

Making mobility programmes more inclusive for students with disabilities

Inclusive Mobility - Research Report



Colophon

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The project Establishing a thought-out Policy Framework for Inclusive Mobility across Europe (EPFIME) is delivered by the Ministry of Education and Training (Flemish Community/Belgium) and the Support Centre for Inclusive Higher Education in Flanders (SIHO), in cooperation with the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) in Ireland, the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) and the Irish Universities Association (IUA).

EPFIME
inclusivemobility.eu

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Introduction and context

Higher Education Ministries set a target for 2020 that at least 20% of graduates in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) should experience a study or training abroad. The trend for internationalisation continues to grow and the EHEA has helped to pave the way for large scale student mobility, increasing the quality and attractiveness. However, statistics show that students with disabilities are still underrepresented in international mobility programmes, further deepening their already disadvantaged position among peers.

The project Establishing a thought-out Policy Framework for Inclusive Mobility across Europe (EPFIME) is delivered by the Ministry of Education and Training (Flemish Community/Belgium) and the Support Centre for Inclusive Higher Education in Flanders (SIHO), in cooperation with the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) in Ireland, the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) and the Irish Universities Association (IUA). Three individual experts are also included to provide expertise on the topic of inclusive mobility. The term ‘inclusive mobility’ is fully defined in the desk research through a 2019 definition from the Inclusive Mobility Alliance which forms the basis of the EPFIME project. It refers to “creating adequate conditions to learn, work or volunteer abroad for people with fewer opportunities, by addressing their diverse support needs. It is a needs-based approach to what the individual beneficiary needs to ensure a safe and exciting mobility period abroad”.

The EPFIME project has examined in-depth the needs and expectations with regard to inclusive mobility of students with disabilities, higher education institutions and national authorities across the EHEA, while focusing on how higher education institutions and national authorities can collaborate more strongly to increase the quality and the transportability of support services for both incoming and outgoing students with disabilities in mobility programmes.

This report represents the first stage of the project’s outputs. It provides a picture of the current mobility participation rates of students with disabilities and a summary of findings from the EPFIME research activities.

To get a detailed picture of the current situation, we have conducted a range of research activities which have resulted in this report, namely: desk research and focus group sessions with relevant stakeholders, as well as bespoke surveys for students with disabilities, higher education institutions and EHEA Ministries of Education. The results of these activities have been analysed and compiled into this research report.





Enablers and barriers to mobility

Although students with disabilities are underrepresented in mobility programmes, they are very interested to study, train or volunteer abroad. Similarly to the general student population, the opportunity to live abroad, to improve and widen career prospects in the future, to expand social networks, and to learn different language practices and teaching methods are the main motivators for students with disabilities to take part in mobility. The main barriers for students with disabilities to not take part in an international mobility programme are expected to be financial burdens, separation from partners, children, friends and problems with finding adequate and accessible accommodation in the host country.

Executive summary

Inclusion in mobility strategies

Inclusion measures or regulations, as well as targets, to ensure social inclusion in mobility towards students with disabilities are rarely existent at country and institutional level. Data collection is currently not common and often limited to collecting mobility data about outgoing mobility in the Erasmus+ programme. The impact of mobility abroad on students with disabilities is rarely studied at national authority level. The limited research available indicates that international mobility programmes have comparable advantages for students with disabilities as with the general student population in terms of higher academic achievement, increased language skills, personal confidence, and personal development. In addition, mobile students with disabilities testify about a more normalised self-perception, making them feel more similar to their peers.

Information provision and mobility promotion

The information provision and promotion on mobility abroad for students with disabilities is lacking. Promotional campaigns are too broad and too limited. They do not reach students with disabilities who don't feel targeted. While some higher education institutions already actively encourage students with disabilities to go abroad, only a limited number of higher education institutions and no national authorities seem to be actively encouraging students with disabilities to come to their institutions or country.

Applications, grants and funding

Students with disabilities, higher education institutions and national authorities report significant barriers in the application process and the portability of grants and support services abroad. Without the possibility to take their support system with them abroad or without the certainty they will be able to receive a similar support system in the host country, students with disabilities are not likely to undertake a mobility abroad. However, when an additional Erasmus+ grant is approved, the overall satisfaction regarding the covering of financial expenses is rather positive.

Disclosure, reasonable adjustments and support services

Disclosure of the disability is an important topic for students with disabilities. When preparing their mobility abroad, many students disclose their situation both to the home and the host institution but a large portion still don't disclose their disability to the host institution, who is not informed about the needs of the student. Higher education institutions do not automatically acknowledge the disability status or automatically provide the same reasonable adjustments offered at the home institution. Preparatory visits are valued and considered as extremely helpful for students with disabilities and the home institution. They serve to examine the accessibility of the university campus, city and student life, as well as to arrange accessible accommodation, organise reasonable adjustments, personal assistance and medical help, reducing doubts and fears of the students and of the higher education staff responsible for its mobility.

Student life and student housing

Although the satisfaction regarding student housing is rather positive, students point out the lack of available information regarding the accessibility of the destination, transport, housing and campus, and the best places where to go socially. Students point also to more support with everyday life necessities (e.g. medical support, cooking, etc.).

Awareness and cooperation

The lack of awareness about the barriers, as well as the lack of communication and collaboration between different stakeholders, both inside and outside organisations (departments of Ministries, inter-departments of higher education institutions, National Agencies for Erasmus+, etc.) are a barrier to supporting students with disabilities in mobility programmes effectively.



Methodology

A number of research methodologies were employed, including a desk research and focus group sessions with relevant stakeholders; as well as bespoke surveys for students with disabilities, higher education institutions and Ministries of Education.

A desk research was carried out to take stock of mobility data and the knowledge base in relation to the topic of international mobility and students with disabilities, and inform various project tasks, including survey design. The review undertook a scoping of literature from a broad range of countries and disciplines. It included academic articles and studies from numerous different sources including websites of organisations specialised in higher education and disability. It also considered literature written on studying abroad experiences by students in higher education and paid attention to any literature and recommendations which specifically refers to the mobility of students with disabilities.

Large-scale, bespoke surveys were launched, collecting data through online questionnaires for multiple target groups: students with disabilities, higher education institutions and Ministries of education. Ministries of Education were encouraged to fill-out the survey with their National Agencies. The first section dealt with characteristic variables of the students, higher education institutions and Ministries of Education respectively. The second section dealt with disability policies, strategies and support services. The third section focused on policies, strategies, and challenges and enablers on international mobility concerning students with disabilities. A fourth section examined expectations of the project's online platform, www.inclusivemobility.eu. Each survey ended with comments and questions about the project follow-up. The student survey was constructed and targeted to investigate the experiences of students with disabilities who participated in mobility programmes, as well as students who had not participated in mobility programmes. A different set of questions was developed to examine the barriers experienced by students who had not participated in mobility programmes.

Each of the surveys were developed through a multi-step method. First, the main questions in each category were determined through an in-depth literature study, and a first item pool was developed. Second, the items were reviewed by a panel of experts to check for content validity and linguistic accuracy. Based on this feedback, some small modifications were made (i.e. insertion of an 'other' response field).

The surveys were administered in English and digitised through LimeSurvey. They were available on www.inclusivemobility.eu during the period September to the end of November 2019. The student survey was also administered in Dutch. Accessibility was taken into account and implemented in the surveys in order to accommodate the access needs of those willing to respond. The online platform of the surveys was accessible for screen-reader software users. The surveys were also available in plain text format.

A variety of channels were used for the promotion of the surveys. In the case of the student survey, there was significant support from disability offices of higher education institutions, which have direct contact with students with disabilities and encouraged them to take part. Additionally, the Bologna Follow-up Group Secretariat, and Erasmus+ National Agencies, together with national and European organisations from the fields of mobility, disability, youth and higher education were involved in the promotion of the surveys by actively sharing them via various communication channels, such as emails, newsletters, social media and articles.

During data cleaning, all respondents who did not complete the first two sections were excluded from analysis. After data cleaning, 1,134 valid student responses, 114 higher education institution responses and 23 Ministry of Education responses were retained. Personal data was removed before the data was transferred to IBM SPSS statistics 26 to guarantee anonymity. The data were reduced and structured in SPSS. This was done foremost by calculating frequency distributions. These provided an idea of trends in the given answers. Cross tables were used to analyse influences of countries and types of disabilities on the basis of the first section of the student survey.

The research followed up with four focus group sessions with students with disabilities, higher education institutions staff, policy makers and national and European organisations from the fields of mobility, disability, youth and higher education. An open call was released for each stakeholder group. Recruitment was conducted through the Support Centre Inclusive Higher Education, Flemish universities associations and the Inclusive Mobility Alliance. Participants in the focus groups were self-selected and they applied voluntarily. According to the principles of convenience sampling, every participant who volunteered for the focus group and who met the eligibility criteria, was selected.

The focus groups served to provide deeper insights on the research results and specifically regarding the project's online platform, www.inclusivemobility.eu. All of the focus group interviews were recorded and transcribed with the full permission of each of the 27 participants.

Throughout the first half of 2020, the project research methodology and preliminary results were presented and discussed on several occasions with students with disabilities, higher education institution staff, policy makers and national and European organisations from the fields of mobility, disability, youth and higher education.





A number of issues emerged over the course of the research, particularly in relation to data collection, which have imposed some limitations upon this study:

- According to the principles of convenience sampling, every participant who volunteered for the focus group and who met the eligibility criteria, was selected.
- Regarding the student survey, it is important to note that a high proportion of students are Flemish (52%) and Irish (13%). The high response rate of those countries reflect the project partners' role in the project. Cross tables were used to analyse influences. Further analysis does not include a country breakdown of the data.
- Regarding the higher education institutions and Ministries of Education surveys, the sample might cover institutions and systems which have inclusion among their mission values and main priorities and often already have strategies and activities in place.
- The higher education institutions survey results are in most cases not representative at country level. Further analysis does not include a country breakdown of this data.
- Since survey questions were not mandatory, the response rate varies across the questions. Some participants' characteristics are unknown, and such participants are therefore excluded from parts of this analysis. During data cleaning, all respondents who did not complete the first two sections were excluded from analysis. The number of participants is always indicated above the figure.
- The selection of examples and quotes is aimed at illustrating enablers and barriers to inclusion and inclusive mobility in various institutional contexts and thus to give food for thought to higher education institutions and Ministries of Education who are confronted with similar questions.



Research findings

In this chapter, a summary of the main findings of desk research, surveys and focus group sessions are presented.

Desk research

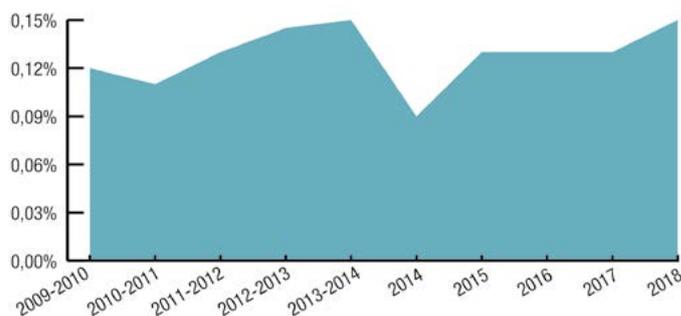
Participation in higher education

The participation of students with disabilities in higher education varies from country to country. This is influenced by the country's definitions and methods of identification, as some use self-declaration and other countries require medical evidence to give a designation of student with a disability. Nevertheless, most EU countries are reporting a significant year on year increase in the numbers of students with disabilities participating in higher education (Ridell, 2016). This participation also depends upon the extent to which the institution has developed an openness to disability and a culture which respects accessibility in all activities across the institution. An inclusive ethos means that the entire institution welcomes all students and ensures that students with disabilities participate equally and enjoy all aspects of higher education including international mobility.

Underrepresentation in international mobility programmes

To enhance the social dimension of the Erasmus+ programme, new rules were introduced in 2014. Among a range of measures to increase accessibility and remove barriers to participation, extra financial support is now offered to students with special needs to cover disability related costs such as personal assistants, sign language interpreters, customised living accommodation, etc. According to the Erasmus+ programme annual reports published by the European Commission, the percentage of the mobile student population receiving this "Erasmus+ Special Needs Support" is stagnating between 0.11% and 0.15% (e.g. 255 out of 231,408 Erasmus+ students and trainees in 2010-2011 ; 498 out of 284,149 Erasmus+ students and trainees in 2016).

Figure 1 - Erasmus+ students and trainees who received the Erasmus+ Special Needs Support



It is important to note that a shift took place between the Lifelong Learning Programme and Erasmus+ programme in 2014. While reports were issued following the academic year from 2009 to 2013, the European Commission started releasing Erasmus+ annual reports based on the fiscal year from 2016 onwards. A gap exists between the two models. As such, it is fair to state the data gathered for 2014 is affected by this change and is mentioned here in this report as purely indicative.

As reported in the Bologna Implementation Report (2018), national authorities implemented strategies to strengthen the social dimension in higher education (for more details, see results of the Ministries of Education survey section). National statistics from Austria and Belgium (Grabher et al., 2014; Flemish Community, 2019) highlight an underrepresentation of students with disabilities in mobility programmes. Flemish statistics show that in the academic year 2018-19, 22.2% of all 'initial mobile degrees¹' are attributed to students from underrepresented groups, in which the largest group is students with a Flemish study grant. Students with disabilities represent a very small proportion at 0.95%.

1. 'Mobile degree': An obtained degree is considered to be a 'mobile degree' when minimum 10 credits are cumulatively achieved abroad during the educational programme leading to the degree.

Figure 2 - Percentages of initial mobile degrees from students from underrepresented groups 2018-2019 - Monitor student mobility Action plan “Brains on the Move” 2013 - Academic year 2018-2019 - Flemish Government

	% mobile degrees of underrepresented groups / all degrees of underrepresented groups	% mobile degrees of underrepresented groups / all mobile degrees	% students from underrepresented groups that obtain a degree (mobile and non-mobile) / all degrees
Belongs to underrepresented groups	16.40%	22.20%	24.60%
Received a study grant	17.20%	20.90%	22.00%
Was working student	7.05%	1.04%	2.53%
Had a disability	17.51%	0.96%	0.99%
Flemish average	17.24%		

The value of international mobility programmes for students with disabilities

International research has conclusively demonstrated the many benefits associated with studying or doing a trainee placement abroad. These benefits range from higher academic achievement, increased language skills and personal confidence, to improved employment opportunities (European Commission, 2019, Teichler & Janson, 2007). Studies in the United States of America suggest that this impact is magnified for underrepresented groups. Engel’s (2017) study for example, indicates that the impact of a study abroad period results in higher four-year graduation rates and that the correlation between study abroad graduation is significant for minority students. Furthermore, the studies by the Irish Universities Association (2018) and Universities UK International (2018; 2019) indicate that students from disadvantaged backgrounds who participated in outward study mobility programmes display enormous enthusiasm and positivity towards the experience, stating significant benefits both personally and professionally.

