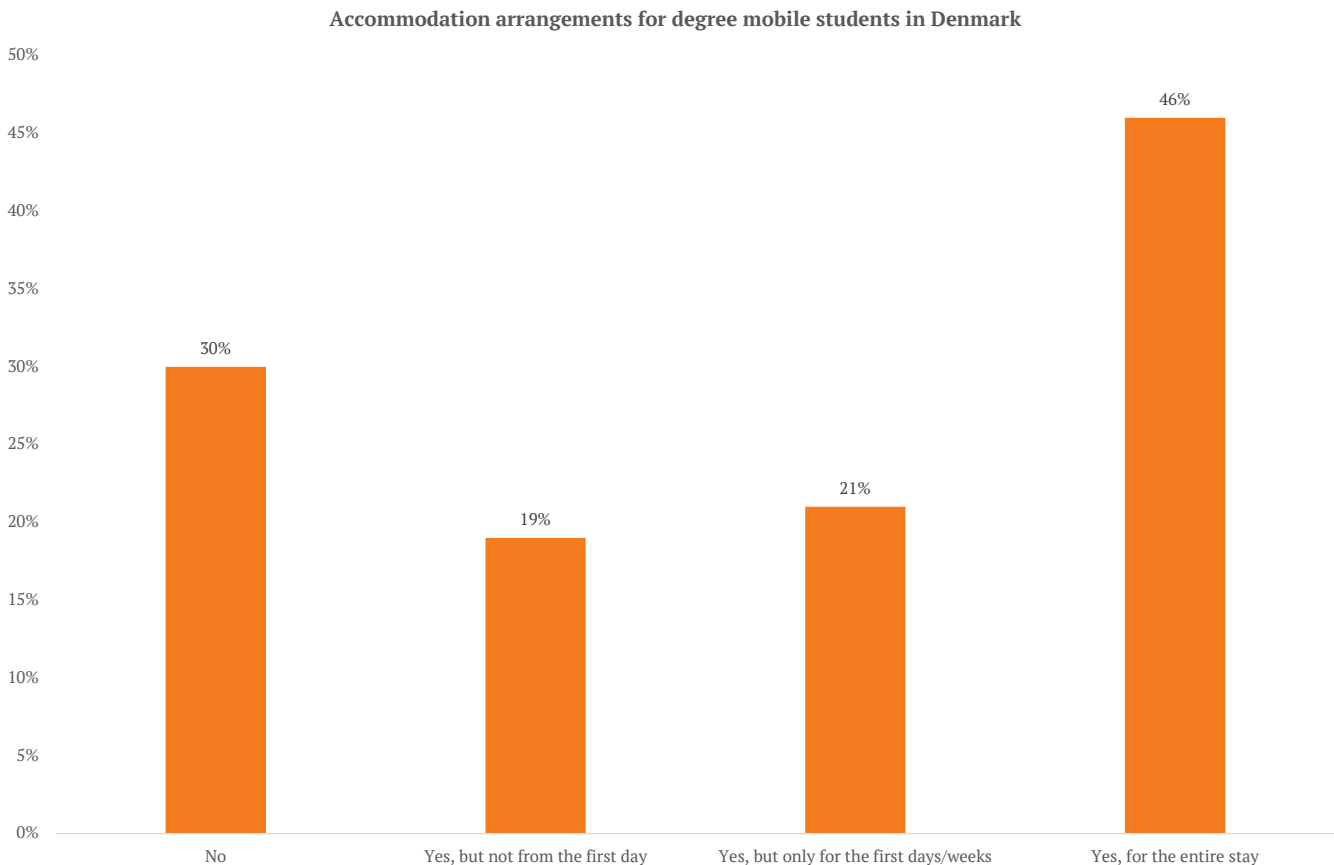
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

The most distinct difference between exchange students and degree mobile students is in the assessment of discrimination – 10% v. 48% respectively report it. Similarly, more degree mobile students than credit mobile state that they have encountered attempted fraud – 39% v. 17% of those going to Denmark.

68% of the degree mobile students faced higher accommodation costs than expected, compared to 51% amongst credit mobile students, however, the percentage of students stating that they found it difficult to finance the mobility period is almost the same

Summary

In general, only a few differences can be observed between degree and credit mobile students to Denmark. HEIs offer less information to degree- mobile students who are also less likely to have accommodation arranged by their hosting HEI. Degree mobile students also report less satisfaction with value for money of their accommodation and also claim that they experience discrimination more often. In addition, degree mobile students moving to Denmark might experience financially more challenging situations than credit mobile students.

5.6 Students on independently organised traineeships – in Erasmus+ programme countries

129 students from our sample went abroad on an independently organised traineeship. 65% of all respondents are female and 68% completed an internship of up to 6 months and 94% did so within the last 3 years. Only mobility students from and to Erasmus+ programme countries were taken into account and 48% of all students come from France, Spain and Germany. Regarding destination countries, the most popular destinations are Germany, Belgium, the UK, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. As for Erasmus+ traineeships, one third of the students stay in cities of 100,000 to 300,000 inhabitants and almost as many students prefer cities with a population of more than a million.

Figure 5.37 - Students on independently organised traineeships – in Erasmus+ programme countries - breakdown by host countries
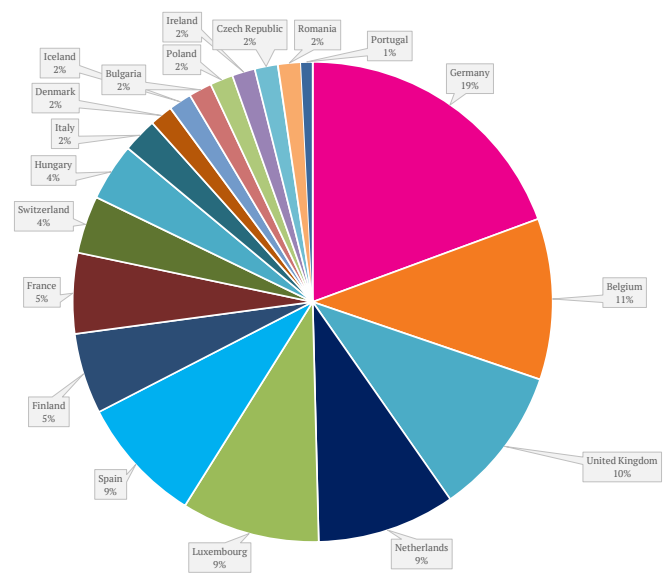
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

When comparing Erasmus+ and independently organised traineeships, there are hardly any differences as to whether accommodation is arranged beforehand as well as how it was arranged. 70% found a place to stay themselves and for 18% the host organisation helped to find accommodation. Slight differences can be seen in the usage of information channels to search for accommodation that actually led to finding accommodation – for students who organised their traineeship period independently, friends and personal connections are the most used source of information, while general websites for accommodation searches and social media platforms are also important.

Figure 5.38 - Accommodation arrangements for students on independently organised traineeships – in Erasmus+ programme countries

**Accommodation arrangements for students on independently organised traineeships
- in Erasmus+ programme countries**

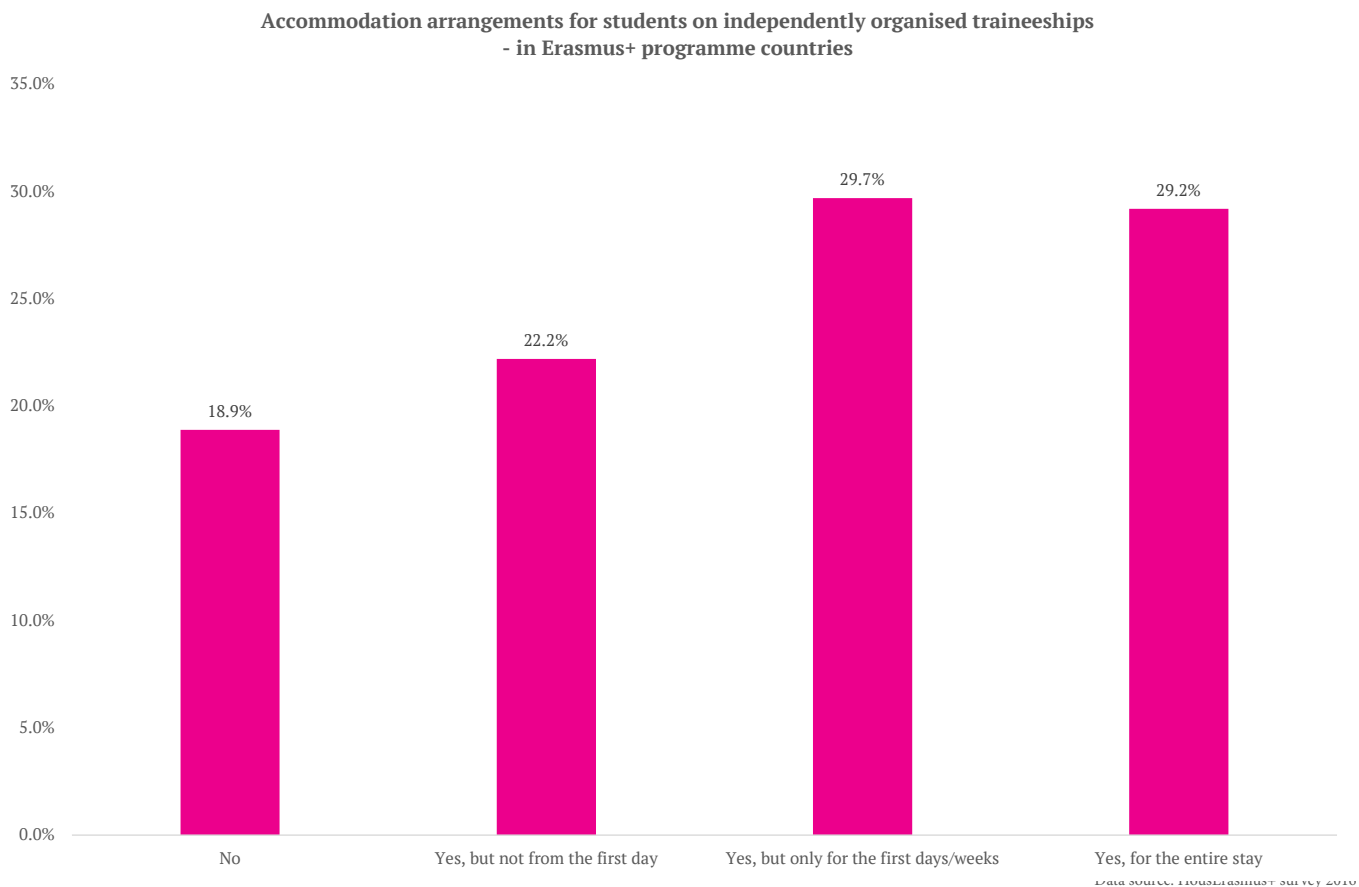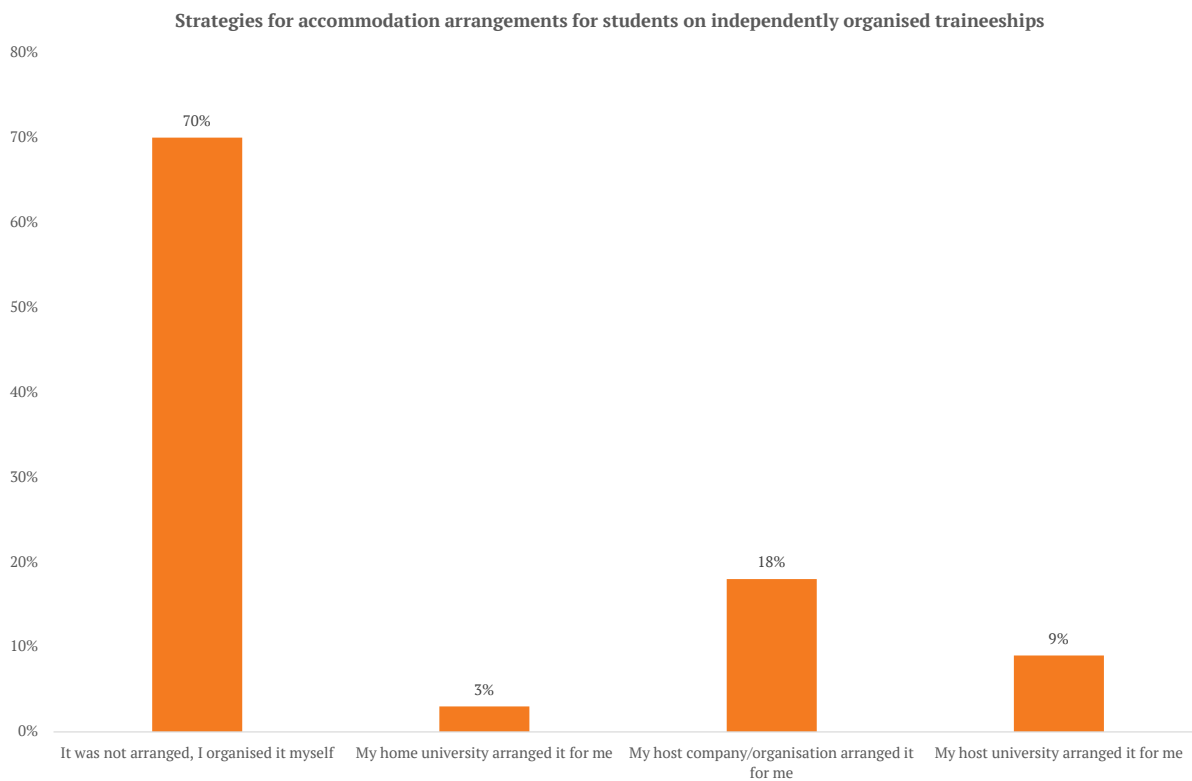Figure 5.39 - Strategies for accommodation arrangements for students on independently organised traineeships

Strategies for accommodation arrangements for students on independently organised traineeships

81

Figure 5.40 - Strategies for accommodation arrangements for students on independently organised traineeships

Information channels that led to accommodation
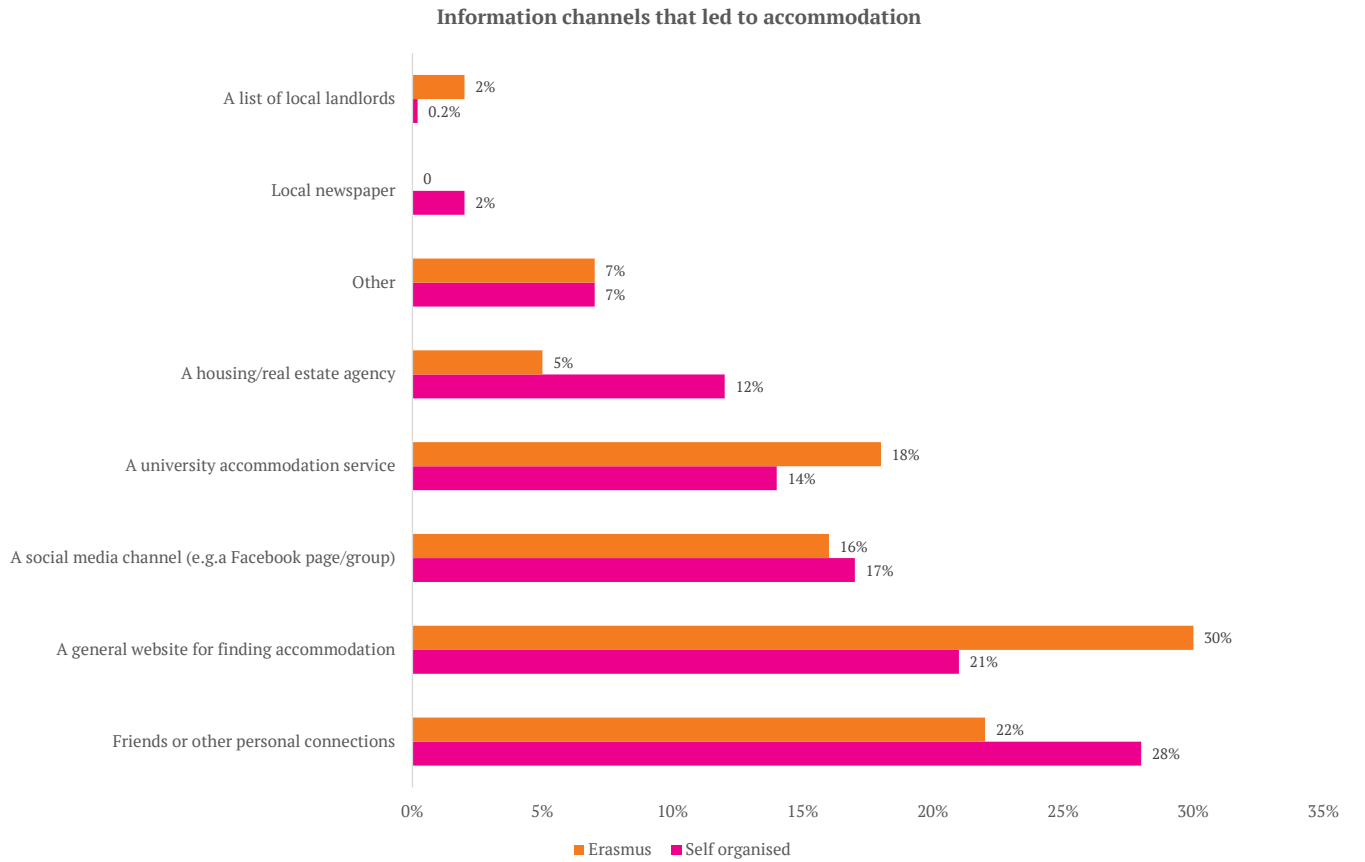
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

All other aspects expressed by students that organised their traineeships independently of the Erasmus+ programme show very similar results to that of Erasmus+ trainees and so a further description of the analysis is omitted.

5.7 Non-EHEA countries to Erasmus+ programme countries – any type of mobility

Analysis of non-EHEA mobile student housing patterns

All in all, 371 responses were recorded from students outside the EHEA on any type of study-related mobility in Erasmus+ programme countries. 56% are female and 93% completed their mobility period within the last three years – 2014-2016. As for the home country – individuals from more than 60 different countries answered the survey and most responses come from Brazil, Mexico, USA, Canada and China. The most popular destinations are Portugal, Hungary, Spain, Italy, Germany, Belgium and Finland.

The majority of students, or 64%, (yet less than those among Erasmus+ students and trainees) arranged their accommodation beforehand and another 18% made some arrangements for the first days/weeks. Those who had accommodation arranged beforehand mostly (50%) state that it was the host HEI or organisation that took care of these aspects. An additional 39% claim that they organised it themselves. This illustrates more involvement from the HEI or host organisation than for other target groups. The reasons for this might be manifold. Potential aspects to consider are the higher need for cultural adaptation, the fact that many students from outside the EU are fee-paying students and therefore expect a higher degree of service from HEIs and lastly the fact that bilateral relations with non-EHEA universities might be of particular strategic interest for EHEA HEIs and therefore a specific focus is put on students coming from these countries.

Figure 5.41- Host country of students outside the EHEA on any type of study-related mobility in Erasmus+ programme countries

|	Frequency	Percent
Portugal	66	17,8
Hungary	43	11,6
Spain	42	11,3
Italy	31	8,4
Belgium	30	8,1
Germany	20	5,4
Finland	17	4,6
France	15	4,0
Denmark	13	3,5
Norway	10	2,7
Czech Republic	9	2,4
Sweden	9	2,4
United Kingdom	8	2,2
Bulgaria	7	1,9
Netherlands	7	1,9
Austria	6	1,6
Poland	6	1,6
Turkey	6	1,6
Slovakia	5	1,3
Latvia	4	1,1
Russia	4	1,1
Iceland	3	0,8
Switzerland	3	0,8
Estonia	2	0,5
Romania	2	0,5
Ireland	1	0,3
Lithuania	1	0,3
Ukraine	1	0,3

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Figure 5.42 - Accommodation arrangements of students outside the EHEA on any type of study-related mobility in Erasmus+ programme countries

**Accommodation arrangements of students outside the EHEA
on any type of study-related mobility in Erasmus+ programme countries**
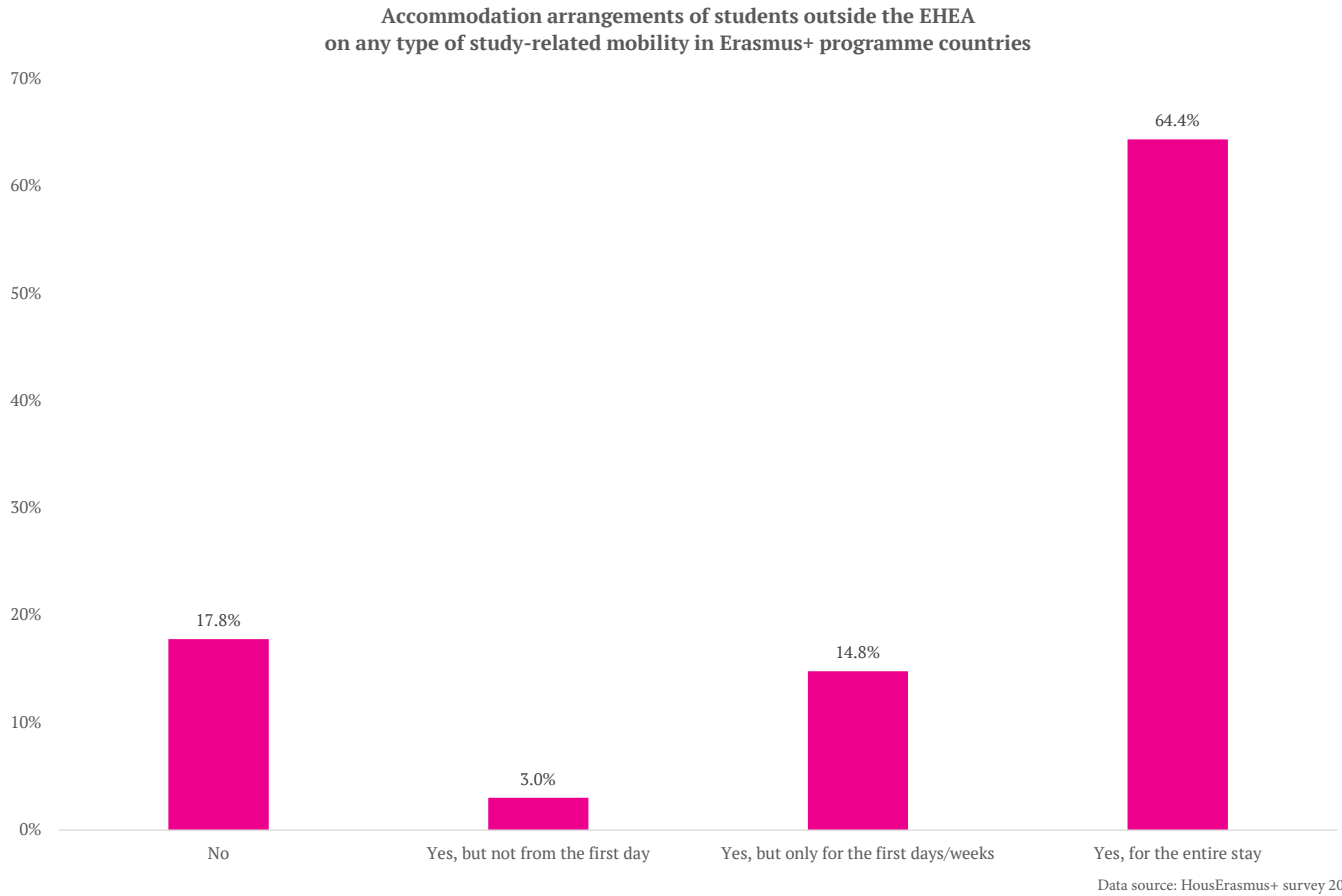
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Figure 5.43 - Strategies for accommodation arrangements of students outside the EHEA on any type of study-related mobility in Erasmus+ programme countries

**Strategies for accommodation arrangements of students outside the EHEA
on any type of study-related mobility in Erasmus+ programme countries**
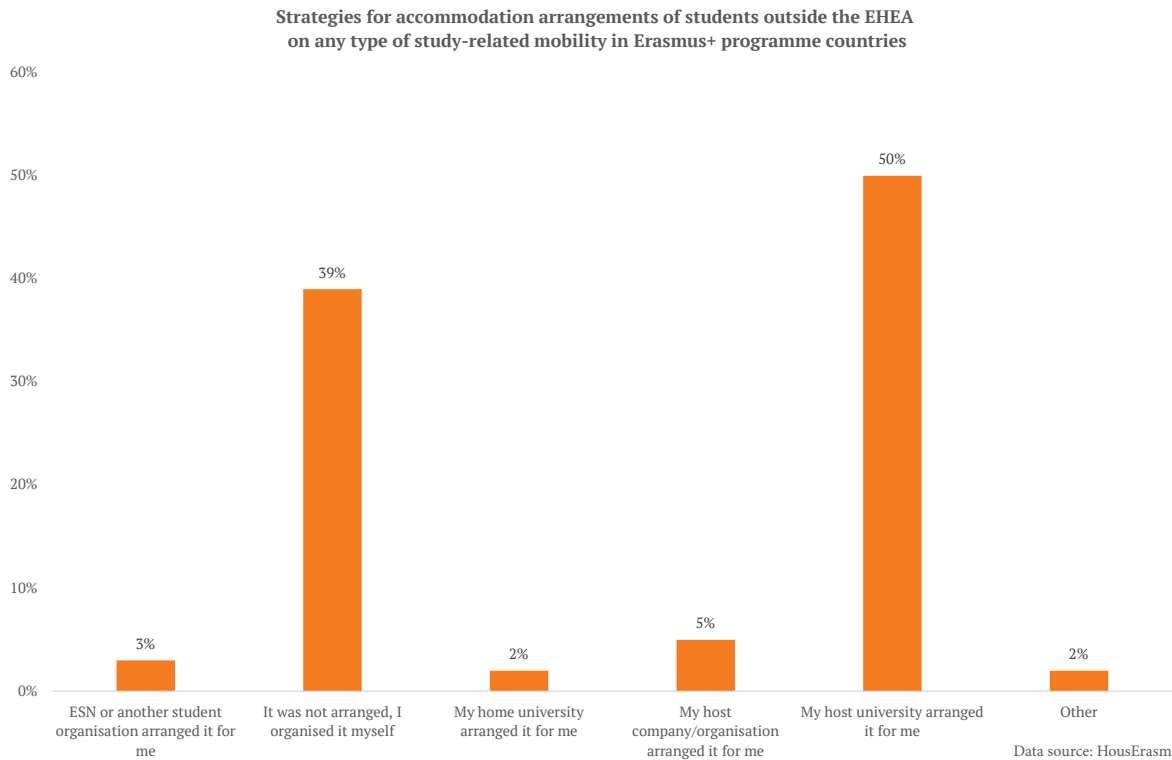
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Regarding students' assessment of the different aspects of accommodation and the search process, non-EHEA students seem very content in comparison to Erasmus+ students and trainees. A higher share of non-EHEA mobile students state that the host HEI/organisation information on housing opportunities was useful –at 76% (66% for Erasmus+ students and 47% for Erasmus+ trainees).

Around the same percentage of non-EHEA students as Erasmus+ students and trainees claim that the housing market in the host country was difficult but accommodation was of good quality. Slightly more students from non-EHEA countries state that the accommodation was of good quality at 80% (70% for Erasmus+ students and 74% for Erasmus+ trainees) – hence also slightly more reported that it was good value for money and about the same applies to overall satisfaction. Yet it should be borne in mind that such assessments have much to do with subjective interpretations and considering different cultural aspects would make for an interesting field for further studies.

Almost the same percentage of students from outside EHEA countries state that they faced discrimination in the process of finding accommodation as among students and trainees from Erasmus+ programme countries - 17-18%.

Just 11% faced attempted fraud while 12% of Erasmus+ students and 18% of Erasmus+ trainees report such attempts.

A similar share of non-EHEA students and Erasmus+ students state that accommodation costs were higher than expected - 40%. However, a higher percentage of non-EHEA students state that it caused issues with financing their mobility period. (39% for Erasmus+ study mobility, 50% for Erasmus+ traineeships).

Summary

• All in all, non-EHEA students, with a few exceptions, have very similar responses than students embarking on mobility within the EHEA, and the latter seem more content in comparison with Erasmus+ students and trainees.

• In some aspects, non-EHEA mobile students seem even more content than Erasmus+ programme students – e.g. with the information provided by their host HEI/organisation as well as the quality of accommodation. Also, a higher percentage have their accommodation organised by the host HEI/organisation.

• Regarding financial aspects, non-EHEA students seem more fortunate than Erasmus+ trainees yet less satisfied than Erasmus+ students: in other words, Erasmus+ trainees see the host housing market as more difficult, accommodation costs higher than expected and also have more difficulty in covering extra costs.

• However, a more in-depth analysis of the composition of the non-EHEA student body would be necessary before any conclusions can be drawn regarding the causes of such differences.

# 5.8 HEIs - International Relations Offices Survey

Key messages

• More than two thirds of HEIs do not have a dedicated person in the office to support students with in their search for accommodation and state that overall there is high demand from students for them the necessary information on accommodation.

• On the whole IROs feel confident that they are living up to students' expectations in delivering information about accommodation opportunities.

• Almost 90% of HEIs agree that internationalisation is a priority for HEIs, yet only roughly half think that a lack of adequate and affordable accommodation is an obstacle to internationalisation.

• The most significant barriers to finding decent and affordable accommodation are listed as mainly contractual limitations for exchange students – shorter terms which result in higher prices and less access. Also linguistic constraints as well as lack of intercultural skills (or miscommunication) hinder finding decent accommodation.

• Most IROs call for more cooperation of all the actors involved (private entities, individual landlords, student organisations) and state that it is in the interest of municipalities also to contribute to ensuring suitable accommodation for the mobile students.

• HEIs are often juggling between two scenarios of insourcing versus outsourcing of student accommodation, which depends largely on the maturity of the private student accommodation market, shortage of housing or legal restraints mobile students might face in the local real estate market as well as the overall HEI internationalisation strategy.

• IROs are calling for more funding to deal with the challenges they are facing and suggest that the initiative should come from the EU, i.e. the Erasmus+ framework also manifesting its priorities through the provision of funding. Similarly, the legal issues would require more systemic pan-European solutions to deal with discrimination issues and access to the basic needs and rights of EU citizens, namely decent accommodation and the chance to be mobile.

Demographics

Higher Education Institutions that took part in the survey are mostly public institutions, with a campus and located in a medium-sized city. Half of the institutions are smaller, with less than 5,000 students.

588 HEIs filled in the questionnaire and 553 are located in Erasmus+ programme countries and therefore were analysed in detail. Also, the rule of thumb of a minimum of 30 cases in the individual country samples for a detailed analysis was applied, hence more information will be provided for the following host countries: Spain, France, Germany, Italy and Poland. Countries with the highest participation were Spain (30%) and France (23%).

Figure 5.44 - Location of the Higher Education Institutions
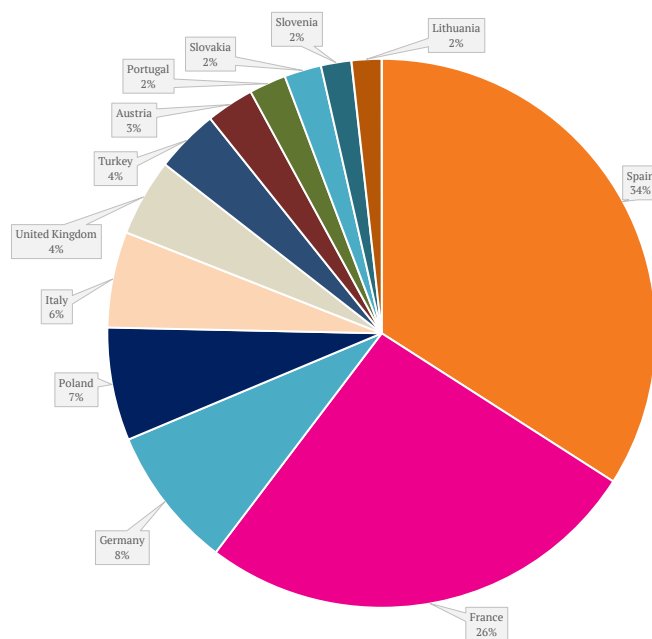
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Types of HEI

The vast majority or more than two thirds (69%) of respondents in the given sample are public entities, and 18% are private institutions. Overall, the percentage of private and public institutions differs substantially across countries, nevertheless public entities predominate. Looking at a breakdown b country, in the Spanish sample, 58% of all HEIs are public, 17% private and 25% other. In Germany, 92% were public HEIs and 8% private.

Figure 5.45 - Types of Higher Education Institution (HEI) as a percentage

Types of Higher Education Institution (HEI) as a percentage

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016
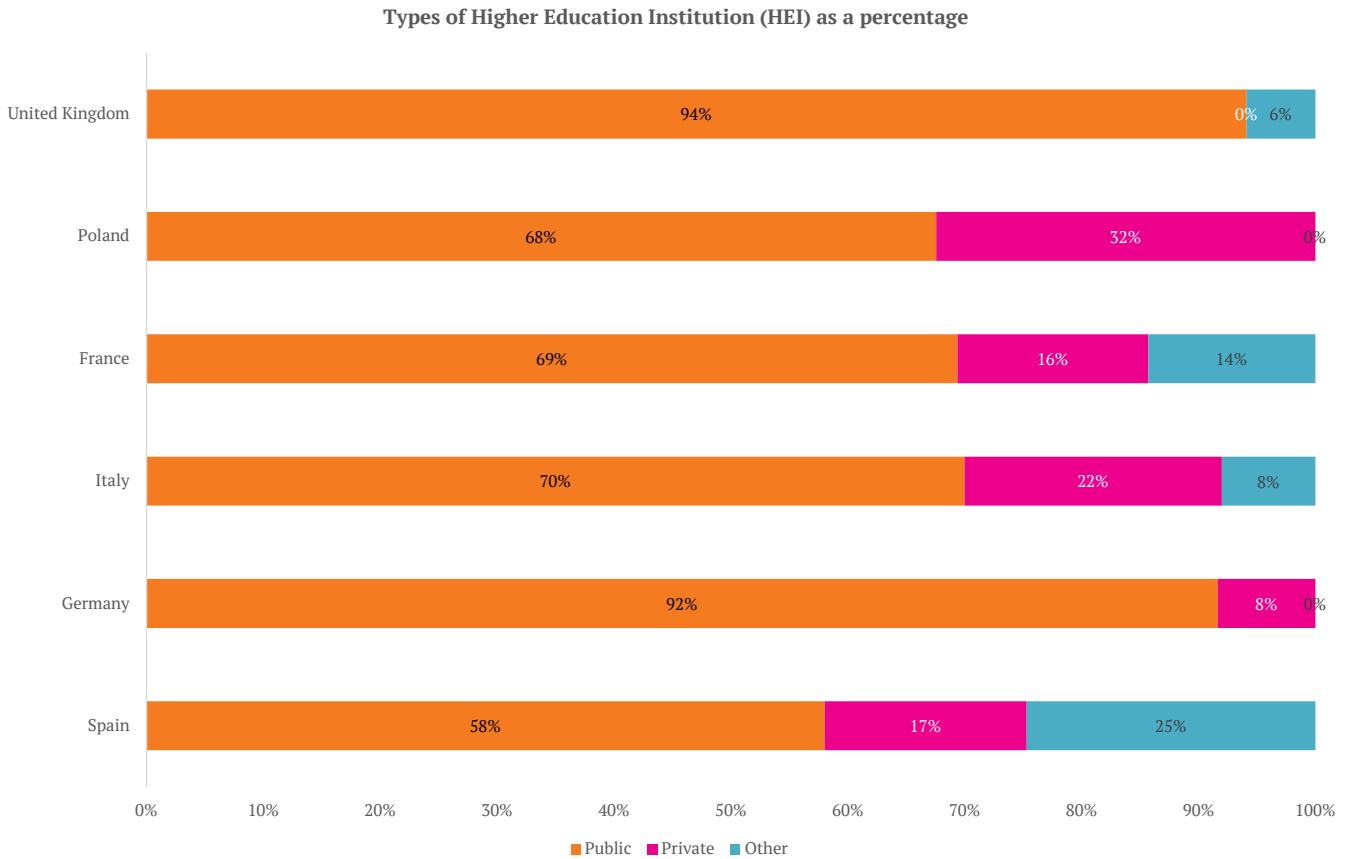
Altogether, 13% of HEIs classed themselves as "other", with the vast majority of the responses were from Spain (56%): these are institutions offering vocational education as well as short cycle tertiary degrees and are typically small (less than 2,000 students). In addition, those could be mixed entities e.g. semi public and private institutions.

Study location

HEIs with a campus is the prevailing form of study organisation in the HEIs represented in the sample. Only 21% of HEIs do not have some sort of campus structure (one central or several across the city (or cities) etc.) and 1,3% have some other structure. Generally, the institutions without a campus are small and specific institutions in Spain or smaller countries. The remaining options were quite evenly spread, reflecting a balance in distribution and variety of models of campus-like structures.

When looking at national characteristics, Germany and the UK stand out with campus structures in more than 90% of the HEIs surveyed. However, in Italy this is the case in just half of the Institutions, while in Spain the figure is almost 70%.

Mobility flows

Figure 5.46 - Total number of registered students

Total number of registered students
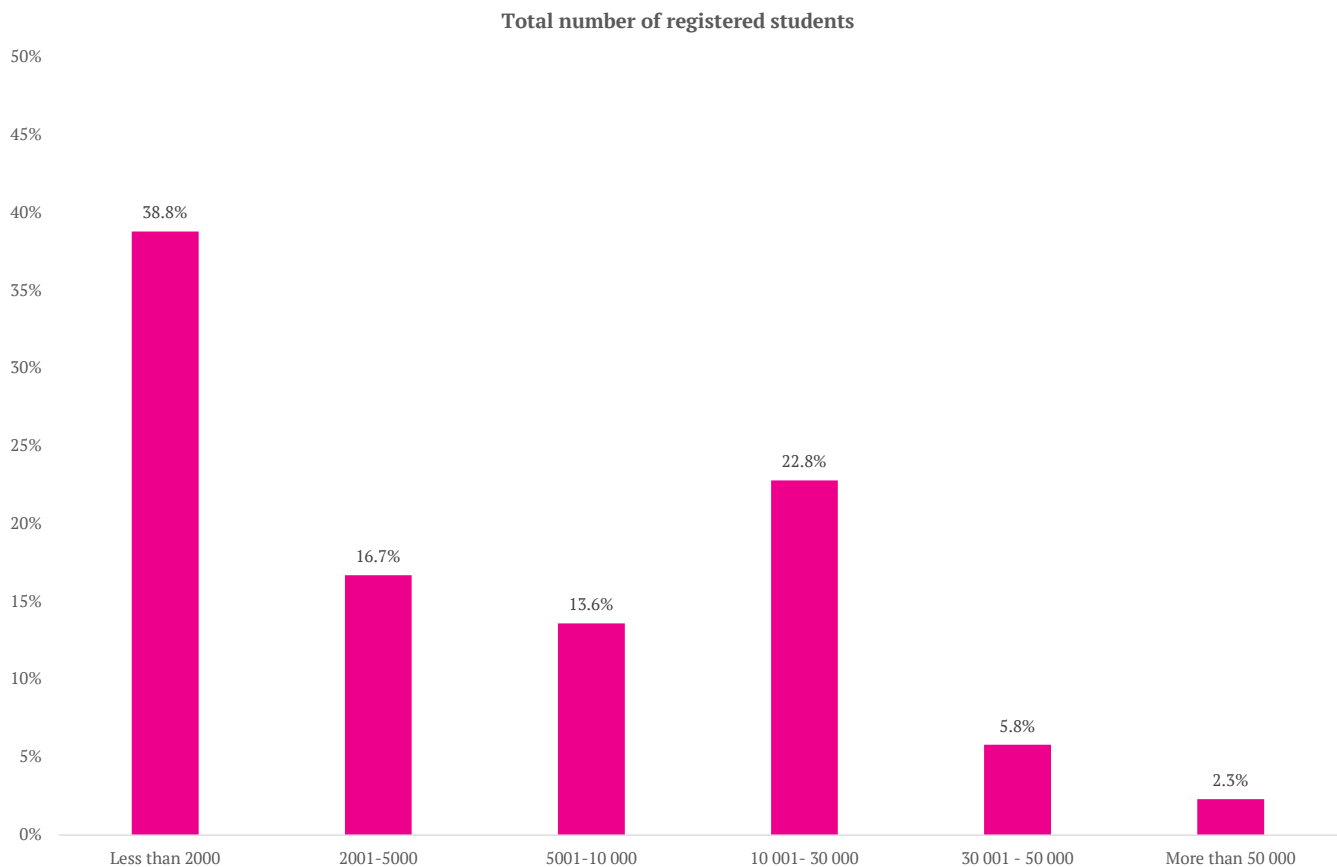
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

HEI size

Around half of the respondents in our sample are smaller institutions with less than 5,000 students and 23% are HEIs with a student body of 10,001-30,000. 14% of HEIs in the sample have from 5,001 to 10,000 students and the biggest HEIs (30,000 to more than 50,000 registered students) account for the remaining 8%.

Mobile students

In the sample represented, most HEIs have had between 1 and 200 Erasmus+ students, both currently and in the previous academic year, ranging from around 600 in the largest higher education institutions in the sample to less than 10 in the HEIs with less than 2,000 students. Most HEIs have more Erasmus+ students than those from any other programmes and had no registered free-movers in the current academic year or in the previous one. Those that do report free-moving students usually tend to have from 1 to 50 of them, with some HEIs in Sweden and the UK reporting a hundred or even several hundred free-mover students.

IRO staff

In line with the fact that 38% of the HEIs in our sample have less than 2,000 students, an overwhelming majority (61%) stated having 1 to 5 people in their International Relations Office. Regarding the differences between private and public HEIs, a bigger and more representative sample would be needed as two aspects, the size of the institution as well as mobility flows, need to be taken into consideration before judging the provision of support for mobile students by the IRO.