As the value of study abroad programmes might differ according to the unique characteristics of individuals or groups of students, it is necessary to consider the extent to which students with disabilities benefit similarly or differently from studying abroad (Heirweg et al., 2020). The limited research on the impact of studying abroad on students with disabilities shows that international mobility has comparable advantages for students with disabilities in terms of personal development, as it leads to better self-knowledge and insights into future career possibilities (Ablaeva, 2012; Shames & Alden, 2005; Universities UK International, 2019). Furthermore, the international mobility experience contributes to their sense of independence, as studying abroad obliges these students to step out of their comfort zone and to live independently (Ablaeva, 2012 ; Scheib, 2007; Shames & Alden, 2005). Similarly to their peers, students with disabilities feel more self-confident and more adaptable. As is the case for their non-disabled peers, students with disabilities report improvements in their communication skills, foreign language knowledge, and their capacity to manage their emotions. It also seems beneficial in terms of the future career possibilities since international programmes make students with disabilities more competitive in the labour market, which is to their advantage particularly considering the

high unemployment rate among this group (Ablaeva, 2012; Burkhauser & Houtenville, 2006). The latest Gone International report (2019) found that mobile students with a disability are also less likely to be unemployed, and more likely to be in further study than non-mobile peers.

In addition to the advantages identified for mobile higher education students in general, some studies report specific advantages for students with disabilities. The study of Shames and Alden (2005) highlights the fact that studying abroad helps students with disabilities to develop a more normalised self-perception and makes them feel more similar to their peers. Furthermore, an increased intellectual and social curiosity of students with learning disabilities and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), leading to more active engagement in coursework, and increased capabilities to orient themselves in time and space, were reported. This is of particular value to these students, as these are skills that are not necessarily self-evident for them and they are often confronted with negative experiences related to this throughout their academic careers (Heirweg et al. 2020).

There is limited evidence at a national level which examines the relative impacts of mobilities of different durations. The research of UUKI found that short-term mobility options of four weeks or less now account for 21% of all reported mobility, or 1 in 5 mobilities, compared with 15.3% for the previous year's cohort. The research clearly shows that all mobility, regardless of length, has positive impacts for students (e.g. employment rate).



Barriers experienced by students with disabilities

Only a few studies investigated the barriers to participation in international mobility programmes perceived by students with disabilities (Erasmus Student Network, 2019; Heirweg et al. 2020; Reina & Klingova, 2012 ; Soorenian, 2008). The most reported factors for not engaging in an international mobility programme are the lack of information about international mobility programmes, the lack of support provisions from home higher education institutions, and financial constraints. In line with earlier research on non-disabled students, the length of the programme and the choice of destinations also seem important when a student is considering studying abroad (Heirweg et al., 2020). Shorter programmes are perceived as very valuable by students with disabilities (Shames & Alden, 2005, Universities UK international, 2018) and can have a lasting impact on students.

Furthermore, students with disabilities are often confronted with psychological barriers (e.g. 'Study abroad programmes are not designed for me') and social barriers (e.g. 'My parents are too concerned') when they consider participating (Ablaeva, 2012; Browne, 2013; Dessoiff, 2006). Browne (2013) notes that the impact of the disability can present another barrier. Students with disabilities might be opting out of the chance to studying abroad simply because study abroad does not feature in their mental maps because they feel that their disability will not be catered for. In this sense, some barriers are perceived barriers and consequently are self-imposed by students rather than existing in reality.

Although the overall satisfaction regarding the amount of expenses covered by the Erasmus+ Special Needs Support is quite high, mobile students with disabilities indicate challenges regarding the difficult eligibility criteria and inaccessible application process. Overall, mobility programmes are not perceived to be sufficiently accessible. Specific information provision about financial support to cover access needs and accessibility of various facilities of the host environment is often still lacking. Only a small

number of students are informed by their home higher education institution on the Erasmus+ Special Needs Support. Furthermore, the coverage for the cost of support persons, such as sign language interpreters or personal assistants is mentioned as the most challenging process for mobile students with disabilities (Erasmus Student Network, 2019).

Students with disabilities are also concerned with studying and taking examinations at a higher education institution abroad (Heirweg et al, 2020). Often students lack information about the accessibility of a mobility programme, do not feel properly informed about the accessibility of the location, do not know enough about the accessibility of the host institutions and do not receive enough information about the accessibility of a workplace. When choosing the destination and institution, many factors play a role. The most important ones are the accessibility of the destination, transport and teaching materials on one side and having financial support on the other (Erasmus Student Network, 2019). Very few higher education institutions can provide adequate services for deaf and blind students (Inclusive Mobility Alliance, 2019). Issues, such as the need for deaf students to learn an international sign language or the institution's ability to provide an interpreter, may arise as a key consideration.

Barriers experienced by higher education staff and stakeholders

Studies on the experiences of higher education staff highlight several points of attention. The biggest barriers reported by inclusion officers and international officers are the lack of actual and reliable information on the available regulations, fundings and support services in the different countries and difficulties with the portability of support services (Flemish Education Council, 2018). Furthermore, international relation officers and inclusion officers are often not aware of the challenges international students face, and often come up with ad hoc solutions for both incoming and outgoing students with disabilities. Roles and responsibilities between staff members are not well

defined (Du Toit, 2019; Flemish Education Council, 2018; Inclusive Mobility Alliance, 2019). The lack of portability of national grants and support services between countries is a major obstacle to student mobility for students with disabilities. Without the possibility to take their support system with them abroad or without the certainty they will be able to receive a similar support system in the host country, students with disabilities are not likely to undertake a mobility abroad. Relevant national authorities (responsible for Education, Health and Social Affairs, etc.) need to provide clear information to students and allow for the portability of these support systems whenever possible (Inclusive Mobility Alliance, 2019).

In January 2019, the Inclusive Mobility Alliance, a network of more than twenty European organisations expert in the fields of mobility, disability, youth mobility and higher education released a comprehensive set of recommendations to improve the inclusiveness of the Erasmus+ programme in the fields of Youth and Higher Education. They also defined the terms “Inclusive mobility” as follows: “Inclusive Mobility means creating adequate conditions to learn, work or volunteer abroad for people with fewer opportunities, by addressing their diverse support needs. It is a needs-based approach to what the individual beneficiary needs to ensure a safe and exciting mobility period abroad. It is important to not generalise needs, needs are specific and the individualised aspect in it is highly important. What the person/beneficiary says they need is what they should receive. It is not only about academic mobility but also about the social aspects that play an important role in the experience abroad and the potential link to connect with the local community.” (Inclusive Mobility Alliance, 2019). This definition forms the basis of the EPFIME project.



Student Survey

Sample overview

Home country

The online student survey gathered 1,134 responses from students with disabilities. The country-by-country breakdown of their home country is shown below.

Figure 3 - Home country distribution - n = 1.115

Albania (1) - Austria (2), Belgium - French Community (4), Belgium - Flemish Community (581), Cyprus (4), Czech Republic (49), Estonia (10), Germany (41), Greece (17), Hungary (24), Iceland (1), Ireland (149), Italy (92), Kazakhstan (1), Lithuania (5), Malta (20), Netherlands (9), Poland (2), Portugal (2), Romania (5), Russian Federation (1), Serbia (5), Slovak Republic (21), Slovenia (1), Spain (46), Sweden (1), Switzerland (3), Turkey (1), United Kingdom (8), Other (5)

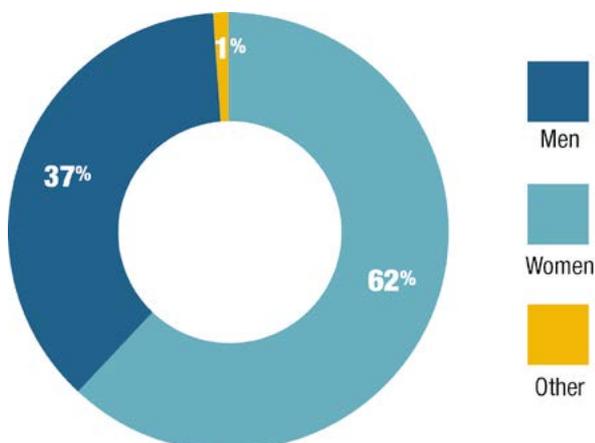


When looking at the geographical coverage of the sample and the number of responses per home country, the home countries with the highest number of respondents are the Flemish Community/Belgium (52%) and Ireland (13%). The high response rate of those countries is related to partners' leading role in the EPFIME project. Italy represents 8% and Spain, Germany and the Czech Republic each represent 4% of the sample. Respondents in the category 'others' (0.5%) have Tunisia, Australia, Canada, Nigeria and the United States of America as home countries, while studying in Europe.

Gender distribution

62% of the respondents identify as female and 37% of respondents as male. 1% of the respondents identified themselves as 'Others' (e.g. non binary).

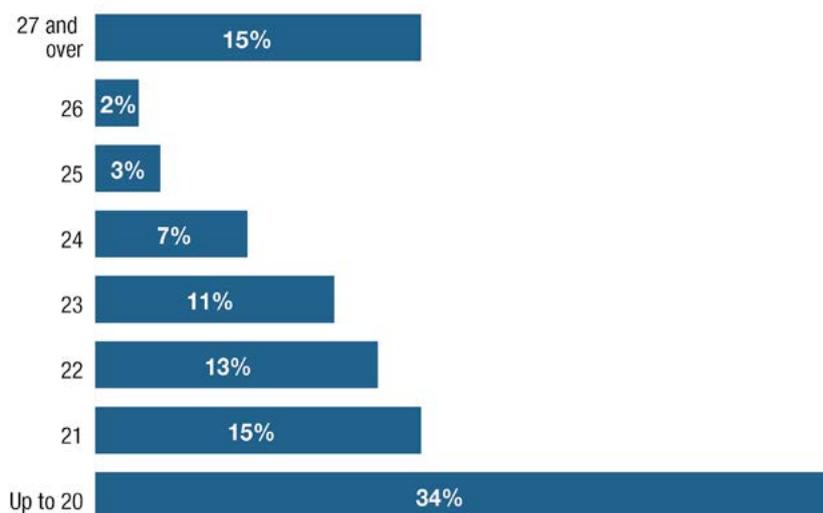
Figure 4 - Gender distribution - n = 1.115



Age group

34% of the respondents are 20 years old or younger. In contrast, 15% of the respondents are 27 years old or older.

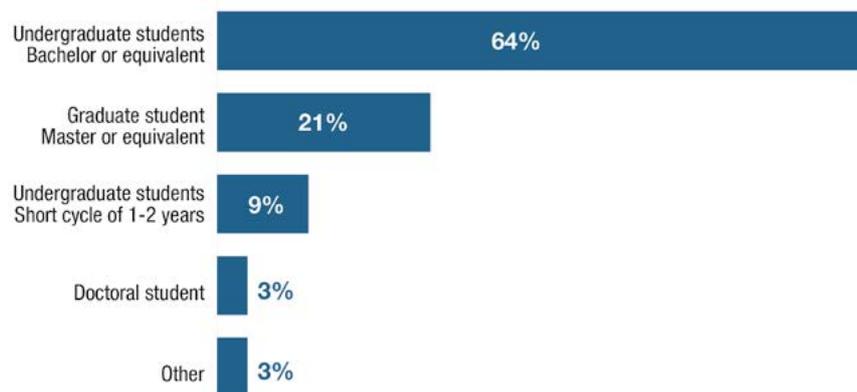
Figure 5 - Age group - n = 1.113



Course type

75% of the respondents are undergraduate students (64% bachelor degrees or equivalent; 9% short cycle one or two years) and 21% of respondents are master students. 3% of the respondents are doctoral students and another 3% indicated 'Others' (e.g. master after master, access course).

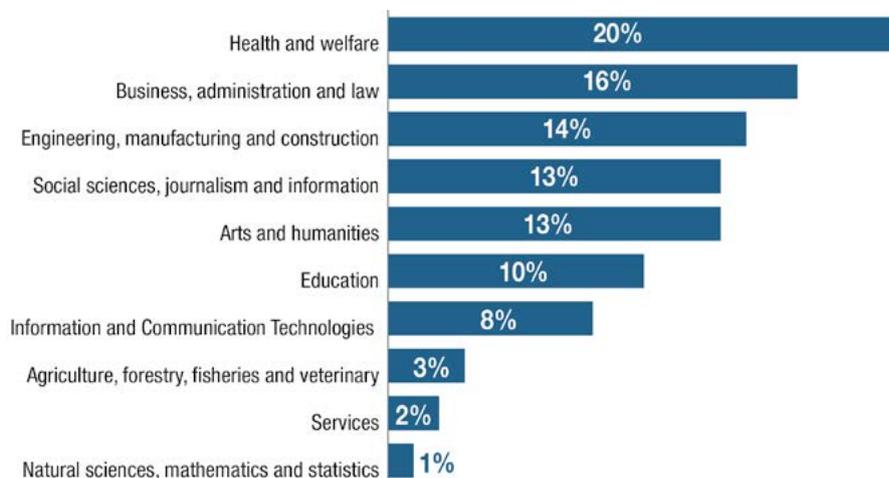
Figure 6 - Course type



Field of study

Students in the sample come from all fields of study, but most frequently from Health and welfare (20%), Business, administration and law (16%), Engineering, manufacturing and construction (14%), Social sciences, journalism and information (13%) or Arts and Humanities (13%). The least common studies are Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary (3%), Services (2%) and Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics (1%).

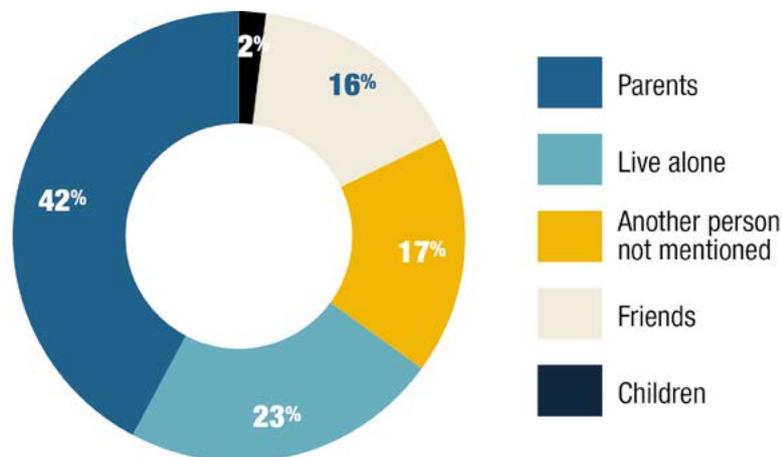
Figure 7 - Field of study - n = 1.117



Living situation

42% of the respondents are living with their parents during the week, 23% of the respondents live alone from Monday until Friday, 16% with friends, 2% with children, and 17% of the respondents with another person not mentioned.

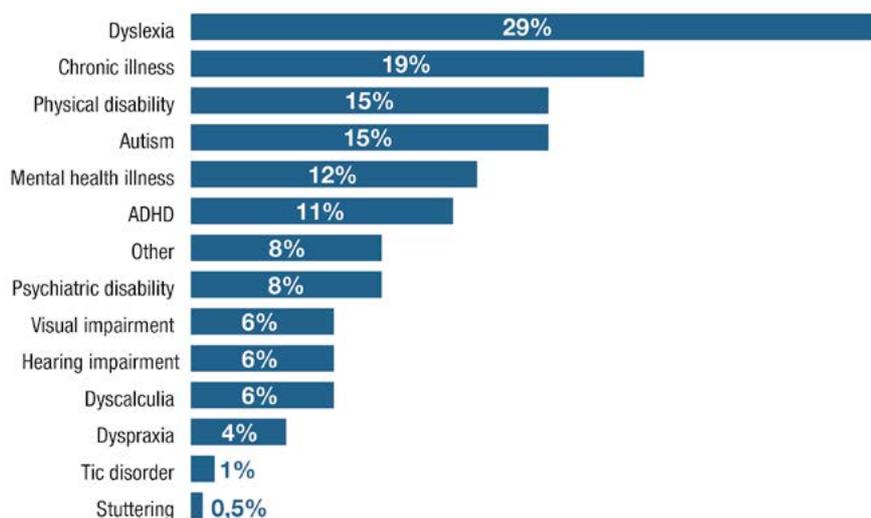
Figure 8 - Living situation - n = 1.100



Type of disabilities

Concerning the type of disabilities, dyslexia is the most common reported disability (29%), followed by chronic illness (19%), physical disability and autism (15%), mental health illness (12%), ADHD (11%), psychiatric disorders (8%), and visual impairment, hearing impairment and dyscalculia (6%). The least represented disabilities in this sample are dyspraxia (4%), tic disorder (1%) and stuttering (0,5%). Other reported types of disabilities (8%) are “migraine”, “dysphonia”, “fibromyalgie”, “multiple sclerosis”, “dysgraphia”, and “several types of brain impairments”.

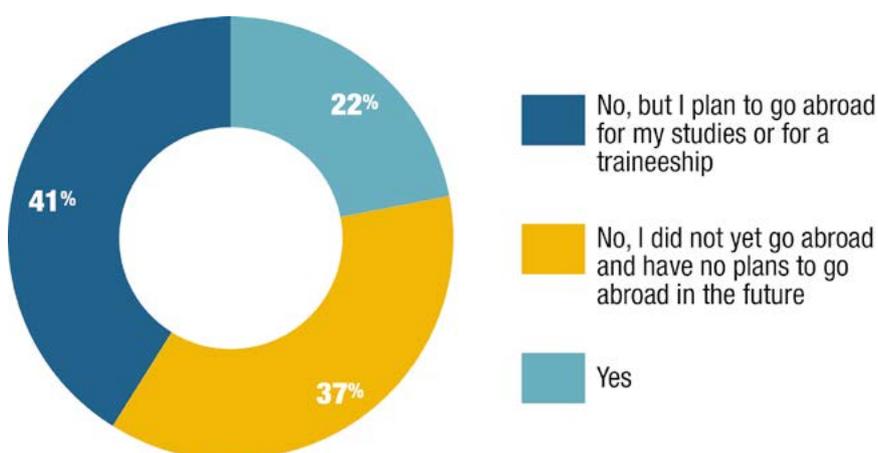
Figure 9 - Type of disabilities - n = 1.093 (multiple answers allowed)



Mobility experience

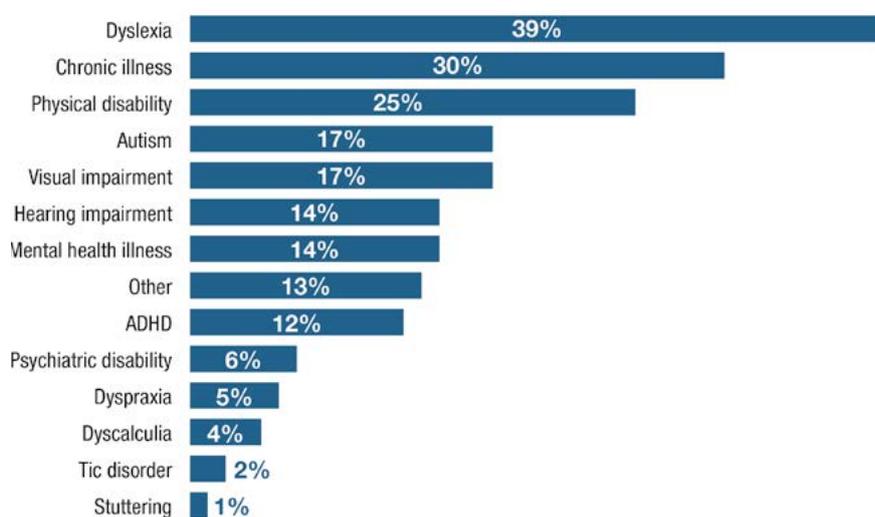
22% of the respondents had participated in mobility programmes, and will be referred to as mobile students in the following chapters. 41% had not participated but planned to go abroad for studies or traineeships. 37% of the respondents had not participated and did not plan to go abroad in the future. Those two groups will be referred to as non-mobile participants.

Figure 10 - Had a mobility experience - n = 1.011



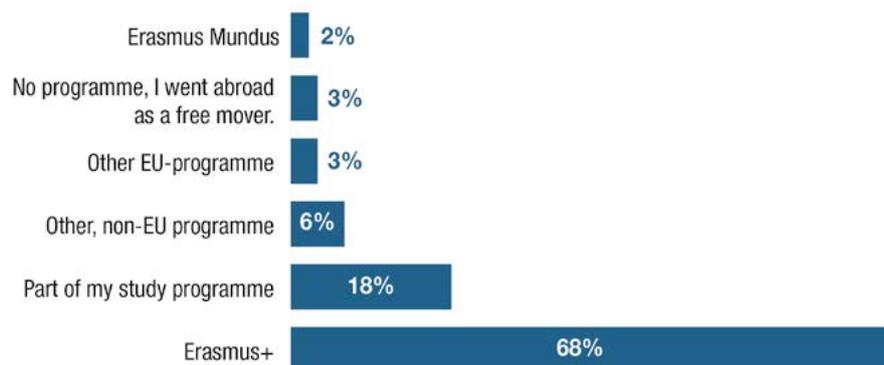
Concerning the type of disabilities of mobile students, dyslexia is the most common reported disability (39%), followed by chronic illness (30%), physical disability (25%), visual impairment and autism (17%), mental health illness and hearing impairment (14%), other reported types of disabilities (13%), ADHD (12%). Psychiatric disorders (6%), dyspraxia (5%), dyscalculia (4%), tic disorder (2%) and stuttering (1%) were least represented.

Figure 11 - Type of disability of mobile students with disabilities - n = 219 (multiple answers allowed)



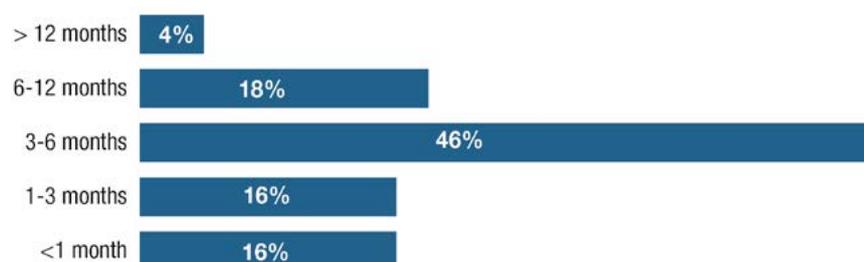
68% of the mobile students with disabilities took part in the Erasmus+ programmes and 18% participated in mobility as part of their study programme. Other EU and non-EU programmes are significantly less common, respectively 3% and 6%. Only 2% of the mobile students with disabilities participated in Erasmus Mundus, and only 3% of the respondents have a mobility experience as a free mover.

Figure 12 - Mobility Programme - n = 216 (multiple answers allowed)



Italy, United Kingdom, Portugal, United States of America (USA) and Spain have been most commonly reported as top destination countries by students with disabilities. This is somewhat expected for most of them, since Italy, the UK and Spain are all popular Erasmus destinations, and the USA is the most popular destination worldwide for international students.

Figure 13 - Duration of mobility - n = 230



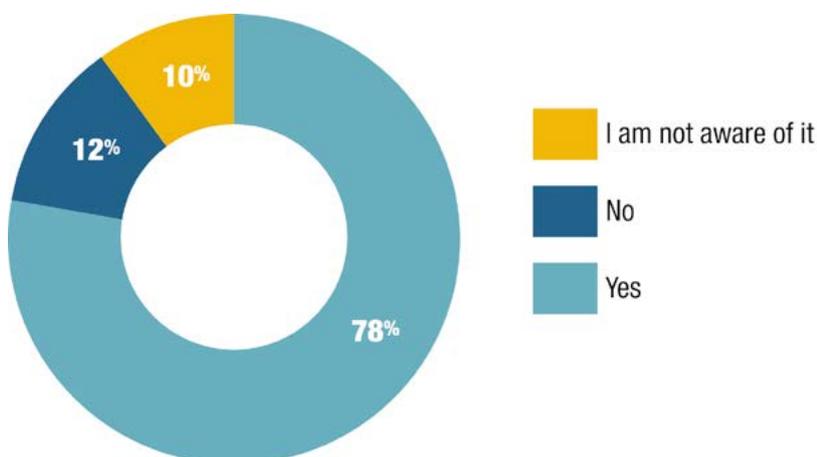
Concerning the duration of the mobility, half of the respondents reported three to six months (46%), 18% reported six to twelve months, 16% reported one to three months and 16% reported a duration of less than one month. Only 4% of the respondents reported mobilities of more than one year.

Disability support home institution

Disability support

78% of the respondents indicate that their home higher education institution has an assigned officer/office supporting students with disabilities. 10% of the respondents, representing all countries and types of disabilities, are not aware if such support provisions are in place or not and 12% state that this officer/office is not present in their institution. It is important to highlight that the question was phrased in such a flexible way as to capture various support provision systems of higher education institutions across Europe.

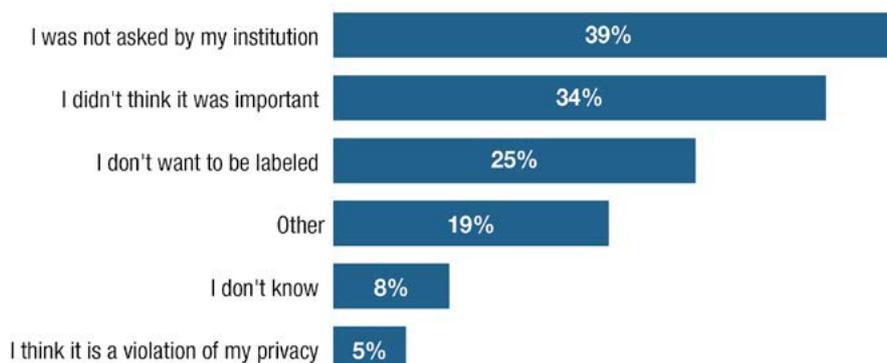
Figure 14 - Availability of disability support - n = 1.017



Disclosure

While 71% of the respondents disclosed their disability to the assigned officer/office supporting students with disabilities at their home higher education institution, 29% of the respondents did not. The most common reasons students with disabilities did not disclose are: not being asked by their institution (39%), thinking that it is not important (34%) and not wanting to be labelled (25%).

Figure 15 - Reasons for why students not disclosing their disability - n = 274 (multiple answers allowed)



Disclosure of the disability is less common for students with a psychiatric disorder (51%), ADHD (60%), mental health and or chronic illness (66%), in comparison to students with a physical disability (82%) or visual impairment (83%).



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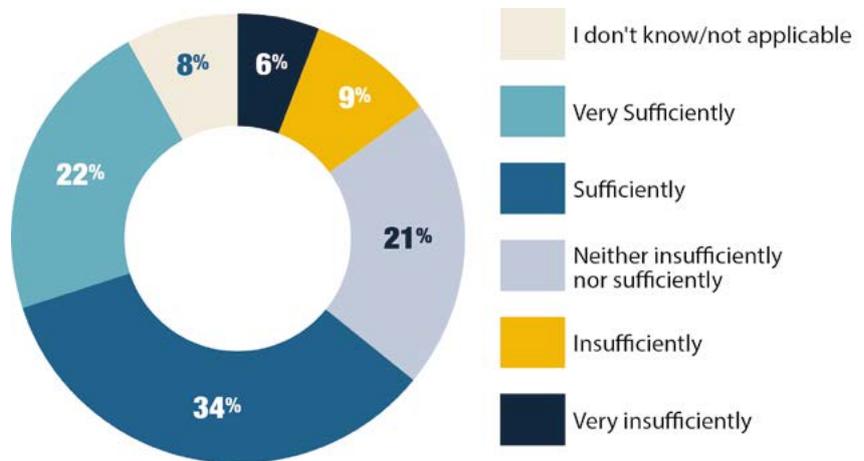
Initially I didn't want to be labelled nor did I feel that I needed support. Once I disclosed and got the support of my institution's disability services, my options opened up.

EPFIME respondent - Student

Disability taken into account

The survey asked the respondents about how their disability is taken into account at their home higher education institution. Overall, most of the answers are positive with 22% of the respondents indicating their disability is taken very sufficiently into account, 34% sufficiently, 21% neither insufficiently or sufficiently, 9% insufficiently and 6% very insufficiently. 8% of the respondents indicated an indecisive answer to this question.

Figure 16 - Satisfaction with disability taken into account at home institution - n = 1,005



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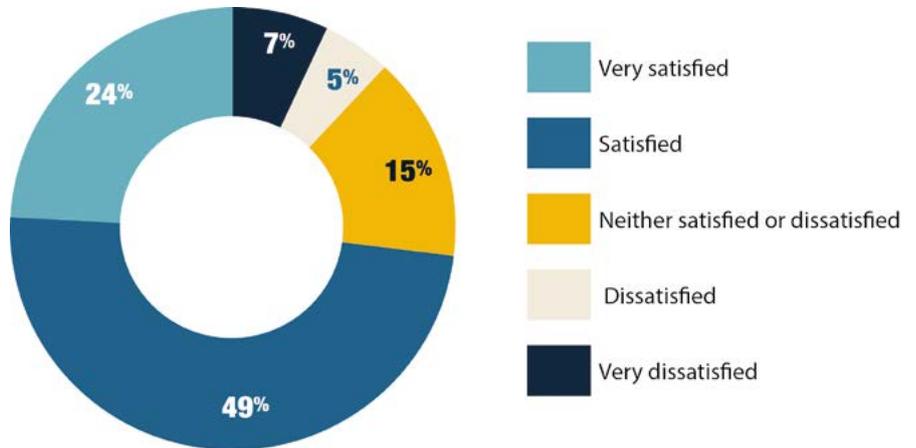
Although further resources could be provided - i.e. more quiet spaces for those of us who struggle with large and noisy crowds, and who suffer from panic attacks - overall, I feel the disability office to be approachable and ready to assist where possible. But in particular, it is the understanding and support of my supervisor in regards to my disability that has proved the most helpful.

EPFIME respondent - Student

Student housing

Figure 17 - Satisfaction with home institution housing situation - n = 253

The satisfaction regarding the home institution housing situation is positive, with 24% of the respondents identifying themselves as very satisfied, 49% as satisfied, 15% as neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 5% as dissatisfied, while 7% of the respondents indicated very dissatisfied.



”

My student dorm is managed by our office of equal opportunities, therefore it is specialised for students with disabilities. Therefore the management also knows how to help us. And the people are also kind and helpful in this dorm.