Figure 5.47 - Number of staff members in the IRO

Number of people in IRO in relation to the size of HEI
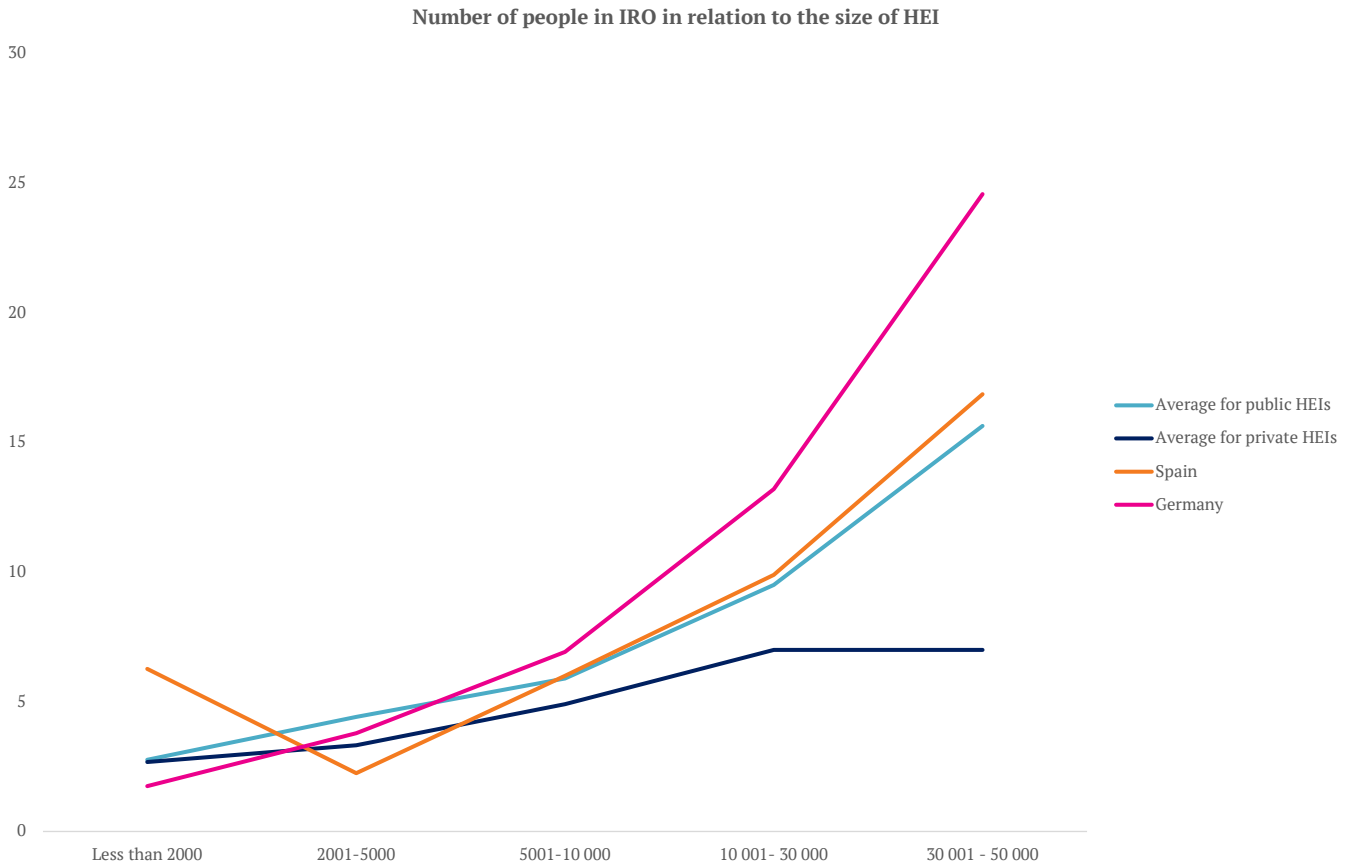
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Language skills

On average, the number of IRO employees that speak English is only slightly lower than the figure available on the size of International Relations Office altogether. Only some Southern countries such as Spain, Italy and France have slightly greater differences between the number of IRO employees and those with a knowledge of English.

As for foreign languages other than English, 43% of the replies indicate that 1 or 2 IRO workers also have other language skills. Another 20% indicate that there are 3 to 4 IROs members who speak foreign languages other than English. In around 10% of the cases IRO staff cannot speak foreign languages other than English.

Next to English, the other languages mostly represent major EU languages (87%); the most common are Spanish (19%), French (19%), German (14%) and Italian (9%). The most commonly-spoken non-EU languages are Russian (41%), Chinese (11%), Arabic and Turkish (8% respectively from the IRO body indicating other language skills). Special support for accommodation issues

It is less common to find dedicated staff at IROs whose primary role is that of assisting students to find accommodation and in more than three quarters of the institutions in our sample (65%) there is no such staff member. Of course, this is closely linked to mobile

student flows as well as the provision of accommodation from other actors (enough accommodation opportunities for students in the rental market, private infrastructures being able to meet demand, etc.), hence it does not show per se whether students are being given enough support or not.

In general, 32% of HEIs have dedicated staff to support students with accommodation issues. Medium-sized HEIs with steady flows of incoming students tend more often to have extra dedicated person/people dealing with accommodation questions. As many as 44% of HEIs with 5,000 to 10,000 students have such a staff member. There seems to be hardly any differences between the public and private sector and looking at a breakdown country for France and Germany, the figure is as high as more 40% of IROs with dedicated staff members dealing with mobile student accommodation; however, the figure is just around 20% in Poland and Spain and roughly one third in Italy and the UK.

Figure 5.48 - HEIs with dedicated staff whose main role is to support mobile students in finding accommodation

HEIs with dedicated staff whose main role is to support mobile students in finding accommodation

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016
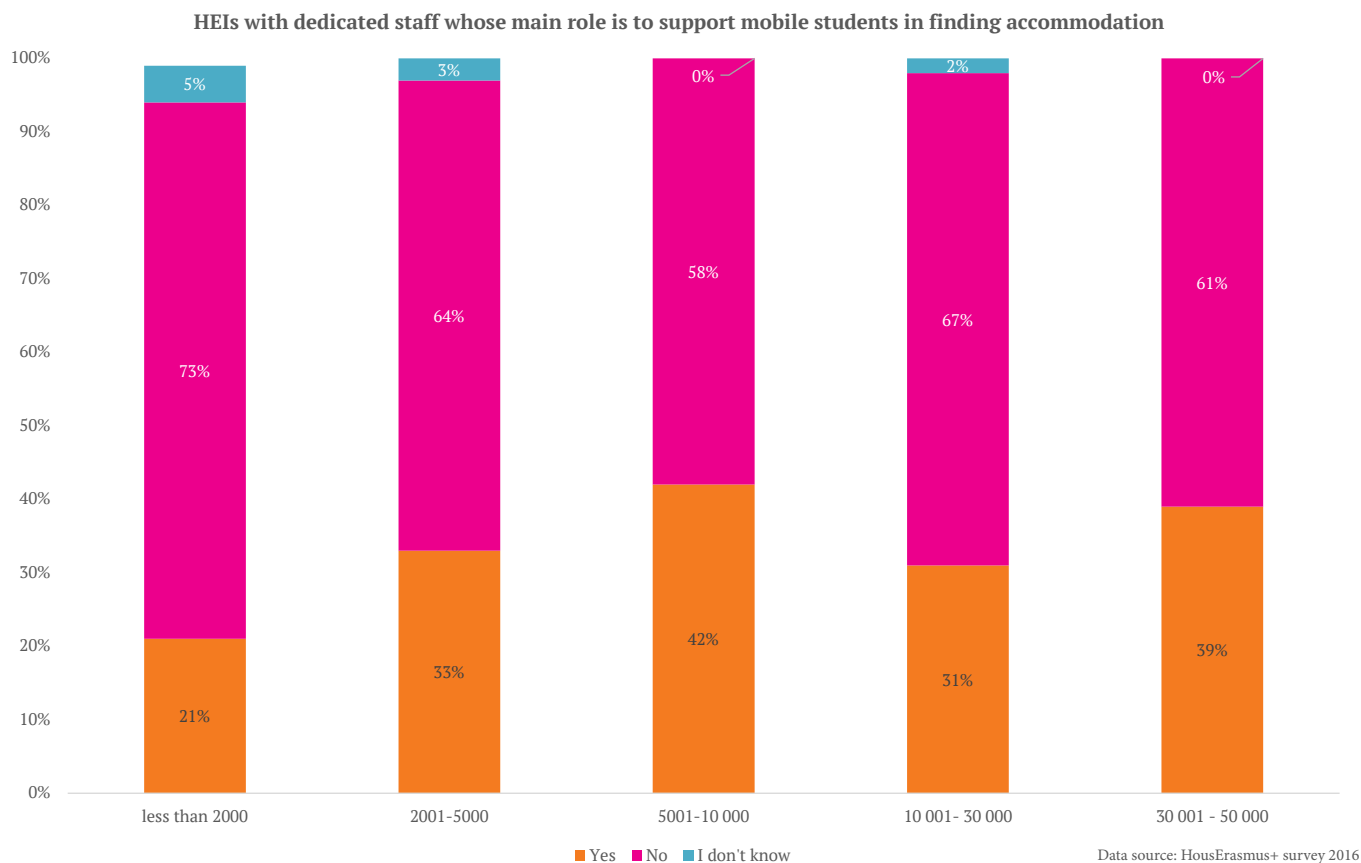
13% of all institutions claim to have full-time staff assigned to this task; 67% of them have one member of staff, 12% two, 7% three and 14% have more than 4 members of staff. As for part-time staff, the breakdown is down as follows: 64% institutions have one part-time member of staff; 20% have two, 6% have three and 10% more than 4 part-time members of staff.

Institutions with working arrangements other than full-time or part-time explained that e.g. finding accommodation is one of many other tasks performed by the existing office staff or they have one full-time worker in the office or an intern only at certain periods of the year (e.g. in September and January) or these tasks are performed by the Housing Services or other support staff services.

Provision of information

Figure 5.49 - Percentage of mobile students requesting support/information on accommodation

Percentage of mobile students requesting support/information on accommodation
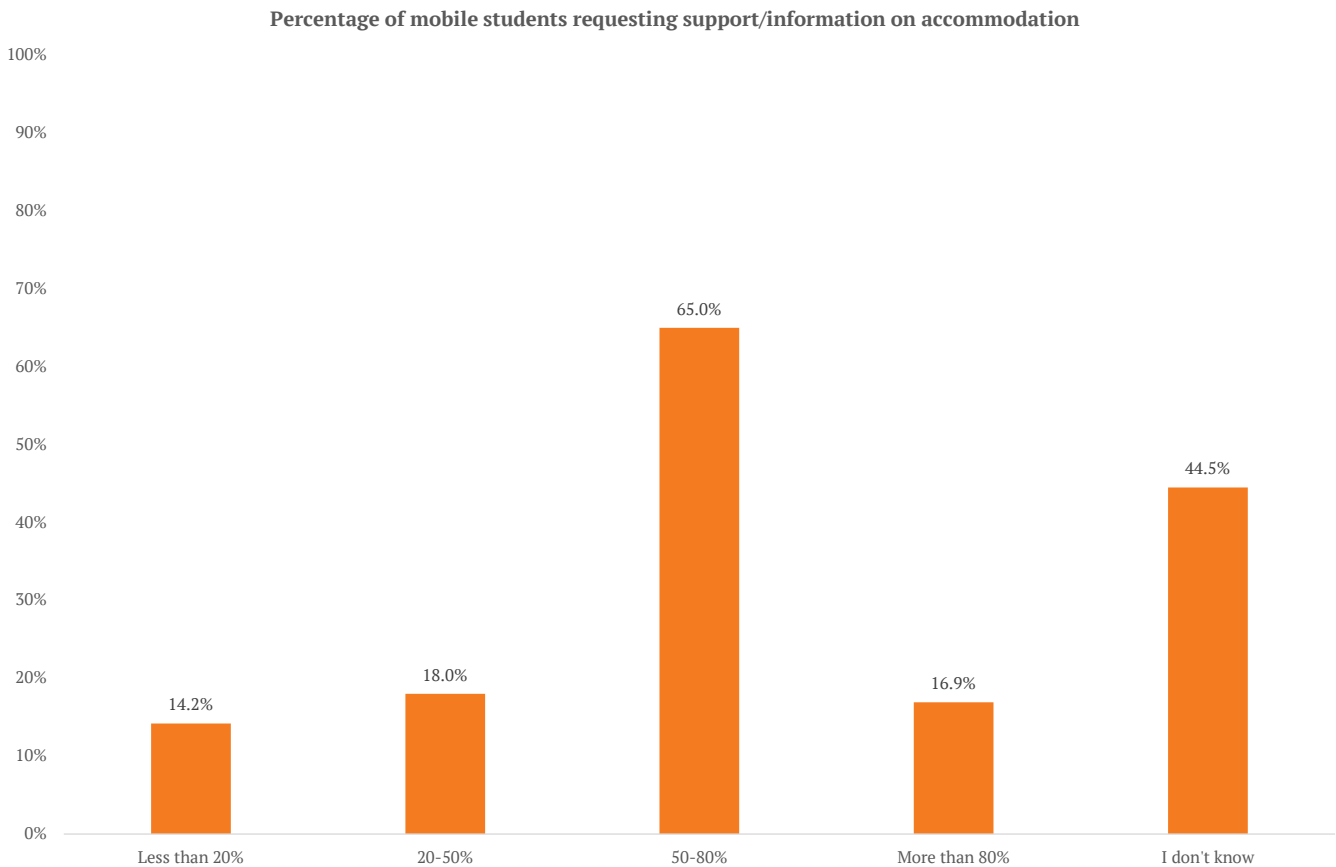
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

IROs have a high demand for housing information by students, proving that this service is a valuable guide in the search for accommodation – almost half (45%) state that more than 80% of all students appreciate their support in finding accommodation. An additional 18% claim that 50% to 80% of all students need such assistance. Looking at the size of HEIs, there do not seem to be many substantial differences as to how often information on accommodation is requested according to the size of the institution. It is worth mentioning that the biggest HEIs seem to be the most confident that not such a large percentage of students require support.

However, when looking at the breakdown by country, Spain and the UK stand out, with just around one third of HEIs claiming that as many as 80% and more of mobile students need their support in searching for accommodation. In other countries this percentage is at least half of HEIs, rising to around 60% in Germany and Poland. IROs in Spain and the UK more often claim that mobile students are not so dependent on IROs when looking for accommodation and in fact, Erasmus+ exchange students heading to Spain and the UK more often claim that they also used other information sources to find accommodation.
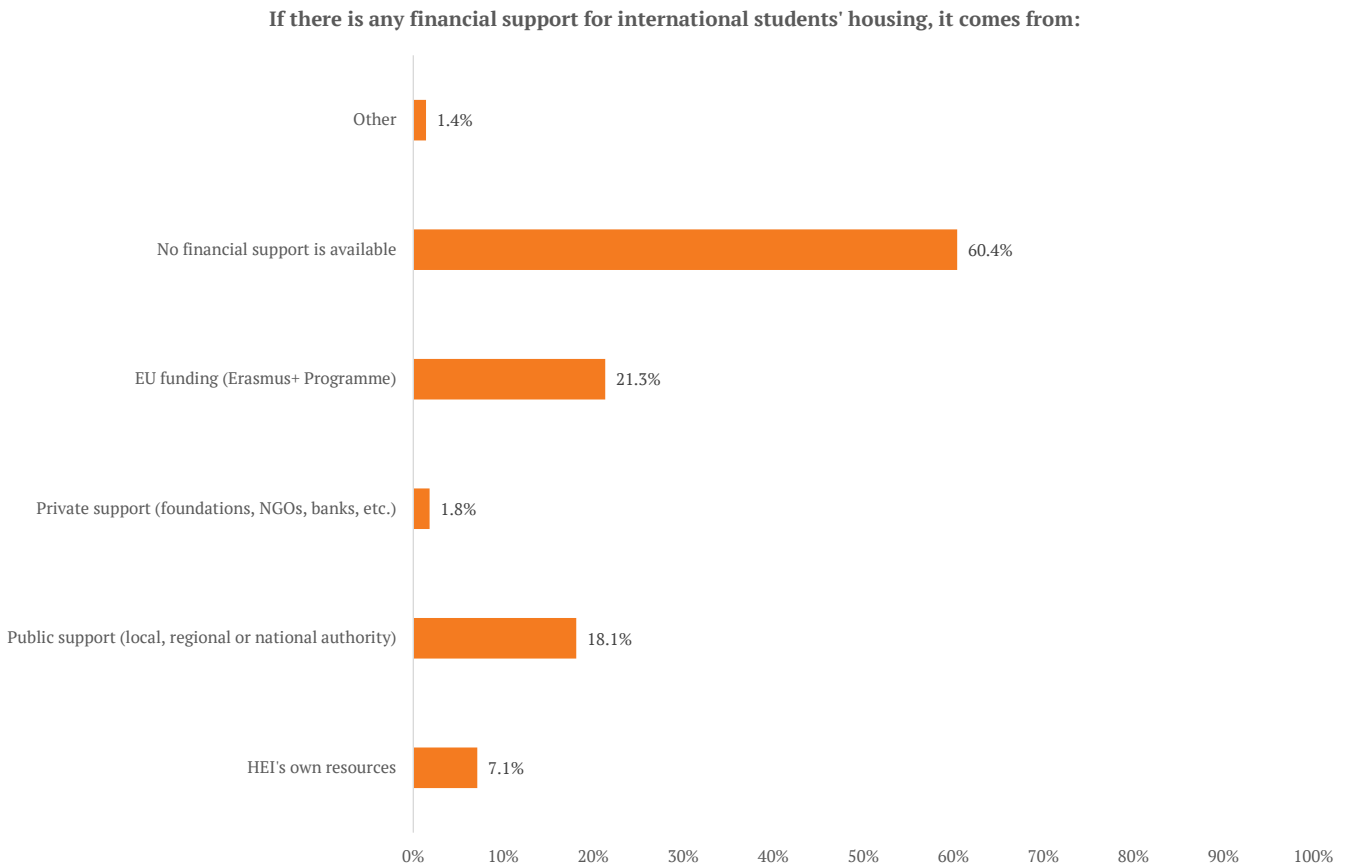
Figure 5.50 - IROs tasked with providing information on accommodation to incoming mobile students - breakdown by country

IROs tasked with providing information on accommodation to incoming mobile students - breakdown by country
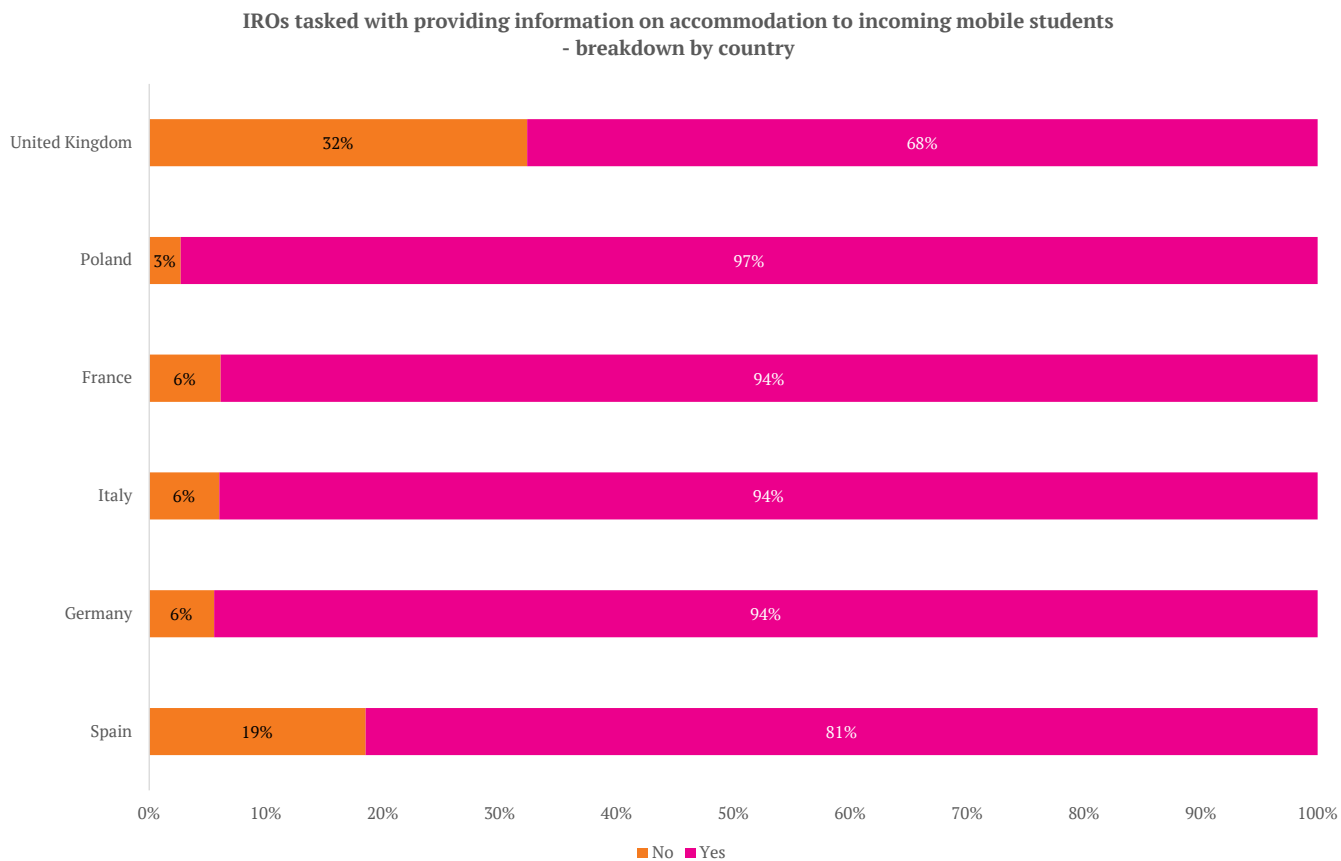
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Altogether, 88% of IROs confirm that providing information on accommodation to mobile students is one of their functions, with the percentage in private HEIs slightly higher than in public institutions. When looking at a country-by-country comparison, the UK and Spain again stand out with a substantially higher percentage of IROs responding that it is not their task to deal with these issues. However, the reason for these responses is not clear. Are students forced to look for other options as IROs are not (or do not consider themselves) required to provide such information or there is no need as the private sector? Or other actors are dealing with these challenges well enough and therefore the HEIs do not feel obliged to invest resources in this task? IROs who report that accommodation support does not constitute one of their functions explain that these are tasks for either student support organisations such as ESN or student unions, other coordinators at the faculty level or external agencies as well as municipalities.

Services

Figure 5.51 - Financial support for mobile students´ accommodation

If there is any financial support for international students' housing, it comes from:

- Other: 1.4%
- No financial support is available: 60.4%
- EU funding (Erasmus+ Programme): 21.3%
- Private support (foundations, NGOs, banks, etc.): 1.8%
- Public support (local, regional or national authority): 18.1%
- HEI's own resources: 7.1%

The majority of HEIs or 60% of respondents stated that no financial aid is available for mobile students' accommodation. Others mentioned one or more sources of funding. The most common extra source is Erasmus+ funding (21%), public support from a regional or national authority (18%) as well as the HEI's own resources (7%). On average, HEIs offering extra financial support receive it from 1 to 2 other sources, and only a few have 2 or 3 sources of additional funding.

Accommodation services for mobile students provided by the HEI

Most IROs state that they do not have accommodation services provided by the HEI (41%). Where such structures exist, among other options, the most prevalent are rooms or apartments available both on campus (33%) as well as off campus (19%). 11% of IROs stated that there is cooperation with the public authorities and 9% reported that they work with a private company.

In order to explain existing accommodation arrangements in more detail, HEIs have different approaches:

• Cooperation – with private agencies and student dormitories aiming for flexible rental contracts; city hotels offering special prices as well as local guesthouses and accommodation provided by the municipality; agreements with other HEIs' campuses or church institutions providing free accommodation; homestays with families.

• Facilitating sustainable support mechanisms. Students who are leaving to study abroad offer their accommodation to incoming students.

• Provision of information. Amongst other options mentioned are an agreement with the student's union to provide accommodation lists of local landlords who accept short-term exchange students; off-campus housing guides, Facebook housing groups.

Communication channels

The most common information channels used are: answering mobile students' inquiries by e-mail, telephone, etc. (31%) and sending all available information to international programme beneficiaries on request (23%). Other means or materials used to provide information are various brochures, e.g. welcome guides; an online magazine with detailed content about accommodation or support from the student union or ESN sections.

Assessment

Internationalisation is certainly of high importance for HEIs as 90% state that "Internationalisation is a priority for the HEI" (58% of HEIs agree totally and 29% agree somewhat). At the same time, only roughly half or 54% (totally) agree that a "lack of accommodation for mobile students is an obstacle to HEI's internationalisation". In line with that, HEIs are generally confident that they offer good support for students and the vast majority or 80% (totally) agree with the statement that the IRO provides all information on accommodation to mobile students. Around three quarters or 73% of HEIs (totally) agree that the HEI makes an effort to remove obstacles to finding accommodation for participants in international programmes. However, in the comment sections no one indicated whether policymakers had been approached to improve relevant policies.

Even if HEIs seem quite self-confident that they are managing the challenges of mobile student accommodation, other aspects of self-assessment showed potential difficulties in their work and potential room for improvement. Replies to the statement whether "HEIs can meet all accommodation requests from mobile students" revealed that only around half of the HEIs (totally) agree with this statement. Also roughly half (totally) agree that the IRO has all the necessary resources to support international programme beneficiaries (qualified personnel, equipment, etc.) (23% agree totally, 32% agree somewhat). Open-ended replies mentioned a lack of qualified staff to help search for accommodation.

Barriers

Mobile students do have a certain level of access to housing offered/managed by the HEI - 56% of the IROs in the sample (totally) agree that national and international/foreign students have equal access to it. In addition, the potential obstacles may also stem from external factors since 33% (totally) agree that landlords are reluctant to rent to mobile students and trainees.

Delving more into potential obstacles faced, 85% of respondents identified some kind of barrier, the most cited of which we classified as follows:

• **Short-term contracts.** Landlords are reluctant to rent their properties for a short period of time, i.e. one semester. Also, when the tenant is not interested in signing a one-year contract, landlords often charge a higher rent for shorter periods (i.e. Hungary). In addition, small property owners are reluctant to rent to foreigners for short periods, in the belief that they will take less care of the apartment than national students renting for a full year (i.e. Turkey).

• **Linguistic constraints.** Mobile students have little knowledge of the local language, making communication with the landlord/housing provider difficult. Linguistic constraints also prevent their engagement with the city and integration. Similarly, a lack of proficiency in English among landlords, property owners and real estate companies hinder students' search for accommodation.

Less frequently, the following factors are also perceived as obstacles:
• **No HEI campus.** Many HEIs see the lack of available accommodation on campus, or a lack of campus, as an obstacle. They consider that the situation where mobile students have to look for housing in the private market constitutes an obstacle.

• **Lack of human resources** that are specifically assigned to this task is reported.

• **(Too?) fast growing demand.** Some HEIs state that they have no problem providing affordable accommodation to mobile students, but they also stated that this type of demand is growing year by year. If HEIs have no external support networks, they foresee that lack of affordable quality accommodation may become a problem in the near future (i.e. Lithuania and Croatia).

• **Dealing with deadlines in a timely fashion.** Several HEIs / IRO indicate that in principle there are/should be no accommodation problems and they are able to provide accommodation to mobile students. However, applications to obtain a room in the HEI's dormitory must comply with rules and deadlines and when these are not met problems may arise, as the student cannot obtain a place in the accommodation offered by the HEI. Hence the cultural differences with dealing with deadlines and paperwork can create extra problems.

• **Overlap between semesters.** In HEIs with the capacity to house mobile students, problems arise when the last January exams overlap with the arrival of new students, as rooms would not be available in this period. Also, students coming in the second semester have less choice or cannot qualify for a place in student residences (i.e. Ireland). However, in other locations it is easier to find accommodation for the second semester.

• **Suitability of accommodation.** Unavailability of apartments that are furnished and/or equipped for renting. There is also a lack of accommodation that is appropriate to the needs of mobile students coming with small children, disabilities etc.

• **Scams.** When hunting for accommodation online, some students have been the victim of misleading advertising: as it is impossible to visit the flat before renting it, the pictures shown on the websites do not match the actual offer and contracts are not transparent (Portuguese HEIs were the most vocal on this point, although they were not the only ones to highlight it).

• **Challenging local/national characteristics of the housing market.** Both small, medium-sized and large cities present constraints on the search for accommodation in the general housing market, but for different reasons. In small / medium cities the supply in the private market does not meet demand, or accommodation is expensive and in certain cases property owners would rather rent to tourists or they charge more for short leases. In large cities rents are high and the closer the accommodation is to the campus, the higher the rent. The range of options is wider, but quality and price vary greatly: sometimes there is a shortage of supply and excessively high rents in relation to quality. It should also be borne in mind that in many large cities the cost of living may be cheap but rents are high or even the opposite - low rents but with a high cost of living. Hence students need more detailed and up-to-date information so they can plan their budget better and are encouraged to participate in an exchange.

• **Legal restraints.** French HEIs highlighted the fact that tenants are required to present a French guarantor before they can rent an apartment and Danish HEIs that they are required to provide a deposit of three month's rent. Also in France, public institutions are legally prevented from publishing private market offers on their websites, a constraint to dissemination of information. In Croatia and Belgium, the national law may be disadvantageous for property owners, something that does not encourage the private market.

• **Bad experiences.** Some owners do not want to rent their properties to mobile students due to previous bad experiences: damaged property, unpaid bills, noise, conflicts with neighbours, etc. (i.e. Austria, UK, Spain, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Poland, and the Netherlands).

Recommendations

Regarding the question whether IROs have any suggestions to eliminate the possible obstacles to mobile students' access to accommodation, 55% of respondents had no suggestions for removing barriers to access to accommodation. However, 45% made some suggestions that can be summarised as follows:

• **Cooperation between the actors involved.** IROs talk about increasing agreements and improving synergies between HEIs, private entities and landlords but also with municipalities that could support internationalisation attempts and serve all the HEIs in the city and so call for a more systemic solution. Such simple practices as HEIs setting aside a number of rooms for mobile students through agreements with student residences or private entities are mentioned, but also more complex solutions.
It is also suggested (and already exists in e.g. Germany and France)[59] that a platform be created by cities/countries which integrates the various stakeholders, where they can exchange views and information: HEIs, housing providers/landlords, policymakers, incoming and outgoing mobile students, student organisations, etc. Besides providing advice and recommendations, the platform could also make relevant documentation available in several languages and ensure transparent intervention of all the stakeholders. It could present the various accommodation options in each city, pricing information and what are the steps to follow to acquire the accommodation.
Greater participation and interest by the representatives of the Erasmus+ programme National Agencies is also expected.

• **Improving intercultural knowledge.** Creating awareness among property owners in particular, and society at large, of the Erasmus+ programme as well as its benefits, so people understand that mobile students, unlike national students, cannot rent flats for a full year or that incoming exchange students could replace outgoing tenants. It is also crucial to understand the positive impact it could have on the society as well as look for solutions together to create a win-win situation.

• **Insourcing v. outsourcing.** There are two contradictory strategies from the IROs: some see the need to either outsource the responsibility for providing quality student accommodation to the private sector or make it for the responsibility of the municipality, while others see the need to increase the HEI's responsibility in finding accommodation for incoming students and improving staff qualifications to deal with the challenges concerning student housing. Again, the general situation in the real estate market as well as legal constraints or size of the incoming student body could make either of the strategies more suitable according to the local situation.
The suggestion was also made that student associations should

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[59] In Germany the „*Wohnheimfinder*" is managed by DAAD - see: https://www.daad.de/de/ and in France managed by the CROUS - see: www.lokaviz.fr)

become the owners of student residences that will be managed by those associations, to prevent real estate speculation. However, what the purpose and capacity of such organisations would be is an open question. Another factor is the added-value aspect, as it would be an excellent platform for social innovation instead of seeing it merely as a simple means to manage accommodation.

• **More information.** IROs suggest that there is a need for more easily accessible and up-to-date information. Some of the elements considered highly useful are e.g. creating a database for property owners who cannot speak English, social network platforms to put incoming students into contact with former mobile students to provide advice, guidance and to answer students' concerns.

It is also important that students arrive in their destination country with a better knowledge of the local language to improve their adaptation to life there; a lack of language skills is another aspect which prevents students from finding the necessary information.

Concerns are voiced regarding intercultural competences: the HEIs of origin should prepare their students for the country and city where they will live, so that their expectations match reality. It is also crucial as students should respect deadlines when applying for rooms supplied by the HEIs. It is advised that they start looking for accommodation a minimum of 6 months in advance.

• **More funding.** There is a call for more financial support and IROs claim that the European Union should provide Erasmus+ partner HEIs with the necessary funds for mobile students' accommodation. Extra funds for housing or dormitories for mobile students only (accommodation support) or scholarships matching the cost of living in the destination country. Also, the wish for public and private investment to construct buildings to house mobile students where necessary is mentioned.

In addition, there is a need for economic support for mentors who help incoming students to find accommodation and take their first steps in the city.

• **Quality label.** Some countries/cities have already created a quality label to ensure students are provided with suitable accommodation and to centralise a reliable and trustworthy supply on the website of a public body (e.g. the town council) would facilitate the flow of information. This would require public policies to be developed by local authorities in order to monitor the prices and quality of the properties rented. Municipalities should also create an enabling environment for property owners willing to rent apartments to mobile students.

The suggestion was also made to create quality standards for student housing across Europe.

• **Dealing with legal constraints.** Drafting specific regulations in order to discuss obstacles in national law that restrict leasing accommodation to mobile students. For example, in Belgium, when the property let to a student is considered the student's main residence,

the owner must pay higher taxes, which makes them less receptive to such contracts. In France, where a French guarantor is required, the solution would be to accept that National Agencies in charge of the Erasmus+ programme, or the student's parents, living in another country, can act as guarantors. Another suggestion is to create legal services in HEIs or a service in the local authority to ensure the legality of the contracts signed by the students.

Good practices

44% of 576 respondents stated they do not have rules of good practice in this field. It is interesting to note is that some respondents who did not have rules of good practice stated that they did not know what would be good practice. Others declared they could not say if theirs was good practice, as they did not have any benchmark to compare it with. Hence, it is necessary to create a good practice guide to facilitate peer learning as well as provide support for its implementation. 56% of the 576 respondents declared that in their opinion they have some rules on good practice on this question.

• **Cooperation with other key actors.** The stakeholders mentioned are student organisations, housing providers, municipalities, policymakers and other HEIs.

• **More people dealing with student accommodation within the IRO.** The HEI has an office or staff dedicated exclusively to finding accommodation for students. Suggestions were also made that on request from a student, the HEI should check the suitability of a flat or apartment for rent. However, others see it part of the exchange experience and hold a contradictory opinion - the HEI should provide all necessary information on accommodation so that students can search by themselves, reinforcing their integration and transversal skills.

• **More information.** Information materials for prospective students about the city and how to find accommodation and existing agreements with housing providers (i.e. http://housing.oead.at/en/; http://studapart.com/en/) should be distributed via the most suitable information channels for students.

In some locations, all information is sent with the admission letter and on welcome days students receive guidance on searching for accommodation. In others, HEI staff manage access to special group on social networks for finding accommodation. Or there may be a special homepage containing information on accommodation in the city/country (i.e. http://studentboet.se/en or the NIDO Programme from the Miguel Hernández University of Elche is a public service that provides the university community with useful information on finding accommodation suited to student needs (http://ve.umh.es/nido/ only in Spanish). Sometimes the HEI has found a way to recommend a reliable, trustworthy private housing service (i.e. https://eurep.auth.gr/en/accommodation-list), where nepotism is excluded, and monitors quality regularly. In some locations, an online notice

board is also effective (i.e. http://www.izmir.edu.tr/iro/announce-ments/general-announcements/item/480-first-exchange-stu-dent-of-izmir-university.html).

• Reviews and up-dating of information. Sending a survey to former students to find out their level of satisfaction with the accommodation and disseminating survey results among incoming students.

Summary

• The HEIs that took part in the survey are mostly public institutions, with a campus and are located in a medium-sized city. Half of the institutions are smaller, with less than 5,000 students. Regarding incoming student flows, most HEIs have less than 200 exchange students but a significant number has more than 500. The number of IRO staff who speak English is only slightly lower than the overall number of personnel in the IRO office and the most common languages spoken other than English are Spanish, French, German and Italian and Russian and Chinese from non-EU languages.

• More than two thirds of IROs do not have a dedicated person in the office to support students in their search for accommodation and HEIs state that overall there is high demand to provide the necessary information on accommodation.

• On the whole IROs feel confident that they live up to expectations in delivering this information.

• Despite this self-confidence demonstrated by IROs, other aspects of their self-assessment showed potential difficulties in their work and potential room for improvement. Only around half agrees that HEIs can meet all requests for accommodation from mobile students and that the IRO has all the necessary resources to support international programme beneficiaries (qualified personnel, equipment, etc.).

• 90% of the HEIs also (totally) agree that internationalisation is a priority for HEIs, yet roughly half think that a lack of adequate and affordable accommodation is an obstacle to internationalisation.

• HEIs need to cope with challenges by carefully balancing between insourcing and outsourcing of student accommodation. The right balance depends largely on the maturity of the private student accommodation market, the level of housing shortages, legal restraints mobile students might face in the local rental market, as well as the HEI's general internationalisation strategy and the importance they attribute to supporting their incoming students.

• The most important barriers mentioned include the contractual limitations for exchange students, i.e. shorter rental periods which result in higher prices and less access. Also linguistic constraints as well as lack of intercultural skills (or miscommunication) hinder them finding decent accommodation. In addition to that, also such factors as the HEI lacking certain facilities (campus, student dormitory) as well as the human resources to deal with fast-growing demand are mentioned. The legal restraints as well as challenging characteristics of the national housing markets are also mentioned, also scams and unavailability of housing that is properly equipped for students.

• As recommendations, first and foremost IROs call for more cooperation of all the actors involved (private entities, individual landlords, student organisations) and state that also it is in the interest of municipalities to contribute to the aim of ensuring suitable accommodation for mobile students. Platforms for various stakeholders to exchange information and their agenda which also could serve as a source of information for mobile students. Some locations have also already adopted different kinds of quality labels to help students find appropriate housing from a trustworthy source in a more systemic way. The importance of intercultural awareness is also highlighted as precondition for smooth integration and mutual growth. HEIs call for more systemic pan-European solutions dealing with access to the basic needs and rights of EU citizens, namely decent housing and the chance to be mobile.

5.9 Student Organisation Survey

Key messages

• Student organisations have identified the biggest challenges for mobile students in the process of finding accommodation to be the lack of available and affordable housing, accessibility of reliable and useful information in the search process, and language and cultural differences.

• The most approach to provide individual support (e.g. in a form of buddy system), systematising support structures, e.g. by offering a platform of with reliable information (mostly via social media).

• Lobbying for better conditions is not commonly an area of work for student organisations.

• HEIs are the cooperation partners most commonly mentioned.

• Student organisations in our sample generally feel equipped to deal with the challenges of mobile student accommodation at their HEI.

Key messages

93 student organisations answered the survey and evaluated the quality of student accommodation in their countries. In addition, 49 different student organisations shared their in-depth experiences regarding the support they provide to mobile students from 26 Erasmus+ programme countries in their search for accommodation.
The majority of responses were from the local sections of ESN (n=34) as well as student support centres at HEIs and student unions. Most responses came from popular Erasmus destination countries – France, Portugal and Spain.

The Role of student organisations

Student organisations play an important role in supporting and facilitating the study mobility experience at higher education institutions and the main focus seems to be on spreading useful information as well as giving individual support to students (often via a buddy system or having a place/office where students can come for advice) as well as arranging accommodation for them, which is done by the vast majority of the organisations.

Unfortunately, due to the small sample it is not possible to draw any substantial conclusions regarding regional patterns or ways of working for different types of organisations, yet good practises still give insight into issues and possible solutions in the work of student organisations.

Cooperation partners

Student organisations represented in our sample most often cooperate with HEIs but also partner up with hostels and B&Bs, private landlords or private housing providers. There are also such practices as enabling apartment swapping/sub-renting between incoming and outgoing students. Lobbying for better conditions is not very common and just a few organisations say they cooperate with municipalities.

In some locations student organisations stated that they are the only actor supporting students in their search for accommodation and all those were ESN sections. A few were not sure about whether there were other support structures available, which means that almost half of the organisations in our sample that offer mobile student support regarding accommodation could potentially be on their own in dealing with this challenging task. As to the reasons why these organisations have taken on the tasks involving the challenges of mobile student accommodation, half of the answers represent the opinion that there is a lack of any other actors taking on these duties. Some of the student organisations from our sample (all were ESN local sections) also admitted that this task was assigned to them by the HEI but they also mention that since they are often the first point of contact for students, all these accommodation questions are addressed to them and wherewith they are trying to support students as best as they can.

Half of the student organisations also shared their view that they are not the only ones working on the challenges of mobile student accommodation and most often mentioned HEIs as being the other actor dealing with these issues. Some reported that there are also other student organisations or NGOs. In a few locations, private companies also support mobile students in their search for suitable accommodation; this is the case in locations such as Portugal and Spain as well as Belgium, Sweden and Ireland.

In a small number of locations, student organisations from our sample stated that there is more than one alternative organisation that dealing with the challenges of mobile student accommodation. Quantity, of course, does not necessarily mean quality, or one single support centre does not mean that there is not enough support provided. Rather it illustrates that accommodation questions tend to be concentrated in the hands of some units in the organisation/enthusiasts.

Finding Accommodation

The student organisations were asked to evaluate the accommodation situation in their city for both mobile students as well as for domestic ones. In the given sample, according to their assessment the situation for local students also is similar to the case of mobile students, with domestic students enjoying only slightly more advantages.

The main difference is that mobile students are usually accommodated in dorms and often there are not enough places even for local students or the dorms are in a bad state. In addition, mobile students are not entitled to a subsidy to cover part of the costs for student housing as is the case for domestic students. Local students are also either guaranteed student accommodation in their first year at university or live with their parents. Some organisations also voice concerns that there is an increasing number of students but not enough student accommodation opportunities as this sector is growing quite rapidly. All of these aspects were also mentioned in the surveys of students and HEIs.

In around half of the locations the support provided by the Higher Education Institutions is evaluated as (very) good, yet over one fifth believe that there is not enough support provided and more could be done in this area. In our surveys Erasmus+ programme students and trainees are more positive and more than two thirds reported that the information provided by the HEI was useful.

Housing policy is regulated and debated at different levels of government; therefore we asked the respondents how they perceive support from the municipality in assisting students through regulations and advocacy. The majority is dissatisfied with the support from the municipality and this backs up the findings from desk research and other surveys that there is still room for improvement regarding opportunities for cooperation.

The biggest challenges

More than half of the organisations feel confident that they are well equipped to deal with the challenges of accommodation for mobile students. Student organisations report the key issues to be dealt with are the availability of accommodation that is appropriate for students, as well as the price range and contractual agreements that are appropriate for the quality offered and affordable for students. Additional factors, such as a lack of systematic cooperation between the actors involved which could ensure a transparent flow of information are also mentioned. In addition, language barriers create more potential hurdles when communicating with the housing provider. Also student accommodation does not always meet the needs of mobile students and such issues as proximity (also the aspect of dangerous areas in the city), facilities (good internet connection without a 2-year contract), general conditions in the student dormitory are mentioned, issues which would require quality control.

Good practices

When asking student organisations to describe some good practices, they mostly spoke about:

• **Individualised support systems** (e.g. buddy networks) that help students on a case by case basis, which of course comes at a cost as student organisations are often faced with a lack of human resources to deal with such challenges. In the absence of well-functioning structures to deal with these challenges in a more systematic way, it could indeed be a solution to act on case by case basis and to look for individual apartments for specific needs and wishes, visit the property together with students in case of a language barrier, etc. Hence it could also be a pathway to true integration in the host country and an in-depth experience of the exchange.

• **Systematising the support structures.** There are ways to make these systems more sustainable e.g. by bringing previous, current and incoming exchange students together online to help each other. And this aspect of support is also commonly mentioned: the exchange of useful contacts from the previous exchange students (identifying Erasmus flats used by the previous generation of incoming students, trying to create a database from previous years with landlords willing to rent out for 6 months or less, etc.).

• **Cooperation and lobbying.** Some organisations also talk about lobbying and possible cooperation with the HEI, starting with reserving rooms for foreign students to distributing information in a more systematic fashion.

Suggested solutions

Centralised and systematic information provision. Such suggestions as *"organising a database with trusted landlords and giving students the opportunity to give feedback" (Croatia) or "providing a database about available accommodation all around Europe, giving special prices to Erasmus+ trainees/students according to grants."* (Spain).

Intercultural awareness. Student organisations also voice their concern about the need to *"raise awareness about different cultures among both local and international students"* (Estonia) so students understand what an exchange period means as well as the local culture, a creating a win-win situation for incoming students.

Stronger involvement from HEIs. There are differences of opinion regarding the level of responsibility of HEIs in providing student accommodation and some state that *"In a perfect world the university should be able to provide cheap dormitory accommodation for those who are in need of a place to stay"* (Hungary). Also, such support mechanisms as subsidies for building houses and therefore lowering prices are mentioned.

Summary

• Student organisations have identified the biggest challenges for mobile students in the process of finding accommodation to be the lack of available and affordable housing, accessibility of reliable and useful information in the search process, and language and cultural differences.

• Good practices are listed as the provision of individual support (e.g. in a form of a buddy system), systematising support structures by, for example, offering a platform of reliable information (mostly via social media) or matching outgoing and incoming students, cooperation with HEIs, B&Bs or establishing good relations with existing landlords.