EPFIME respondent - Student



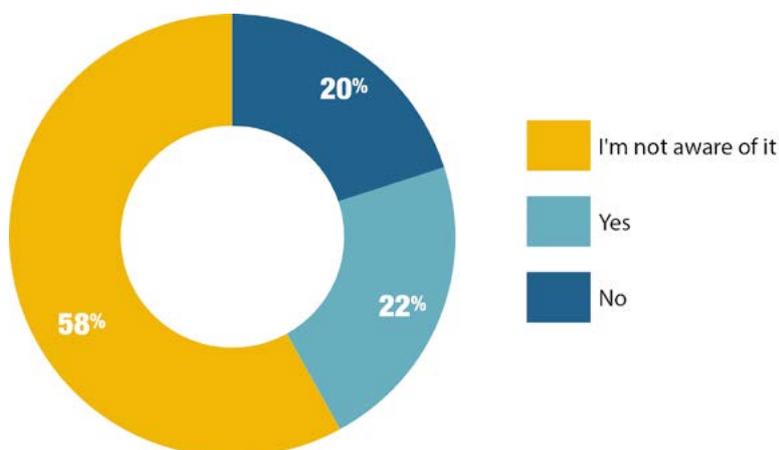
Information provision and communication about mobility programmes

Information provision

Only 22% of the respondents state that their higher education institution provides additional information about mobility programme opportunities for students with disabilities. 20% of the respondents point out that no information is provided, while 58% of the respondents state that they are not aware of such information being provided by their home institution.

Figure 18 - Information provision on international mobility opportunities for students with disabilities - n = 1,014

All countries and types of disabilities are represented among the students who are not aware of such information being provided by their home institution. Having a chronic illness seems to play a significant role with this. Approximately 60% of the students with a chronic illness are not aware of the information provided by their home institution (Pearson Chi-Square ,407).



”

I have not heard of any information about the Erasmus+ programme for disabled students.

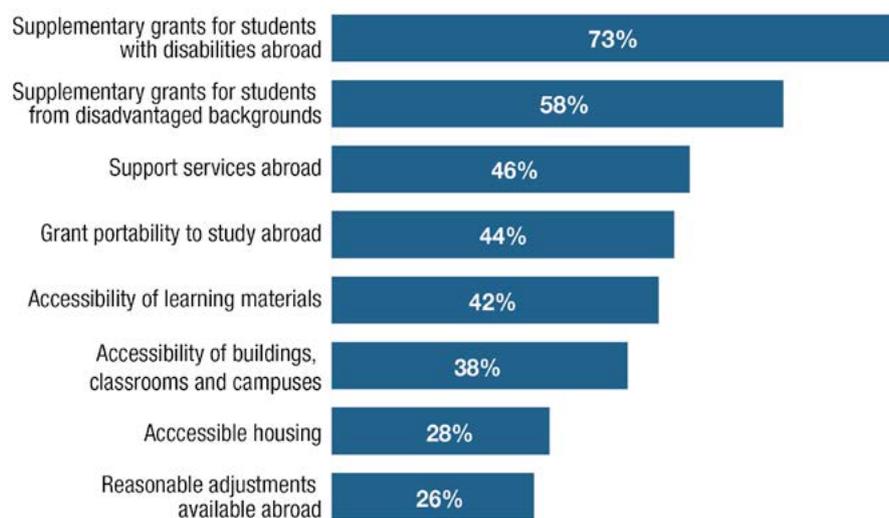
EPFIME respondent - Student



Type of information

When taking a further look at the type of information that higher education institutions provide, the responses primarily focused on supplementary grants for students with disabilities (73%) and supplementary grants for students with disadvantaged backgrounds (58%), followed by information about support services offered abroad (46%), grant portability (44%), accessibility of learning materials (42%) and accessibility of the building, classrooms and campuses (38%). Information about reasonable adjustments abroad (26%) and accessible housing (28%) are less provided.

Figure 19 - Type of information provided - n = 218 (multiple answers allowed)



Communication activities

Among the ways used to provide information about mobility programmes abroad to students with disabilities, on campus events and information days are largely the most common (99%), followed by brochures (77%) and others (45%, e.g. emails, face to face meetings). Specific materials to inform students with disabilities in an inclusive way (e.g. using sign language and braille) are significantly less common.

Figure 20 - How information is provided - n = 218 (multiple answers allowed)

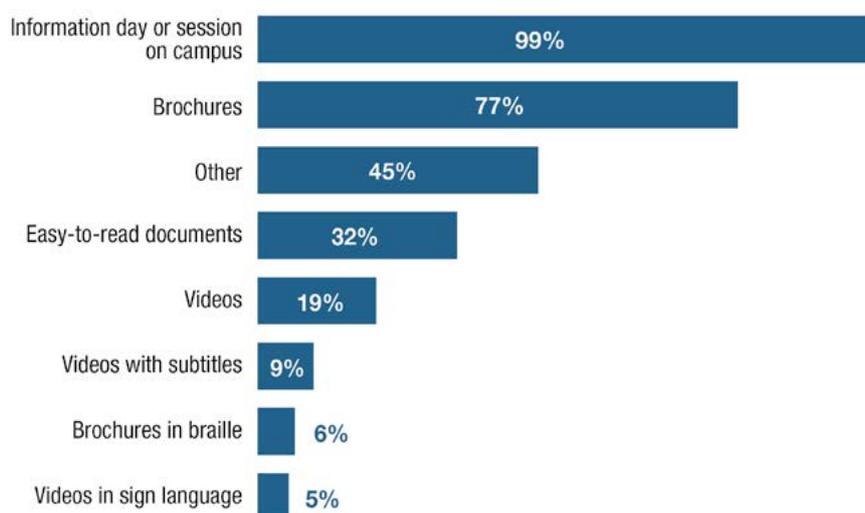
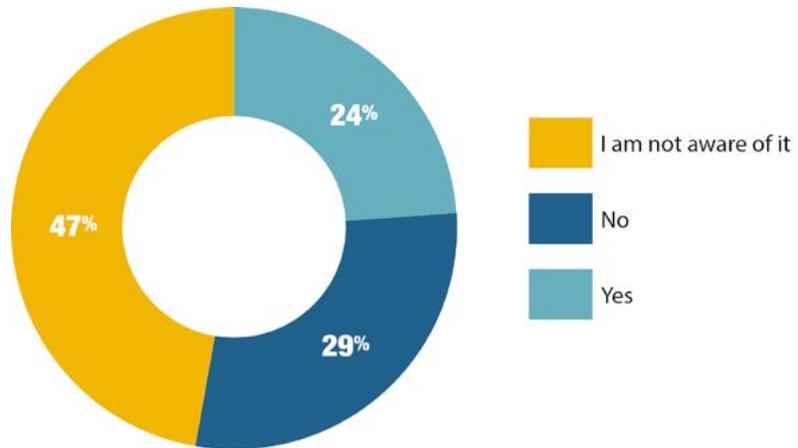


Figure 21 - Have marketing channels, social media channels or campaigns - n = 1,019

Only 24% of the respondents indicate that their institution has marketing channels, social media channels or campaigns which specifically target students with disabilities. 29% of respondents pointed out that none of these are available, while 47% of the respondents are not aware of it



When asked about barriers in information provision, 173 students with disabilities used the open-ended answer option to give their views about their experience. Broadly speaking, two large sets of barriers are mentioned. Many barriers relate to a one-size-fits-all approach, often leading to inaccessible information for students with disabilities.

Further reported barriers relate to inaccurate and/or contradictory information and the lack of advice and support. Many students need to inform themselves in direct contact with the partner higher education institution of their choice. The lack of clear answers to their questions makes students feel unsure.





”

Much of the information on the foreign exchange programmes is given via public talks without captioning, interpreters or video recordings, and questions are generally taken verbally or over the phone, which is inaccessible to me as a deaf person. I have had to rely on written information and notes made by friends for a lot of the initial information, and have not been able to have regular contact with my home university's exchange office since going abroad. I am not aware of any of the written information being available in alternative formats, and the talk venues are often physically inaccessible and have little flexibility in terms of timings, etc.

EPFIME respondent - Student

Regarding the question on what information should be offered, the responses of students included information about how to apply for grants, information on how transport, accommodation and support assistance services (e.g. healthcare) are organised in the location abroad, and information regarding the accessibility, support services and housing offered by the host higher education institution. Students expect to be informed about whether the host institution can accommodate the same measures offered at the home institution and country

”

I have personal assistance and need 24/7 personal support. It would be a really big help to get support by finding students or people who are able and willing to work for me during the semester abroad. Assistance gets paid by the local country where I'm living in. Because I'm moving to another country in Europe there is different taxation and different laws in hiring people - also for that support would be helpful.

EPFIME respondent - Student



Information Access to Mobility: enablers and barriers

Motivation

Concerning the motivation of mobile students with disabilities for a study, work placement or traineeship abroad, the most cited options are: the opportunity to live abroad (64%), the opportunity to improve and widen career prospects in the future (55%), the opportunity to expand the social network by meeting people from different countries (53%), the opportunity to develop soft skills (52%), and the opportunity to experience different language practices and teaching methods (50%).

When asked which aspects play an important role in participating in mobility abroad, personal development, language development and social integration are rated as important or very important by 53%, 49% and 47% of the mobile respondents respectively. Quality of education, academic level and the service from the host institution are rated as important or very important by 43%, 41% and 38% of the respondents respectively.

Figure 22 - Motivation for mobility abroad - n = 220

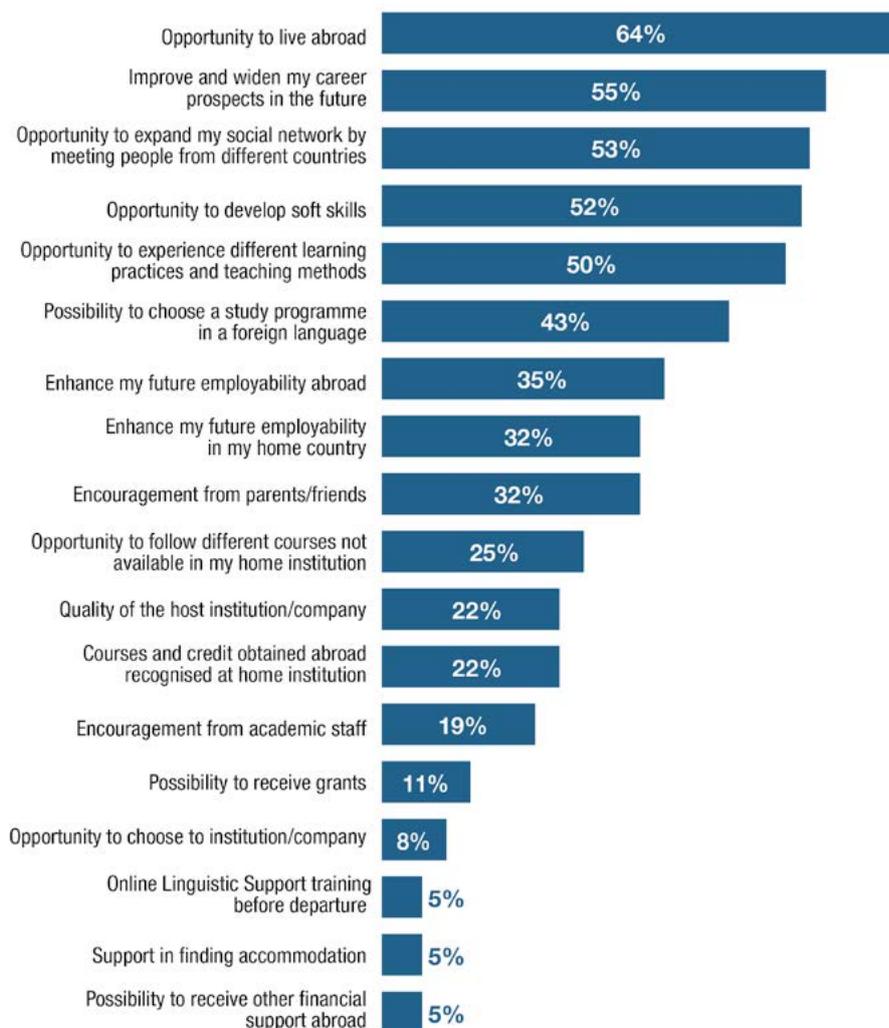
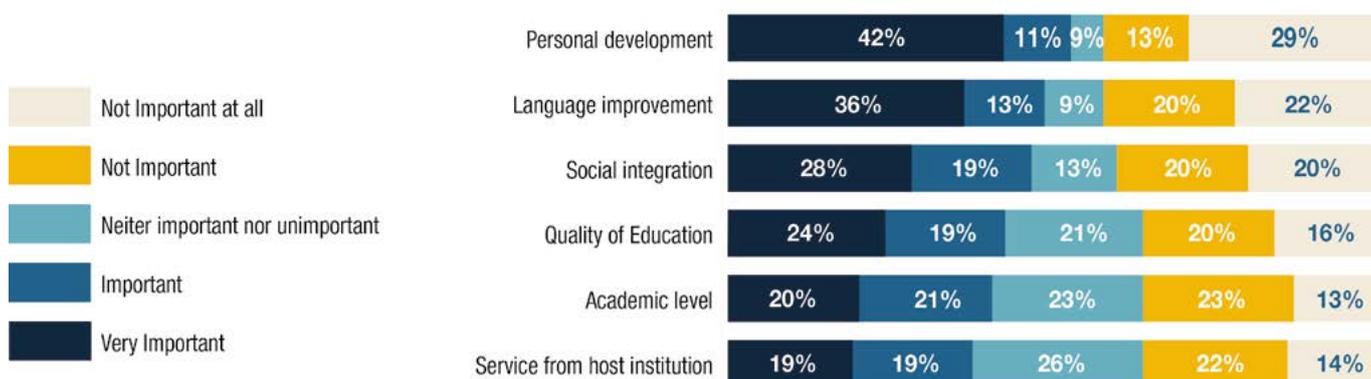


Figure 23 - Factors which played a role in enrolment for a mobility abroad period - n = 206





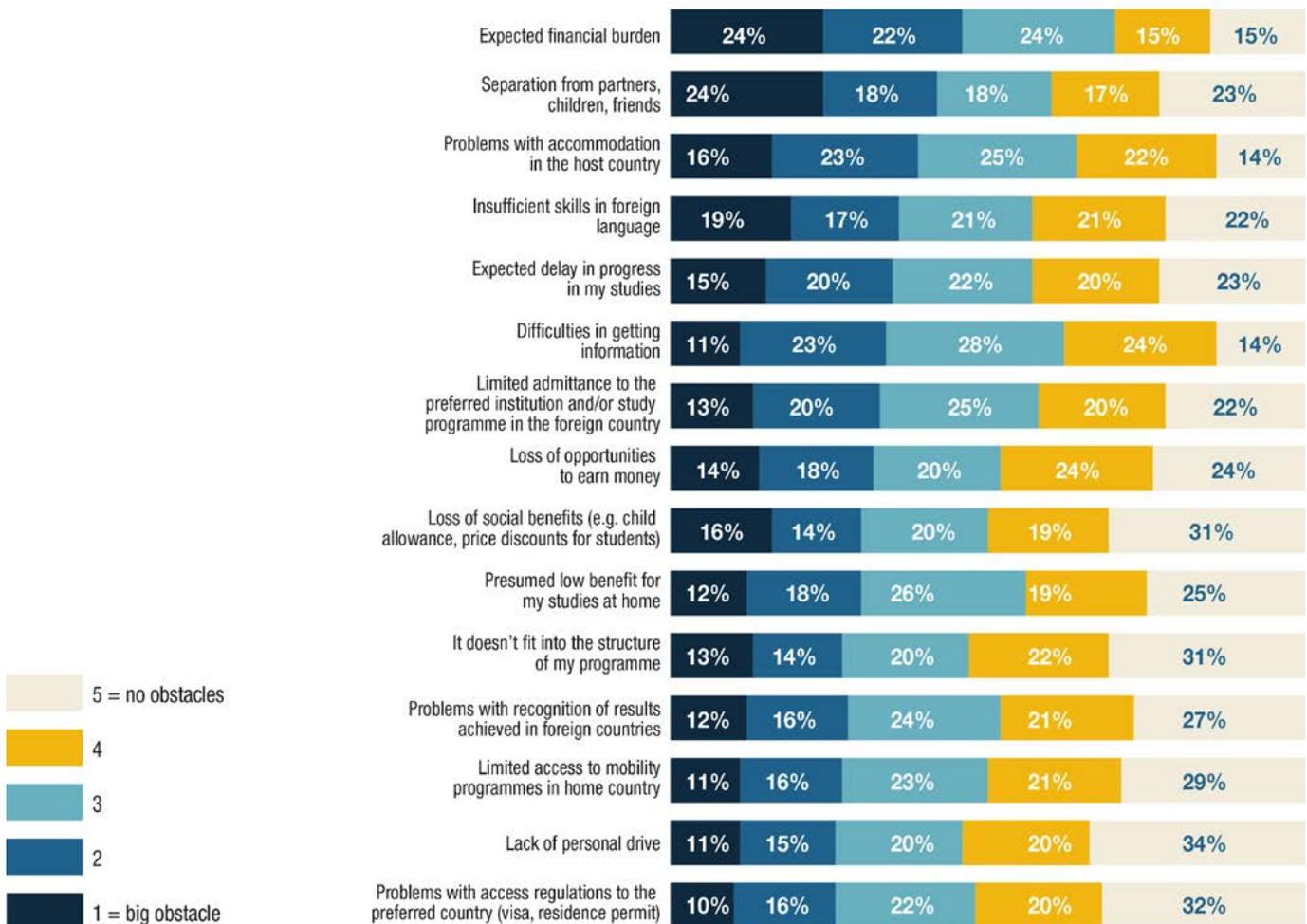
When preparing for my own year abroad in studies I was told I need to speak with my lecturers and faculties who don't know any information about disabilities in those countries. As a result of the lack of information I have decided to not go for a study abroad, for fear that I won't be taken care of adequately.

EPFIME respondent - Student

Barriers to participation

A vast majority - 78% of students with disabilities - did not participate in international mobility programmes. Expected financial burdens (46%), separation from partners/children/friends (42%), and problems with accommodation in the host country (39%) are rated as important obstacles for engaging in an international mobility programme. Insufficient skills in foreign language (36%), expected delays in progress in studies (35%) and difficulties in getting information (34%) are rated as important or very important obstacles.

Figure 24 - Barriers to engaging in mobility programmes - n = 737

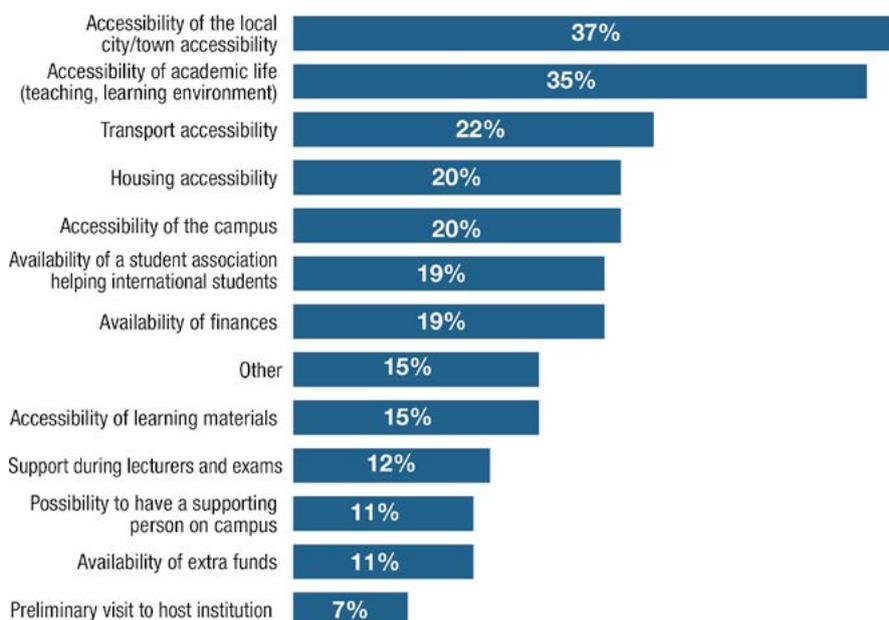


Mobile participants: from pre-departure phase to impact

Host institution choice

When asked which factors played a role in the choice of the host institution, the accessibility of the local city/town (37%), and the accessibility of academic life such as the teaching/learning environment (35%) play the highest role for most of the respondents. They are followed in popularity by local transport accessibility (22%), housing and campus accessibility (20%), the availability of a student association which helps international students (19%) and the availability of finances (19%). The factors that are taken into account by the smallest proportion of students with disabilities that went abroad are the availability of a preliminary visit to host institutions (7%), the availability of extra funds (11%), and the possibility to have a supporting person on campus (12%). Under the 'Other' option, 16% students mentioned advice from family.

Figure 25 - Factors which played a role in the choice of host institution - n = 200 (multiple answers allowed)



”

I chose that institution since it is located in a city where I'm not dependent on walking or taking public transportation but can go by bike.

I went to the deaf university. Deaf place, so safe place to me.

My home institution wanted me to go to England because I had family there.

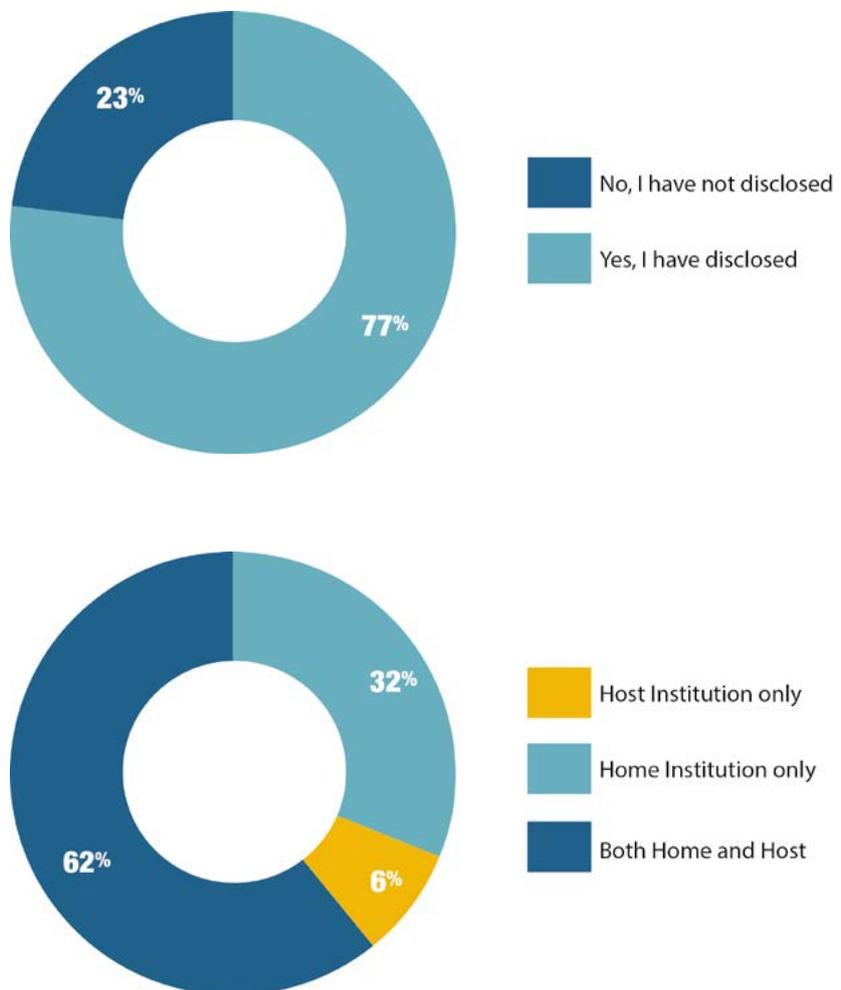
EPFIME respondent - Students

Disclosure

An important decision students with disabilities have to make when preparing for a mobility abroad is whether they want to disclose that they have a disability. Among the mobile respondents with disabilities, 77% disclosed it and 23% decided not to disclose it. Analysis by disability type indicates that approximately half of the students with a psychiatric disability (55%) and autism (48%) do not disclose their disability when preparing their study abroad. Also one out of three students with mental health issues, ADHD, dyslexia and dyscalculia did not disclose their disability before the actual mobility period.

Among those who decided to disclose it, 62% disclosed their situation both to the home and the host institution, 32% of them disclosed it only to the home institution, 6% only to the host institution.

Figure 26 - Disclosure before the mobility period - n =197 (up)
Institutions to which the disability was disclosed n = 151 (down)



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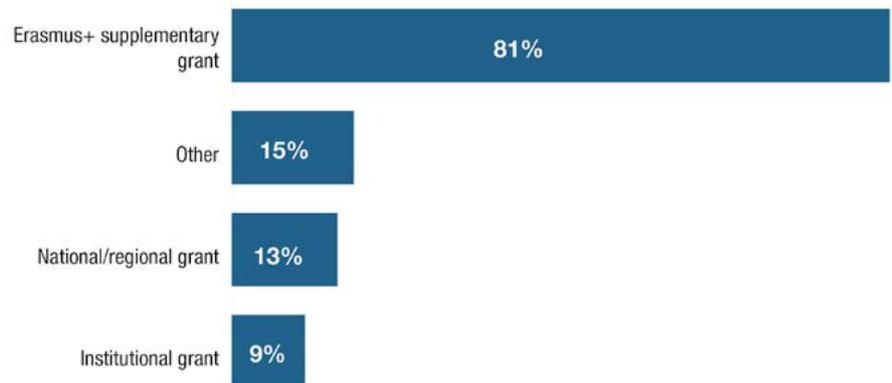
The problem is you have to calculate all costs before (the total amount with the explanation for your calculation is part of the application process) and then collect all invoices at your host country. If expenses are higher than calculated before, you have to pay this from your own pocket. If your expenses are lower than calculated you have to pay the money back. The reality is you always have some unexpected costs which you hadn't included in your calculation before so you have to calculate the worst case scenario to have some space for unexpected costs (because shifting costs is allowed).

EPFIME respondent - Student

Grants

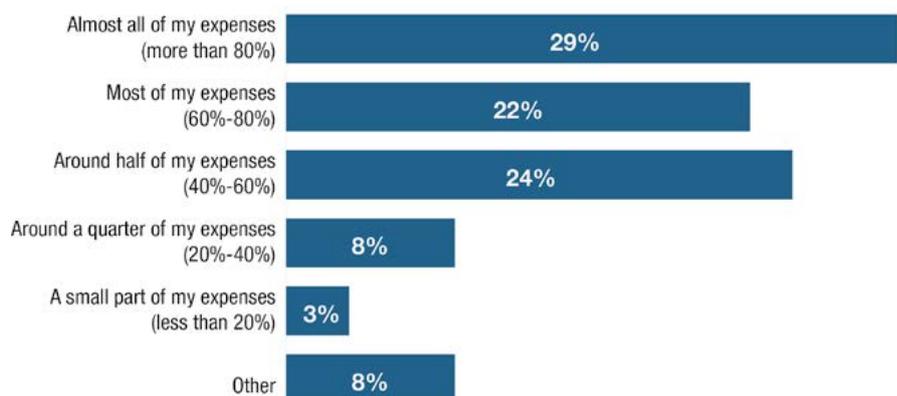
Around 35% of the mobile students applied for an additional grant, in which the Erasmus+ Special Needs Support was by far the most popular (81%).

Figure 27 - Types of additional grants - n = 62



Around one out of five students who requested an additional grant (17%) point to barriers in the process of application and the portability of grants.

Figure 28 - How expenses were covered by additional grants - n = 62



”

The application process for more financial support was too huge and too complicated. I had troubles with my health insurance to get an attestation for further support. My health insurance didn't want to pay for services abroad.

EPFIME respondent - Student

”

I have faced the barrier of unavailable written interpreters. I would have needed one in carefully chosen lessons only. Roughly 3 hours per week but it was not possible to get one. However, the people of the host institution I was in touch with were very nice and very sorry because they could not offer suitable interpreters. The host institutions organised filming of the lessons concerned. That was indeed helpful but the videos did.

EPFIME respondent - Student

Preparatory visits

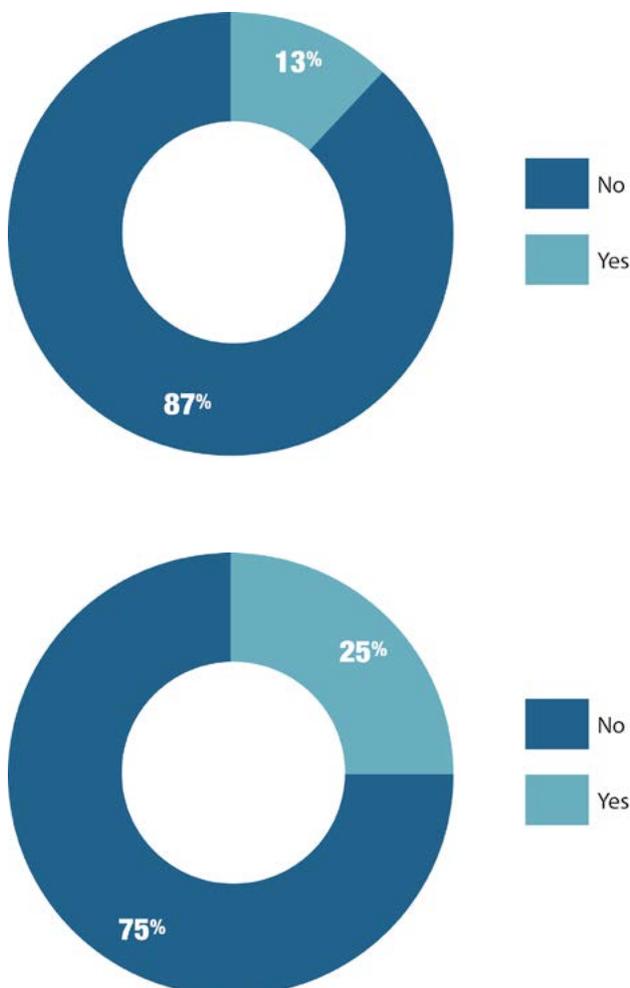
For around 13% of the respondents, a preparatory visit to their future host institution was organised, and for around 25% of them, financial support was provided for this. Students experienced the preparatory visit as extremely helpful to examine the accessibility of the higher education institution and its location, to arrange accessible accommodation and to organise reasonable adjustments including personal assistance and medical help. Students felt better prepared and safer.