• As a way to find a solution regarding mobile student accommodation, generally the provision of more centralised and systematic information is called for so that students know where to find it and who they can trust. It goes hand in hand with advocacy for better cooperation and management from all parties involved. The need to focus on intercultural communication and offer support if needed is also emphasised. Last but not least, even if HEIs are currently the closest and often the main cooperation partner seven more involvement by HEIs is called for to deal with the challenges mobile students have to face.

• Overall it is claimed that the situation for domestic and mobile students regarding accommodation is quite similar and two-thirds of student organisations say that they feel equipped to deal with the challenges of student accommodation at their HEI. Yet around half may be the only organisation working on these issues and supporting mobile students in their search for decent accommodation.

• Lobbying for better conditions is not normally the work of student organisations in our sample.

5.10 Housing Provider Survey

Key messages

• When asking housing providers what were the reasons to focus on student accommodation, they expressed different motivations. Both public and private providers mention the response to market demand, as well as having the task assigned them by HEIs or the local municipality.

• Housing providers see their work as a support measure for HEIs to build their international image, as well as facilitating cultural exchanges.

• Almost half of housing providers state that they cooperate with Higher Education Institutions. 21% work together with student organisations, while 30% of the housing providers have neither a cooperation agreement with a Higher Education Institution or with a student organisation.

• Most housing providers consider mobile students as good tenants, and in the open comments about why they have decided to work with this particular target group revealed that they enjoy working with young people.

Demographics

In total, 144 individual participants answered the survey, of which 126 took part in the English and 18 the French version of the survey. The sample has a balanced share between private and different types of public sector organisations and most answers received were from companies/organisations located in Germany and France. These are predominantly the local sections of the *Deutsche Studentenwerke (DSW) (German Association of Student Services Organisations)* and *CNOUS (Centre régional des oeuvres universitaires et scolaires* – French Association of Student Services Organisations), which are semi-governmental structures and therefore offer insights into the ways the challenges of mobile student accommodation are dealt with within this type of nation-wide structures.

Regarding the specific types of organisation, the majority of responses were recorded from private companies (39), most of which are based in Spain (9), UK (8) and the Netherlands (6). Non-profit organisations/foundations followed with 29 answers and this sector is in particular represented by Italy (8) and Germany (7). Other respondents described themselves as self-governing institutions under public law, 'etablissement public', publicly owned company, as well as individual accommodation providers. The most common type of organisation that answered "other" is a Higher Education Institution that owns accommodation itself.

When looking at how organisations describe themselves in our country sample, in Germany a majority of the respondents are local sections of the   that classify themselves in different ways – i.e. self-governing institutions under public law, non-profit companies/ foundations and publicly owned companies. In France, the vast majority of respondents are an 'etablissement public' (CNOUS).

The majority of the organisations/companies answering the survey questions describe themselves as property owners – 64%. Another 20% sublet and 14% are service providers promoting third party offers. A small share of actors (14%) combines two or all three of the above-mentioned roles.

These results illustrate the diversity of types of actors involved in the provision of student accommodation across countries but also shows a bias towards bigger organisations, as only few local landlords answered the questionnaire. Another group of organisations that is worth mentioning are the so-called 3rd party providers, which are often web platforms which act as intermediaries between landlords and students.

Figure 5.52 - Countries where companies/organisations are based

In which country is your company/organisation based?

Country	Value
Turkey	1
Romania	1
Poland	1
Norway	1
Luxembourg	1
Iceland	1
Greece	1
Estonia	1
Czech Republic	1
Cyprus	1
Sweden	2
Slovenia	2
Slovakia	2
Finland	2
Denmark	2
Ireland	3
Croatia	3
Portugal	4
Belgium	8
Spain	9
Netherlands	12
United Kingdom	13
Italy	16
France	21
Germany	27
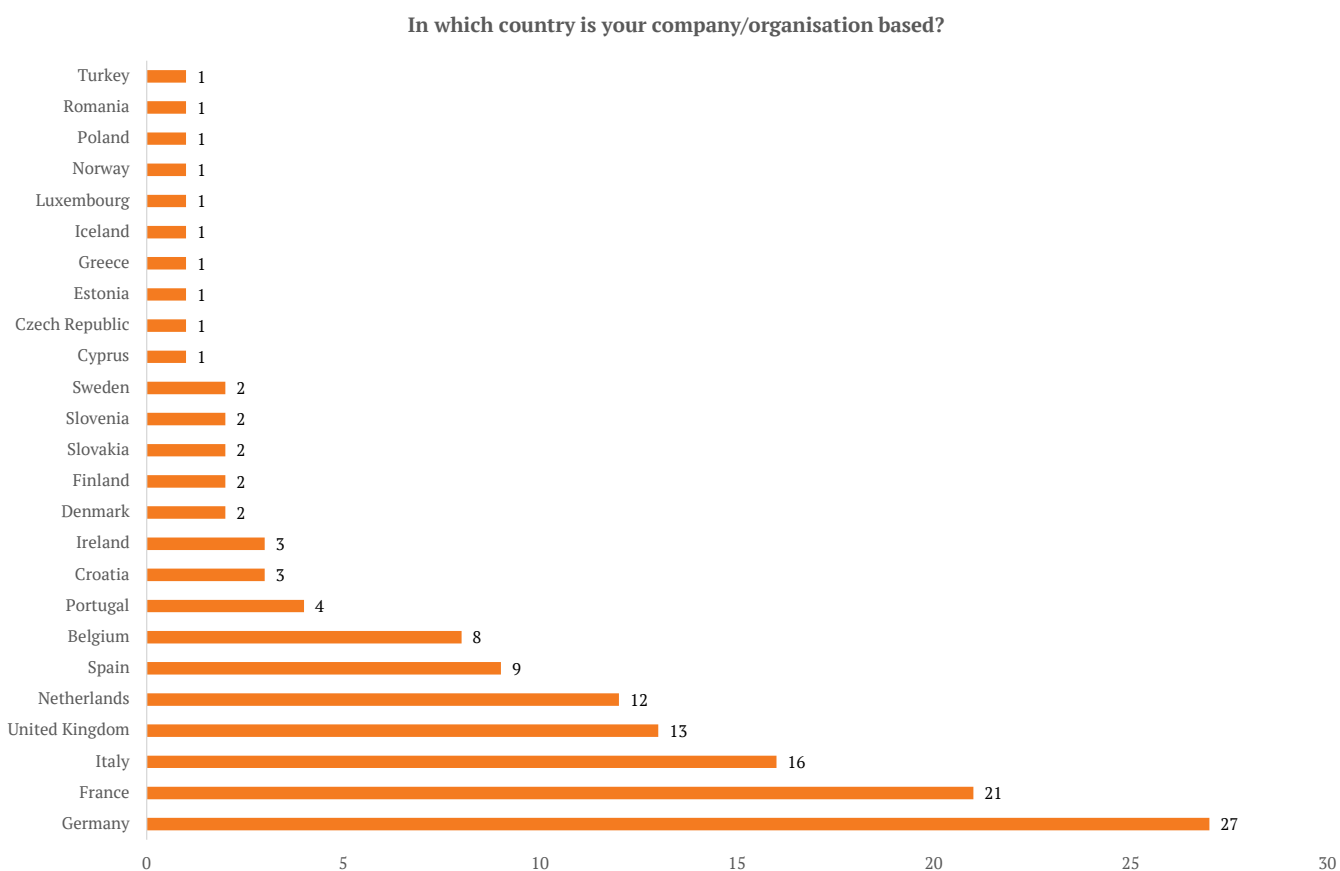
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Services provided

When asked what other services are offered, the most common answer is the provision of comprehensive student services including food (canteens), cultural offers and social activities (in particular welcoming mobile students).

It was also mentioned that the provision of financial support falls in the portfolio of some organisations and in fact the *Deutsche Studentenwerke* in Germany is responsible for managing the federal grant system for students, *BAFöG (Das Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz)*. They deal with the funds and also provide counselling and advice on students' eligibility. DSW administers more than 2.5 billion euros in federal grants, with a similar amount administered by the CNOUS in France.

Both *Studentenwerke* and CNOUS aim at increasing equal opportunities in higher education, improving the basic conditions for studying, and so addressing social, economic and cultural issues. On the homepage of the DSW the nature of the organisation and its work is explained as follows:

"On the one hand, the Studentenwerke work in accordance with modern commercial principles including market and customer orientation, staff qualification and development schemes and quality assurance. On the other hand, they provide public benefit and welfare services as provided for in the German constitution and in state legislation. This is the why the Studentenwerke also provide not-for-profit services and are able to make homogeneous service offers, even at economically unprofitable locations".

In the overall sample of housing providers, both very big and internationally active student housing providers as well as individual landlords are represented. Therefore, the number of beds offered per housing provider differs greatly. Yet, there is a relatively equal distribution between small and big accommodation providers. More than 1/3 of all respondents offer 1,000 or more beds. 124 out of the 139 survey participants describe themselves as housing providers mainly for students.

The housing providers from Germany operate on average with around 3,000 beds, those in France with an average of 5,000 and the prevailing form of housing provider, namely public establishments, tend to have between 1,000 and 10,000 beds.

Only 11 out of the 139 survey participants operate in more than one country and of these 11 survey participants, most operate in 2-3 countries (mostly private companies) and only one participant operates in more than 4 countries. The survey participants that operate in multiple countries were asked what they consider as the benefit of a transnational approach. The wish to reach out to more students and hence find more customers is mentioned as one of the main reasons. Another reason is the aim to better understand the needs of new markets.

General student housing

The survey participants were asked what they consider to be the benefits of focussing on general student housing (available for all students). There follows an overview of the answers:

• **Task assigned by the HEI or municipality.** Both types of actors – private as well as public organisations – report such cooperation. On respondent states: "We are forced to focus on student housing by our own and governmental regulations."(Self-governing institutions under public law, Finland).

• **Building the image of HEI.** Aspects such as providing all the necessary services to students in an easily accessible way to support the incoming flows of students were mentioned. Also that it is necessary for attracting students to the HEI, hence there is a need to ensure that the students get appropriate, safe and well-managed accommodation. "We provide accommodation for students, especially foreigners, to facilitate access to decent housing that meets our quality standard and to support the image of the University [...] as a study destination" (Private company in Spain). Also, the academic aspect is placed in the foreground:

"Living in our Halls of Residence guarantees excellent study conditions for bright and motivated students, regardless of their financial status, so that they can complete their university studies within the correct time schedule and get the best academic results. The [..] residence system represents a multicultural and interdisciplinary melting pot, a "school of life" where students from a multitude of backgrounds and nationalities can meet, all with the same goal: building their future (both personal and professional) in a stimulating environment." (Non-profit organisation/foundation, Italy).

• **Facilitation of cultural exchange and integration.** Student accommodation is also seen as something that "gives students a new opportunity to explore the culture of other countries and places and build peace around the world." (Non-profit organisation/foundation).

• **Response to market demand.** A very practical reason is the growing market with very specific needs that can be profitable. "Lack of student housing and students are willing to engage in social projects" (non-profit organisation/foundation, France). Also, for smaller landlords it could be a window of opportunity as it might be difficult to rent a large apartment to other groups.

• **Good tenants.** Many organisations shared their view that students are a good customer group, as they are up to date, ready to use internet-based services and generally trustworthy and intelligent. Smaller landlords in particular emphasise the fact that students can be pleasant tenants and consider them as "young people with positive energy" (Private company, Slovenia). There are, of course, expressions of negative experiences but the positive ones clearly prevail.

Mobile student housing

Composition of students

When focussing on the mobile student population, housing providers were asked to describe the typical composition of the mobile student population. There is no clear trend and most housing providers mention that they receive students from all over the world but of course, the share of European and non-Europeans varies across the countries. This can be attributed to differences in the language of instruction as well as the general trends in different exchange flows as described in the Desk Research chapter.

Specific policies for mobile students

When asked whether the housing providers have any specific policies for renting out to mobile students, the answers differ according to the type of the housing provider. Overall, public bodies seem to be slightly more likely to have such specific policies in comparison to private companies. The term 'special' can have a broad meaning and can lead to both positive and negative discrimination.

Following is an overview of the answers of **non-profit and public bodies** (non-profit organisation/foundation, self-governing institutions under public law, 'establissement public' and publicly owned company were clustered together) who have special policies for mobile students. Some of the most relevant aspects mentioned as well as the reasoning to have specific policies in place for mobile students are:

• **Reservation of a specific number of places for mobile students.** The majority stated that they reserve a specific number of beds for mobile students. Yet there could still be a specific priority list and, for example, an 'establissement public' in France stated that they give preference first to PhD candidates, then Master students and only after that to Bachelor exchange students. Other regional CNOUS sections stated that they offer accommodation only for students studying for a Masters or higher degree.

• **Need for confirmation of enrolment.** "They need to be students at our HEI. Accommodation is given on a first come, first served basis but priority is given to full-year students." (Non-profit organisation/foundation, Cyprus).

• **More flexible contracts.** The exceptions made for mobile students could be time-related (allowing shorter periods) or no guarantor required (because for example their host institution stands guarantee for them). "We grant them extra points for apartment applications based on an urgent need of apartment. However, the same points are awarded to students arriving from other parts than southern Finland also." (Self-governing institutions under public law, Finland).

• **Higher rent/ need to pay the whole rent in advance/flat rate.** Due to a higher risk and extra administrative work, prices might be higher for mobile students. One of the reasons given for the higher rent is the trouble in dealing with cases when mobile students do not pay the rent and the housing provider has difficulties in taking legal action across borders. Special policies might also mean the need to pay the whole rent in advance. However, two non-profit organisations/foundations from Italy indicated that they also have reduced rents or a flat rate for mobile students.

• **Start-up kit.** Local *Studentenwerke* from Germany share the strategy to have a "carefree package" that can include such aspects as an integration programme, support for day-to-day chores like laundry, meals, etc. Another interesting example is a package deal for mobile students that is offered by a university in Belgium, including:
o "specific residences for mobile students (with a housekeeper)
o specific renting period: 5 months instead of 12 months
o financial reduction (it is possible to rent also only for 10 months instead of a whole year)
o double rooms (to be shared with another student) to have a cheaper rent
o a deposit of 2 months (instead of 1 month)".

• **A label to help students find reliable and qualitative housing.** A non-profit organisation/foundation from the UK explained that they have established a system to recognise private halls and landlords who provide a fair and transparent service to mobile students – for more on the criteria and practicalities of granting this label, see "International Friendly Standard"[60].

When asking **private companies** regarding their special policies, the main aspect is confirmation that the mobile student is enrolled at a specific HEI, but other documentation could also be required: "we need a visa, registration and a bank statement" (private company, Germany). Other aspects that are mentioned are: locally based guarantor as a requirement, as well as paying the whole rent in advance. Furthermore, due to additional administrative work and shorter contracts, extra fees and higher prices sometimes apply to mobile students. "There is a one-time fee of €200 for contracts of less than 10 months." (Private company, Belgium). Private companies also understand that mobile students would prefer fully furnished housing so they offer rooms that are ready to live in.

To sum up, the most common services offered to mobile students are: reservation of a contingent of rooms for them or simplified access to accommodation through different processes like point systems. Financial specificities are mentioned multiple times. In some cases these are more conditions, in other cases more lose ones. Housing providers mention higher prices and an additional administrative fee

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[60]See: http://www.manchesterstudenthomes.com/pages/LL_IFS.

as more strict conditions. On the other hand, renting for shorter periods, such as 5 or 10 months instead of 12 and offering double rooms to save money are mentioned as beneficial conditions for mobile students. Specific services for mobile students have been mentioned as well – support with daily chores, integration programmes and the like. Legal issues like the proof of a visa and identity, as well as proof of enrolment at a HEI are also mentioned multiple times.

Complementary services offered to students

When looking at **non-profit and public bodies** (non-profit organisation/foundation, self-governing institutions under public law, 'etablissement public' and publicly owned company were clustered together) regarding complementary services for mobile students the following aspects were mentioned:

• **Tutor/buddy programme.** The most common way to support students is the peer-to-peer approach, where mobile students get a local tutor/buddy to support them. There are different forms of tutor/buddy programmes, e.g. one organisation mentioned that there are students specially assigned in their dormitories. Another one states that there are students available in the welcome offices. DSW and CNOUS mention that they have student available to support mobile students; they are paid by the institution throughout the year.

• **Integration programmes.** Welcoming events/weeks/procedures and activities such as welcome and orientation days/week with specific programmes to get to know the local culture, free tickets to cultural events. Social, cultural and sports events and activities throughout the semester: "Student tutors in each dorm who organise a program of activities for both international and national students. Tutors also offer counselling and help with cultural adjustment." (*Studentenwerk*, Germany)

• **Counselling.** "Service packages: psychosocial, financial and social counselling." (*Studentenwerk*, Germany). A wider scope of activities available outside the exchange period are also offered: "informative courses and job orientation and soft skills meetings and workshops with the aim of improving the students' curriculum and facilitating their integration into the working world" (non-profit organisation/foundation, Italy). Also, intercultural mediation is mentioned.

• **Language courses.** Self-governing institutions under public law in Portugal, as well as four non-profit organisations/foundations in Italy, mention free language courses.

• **Specific key support services upon arrival.** These services can include a pick-up service from the airport, health insurance, pastoral services, support in the search for private housing, a one-stop support centre where they can deal with all the paperwork, as well as specific opening hours.

• **Documents available also in other languages.** The translation of relevant documents, as well as trained staff and websites available in English are mentioned as complementary support services.

• **Practical support kits.** The provision of bed linen, TV, library, easy-access internet contracts in place, free bus to IKEA and other small-scale services are mentioned as well.

Among private companies, the services provided partly resemble the offers also available from public and non-profit bodies but seem to be narrower in scope. Pick-up services, welcome packs with bedding/kitchen packs, local sim card and other practical items as well as the availability of information in English are the most commonly mentioned aspects. Just three companies mentioned counselling or legal advice or support with insurance arrangements. Just two mention support with local integration (cultural aspects), or support in finding an internship.

To sum up, a range of services were mentioned several times, which shows a wide variety of support that is being offered due to the specific needs of mobile students. Some of these are more practical, while others are aimed rather at improving the quality of students' stay, such as social, cultural and sports events. Welcoming and orientation activities, tutor and buddy programmes as well as integration and language courses help students to integrate. As we can see, the student experience stands at the centre of the answers provided. This shows that there is a general understanding of the needs of students and that necessary services have been clearly identified. The awareness of such offers should serve as an indicator for housing providers that are considering breaking into the student housing market or feel that they do not have the necessary services to offer high quality student housing yet.

Advantages and disadvantages to hosting mobile students

To the question whether there is a perceived advantage or disadvantage to renting out to mobile students, the answers vary broadly. 31% of housing providers describe advantages whereas a little above 20% describe disadvantages and around one third of the housing providers described no perceived advantages or disadvantages, while around 4% say there are both.

Following is a list of advantages and disadvantages as stated by the housing providers.

Advantages:
• **Good tenants.** "They normally are normally reliable tenants (good at payments and keeping the houses in good condition)." (Private company, Spain)

• **Cultural exchange.** "It adds diversity and culture to the student population, thereby giving all students a broader set of experience to learn from." (Self-governing institutions under public law, UK).

• **Good business.** Good in terms of business, as they frequently use services which increases sales revenues" (Self-governing institutions under public law, Portugal)

• **Building the image of the HEI.** "Helps the university to achieve the target of being a "global" institution (Self-governing institutions under public law, UK).

Disadvantages:
• **Short contracts.** Exchange students stay only for one semester. This can create challenges. To compensate for the higher need of flexibility, rooms for mobile students need to be costlier and also administration costs are increasing. Usually, the first term sees a higher number of exchange students and in the second term a lot of rooms stay empty as the students leaving after the first semester are not compensated for by the lower number of students coming for the second semester. Yet in other locations it could be easier to find accommodation for the first semester. Higher turnover results in more rapid deterioration of the building/furniture.

• **Extra support needed.** Need more counselling than local students who know the local culture, administrative processes, local language etc.

• **International challenges from the legal perspective.** Despite being usually better tenants in terms of paying rents in time, in case mobile students do not pay the rent (in time), it is very challenging to take legal action against students from overseas. Also returning deposits is more difficult with banks in other countries. Also, if no guarantor can be provided, the HEI at home or the parents need to provide it. Renting to a student who does not get a visa can become a challenge, as a last-minute replacement needs to be found which can result in loss of rent.

• **Cultural differences.** This factor can lead to disputes (e.g. volume, rules for sorting rubbish, cooking, issues with hygiene or cleanliness of homes, etc.). Some groups of mobile students build their own communities and do not integrate, which might lead to frustration with the landlords or neighbours.

It needs to be said that the perceived advantages are often described as positive in the sense of the student experience in a cultural context or as an added value in terms of business, whereas the disadvantages can be categorised into administrative challenges and cultural challenges.

Legal and financial incentives to rent to mobile students

To the question whether there are any legal or financial incentives to rent to mobile students, only 2% of the housing providers answered positively and an additional 9% were not sure. The answer "I don't know" comes from non-profit organisations/foundations.
The following aspects were given as examples for incentives and are shared by non-profit organisations/foundations:

• Sponsoring from the HEI means they can employ an intercultural social worker (Germany)

• Mobile students can benefit from the financial help of the CAF, landlords can deduct a part of these incomes (rents) when they declare their taxes (France)

All in all, there seem to be very few legal or financial incentives, which confirms the observation that policymakers are not very aware of the special requirements for student accommodation, let alone student accommodation for mobile students.

Information provided to students

Housing providers offer a wide range of information to students. When asked to identify the type of information they typically provide, almost all housing providers indicate such aspects as type of accommodation, cost, location and photos. Other information – e.g. student reviews and a ground plan - are less likely to be provided and, if at all, these options tend to come from private companies. Availability is less often indicated by public and non-profit organisations, i.e. self-governing institutions under public law, non-profit organisations/foundations, 'etablissement public'. Very few organisations provide student reviews, which, in a time of community-driven review systems in almost all areas of life, is another indicator for the huge fragmentation of the student housing market.