”

It felt a lot safer and I felt less anxious to go. I knew I would be welcome and not be treated differently because I was disabled and people would help me out. It made the first days.

EPFIME respondent - Student

Figure 29 - Opportunity to take part in a preparatory visit (up) - n = 152
Received financial support for preparatory visit (down) - n = 152



”

I had the possibility to find a good accessible accommodation, pre visit the university and visit an information centre for people with disabilities in my host city, which helped me organise medical aids and to search for personal assistance in advance of my studies.

EPFIME respondent - Student

Barriers

Four out of ten of the mobile students experience barriers during the preparation of international mobility (41%), while half indicate that it was not the case (49%), and one of ten don't know (10%).

When zooming in on the type of barriers these students experienced, the lack of information about the accessibility of the host institution (56%), lack of the support services from the home institutions during the preparation period (50%), lack of information about the accessibility of the host city/ town (40%) and barriers of financial nature (31%) are most mentioned. Discrimination by teachers and staff and lack of support from friends and family are significantly less reported.

Figure 30 - Have faced barriers during the preparation of their international mobility - n = 200

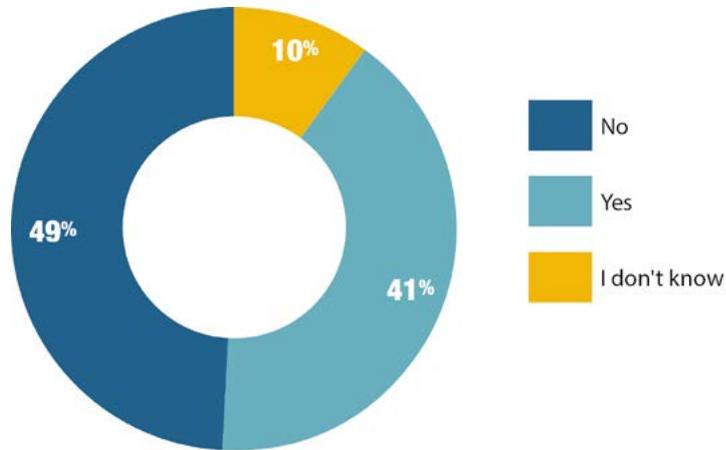
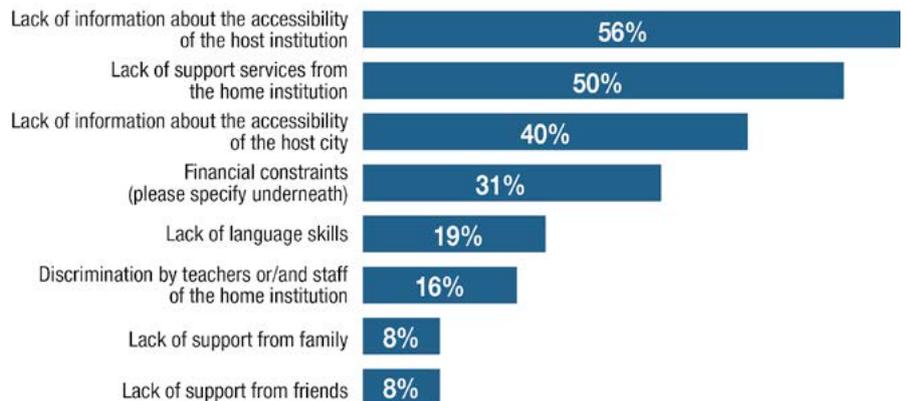


Figure 31 - Type of barriers faced in preparing for international mobility - n = 62



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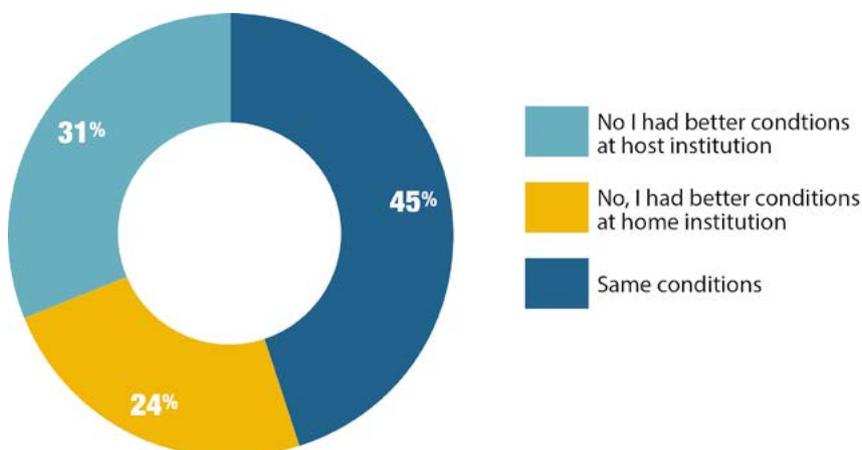
I was given no information about the accessibility of my destination university or city and when asked, the exchange service did not know anything about accessibility and the disability service did not know anything about exchanges. I was not given a contact person or way of implementing adjustments at my destination. Several members of staff at my home university advised me against studying abroad and thought I would not be able to cope in another language because my disability affects communication (despite the fact that I have the required qualifications/ability in the language). I was too afraid to disclose my disability to the exchange office or my destination university because I thought it might impact their judgement of my language ability (on which my exchange is conditional), and would not have disclosed it at all to my home university if I had not already done so before I decided to do the exchange.

EPFIME respondent - Student

Support from institutions

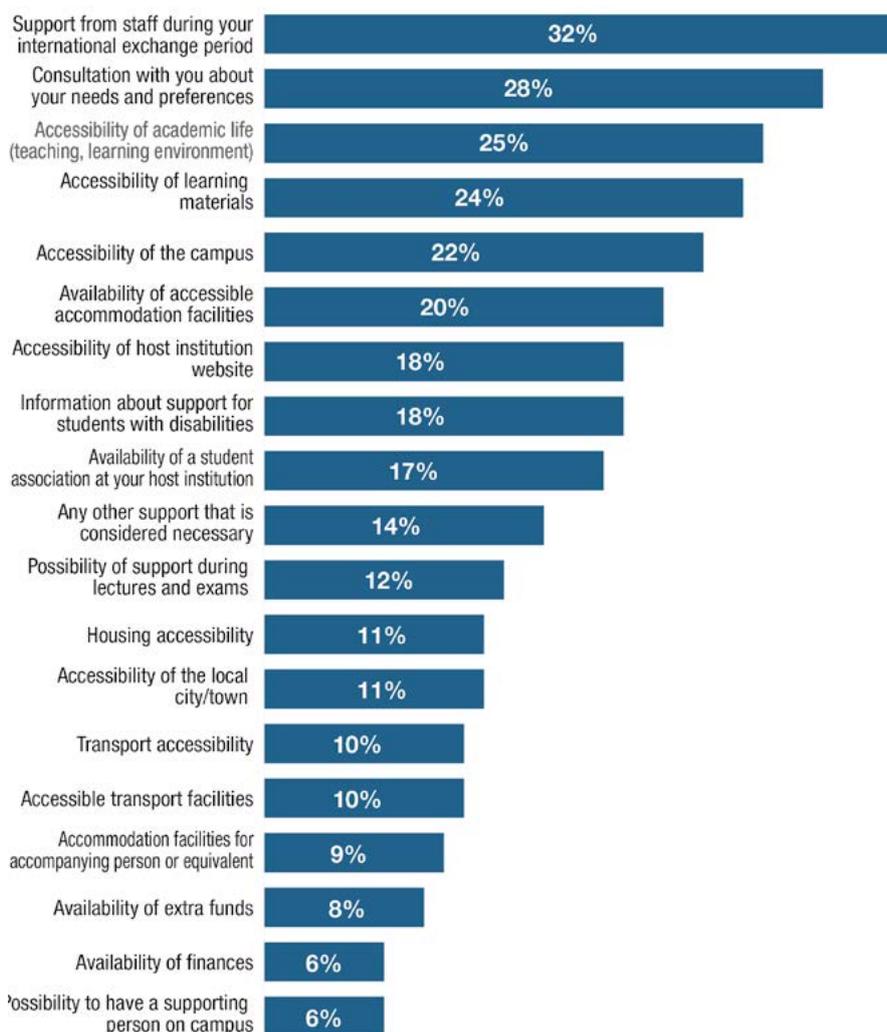
For the mobile students with disabilities who applied for support services at the host institution, 45% experience the same conditions for academic success and personal well-being as compared to their home institution. 24% have better conditions at their host institution, and 31% experience better conditions at their home institution.

Figure 32 - Difference by conditions comparing home and host institutions - n = 92



When asked in which areas the host institution supported them most during the mobility period, the most cited options are: support from staff during international mobility period (32%), consultation about the needs and preferences (28%), accessibility of academic life (25%), accessibility of learning materials (24%), and the availability of accessible housing facilities (20%).

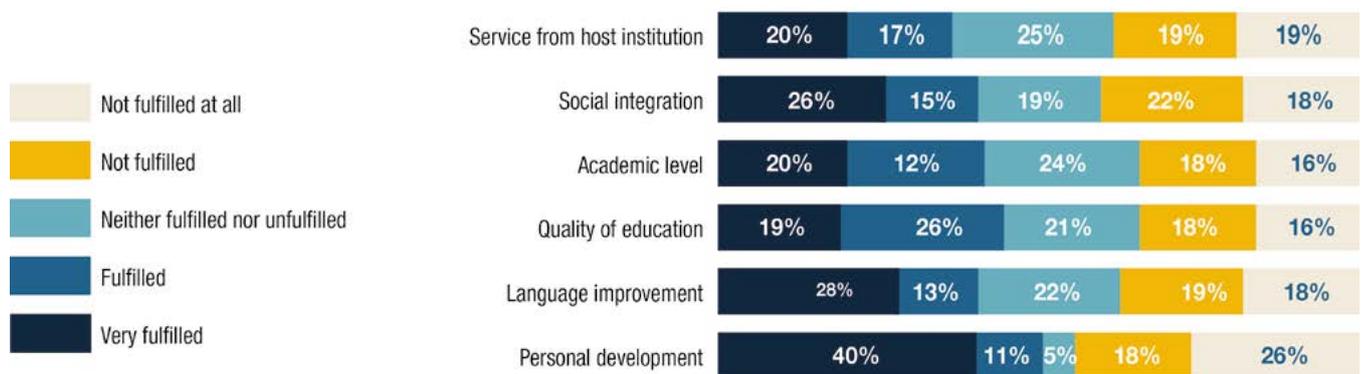
Figure 33 - Support offered from host institution - n = 218



Acquired skills and added value

Regarding expectations after the mobility period, personal development (51%), quality of development (45%), academic level (42%), social integration (41%) and language improvement (41%) are rated as fulfilled or very fulfilled. Support services from the host institution are rated as fulfilled or very fulfilled by 37% of the respondents. Regarding the added value of the mobility and the skills acquired while abroad, improvement of language skills, independence and self-confidence, as well as the social aspect and learning new coping strategies are most mentioned by students.

Figure 34 - How original expectations were fulfilled - n = 206



The mobility period really had a moving impact on me as a person. I truly created a different picture of myself in terms of confidence, expectations, achievements I could make, and an overall new perspective on what I could do and could not do. I had never had the chance to live in a community other than my own, which most of the time was very oppressing to say the least. Living in a community where no one sees you as a normal person if you are blind is staggeringly difficult and highly risky if you really want to achieve something as a blind person. It takes a terrific amount of energy and effort to prove that you can be the opposite of what your community is constructed and driven to believe about your disability; in my case, blindness. In the community where I lived during the exchange programme. I met with a different perspective on blindness. They supported every movement I made and also the people I met in the street were highly more informed than those in my home country. Plus the opportunities to participate in various programmes and activities as a person with disabilities were far greater at the receiving institution and beyond. This had an amazing impact on me and I started integrating more into the community. I gained better social skills, I also acquired better mobility skills as the infrastructure of the city was of course appropriate for blind pedestrians.

EPFIME respondent - Student

Summary key findings student surveys

- The vast majority of students disclose their disability. However, a significant number of students choose not to disclose their disability to the home institution because they have not been asked, because they didn't think it was important, or because they didn't want to be labelled.
- Students with disabilities are positive about the support services offered by their home institution, with two out of three respondents indicating that their disability is sufficiently to very sufficiently taken into account.
- Satisfaction regarding student housing is also high, with three out of four of the participants identifying themselves as satisfied to very satisfied at their home institutions.
- Information provision on study abroad for students with disabilities is lacking and there are issues with the message reaching the receiver. In particular, the lack of clarity and information about the transportability of grants and support services abroad represent important obstacles to the mobility of students with disabilities.
- A large portion of students with disabilities don't think that Erasmus+ or other mobility programmes are also open for them. Too many students still don't know that support and supplementary grants are available.
- Similar to their peers, the opportunity to live abroad, to improve and widen career prospects in the future, to expand social networks, and to learn different language practices and teaching methods are the main motivators for students with disabilities to take part in mobility.
- Expected financial burdens, separation from partners, children, friends, and problems with finding adequate and accessible accommodation in the host country, are important factors for not engaging in an international mobility programme. Insufficient skills in foreign language, expected delay in progress in studies and the lack of (accessible) information about the host institution, country and support services are also important barriers.
- The planning and preparation for an international mobility programme takes more time for students with disabilities when compared to their non-disabled peers, as many factors need to be considered because of the lack of information provision, inaccessibility and unknown host environment. Additionally, challenges of availability of assistance, such as support persons or medical assistance were among the highlighted elements.
- The key criteria for choosing a host institution to study at widely depends on accessibility criteria (city/town, learning, transport, housing and campus), which are not always easily found.
- In line with earlier research on non-disabled students, the length of the mobility programme seems also essential when a student with a disability is considering studying abroad. Students with disabilities quite often participate in short mobilities and value the flexibility of short duration periods.
- Although the overall satisfaction regarding the covering of financial expenses via grants is positive, mobile students with disabilities indicate challenges with the difficult eligibility criteria and inaccessible application process.
- Preparatory visits to the host institution before the mobility takes place have proven to have an important positive impact on reassuring both the student and the staff in charge of the mobility, reducing doubts and fears.
- A significant number of students don't disclose their disability at the host institution. Most students experience similar or better support conditions at host institutions during the mobility period. Students value the support from staff during the international mobility period, consultation about needs and preferences, support in academic life, support regarding the accessibility of learning materials and support regarding accessible student housing.
- International mobility programmes have comparable advantages for students with disabilities as with the general student population in terms of higher academic achievement, increased language skills, personal confidence, and personal development. In addition, students with disabilities testified about a more normalised self-perception, making them feel more similar to their peers.

Higher Education Institutions Survey

Sample overview

Geographical coverage

A total of 114 higher education institutions from 22 European systems responded to the EPFIME survey. The country-by-country breakdown is shown below.