Figure 5.53 - Type of information provided about the accommodation on offer
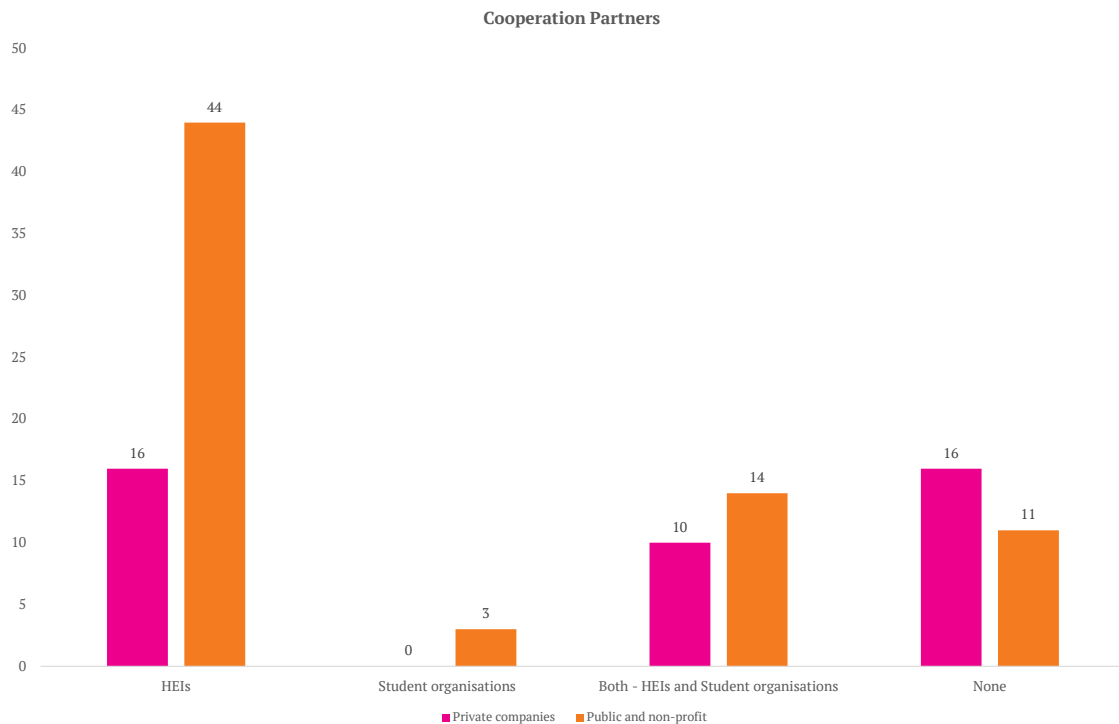
Information provision
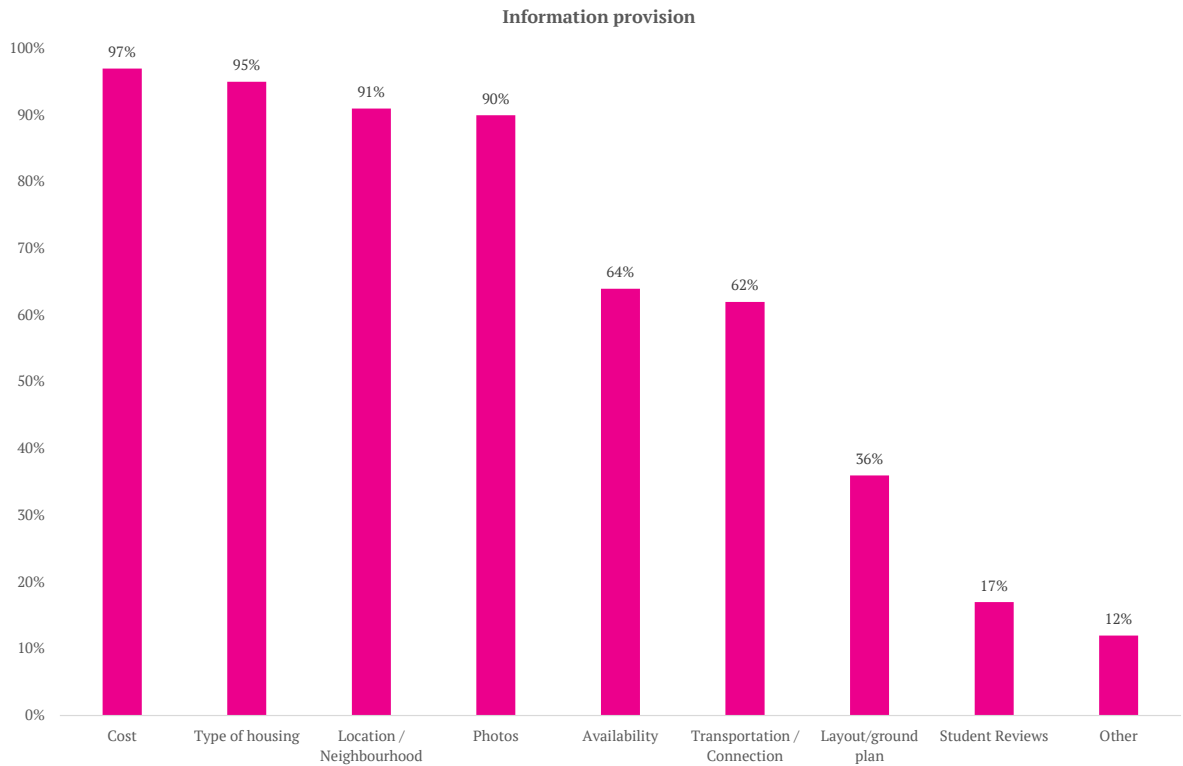
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Cooperation with other stakeholders

Another important aspect of the housing market for mobile students
is cooperation with other stakeholders.

Figure 5.54 - Cooperation partners of housing providers

Cooperation Partners

Private companies   Public and non-profit

Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

As seen in Figure 5.55, more than half (44% + 14%) of public and non-profit housing providers answer positively with regard to cooperation with Higher Education Institutions, whereas only 26% (16% + 10%) of private providers mention such cooperation. This means on the one hand that the private housing market for students is more self-organised and on the other hand that there is a clear lack of cooperation between the private sector and Higher Education Institutions.

When it comes to cooperation with student unions, neither private nor public/non-profit organisations cooperate often with student unions, which should naturally be the voice for the needs and expectations of both students in general and also mobile students in particular.

When asked what "other" cooperation partners exist, Internet platforms for renting out to mobile students are the most frequently mentioned. In general, public and non-profit organisations seem to be more eager to cooperate with other stakeholders.

Students with disabilities

On the question whether student accommodation is fit to host students with disabilities, Figure XX shows an equal distribution between accessible and non-accessible accommodation. The number of students with disabilities taking part in a mobility experience is still marginally small compared to the number of their peers without disabilities. Offering special services and student accommodation fit to host students with disabilities would contribute to removing those obstacles. Given the lack of awareness of the needs of the mobile student population, one can assume that there is also very little awareness of hosting mobile students with disabilities. The EU co-funded project Exchangeability has been trying to explore the accessibilities of higher education in general and has shown that more in-depth research on the accessibility of student accommodation could contribute to a better understanding of the needs and circumstances of students with disabilities embarking on a mobility experience.

Figure 5.55 - Student accommodation fit for students with disabilities
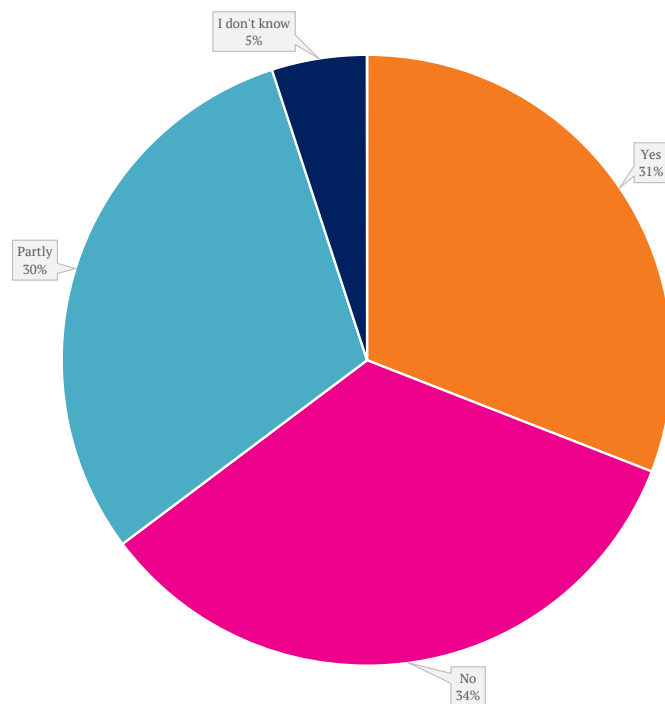
Data source: HousErasmus+ survey 2016

Good practices

All housing providers were asked to share good practices through the survey. The following is a list of particularly relevant good practices as recommended by the housing providers:

• Create a particular programme(s) to help mobile students settle in, make friends and be supported with any issues that might arise during their time in the accommodation

• Provide information in the necessary languages and translate documents like agreements into the necessary languages

• Offer support staff that speak the necessary languages and have the intercultural skills to work with mobile students

• Create close collaboration with the HEI and active networking

• Establish an off-campus property accreditation scheme; properties and landlords checked by HEI and verified as suitable for student use

• Use to send a "co-houser form" to all the students who decide to share their flat with other students so we can accommodate students with similar habits in the same flat

Summary

• 144 answers were gathered from different housing providers operating in Erasmus+ programme countries.

• The sample has a balanced share between private and different types of public and non-profit sector organisations. The following structures were classified as public and semi-public as well as non-profit organisations:
• self-governing institutions under public law,
• 'etablissement public',
• publicly owned companies,
• non-profit organisations/foundations.

Additionally, individual accommodation providers and Higher Education Institutions that own accommodation themselves also participated in the survey.

• The majority of the organisations/companies answering the survey questions describe themselves as property owners (64%). Another 20% sublet and 14% are service providers promoting third party offers. However, housing providers offer additional services, the most common being the provision of food (canteens), cultural offers, social spaces and social activities (in particular welcoming mobile students).

• Many answers of the survey come from local sections of DSW (Germany) and CNOUS (France), which can be connected to their associate partnership in the project. They are semi-governmental nation-wide networks of non-profit local organisations that support students and ensure that they have access to affordable and decent housing. Both *Deutsche Studentenwerke* and CNOUS provide a range of additional services to students. There is usually one local *Studentenwerk* or CNOUS organisation at each HEI or city with multiple HEIs.

• As the reason to work in the field of student housing, the motivations most commonly given are: a response to market demand and the need to support incoming students, as well as a task assigned by the HEI or municipality. It is also seen as a support for the HEI to build their international image as well as facilitation of cultural exchange and integration. Private providers also mention the aspect that students are generally seen as good tenants that are easy to work with: they are ready to use modern technologies which save time and resources, as well as being generally positive and therefore pleasant to interact with.

• There is a wide variety of support mechanisms that are offered due to the specific needs of mobile students. Some are more practical, such as pick-up and specific opening hours, etc. Others are aimed more at improving the quality of students' stay such as social, cultural and sports events. Welcoming and orientation activities, tutor and buddy programmes as well as integration and language courses help students to integrate.

• When specific policies for mobile students are discussed, financial specificities are mentioned multiple times and could mean both – stricter or easier conditions – higher prices and administrative fees or the possibility to rent for 5 or 10 months instead of 12 and offering double rooms so students can save money, which illustrates the diversity of the housing providers and their approach.

• Unfortunately, not many examples of legal or financial incentives were gathered, which illustrates potential room for improvement in the ways mobile students can be supported.

5.11 Policymakers and Stakeholders

Key messages

• The difficulties in identifying policymakers responsible for student housing showcases the absence of the topic from policy agendas.

• The policymaker survey demonstrates the diversity of the scope of operation of potential actors involved in housing issues (e.g. national, regional level) as well as the range of interests they might have in addition to legislative duties (e.g. urban planning, support for the HEI in their internationalisation strategy to provide qualitative housing for the students, carrying out surveys to monitor quality and strategic planning).

• Good practices that could be indicated are legal incentives, i.e. legislation that aims at fostering the educational and social integration of mobile students, as well as collaboration with HEIs, student organisations and other relevant stakeholders.

Demographics

Mapping policymakers and reaching out to them was a challenging task, which also could serve as a potential indicator that there might be a lack of involvement from a policy perspective.

Policymakers in the context of the HousErasmus+ project were identified according to the standard definition from political science – as the actors having real legislative power, hence public bodies that are in charge of making or adjusting the rules and laws that directly influence the infrastructure providing student accommodation. It also means that both the national as well as the municipality level is meant. Nevertheless, due to the low response rate opinions from other stakeholders will also be looked at in order to get more insights about the status quo and on-going discussions regarding the situation for mobile students.

As the Desk Research on legal aspects of housing, as well as study visits and regional conferences illustrated, public bodies often do not have specific departments for student housing and even housing in general is often a co-responsibility of different units such as urban planning. This makes the prospects of cooperation with other stakeholders even more of a challenge.

The ten answers gathered are from six different countries, with Austria and France having three answers each, while Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands and Spain returned one answer each. Four of the responses represent policymakers in the usual sense of the word (having legislative power) but all other answers represent organisations or institutions that are not in charge of the actual decision-making process but still actively take part in discussion process, for example, as advisory bodies, advocacy work etc. As the relevant data is mostly qualitative, the comments of these organisations are also considered.

Policymakers' scope of action

The aim of the questionnaire was to understand the responsibility of policymakers when it comes to student housing. Even if the low response rate does not allow for an in-depth analysis or recognition of patterns, the answers provided illustrate the complexity and diversity of the pool of policymakers and stakeholders which are involved at least to some extent in the discussion of (student) accommodation.

As for the responsibility of the organisation/institution regarding housing policy, roles do differ and some are involved in lobbying as well as making sure that society is well informed about the housing market and student accommodation options. Others focus on strategic planning of housing and formulating policies for new housing to be built or regarding the legal aspects of its management as well as social housing projects. It is also pointed out that responsibilities can differ depending on the scope of activity of policymakers and in fact some operate in municipalities with 35,000 citizens or at a regional level with up to 1.8 million citizens.

To sum up, policymakers indicate that their responsibilities can be manifold. The following are typical responsibilities:
• Urban planning - defining local plans for inter-municipal planning
• Involvement in HEI real estate strategies, including campuses, which also includes transportation and renovation of housing
• Annual survey on student housing in the agglomeration/strategic studies
• Innovative projects – social housing, smart cities.

Even if the sample was very small it still revealed synergies of housing policies integrated in the wider scope of planning strategies for education, social, economic and other aspects. For example, a regional French policymaker quotes new legislation that has been in place since August 2015:
"The Regional Council shall have the competence to promote the economic, social, health, cultural and scientific development of the region, provide support for access to housing and the improvement of housing, of the city and urban renewal and support for educational policies and the development and equality of its territories, as well as to ensure the preservation of its identity and the promotion of regional languages, Integrity, autonomy and powers of the departments and municipalities".

Specific policies for student housing
When asked whether the organisation/institution has a specific policy for student housing, only six confirmed such practices. This once again shows the diversity of policymakers but also that student housing is not naturally part of an area of interest and influence for organisations/institutions dealing with housing issues.

Is there really a problem to address?
When asked why there is no specific policy for student housing, only one response was given. A policymaker from Spain stated that the

private housing market is adequate for students to find appropriate accommodation without the need for specific intervention from the policy perspective. This answer is in no way representative and, seeing that access to Higher Education and Mobility in particular are still socially selective, there would be strong counter-arguments against this opinion. As can be seen from the surveys of HEIs and students, there is still a strong mismatch between how appropriate HEIs assume accommodation is and the expectations students have of student accommodation. Even though a range of services and support systems has developed naturally within the broader framework of student accommodation, the fact that mature markets like the UK still have a lower satisfaction rating than markets where less services are offered show that not having policymakers involved might be an issue.

When the public sector steps in
The city of Helsinki indicates that 25% of newly built housing is subsidised, where 300 units per year will be built as rental units intended for students. In a similar approach, EPA Plaine de France is responsible for building 70,000 new houses per year for 25 years. As part of this responsibility, they state that they are developing a new district for both international and local students with 5,000 housing units, which includes also amenities and services such as culture, sport and health care. These examples show that there can be a real impact when the public sector gets involved in building student accommodation and that some policymakers have identified the student accommodation market as one to focus on.

In both cases housing issues are a communal responsibility rather than a regional one, which underpins the assumption that the sort of policymakers that can be involved in student housing can be highly diverse and that generalisations are hard to make even within certain countries.

Mobile student housing

When asked to describe housing policies specifically for mobile students, none of the respondents mentioned concrete policies. This illustrates the fact that the specific needs of mobile students as identified in this research paper are not yet part of public awareness.

Potential problems
It was mentioned that non-domestic students are not eligible for an existing "housing scholarship" by the state, nor can they usually apply for social housing and, as we know from surveys with other actors, often they are not entitled to a place in student dormitories unless specially reserved for them by the HEI, etc. This makes it clear that there are potential problems exchange students face – and the question is: what are the support mechanisms that are in place?

From the Desk Research and the sample gathered through the survey, it is evident that policymakers often face an overlap of competencies with other levels of public administration on the topic of housing. One answer of the survey indicated that such structural overlap is intentional, even though it can make cooperation patterns more complex. Strategic planning is mentioned as an example, which is often a shared responsibility done in partnership with multiple municipalities or regions. In France, a partnership with CROUS is mentioned as one such good practice.

Unfortunately, the sample does not allow us to draw any conclusions on the cooperation between policymakers and Higher Education Institutions. Naturally, one would assume that HEIs have a strong influence on regional and local policies, as they have an important impact on the community. Furthermore, one could assume that municipalities interested in attracting international talent to would want to cooperate with HEIs in this matter.

Support for stakeholders
When asking policymakers to describe how they support private entrepreneurs dealing with student housing, practices such as tax exemptions are mentioned but not elaborated on. Another aspect mentioned is the provision of grants and subsidies, yet again without specifying the criteria or amounts. Lastly, one policymaker described the service provided searching for appropriate land as support for housing.

Several policymakers also talk about working together with student organisations. For example, the city of Helsinki describes close collaboration and meetings 2-4 times per year together with other partners such as HEIs to discuss the housing situation for students. The EPA Plaine mentions collaboration with the Erasmus Student Network, FAGE (*Fédération des associations générales étudiantes*) and AFEV.

None of the policymakers questioned talked about the use of EU funding for building housing, yet multiple mention national schemes. One example is the "Ecocity" certification by EPA Plein de France, which allows them to receive financial support through a national programme to support ecological urban projects.

A French policymaker also indicated that while properties are waiting for confirmation for bigger projects, they can be used for temporary student housing which can be built for 5-10 years before permission for a bigger project is granted.

Summary

Policymakers were the most challenging focus group that the Hous-Erasmus+ project tried to reach out to. The low response rate already illustrates the difficulty of mapping them, as well as the diversity regarding their scope of operation (e.g. national, regional level) and also the range of interests they might cover in addition to their legislative duties (e.g. urban planning, support for the HEI in its internationalisation strategy to provide qualitative housing for students, carrying out surveys to monitor quality and strategic planning).

It is also difficult to draw any conclusions about the importance attributed to social policies and what level of interest there is in supporting particularly mobile students as much as possible, as all of the support mechanisms mentioned seem to be targeted at domestic students.

Some of the good practices that could be indicated are:

• Legal incentives – legislation that aims at fostering educational and social integration of mobile students

• Support for private companies interested in providing student housing (tax exemptions, subsidies)

• Collaboration with HEIs and student organisations to discuss the housing situation for students – meeting 2-4 times a year as a way to stay abreast of developments

• Using the window of opportunity when waiting for confirmation for bigger projects – use these few years to provide temporary student housing.

6. Study visits

Aarhus

Status quo

Aarhus is Denmark's city with the highest number of students per capita. With around 330,000 citizens in the municipal region of Aarhus, it is Denmark's second biggest city after Copenhagen.

The University of Aarhus had around 44,500 students in the academic year 2015/16 and represents the majority of students in the city. The university is complemented by nine additional Higher Education Institutions such as the academy of art, etc.

Main challenges

Due to the high number of students, student housing is a big challenge. Every academic year around 12,000 new students start studying in Aarhus, resulting in a huge influx into the student housing market in August and September, making it difficult for students to find the right apartment at the beginning of the semester. According to student housing providers and the university, the market saturates in October/November and in January and February there are usually empty student apartments. The average price of student housing ranges from 300-600 euros.

Good practices

HEI reserves accommodation and pays for the months it stays empty in between the semesters

At the University of Aarhus, the vast majority of Erasmus students have their accommodation organised by the institution, which reserve 700 student flats throughout the year. As Erasmus students usually occupy those flats only 9-10 months per year, the remaining 2-3 months of rent is covered by the university. This practice is very helpful for Erasmus students but at the same time very costly for the university. The International Relation Office manages the allocation of student housing and tries to reserve sufficient student accommodation to cater for all incoming Erasmus students who would like to make use of the offer.

Degree seeking international students do not experience the same support, as they are considered regular students. This means that they need to compete in the local housing market which is very competitive. To get an apartment in the city centre, students need to collect points in a queueing system for around two years and even getting a normal student apartment can take up to 6 months of queuing. When looking at the results of the online surveys, full-degree mobile students studying in Denmark indicate that they do receive some support and even if they feel more discriminated in comparison to those who are doing credit mobility, they are not left completely on their own.

Close collaboration with housing providers – a board consisting of

student representatives

The main student housing provider of Aarhus, Kollegiekontoret, provides around half of Aarhus' 10,000 student accommodation units and collaborates closely with other student accommodation providers to display their student accommodation on Kollegiekontoret's website, which is available in English.

Kollegiekontoret is a private non-profit company which has a board, where the majority of members are students. This helps to facilitate the decision-making processes and ensure a democratic way of making students' voices heard. The representatives usually consist of students from 34 apartment-specific boards. Each apartment complex or dorm has its own board which regulates daily life and rules in their building/complex.