Figure 35 - Participating countries

Austria (2), Belgium - French Community (1), Belgium - Flemish Community (15), Cyprus (6), Czech Republic (9), Estonia (2), Finland (1), France (1), Germany (8), Hungary (11), Iceland (1), Ireland (4), Italy (18), Lithuania (2), Portugal (1), Serbia (1), Slovak Republic (7), Slovenia (1), Spain (9), Sweden (7), Switzerland (4), United Kingdom (1)



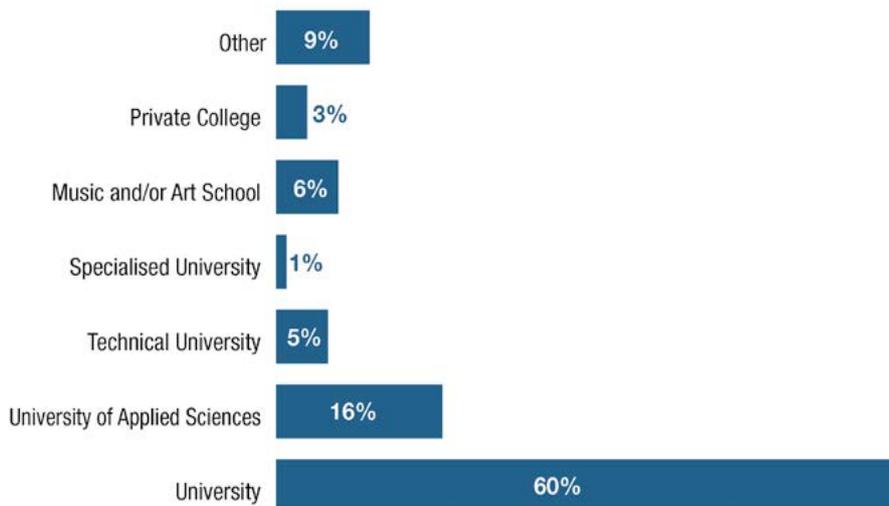
When looking at the geographical coverage of the sample and the number of responses per country, the size of the higher education system should be taken into account. While institutions from Italy (16% of the sample), Hungary (10%), Czech Republic (9%), Spain (8%), Germany (7%) represent a significant part of the sample, they also have bigger systems. This is in contrast to the Flemish Community, a smaller system with a high number of responses in the sample (13% of the overall respondents). Outliers are, for instance, France and Finland, with a comparably big system but a small number of responses.

This indicates that the sample might have a self-selection bias, meaning it mostly covers those higher education institutions which have inclusion among their mission values and main priorities and often already have strategies and activities in place. Consequently, the survey results are in most cases not representative at the country level, and therefore the further analysis of the higher education survey, does not include a country breakdown of the data.

Institutional profile

More than half of the responding institutions are universities (60%). The remaining responses are mainly composed of universities of applied sciences (16%), technical universities (5%) and music and art schools (6%). Only a small number of responses are from other types of higher education institutions, including private colleges, specialised universities and open universities.

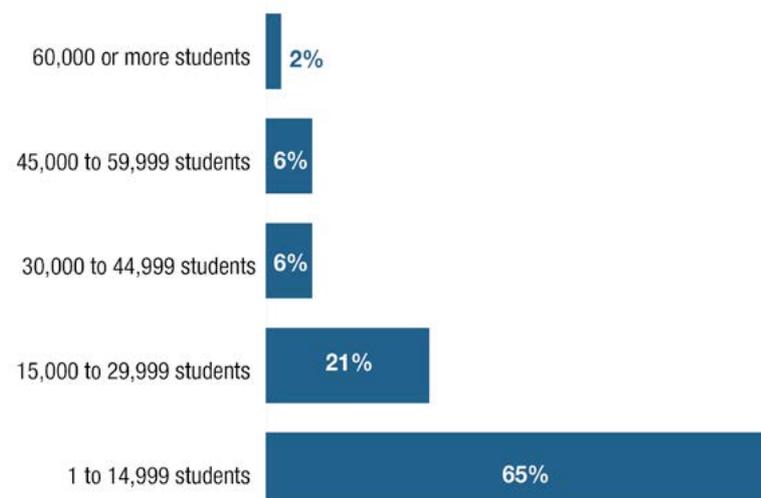
Figure 36 - Institutional profile higher education institution - n =113



Institutional size

Approximately two thirds of the sample (65%) is composed of smaller institutions with up to 15,000 students and just 21% are from medium-sized institutions with up to 30,000 students. Another 6% of responses come from large institutions with up to almost 45,000 students, and there is a small number of respondents from very large institutions with more than 60,000 students (2%).

Figure 37 - Size of the institution per student enrolled - n = 109



Policies and strategies on disability

Data collection

The vast majority of the higher education institutions (79%) do collect data about the participation of students with disabilities, even categorised by disability.

Figure 38 - Data collection on participation of students with disabilities - n = 86

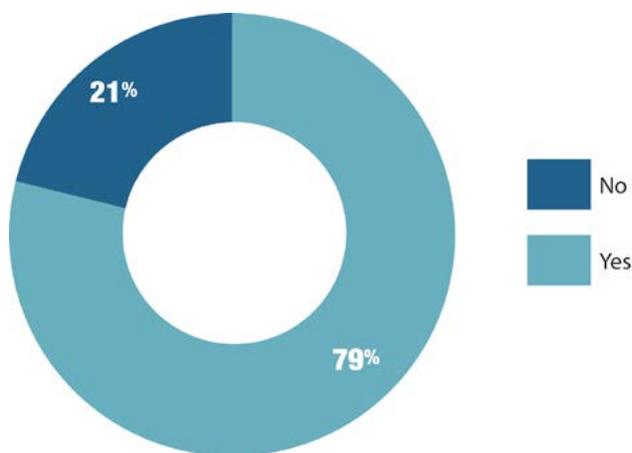
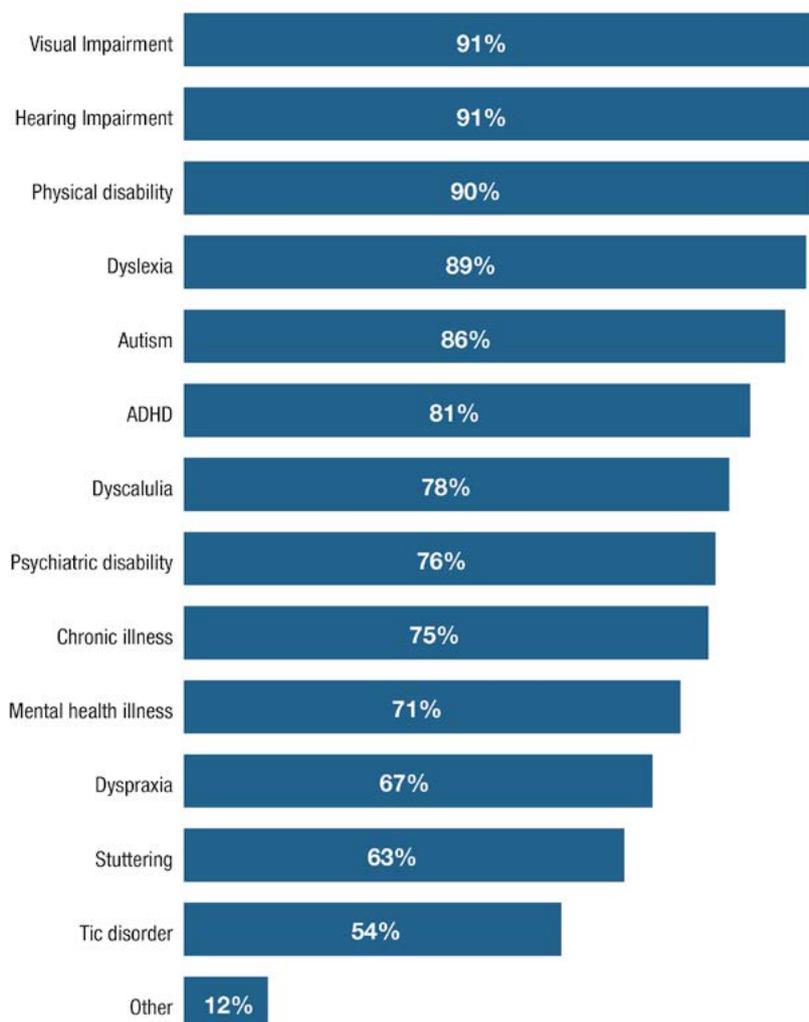


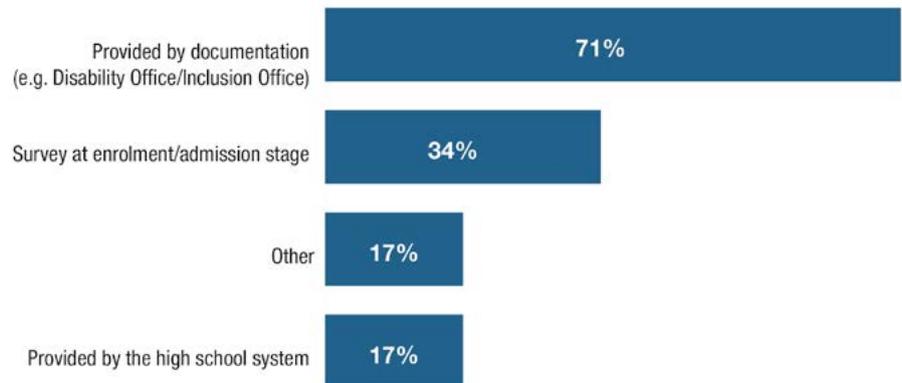
Figure 39 - Data collection on type of disabilities - n = 63 (multiple answers were allowed)

The most common data collected by higher education institutions are for students with a visual and hearing impairment and physical disability. Next come dyslexia, ADHD, autism, dyscalculia, psychiatric disability, chronic illness, mental health illness, dyspraxia, stuttering and tic disorder. Other registered types of disabilities (12%) are among others “dysphasia”, “sensory /auditory processing disorder”, “students with emotional and behaviour issues”, and “non-verbal learning disorder.”



There are lots of different ways in how this data is gathered by higher education institutions in the different countries. While 17% of the respondents gather data directly from the high school system and 34% of respondents gather data at enrollment or admission stage, 71% of higher education institutions gather data systematically from the disability/inclusion office based on disability documentation.

Figure 40 - Ways of data collection - n = 63 (multiple answers were allowed)

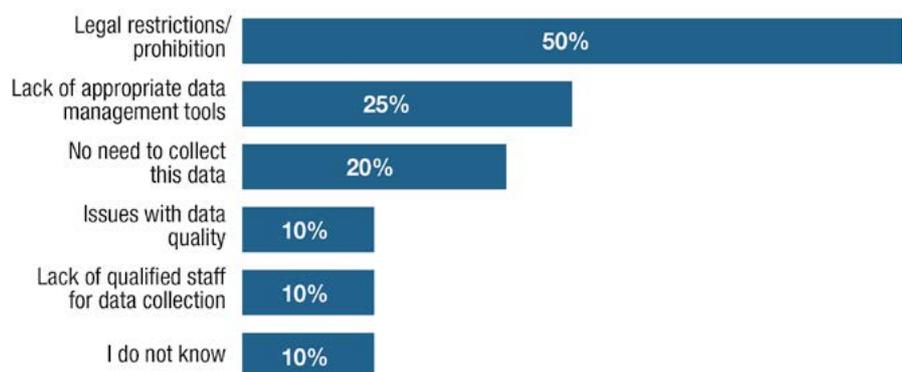


In Sweden, students with disabilities that need special support to complete their studies, have to fill out a form in the system ‘National Administration and Information System’ (NAIS). The system supports the application management processes of our university. Students have to upload their disability certificate along with their application.

EPFIME respondent
Higher Education Institution representative

Figure 41 - Reasons for not collecting data - n = 20
The question allowed multiple box-ticking

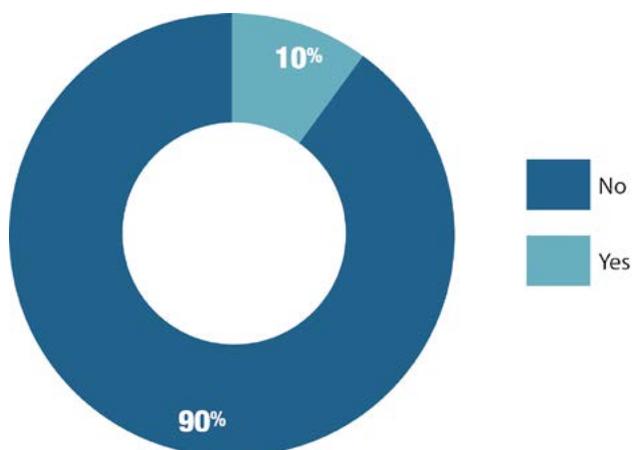
The reasons expressed for not gathering this data in a systematic way are various: legal restriction (50%), lack of appropriate data management tools (25%), issues with data quality (10%), lack of qualified staff (10%) and the lack of need to collect this data at institutional level (20%).



Participation targets

Only 10% of the responding institutions have set quantitative targets for the participation of students with disabilities in higher education, often aligning with national action plan directives.

Figure 42 - Have targets for participation of students with disabilities - n = 89



Certain study programmes have placed a 5% target for students with impairments and other difficulties

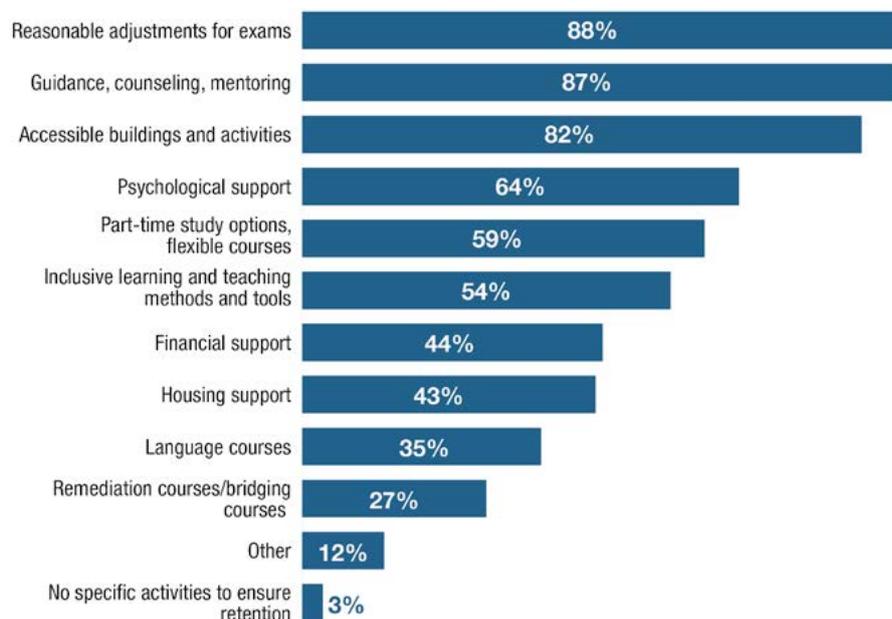
Our university has set a target of 10% as of September 2019. This target aligns with the aim of the National Plan for Equity and Access 2015-2019 to increase the number of new entrants to higher education with disabilities to 8%.

EPFIME respondent
Higher Education Institution representative

Support services

More than 80% of the surveyed institutions offer a wide range of guidance, counselling, mentoring services, and reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities.