The role of the municipality – subsidies for building new student accommodation as well as facilitation of cooperation structures
One fourth of all student accommodation built in Aarhus is subsidised by the Municipality of Aarhus, which provides 10% of the building costs. Additionally, the municipality organises regular meetings between all involved stakeholders - Higher Education Institutions, students, student accommodation providers and policymakers. This so called "Aarhus model" ensures excellent cooperation between all relevant actors and a wide awareness of challenges and possible solutions. The municipality wants to attract international talent by providing a one-stop service point for mobile students and expats to register in the city and get all their paperwork done. This practice has been adopted by the Danish government and is now implemented in many Danish cities.

Athens

Status quo
Athens is the capital of Greece and in its metropolitan area it has almost 3 million inhabitants. It is Greece's top destination for mobile students.

During the study visit, two large public universities were visited - the Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB) and the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA), with 230 and 150 incoming students per year respectively.
The rents in Athens are relatively low compared to other European countries and according to all interviewed stakeholders, prices have been decreasing further after the financial crisis. Hence, the low rents and the abundant housing market were mentioned as positive attributes when searching for an apartment in Athens.

Main challenges
Both universities organise student mobility partly in a decentralised manner (faculty Erasmus+ coordinators) and through a central international relations office. Neither of the universities offers student accommodation directly to students, as dorms are not common in Greece and are usually reserved for Greek students from weaker socio-economic backgrounds. Despite the centralised approach to organising mobility, the international relations offices in both universities are very involved in providing support to mobile students to find accommodation.

The housing market seems very scattered and there is little offered in terms of organised services outside of university support. Almost all students stay in private apartments, which are often rented out as shared flats, particularly for mobile students.

Students mentioned the language and the lack of contracts, as well as unusual requests for cash payments as the main challenges to finding accommodation in Athens. Security concerns were mentioned but do not seem to be a predominant issue.

Good practices
Support with cultural integration
ESN NTUA has a "housing team", which supports the university in providing students with information about housing. All students are contacted by the housing team before their arrival with information on accommodation. The Housing Team maintains a database of available private apartments. The housing team usually consists of part-time students and collaborates closely with the local Erasmus Student Network.
Besides that, Greek language courses are offered and ESN helps with cultural adaptation which is an important part of the exchange and also plays a role in finding accommodation and living in Greece.

Up-to-date information databases

AUEB, on the other hand, helped to set up and now collaborates very closely with StayInAthens.com, one of the main online providers for mobile student housing in Athens. The online platform StayInAthens.com was established in 2007 by former Erasmus students that saw a high demand for accommodation combined with the challenges posed by the language as an opportunity to support mobile students by providing an offer online. The platform currently hosts around 110-120 apartments. The website cooperates closely with ESN sections in Athens and cooperates generally with ESN Greece. It also offers internship positions to ESN members who would like to support students further.

Barcelona

Status quo

Barcelona is Spain's second most populated municipality, as well as the capital of the autonomous community of Catalonia. Barcelona itself has around 1.6 million inhabitants and its metropolitan area over 5.3 million inhabitants.

During the study visit, the University of Barcelona (UB), the Politechnic University of Catalunia (UPC), as well as the Pompeu Fabra University (UPF) were interviewed. UB and UPC receive around 1,200 exchange students each year, while UPF receives around 600. With Spain being the destination with the most incoming Erasmus students per year, demand is particularly high.

Main challenges

The housing market in Barcelona is relatively fragmented, with many private providers that offer single rooms or apartments. Only few residences or dorms exist and none of them are owned by HEIs. Due to Barcelona being a main tourist destination, the housing market is very challenging and rents are comparatively high for the Spanish market. The attractiveness to rent apartments through services such as Airbnb makes the housing market even more competitive and increases rents further.

Students that do not speak Spanish or Catalan often face challenges. Additionally, it is more difficult to find short term accommodation, as mobile students often compete with Spanish students for the same apartments.

Good practices

Centralised service centre

A wide range of big public universities has for that reason established the Barcelona Centre Universitari (BCU), which is responsible on behalf of the universities for a wide range of student services, amongst which housing plays an important role. The universities see themselves mainly as information providers and all institutions refer to RESA Housing, a subsection of the BCU. Additionally, some of the institutions cooperate with the local Erasmus Student Network or cooperate with online providers such as Housing Anywhere or Uniplaces.

RESA Housing is the head reservation office for accommodation and has been providing its services for more than 10 years. Through a website which is available in Spanish, English and Catalan, as well as an office in Barcelona, they provide accommodation in around 500 flats, mainly aimed at mobile students. Despite this big offer, it does not cover the high demand in student accommodation.

Buddy programmes

The Erasmus Student Network has very strong local associations which organise buddy programmes to help students integrate and support them in finding accommodation.

Berlin

Status quo

With a population of 3.5 million inhabitants, Berlin is the biggest city in Germany. It is also the capital of the country and as such, it attracts the highest number of students in the country.

The city has four public research universities and more than 30 private, professional, and universities of applied sciences, offering a wide range of disciplines. A record number of 175,651 students were enrolled in the winter term of 2015/16.

Main challenges

Although Berlin is a major European capital, the housing situation does not seem to be as problematic as in other capitals and/or big cities. Several housing providers (public and private) are tackling the student market already and there is no shortage of affordable housing in Berlin, especially thanks to the provision of (very) affordable accommodation from the *Studentenwerk*. Also, as Berlin is a very international city, many landlords speak a decent level of English and are more willing to rent to mobile students.

Good practices

Centralised service provider

The *Studentenwerke* are the main housing providers for students in Germany. There are 58 *Studentenwerke* in the whole country providing economic, social, health and social support to 2.75 million students in Germany, including 320,000 mobile students, in more than 300 Higher Education Institutions. They provide affordable accommodation for students.

A national umbrella organisation called Deutsches *Studentenwerk* supports the 58 local *Studentenwerke* by providing a platform for training and exchange of good practices. The *Studentenwerk* Berlin covers approximately 20 Higher Education Institutions particularly by

- representing the social interests of students and the *Studentenwerke* vis-à-vis politics, the public and leading university and science associations,

- bringing its expertise to bear on national and regional legislation,

- and by providing a platform for training and the exchange of good practices.

Tutor/buddy programme

The *Studentenwerk* Berlin has implemented a system of residence tutors and country tutors to support (international) students. Residence tutors are regular "mentors" or "buddies" as already implemented in several Higher Education Institutions in Europe. They have hours when they are available at the residence for any kind of support that students might need. They also animate the residence, organising gatherings, dinners, parties and competitions between residents. Their position is funded by their respective *Studentenwerk* as a part-time student job and they liaise between the administration and students. A similar practice can be found at the University of Potsdam (next to Berlin) where the International Relation Office employs two students among the ESN volunteers for a 20h-student-job. This can be considered as good practice.

One innovative aspect is that they are complemented with the support of 3 "country tutors" that are in responsible for supporting mobile students coming from a specific region of the world: China, Africa and the Middle East. These country tutors are recruited among mobile students originally from these regions who know the culture, the habits and (some of) the language(s). They can better understand the cultural shock and provide a more personalised peer-to-peer support to students coming from these areas, who are often reluctant to contact the administration when they are facing issues. They liaise between students and the *Studentenwerk* administration to ensure better cooperation and mutual understanding.

Tailor-made service packages for mobile students

Twenty First and Smartment Studenten-Apartments are two companies that were recently established as online platforms to offer student accommodation in different cities in Germany (Smartment Studenten-Apartments will start providing housing in Berlin in early 2018). They both provide a range of extra services to students (welcome packs, residence tutors, etc.) trying to adapt to their needs and making it as simple as possible for mobile students to find a flat.

Twenty First is developing a social media service called "Twenty First Connect". It will be both a web application and smartphone application. The aim of this app is to:

• Connect residents to other residents and student ambassadors (volunteer position), allowing information to be exchanged, events within the residence, and meetings with other residences to be organised

• Connect residents to residence managers, allowing exchange of practical information in the residence (e.g. your package has arrived, you can pick it up tomorrow) or complaints (e.g. my neighbour is listening to loud music).

• Connect residents to the marketing team of Twenty First, for billing, online storage of rental agreements, invoices, etc.

A wiki part will be included where residents and ambassadors will be encouraged to write tips about the residence, the neighbourhood, the city, etc. for future tenants.

Budapest

Status quo

Budapest is the capital of Hungary and has a metropolitan population of around 3.3 million inhabitants. It has 21 universities and a wide range of smaller colleges of higher education.

During the study visit, two universities were interviewed. The Eötvös Lóránd University (ELTE) is the biggest university in Budapest and has around 400-500 incoming Erasmus students per year and 10% of its student population is from abroad. The second institution interviewed is the Central European University, a private university with 83% of mobile student population with only 20-30 Erasmus students per year.

Main challenges

The housing market provision in Budapest is slightly below the European average but has seen a steady increase in the past years. Housing providers as well as universities interviewed agreed that tourist services, such as Airbnb, contribute to the competitiveness in the housing market and increase the prices for student apartments. Budapest being a popular destination for conferences further increases this challenge. There are dormitories in Budapest but it is not a very common type of accommodation. Most students stay in single or shared apartments.

Challenges described by students focus mainly on communication challenges due to language issues, as well as landlords who do not want to sign contracts, ask for cash deposits and the challenge to find short-term accommodation, as landlords prefer to rent out for mid or long term.

ELTE suggests that there should be increased cooperation between the universities (e.g. national rectors conference) and the housing market to build more dormitories and provide more high-quality accommodation for students.

The ApartmentsOfBudapest.com company started in 2006, specifically targeting mobile students that are looking for apartments in Budapest. The fact that mobile students are willing to pay a little more for additional services and English/German speaking support, makes them an interesting market. ApartmentsOfBudapest.com offers around 1,100 beds and can be considered a major housing provider in Budapest. Unfortunately, no cooperation with universities exist, as they universities are described as conservative in terms of cooperating with the private market, which limits the possibilities to jointly improve the offer.

Good practices

Special scholarship for mobile students – to attract talent

The Hungarian government provides the Stipendium Hungaricum for students at public universities, which is managed by the National Agency and allows students to apply for a scholarship to study in Hungary. Typically, Stipendium Hungaricum students are provided by free accommodation by the university. This scheme is complementary to the Erasmus+ programme and attracts talent and provides great opportunities for universities to offer support services to students which they could not through the Erasmus+ scheme.

HEI taking supporting students upon arrival – time frame before semester

CEU offers temporary accommodation for 8 euros/night for students during summer to arrive early and have the opportunity to visit apartments before their studies start. Additionally, the opening hours of the apartment search service are after 5pm, so that it will not overlap with the students' daily study schedule. This is possible due to student-assistants being hired to support mobile students with their search for accommodation.

Granada

Status quo

Granada is a medium sized city in Andalucía, in the south of Spain. The public University of Granada has around 70,000 students in total and each year it welcomes around 10,000 mobile students. This is the HEI which receives the largest number of Erasmus students in Europe.

Main challenges

Given this huge number of incoming students, the international office is not able to provide accommodation for all of them, and the city accommodation market makes no difference between national and mobile students.

The private accommodation market has enough apartments available at the start of September for students, and costs are affordable. According to students, they still have to face some difficulties when looking for accommodation. On the one hand, the buddy system offered by the university does not work at all, according their experience. They usually ask for advice of friends who have been to Granada previously.

Private housing is usually cheaper than residence halls, but some time is needed to look for suitable accommodation, so students have the additional cost of a hostel for the first days. In addition, it is difficult to find a place for just a few months: most housing contracts require a minimum one year rental, but this requirement is changing quickly.

Good practices

Information provision and individual assistance

The University has developed a strategy focussed on two main programmes: the buddy programme and the accommodation with elderly people programme. In addition, the University offers a database of apartments for renting, both for national and mobile students, but just as an information service, and never as an intermediate. The University also provides information on students' halls (residencias universitarias and colegios mayores, a common accommodation service model in Spain).

The policymakers interviewed, from the regional government, point out that student accommodation policies are not part of their tasks. Nevertheless, they run in collaboration with the University the scheme to share accommodation with elderly people programme.

Social innovation project

In order to take part in the elderly people's programme, the University's social worker fills in a form with basic information about the student and if he or she satisfies the necessary requirements, the application is forwarded to the competent social worker at the Regional Government. Mobile students are specifically required to be fluent in Spanish to join this scheme.

They are also required to follow certain co-habitation rules. The scheme is not particularly sought after by mobile students, as they are not, generally speaking, interested in a place where they have to follow rules and take on the responsibility of helping elderly people with special needs. They would rather pay more for an ordinary flat. However, the experience of students that took part in this scheme is described as rather positive. Among the mobile students who apply for this programme, most come from Latin America (namely Chile) and Africa (mainly Morocco and Equatorial Guinea). The scheme also provides them with a grant for food in student canteens and special discounts in city buses.

Access to financial support

It is still possible for an Erasmus student to register in any of the Master Courses (*títulos propios*) given by the University and apply for the economic support provided by the University. After paying the relevant tuition fees, the student may apply for a grant that is not specifically intended for accommodation. If the grant is approved, the student may use it for any of his or her needs.

A look to the future

The new University internationalisation plan will be implemented in the coming academic year. The housing coordination services will make an effort to highlight a characteristic student accommodation model of Spanish universities, based on *Colegios Mayores* (student halls) and *Residencias Universitarias* (residence halls).

They will be available for all students, but more specifically focussed on mobile students, since the new internationalisation plan is fully committed to quality education and accommodation is considered a crucial factor for students' academic performance.

As places are limited, and in order to facilitate access, they will be allotted for short periods, on a rotating basis.

Mobile students potentially interested in this type of accommodation would be those in post-graduate or doctorate studies.

Erasmus students are not interested in this model, as University halls require that students to follow certain rules, such as established timetables, that Erasmus students typically are not willing to accept. Moreover, the model is normally misunderstood, as students do not generally believe that their academic results may be improved by living in a Colegio Mayor or Residencia Universitaria.

The housing coordination service, alongside the Regional Government, would like to promote stricter supervision for mobile students' housing: monitoring is non-existent currently, but unregulated housing should be discouraged.

Helsinki

Status quo
With a population of 1.4 million inhabitants, Helsinki is the biggest city in Finland. It is also the capital of the country and, as such, it attracts the highest number of students in the country.
The University of Helsinki had around 35,000 students in 2014/2015 and represents the majority of students in the city. The university is complemented by additional Higher Education Institutions such as Aalto University or the University of the Arts Helsinki.

Main challenges
The important influx of students arriving at the beginning of the academic semester (especially in August/September) has an important impact on the housing market, making it difficult for students to find the right apartment at the beginning of the semester.
The average price of student housing in Helsinki ranges from 300-600 euros.

Cooperation of student unions to ensure students have access to affordable accommodation
The Foundation for Student Housing in the Helsinki Region (HOAS) is a non-profit foundation and was founded in 1969 to relieve the shortage of student housing in the metropolitan area. 16 student unions operating in the Helsinki region initiated this project in order to provide affordable accommodation for students. It was created with start-up capital originally invested through bank loans and in a little over 45 years, that small amount of start-up capital has turned into a business with a turnover of 70 million euros and 9,300 student

apartments. HOAS was established by students for students and the internal decision-making process still involves student representatives from the different student unions in Helsinki. This provides a democratic way of making students' voices heard and gives them ownership of the project.

The vast majority of exchange students in Helsinki have their accommodation organised by HOAS.

Reservation of accommodation spaces for exchange students
Every year, 900 beds are reserved and provided by HOAS to exchange students from different HEIs in Helsinki, which covers most of the demand. Degree seeking international students do not experience the same support, as they are considered regular students. This means that they need to compete with the local housing market, which is very competitive.

Up-to-date information provision, counselling
The University of Helsinki has organised a main entry point (student services) where mobile students can find all information they need for their stay in Helsinki: welcome fair, practical information, peer-tutoring system, etc. A smartphone app "UniArrival" is currently being developed where all information will also be provided via one main channel. This can be considered as good practice.

Cooperation between stakeholders
It is important to note that the Municipality of Helsinki owns the majority of housing in Helsinki but not student housing, which is owned by HOAS. The different student unions (also through HOAS) do important advocacy work in Helsinki and ensure their voice is heard (see also the World Student Capital initiative).

The Municipality of Helsinki organises regular meetings between all involved stakeholders: Higher Education Institutions, students, student accommodation providers and policymakers which results in excellent cooperation between those actors and a wide awareness of challenges and possible solutions.

Karlstad

Status quo

Karlstad is a medium sized city in Sweden with only one University, Karlstad University. It has around 16,000 undergraduate students and each year hosts around 300 exchange students (180 in the first semester, 120 in the second semester approximately). Karlstad University has set an international strategy which includes increasing of the number of exchange students (both incoming and outgoing students).

Main challenges

Accommodation is one of the key issues that must be solved in order to attract more students, given that there is a considerable lack of accommodation in Sweden in general, but in Karlstad in particular.

Good practices

Cooperation with other stakeholders
The University is not allowed to undertake any action on housing for Swedish students, but has the obligation to inform mobile students on the options they have regarding accommodation. But this is a challenging matter: the obstacles on finding a proper place for a short period of time have pushed the university to sign an agreement with the municipality company KBAB. Previously, the University cooperated with the private sector, yet students were not satisfied and it was too much of a workload to arrange on the part of the university. Therefore, they made the decision to cooperate with the municipality.

Up-to-date information provision

This agreement with the housing company means close collaboration between both institutions: the University provides information to students on the company's offers and the company is responsible for contacting the students directly the moment they are selected for the exchange and provide all information about their services.

Some months before students arrive, the municipality company provides all information in English and different payment options in order to avoid bank taxes for international transfers. Hence the majority of students choose KBAB rooms in dormitories within the campus, because in the private housing market they have to face language barriers, there is a lack of furnished rooms or apartments, and some obstacles to payment, in addition to the high prices.

Reservation of accommodation places for exchange students
Each semester KBAB reserves enough rooms for mobile students, so all of them have the possibility of booking one if they choose this option.

The main strengths of this model are, as pointed out by the participants interviewed, the ease of the procedure: once the students arrive in Karlstad, they can focus on their studies; they have furnished rooms near the University and staff working to maintain the campus.

Paris

Status quo

With a population of 12 million inhabitants, Paris is the biggest city in France. It is also the capital of the country and as such, it attracts the highest amount of (international) students in the country.

In the academic year 2004–2005, the Paris Region's 17 public universities, with 359,749 registered students, comprised the largest concentration of university students in Europe. The Paris Region's prestigious *grandes écoles* and scores of university-independent private and public schools have an additional 240,778 registered students, that, together with the university population, meant a grand total of 600,527 students in higher education that year.

Main challenges

Paris is a European capital that is the economic and cultural centre of France. This leads to a very high demand for housing, which means that the general housing situation is challenging, as there is a shortage of affordable housing for the general population in the centre of Paris. Students struggle to find affordable accommodation and usually end up in the Parisian suburbs, far away from the city centre and university campuses, sometimes in "unsafe" areas or districts. Commuting every day for up to two hours is quite common practice in Paris.

As a direct consequence of this general situation, mobile students are faced with a difficult situation to find affordable housing and are easy targets of scams and unscrupulous landlords. For example, it has become a common practice in France for private landlords to require three months of rent as a deposit or to pay six months to twelve months of rent in advance. Landlords usually also tend to refuse guarantors that are not based in France (although the national law allows any EU citizen to act as a guarantor) which makes it almost impossible for mobile students to find a place to stay on the private market.

Good practices

Centralised service provider
The Centre national des œuvres universitaires et scolaires (CNOUS) are the main housing providers for students in France. There are 28 CNOUS in the whole country, providing economic, social, health and social support to more than 2.6 million of students in France, including 300,000 mobile students. They provide affordable accommodation for students. The CNOUS de Paris covers more than 140 Higher Education Institutions.

A national umbrella organisation called *Centre national des œuvres universitaires et scolaires* (CNOUS) supports the 28 CNOUS by providing a platform for training and exchange of good practices. The CNOUS was responsible for the creation in 1997 of the website https://www.adele.org/, a centralised offering of more than 300,000 student accommodation places from 150,000 residences all over France.

Support to deal with national legal requirements

The CNOUS, together with the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, has created the Programme "Caution Locative Etudiante" (CLE) that act as a substitute guarantor for students (including mobile students). More info can be found at https://www.lokaviz.fr/

Some banks also offer a similar service but only for PhD students because PhD students have a regular monthly income - higher than regular students - that helps mitigate the financial risk taken.

Social innovations – combining volunteering/involvement in the local community and provision of accommodation

Some NGOs have tackled the situation by developing social projects related to housing. The concept stipulates that students engage in a volunteering project for the local community (e.g. supporting kids with homework, helping the elderly) to get access to affordable flats. (e.g. AFEV http://kolocsolidaire.org/ and Solidarité Etudiante https://www.coopcoloc.fr/). AFEV in particular works together with universities to recognise the volunteer experience of student through ECTS credits.

Centralised online buddy platform

ESN France is currently developing a project called ESN Buddy System, an innovative centralised online platform at the national level with the aim of matching mobile students with local students before starting their mobility period in France. The aim is to support mobile students with practical information using a peer-to-peer approach and facilitate their integration in France. This project has received important institutional support in France from a high number of stakeholders such as the CNOUS, Campus France and some universities. For more information see http://buddysystem.eu/.

Cooperation with other stakeholders

The City of Paris has put a strong emphasis on housing. Important investments have already been made over recent years. An international campus residence called "Greater Paris International Student District" (QUIGP) is currently being created in the Northern area of Paris. It is designed especially for mobile students and as of 2020 it will offer 5,000 additional housing units as well as "a comprehensive range of housing options, services and amenities, setting a new standard for excellence that will spark innovation, nurture cross-cultural exchange, and shape sustainable new lifestyles". The QUIGP has involved all types of stakeholders in its planning phase, from local and national authorities to housing providers (CNOUS) and student organisations (ESN and Student Unions).

A similar campus residence for mobile students called "Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris" was created in 1925 in the southern part of Paris. Originally built as a place for students, researchers and intellectuals from around the world to meet in the spirit of peace, unity and friendly cooperation, it provides 6,000 beds for Master Degree and PhD students and academics. It is a private foundation recognised as being of public interest and it is financed by a large panel of private and public sponsors.

In general, the high level of cooperation between all the stakeholders playing a role in student housing and especially the involvement of student organisations (e.g. Erasmus Student Network, local student unions) is to be considered as good practice. The fact that local and national authorities and stakeholders take students' opinions into account, involving student organisations in all phases of urban planning and the creation of new campuses can only benefit the quality of support offered to (international) students in the long run.

Local responses to national legal constraints

The City of Paris is trying to tackle a major issue, namely, that a significant number of offices in Paris remain empty. Due to a loophole in different tax regulations, it is less costly for landlords to keep these spaces empty rather than trying to rent them or investing in renovating them. The City of Paris has made some investments over the last years to acquire these spaces, renovate them and provide social housing for the inhabitants of Paris. A start-up has recently been in contact with the City of Paris to help tackle this issue and transform unused office spaces into student housing.

Some companies already operate in a similar market, providing short-term accommodation in empty office space but they are not limited to student housing and provide a wider range of services (e.g. see http://fr.cameloteurope.com/).

Zagreb

Status quo

Zagreb is Croatia's city with the highest number of students per capita. With around 792,875 citizens in the municipal region of Zagreb, it is Croatia's biggest city. The University of Zagreb had around 72,480 students in the academic year 2015/16 and represents the majority of students in the city. The university is complemented by additional Higher Education Institutions such as the Polytechnic of Zagreb.

A total of around 800 Erasmus+ students study each year at the University of Zagreb (460 in the fall semester and around 300 in the spring semester). In addition, 100 students come through the CEEPUS programme. The majority of these exchange students have their accommodation organised by the relevant institution and are allocated a room at the Student Centre, a service of the University of Zagreb. The Student Centre has a total capacity of 7,545 beds and reserves 330 beds for exchange students each semester.

Main challenges

There does not seem to be very close collaboration between the different stakeholders met during the visit (University of Zagreb, Student Centre, ESN Zagreb, HomeInZagreb). Most of them expressed interest in cooperating closer with each other but for several reasons (legal reasons, lack of trust, lack of time) cooperation has not yet

come about. There is significant room for improvement on that specific point, in order to better support mobile students with housing issues.

Some policies exist at the national level in order to provide more student accommodation in Croatia ("Strategy for Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Croatia (2014)") but the lack of available funding seems to be the main cause delaying the construction of new student housing. A project for a new campus in the Eastern part of Zagreb is currently on hold.

The University of Zagreb has also started renovating and constructing green buildings in the delocalised cities of Varazdin and Cakovec. These buildings comply fully with national regulations in terms of green buildings and as such can be funded by national funds. Some EU Structural funds are also being used.

Good practices
Reservation of rooms for incoming students
Since incoming mobility has been increasing a lot over the last years, the agreement between the International Relations Office and the Student Centre to pre-book beds has been adapted regularly over the years.

Solutions for covering accommodation costs in the months outside the semester period
Since exchange students usually occupy their flats for only one semester or for a total of 9-10 months per year, the Student Centre has chosen to implement very flexible policies in order to adapt the renting period to what students really need. The demand for a bed at the Student Centre is very high throughout the whole year (more than 12,000 Croatian students ask for a room each year). It is not a problem for the Student Centre to find someone that will take an empty room even for a short term.
The Student Centre also offers tourist accommodation for the Summer period.

The average price of student housing ranges as follow:
• EUR 65-150 per month for a bed at the Student Centre
• EUR 200-350 per month would be the average market price in Zagreb for a room or a studio
• EUR 300-400 per month including bills at HomeinZagreb, with an addition of EUR 199 for a service fee, for an overall package that includes also pick-up at the airport, sim card, etc.

Tailor-made support for mobile students
Degree seeking international students do not experience the same support, as they are considered as regular students and do not have access to the Student Centre as they are not considered as "domestic students" by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport (Croatian nationality or EU nationality and living in Croatia for more than 5 years). Mobile students who are not beneficiaries of the Student Centre usually look for a flat on the private market. The main challenges that mobile students face in Zagreb are:

• Private landlords do not speak English and services such as electricity/water providers generally do not speak English

• Only a few private companies tackle the issue of mobile student accommodation and offer their services in English

• There are a lot of apartments rented on the black market (without contract) which puts mobile students at risk

In order to tackle these issues, the company HomeInZagreb was created and offers a service to mobile students that is all-inclusive: relation with landlords and with the Croatian administration, provision of additional services such as pick-up, sim card, etc. This can be considered good practice.

Summary – study visits

The ten study visits gave valuable insights as to how HEIs actually deal with the challenges with international and exchange student accommodation. The chance to hear their stories helped to understand the key aspects to finding and staying in different housing options. The question of whether good practice is transferrable to different contexts highlighted the complexity of the challenges but also illustrates the need for more peer learning activities and cooperation at the national level.
The key aspects named as common problems as well as good practices are summarised below:

Main challenges
• The lack of suitable and affordable student housing
• Difficult conditions in the local real-estate market – where there is already a shortage of housing for general public
• Legal constraints
• Language barrier
• Lack of cooperation between stakeholders, hence extra unnecessary hurdles
• Lack of special support systems for international degree mobile students

Good practices
• Centralised systems to ensure collaboration of the key actors, providing qualitative and affordable accommodation for students.
• Buddy systems
• HEI reserves accommodation and pays for the months it stays empty in between semesters. Support for students upon arrival – time frame before semester.
• The role of the municipality – subsidies for building new student accommodation as well as facilitation of cooperation structures
• Up-to-date information databases
• Tailor-made service packages for mobile students
• Special scholarship for mobile students to attract talent
• HEI supporting students upon arrival – time frame before semester

• Support to deal with national legal requirements
• Social innovations – combining volunteering/involvement in the local community and provision of accommodation
• Local responses to national legal constraints

7. Conference Reports

Four regional conferences were organised within the HousErasmus+ project. Their main aim was to allow all stakeholders involved (student representatives, Higher Education Institutions, housing providers and policymakers) to exchange information and good practices and therefore increase the capacity of stakeholders. During the 1 ½ day conferences, participants were informed of the preliminary research results of the HousErasmus+ research and were asked to derive concrete recommendations for their specific region by building upon these results and their personal experience. Furthermore, the four conferences that took place in Malmö, Paris, Budapest and Madrid provided expert knowledge through various panel discussions and the presentation of best practices identified for each region.

Participation in the region conferences was clustered in the following way:

Northern region (Malmö conference) – Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia.

Western European region (Paris conference) – Ireland, Belgium, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, France.

Southern European region (Madrid conference) – Greece, Italy, Turkey, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Central & Eastern European region (Budapest conference) – Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, FYROM.

Mapping of stakeholders
During the conferences, the following actors were identified as stakeholders. This list is not exhaustive, but illustrates the scope of potential cooperation and the typical actors that are dealing with mobile student accommodation issues to a greater or lesser extent.
• Students (local and mobile)
• IROs as well as other relevant HEI structures
• Student organisations (welfare associations, student unions, ESN local sections)
• The government (local and national) - higher education ministries, municipalities
• Private housing providers (individuals and companies)
• Investment banks
• Hotels and hostels
• Real estate agencies

Challenges identified per region

Northern region
• Lack of affordable and suitable housing for mobile students. Inflation and growing real estate prices contribute to the problem
• Legal infrastructure not favourable for mobile students (e.g. no practice of sub-letting)
• Many of the 'solutions' for student housing problems entail segregation of mobile students
• Lack of reliable and comprehensive information databases
• Difficulties with short-term accommodation - one-year contracts preferred by housing providers
• Lack of lobby and advocacy for mobile student accommodation options.

Western European region
• Shortage of suitable and affordable student housing
• Lack of human resources. More support from student organisations dealing directly with housing problems would be appreciated.
• Discrimination. There are still prejudices and xenophobia towards mobile students especially in small cities. Available accommodation options for both groups lead to segregation of domestic and mobile students.
• Legal infrastructure needs improving. Complexity as well as a lack of certain regulations that would protect tenants and landlords mean the potential of the rental market is not being used to the fullest.
• Lack of adequate public transportation infrastructure as a necessary complementary service to housing.
• Short-term contracts challenging to secure accommodation.

Southern European region
• Cooperation between HEIs, municipalities and partners should be enhanced.
• Bureaucracy at HEIs is considered an obstacle rather than tangible help.
• Cities like Madrid/Barcelona, which are typical tourist destinations, have a more challenging housing market for mobile students. Many apartments have been turned into tourist apartments and therefore are not rented out to students or other tenants (the negative impact of AirBnB as an example is mentioned multiple times).
• In big cities, companies charge more than private landlords. At the same time, illegal renting is common and that distorts the prices of private accommodation providers. Therefore, companies that help students exist, but they are often considered too expensive. Platforms that are trying to bridge the gap often lack quality assurance mechanisms. In addition, big cities offer even more potential challenges:
• In cities such as Milan, Rome, Madrid, rents are very high and there are restrictions on the length of the rental period. Consequently, students can find themselves renting flats without legal contracts, encounter fraud and landlords take advantage of them.
• ESN Italy pointed out that in Rome, HEIs do not do so much as it is almost impossible to find accommodation for the large incoming student body. A lot of landlords do not provide contracts, therefore

the rental market is not easy.

• In this regard, representatives from 3rd party online platforms explained that in some cities it is really difficult even for housing providers. For instance in Madrid: landlords need also to have a guarantee they will be paid.

• Small cities/countries have other obstacles.

• In small cities finding accommodation in the private market is quite easy. However, if there is lack of affordable and decent housing for students in small cities, there are no companies that provide information and support. Cyprus, for example, does not have private student accommodation provider networks because the country receives only a relatively small number of exchange students. Apartments are not targeted at foreigners and discrimination exists. For example, students from African countries pay more than European students for the same room/flat and landlords prefer domestic students.

• Lack of human resources. In many popular locations, it is not possible to help everyone because of the huge number of foreign students. Greek representatives explained that in their case the pressure is in the ESN office, not at the IRO office or in a private company.

• The quality of student dormitories: many of these are in bad condition, they need to be renovated before they can be used for students.

• Overarching: problem with the language barrier, adequate transportation, short-term contracts, lack of legal knowledge.

• Lack of funding: either flats/rooms are too expensive or they are unfurnished, which increases costs.

Central & Eastern European region

• The increase of incoming students in recent years has been perceived as sudden, as there are not only Erasmus+ students but also PhD candidates and students using other mobility programmes.

• The HEIs has also seen a growing demand of students with disabilities using the Erasmus+ programme. It is said that although some years ago HEIs could offer enough support, today the numbers have increased significantly, making the search for suitable accommodation a new challenge.

• Fraud and eviction have been mentioned as a common phenomenon

• Erasmus+ mobile students usually have a difficult time finding accommodation in a city that depends heavily on tourism. Unfortunately, practices of charging mobile students and evicting them during the high tourist season are common.

• The local community is prejudiced against mobile students and foreigners in general. Participants report that when dealing with student housing, many locals in central and especially eastern Europe think that foreign students are coming to party and vandalise the apartments.

To sum up, each regional conference offered participants a platform to discuss the most topical issues regarding mobile student accommodation. This sub-chapter is in no way an exhaustive list of the challenges faced, but illustrates the most pressing issues that the stakeholders identified.

Overarching aspects that were discussed in all locations were the lack of affordable and suitable housing for mobile students, language barriers, difficulties with short-term contracts, the need for more cooperation between stakeholders and a lack of human resources to deal with the issues.

An alarming opinion that was voiced several times is that when the incoming student flows are too big, the host institution is 'objectively' not capable of dealing with the demand. Such situations should rather lead to looking for more help and also receiving more support from the EU or redistributing existing funding, rather than 'giving up'.

Conference Recommendations

Regional conferences illustrated that, next to many local and country-specific challenges, there is a range of topics that tend to be at the centre of discussions in all the regions, therefore potentially calling for more overarching solutions and EU-wide initiatives.

Overarching – at the EU level

• **Awareness raising** and a deeper understanding of the European project that would also lead to better intercultural dialogue, language learning and integration as well as sharing views and understanding cultures.

• **More flexibility for the integration of a mobility period in the curriculum** is needed. Besides other evident benefits of going abroad for two semesters instead of one, the issue pertaining to finding short-term accommodation could be solved, as landlords are more willing to sign longer-term contracts. Secondly, a potential solution that should be explored is to combine studies and traineeships abroad, as it would give trainees access to the infrastructure that HEIs offer as support with finding accommodation. It would also allow students that would otherwise lose their student job at home and would not be able to go on a mobility period for that very same reason to retain a certain necessary income. Thirdly, in almost all locations, the accommodation situation is worse during the fall semester, although there are exceptions. Therefore, more flexibility in the curriculum regarding when to go on exchange as well as encouragement to take the situation in the host country could ease the challenges faced.

• **Call for more systematic provision of information.** There is a need for more streamlined ways to provide mobile students with useful and reliable information and also to support them with language learning and cultural preparation, which are at the core of understanding information provided in the host country. Taking into consideration that the current generation of mobile students are digital natives, pan-European tools should be developed for students to easily find accommodation and learn about aspects related to language and culture. Tools such as the European Commission's Erasmus+ App could be extended so that students can factor in the availability of accommodation in their decision-making process of where to go abroad.

At a national level

• **Call for more cooperation between stakeholders.** All stakeholders express the need for a more systematic approach to sharing knowledge and understanding the needs of other stakeholders. However, opinions differ when discussing who should be leading such processes. Some participants insist that HEIs should bear the responsibility, as they are bound by the Erasmus Charter to do so: "provide information on accommodation". Others feel that HEIs have a limited responsibility in supporting the process but that policymakers should be in charge. In any case, the need for increased involvement of student representatives seems to be commonly agreed upon.

• **Public support for student housing**- To invest in the education sector as a means to building a positive future also means investing in support structures and processes. To reap the widely acknowledged benefits of student mobility, the call for more targeted investment by the public sector has been proposed:

• Collaboration with private providers to increase the accessibility of affordable housing in the form of subsidies or tax reductions for the hosting providers supporting mobile students.
• Rent caps (on the private sector)
• HEIs or the municipality stepping in as guarantor in case of need
• Taxing vacant locations: incentive to use space in areas where having no tenants is more beneficial to landlords than renting
• Ensure quality legislation: refurbishment of student accommodation at least every 10 years.

• **Awareness campaigns:**
• by clearly communicating issues faced by students as well as the importance and positive benefits of having Erasmus+ students for local society.
• that the quality of accommodation is also highly important for a quality academic experience.
• about housing and tenants' rights and laws that protect them. Assistance and legal advice needs to be available.
• student opinion needs to be taken on board, making sure there is a student representative in every housing office/housing related meeting, so they can present a clear view of their needs and concerns.
• Need for more human resources when dealing with questions pertaining to student accommodation. There is a clear need for HEIs to offer legal services to provide help/support to students exclusively related to accommodation challenges. Also, HEIs should have a better picture of their capacity to receive students and facilitate integration of the Erasmus+ students.
• Incentives for Erasmus+ students to choose less popular destinations, as otherwise the large flows to popular locations sometimes brings the housing and HEI infrastructure to its limits. This is already the case in Denmark, where the government has policies in place to encourage students to go to places other than Copenhagen and Aarhus.

• Taking stock. To overcome local challenges, stakeholders need to understand the current local situation. To achieve this goal, there should be clear mechanisms for evaluating student experiences and the current housing situation that can feed into developing policies for the future. These could be internal policies at HEIs that develop internationalisation strategies, as well as more generic policies developed by local governments which affect the whole community.

Good practices and reflection on the challenges of implementation

• **Information system and quality assurance.** Although overall there is a call for more systematic provision of information, different stakeholders shared their current practices, which could be useful for other locations:

• Create a checklist that mobile students can use before they come to the host country. The home HEI could provide information not only about where to find accommodation but also on housing legislation in the country.
• A label for student accommodation that meets the quality requirements imposed by the municipality. A template leasing contract has been created as part of this label.
• Student accommodation review database to check for quality and avoid fraud.

Making student housing out of containers
Various models exist where temporary student accommodation is offered at the beginning of a semester for a reasonable price. Containers or similar temporary solutions can help to avoid high costs for hostel/hotel stays or for students who have no accommodation at all at the beginning of the mobility period. Both in Stavanger and Aarhus such models have been tested and deemed as good practice.

Creating shared rooms out of individual rooms
In Bergen, rooms that would usually be rented as individual rooms were changed into double rooms to cover for the additional need for beds. This system has worked surprisingly well, as many students would rather have accommodation and pay 100 euro less per month. When discussing the possibility to expand such an approach to other student accommodation, it was pointed out that in some places it is a requirement to share a dorm during the first year(s) in HEIs in the USA. Even though it is not a solution that can be applied everywhere and to all students, it is an idea that especially in areas with a significant lack of beds resonated very well with all stakeholders.

Alternative accommodation - living with elderly people
A good practice that has been identified in multiple cases is when students live in alternative accommodation where they take on certain responsibilities and are compensated in return. One example of Catalonian Universities is the "CONVIVE programme", which entails sharing accommodation with the elderly. By supporting the elderly

for a certain number of hours per week, students can get free or highly reduced rent. Such models are particularly interesting for degree students, as they stay for a longer time. Similar systems have been tried in e.g. Jyväskylä (Finland). Such initiatives do offer new possibilities to extend the amount of beds available to students and at the same time have a positive impact on society but should rather be considered as exceptional solutions. It is recommended to start such initiatives in cooperation with local NGOs or with the support of policymakers to avoid a substantial increase in administration.

HEIs renting a hostel during the busiest months

Several conference participants reported that HEIs have rented rooms in hotels/hostels or at least reserved contingents for students to have a temporary accommodation when arriving at the host institution. The drawback of such a solution is the high costs that comes with renting for a longer period of time. Often, the busiest months in terms of incoming students are also the high season for tourists, which can lead to a general lack of housing and higher costs for hotels/hostels. In Spain, the market responded by creating so-called "Erasmus hostels", which focus on mobile students. Such solutions could be feasible in more locations if mobile students are identified as a potential market.

Social networks for travellers

Couchsurfing, where travellers have the possibility to stay with locals that offer a couch or a bed is a solution that has proven to work in some locations like Malmö. Administering such solutions can be very resource-intensive, which is why the university delegated the initiative to the student union, which now runs it. Students fill in what they are looking for (male/female, with/without pets, etc…) and how much they are prepared to pay for it (ranging from 0 to 200 euros for two weeks) and then they are paired up. This is also what the university can advise students to use, in case they have not found anything before they arrive. The student union (and earlier the university) do not charge for this service, which means it comes at an additional cost in terms of resources for an HEI/student union that wants to implement such a scheme.

Students sub-letting to each other

Subletting apartments to other students can be a solution in areas where is it legally accepted. Unfortunately, legislation in many countries does not allow for subletting of apartments or regulations are very strict and make it difficult for the tenant to do so.

Nation-wide student services provider - e.g. CNOUS in France and Studentenwerke in Germany

Student services providers such as the CNOUS and *Studentenwerke* in Germany are semi-public organisations that help students with a wide range of services such as finances, jobs, internship and accommodation. In some European countries, large student service providers have taken over the role from HEIs to manage student accommodation, while in other European countries such organisations do not exist or carry much less responsibility. Having professional service providers supported by federal funds can be considered as good practice as experiences with those organisations are very positive. The cooperation between national umbrella organisations also help to find more pan-European solutions and to facilitate the exchange of knowledge.

Services in exchange for free/cheap accommodation

Mobile students giving language courses to families in return stay for free or at a reduced price with those families is yet another good practice on how to extend the offer of available beds. This system can be compared with the traditional au pair and requires HEIs or student unions to facilitate a matching system.

Student organisation owning and renting rooms directly

In some countries, especially the Nordic countries, student unions own and rent rooms directly, which allows them to respond better to the needs of their peers. Such practices are often connected to student culture, as it is predominantly found in Nordic countries, and is therefore difficult to scale to other countries. It can definitely be seen as good practice though, as reports from countries where students are directly in charge of accommodation are positive.

8. Recommendations for stakeholders

As the research shows, there is a vast diversity in the accommodation scenario for (mobile) students in Europe. We have, therefore, tried to formulate the recommendations generally enough to be applied by as many actors as possible. At the same time, we tried to be as precise and specific as possible and 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.

Problem faced: Mobile student accommodation issues are not high on 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[61]. 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.

HEIs

• 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).

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[61]See: https://www.studentenwerke.de/de/content/kooperation-mit-polen.

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* (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.

HEIs
• 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.

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.

HEIs

• 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.

Problem faced: Quality assurance for student accommodation is often lacking. Cases of discrimination and attempted 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 U*K Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA)* has created a handbook for practitioners managing accommodation for international students[62]. 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.

HEIs
• 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

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[62]See: https://www.englishuk.com/uploads/assets/members/publications/accommodation_guide.pdf.

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+.

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.

HEIs
• 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 follows 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.

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 *#europehome* 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*[63] 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)"[64] 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).

HEIs
• 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.

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[63]It is offered for students at public universities and managed by the National Agency. For more information see: http://www.tka.hu/international-programmes/2966/stipendium-hungaricum/.
[62] See: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf.

• 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.

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.

Student organisations
No recommendations to be given.

HEIs
• 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.

Housing providers
• Create partnerships with HEIs to guarantee long-term rents despite the fact that mobile students stay only for a short period of time.

Local/regional/national policymakers
• Revise sub-letting regulations for student accommodation to allow a more flexible sub-letting environment.
• Create tax-incentives for renting to (mobile) students.

EU and Erasmus+ framework
• Offer additional incentives for students wanting to study for 2 semesters. The benefits of having longer term mobility experience are widely acknowledged.

Problem faced: Trainees suffer most under challenges experienced with accommodation

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.

Student organisations
• Look for solutions on how to contact and provide services to trainees coming to the city where the student organisation is located.

HEIs
• 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.

Housing providers
No recommendations to be given.

Local/regional/national policymakers
• 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.

EU and Erasmus+ framework
• 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.

Problem faced: Language barriers and cultural differences are an obstacle in the process of finding accommodation

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.

HEIs
• (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.

Partners

Associate Partners