Figure 43 - Type of support provided for students with disabilities - n = 114 (multiple answers were allowed)



Most often, students have to provide medical information, passing a needs assessment that will allow for the provision of personalised support, grants and funding. In most countries higher education institutions and students with disabilities have to cooperate with several organisations.



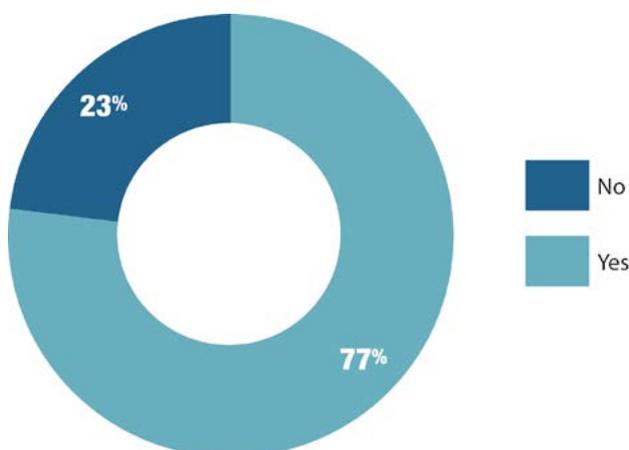
A higher education student with a disability in the UK is entitled to a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) with the view of covering the extra costs the student may incur because of the disability. This allowance is paid either into the student's bank account or to the organisation that provides the service or supplies specialised equipment. Proving one's eligibility for DSA is a straightforward process if a student has a physical, visual or hearing impairment. A letter from the doctor or a specialist is considered sufficient medical evidence in these situations. However, a full diagnostic report is required in case of the student suffering from dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties. Such a report must be written by either a practitioner psychologist or a specialist teacher who must have a current Assessment Practising Certificate. Following the receipt of the student's application form and medical evidence, the student may be asked to book a Study Needs Assessment with an experienced Needs Assessor during which there will be an informal discussion regarding equipment and support that the student would need during their time at university.

EPFIME respondent Higher Education Institution representative

Accessibility buildings and student housing

77% of the respondents indicate their institutions have specific measures and practices connected to accessible buildings.

Figure 44 - Have measures and practices in place to ensure building accessibility - n = 87



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Our university developed an online Access Guide containing information on the physical accessibility of rooms and buildings. The Access Guide collects essential information on how to reach, enter and use bookable (class) rooms and their environment, taking into account the mobility, visual and hearing abilities of visitors, students and staff.

EPFIME respondent
Higher Education Institution representative



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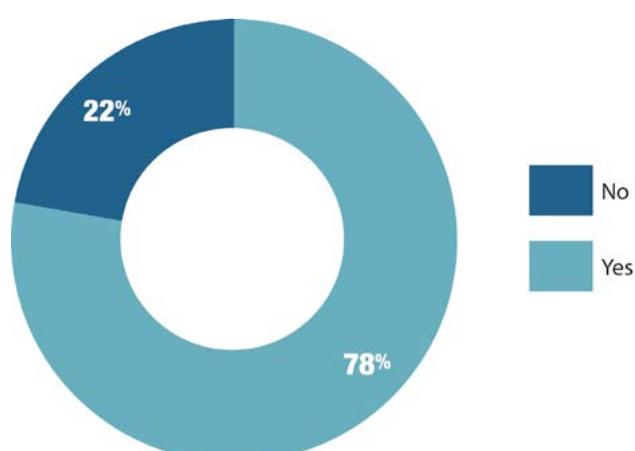
The university has a Campus Accessibility Officer to advise and guide the University in its duties under the Disability Act 2005. This act requires public bodies to ensure that buildings and services are universally accessible to staff, students and visitors with disabilities. An audit, conducted in 2013, identified areas for improvement to the built environment in university and priority works are currently being implemented. Works completed to date include major improvements to the concourse around the campus; automation of entrances and exit doors to buildings and new disabled parking bays. Work will continue over the coming years to progress our university towards its goal of an accessible campus for all.

EPFIME respondent - Higher Education Institution representative

Accessibility in the curriculum

Figure 45 - Have measures and practices in place to ensure that curriculum are accessible - n = 86

78% of the institutions have specific measures and practices connected to accessibility in the curriculum. Recorded lecturers, assistive software, note taking assistance and support for study planning are the most reported measures that higher education institutions offer to students with disabilities.



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The Access Center and IT Services are working together to identify deficiencies in the existing systems and are working to address them. The Access Centre was involved in the process for selecting a new Virtual Learning Environment and accessibility was a key priority in this process.

EPFIME respondent
Higher Education Institution representative

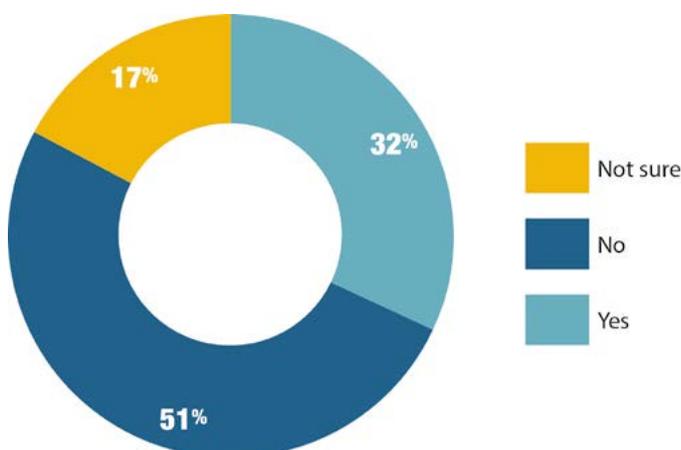


Policies and strategies on inclusive mobility

Internationalisation strategy

Figure 46 - Have mentioned inclusive mobility in institutional strategic plan - n = 90

32% of the higher education institutions have responded that their institution’s strategic plan or internationalisation strategy include specific reference to inclusive mobility for students with disabilities. 51% of the respondents point out that no reference is made, while 17% of the respondents are not sure if any reference is made.



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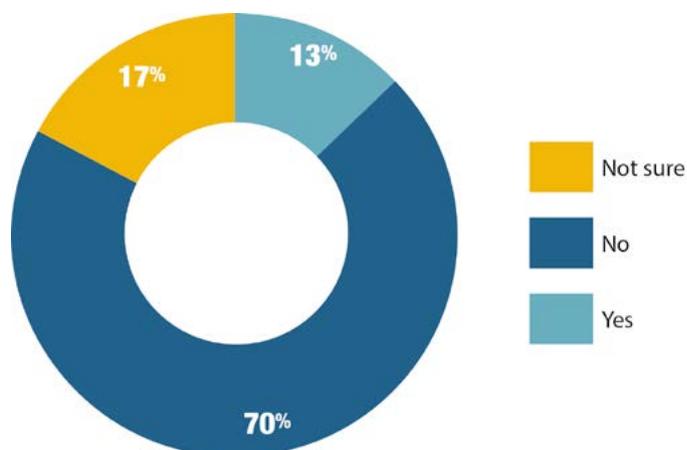
Our internationalisation strategic plan ensures necessary structures so that all students and staff can gain an international experience by removing all possible barriers (including financial, physical and mental barriers) and by offering qualitative support for both incoming and outgoing students with specific needs (e.g. short mobility options, targeted mobility grants, qualitative support before, during and after a mobility period).

EPFIME respondent
Higher Education Institution representative

Mobility targets

13% of the institutions have a target for the participation of students with disabilities in mobility programmes. 70% of the respondents, point out that no targets are in place, while 17% of the respondents are not sure.

Figure 47 - Have mobility targets for students with disabilities - n = 94

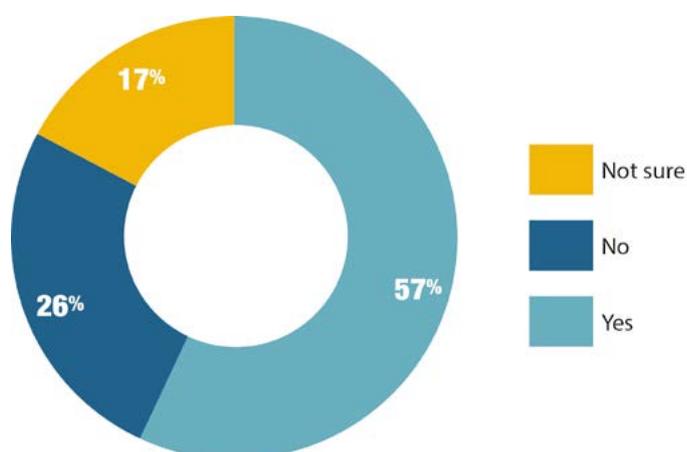


Initiatives to encourage students with disabilities regarding outgoing mobility

57% of the institutions have declared undertaking initiatives to encourage students with disabilities to take part in outgoing mobility. 26% of the respondents do not undertake initiatives, while 17% of the respondents are not sure if any initiatives are undertaken. Next to the publication of information on the institution's website and student council/union website, many institutions promote Erasmus+ and special needs grants through general presentations. Some institutions organise meetings where former participants present their exchange, or work on a specific website for outgoing students with disabilities. One institution has a dedicated contact person in the international office for special needs for Erasmus outgoing students. Furthermore, some institutions try to create awareness and to inform the Erasmus+ advisors at department level about the special support available for students with disabilities, so that they can use this knowledge in their student interactions.

Figure 48 - Take initiatives to encourage outgoing mobility - n = 93

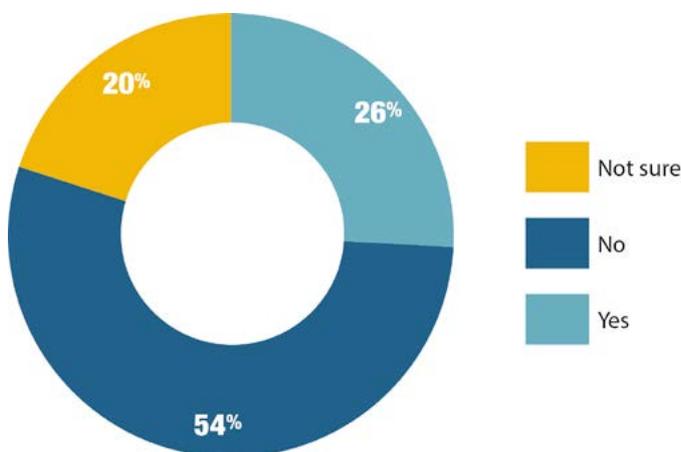
Several higher education institutions point out that students' stories and testimonies from former participants are the most powerful in terms of promoting study abroad opportunities to their peers.



Initiatives to attract incoming students with disabilities

26% of the institutions undertake initiatives to attract incoming students with disabilities on mobility. 54% of the respondents do not undertake initiatives, while 20% of the respondents are not sure if any initiatives are undertaken. Focus groups with higher education inclusion and mobility experts also pointed out the importance of taking into account inclusion measures and support offered inside the inter-institutional agreements.

Figure 49 - Take initiatives to attract incoming students with disabilities on mobility - n = 93



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In the Erasmus+ inter-institutional agreements, we mention explicitly our engagement and capacity to welcome incoming students and staff with disabilities.

EPFIME respondent
Higher Education Institution representative

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Next to a detailed English language website about studying with a disability, the Disability Office developed a checklist that (future) students can download via the website to prepare their stay. Furthermore, international students can submit an application from 11 November to study at our university for the following academic year. The fact that students can already indicate on their application form that they want more information about studying with a disability at our university is an added value. Students fill in this application form well before their definitive registration at our university so that the university can contact students well before the start of their studies (no later than four months before the start of the academic year). Students are also warmly invited to visit the university in advance.

EPFIME respondent
Higher Education Institution representative

Data collection mobility programmes

52% of the surveyed institutions collect data about the participation of incoming students with disabilities on mobility, and 53% of the surveyed institutions collect data about the participation of students with disabilities in outgoing mobility.

Figure 50 - Collect data about students with disabilities' participation in incoming and outgoing mobility - n = 93

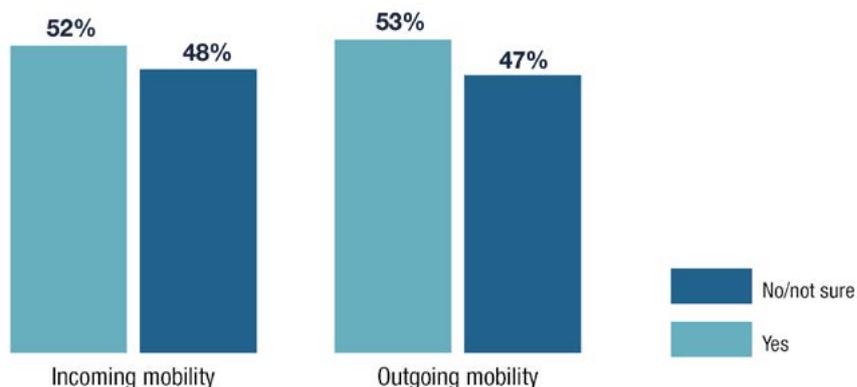
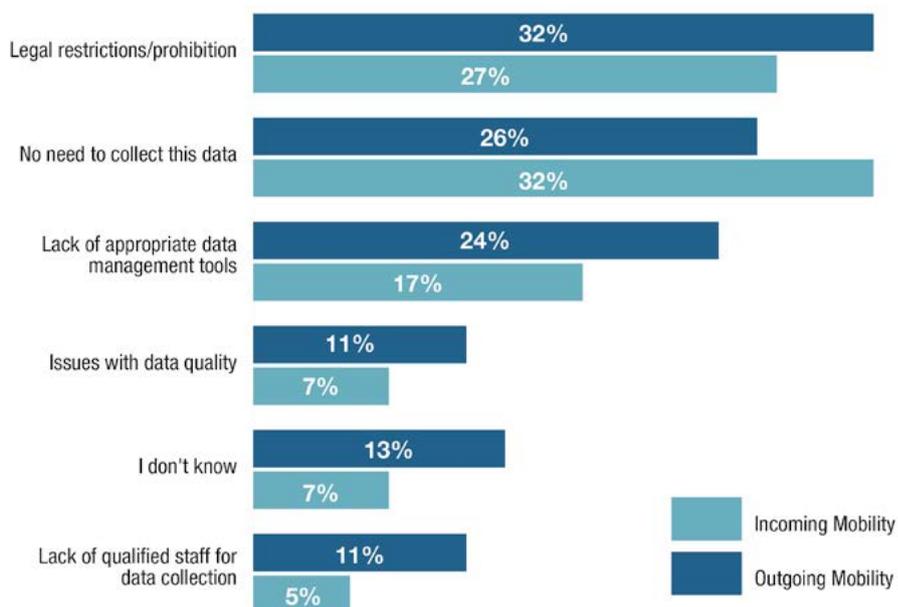


Figure 51 - Reasons expressed for not collecting data of students with disabilities in incoming and outgoing mobility - n = 38 (multiple answers were allowed)

From the institutions who do collect this type of data, most respondents have indicated only collecting data about participation in the Erasmus+ programmes. The institutions who are currently not collecting this data have mentioned various reasons for not doing so, such as legal restrictions, a lack of appropriate management tools, staff and issues with quality data. Some institutions point out that the limited number of cases they have encountered so far are the reason why they do not have a need to collect this data systematically.



Mobility programmes and popular countries

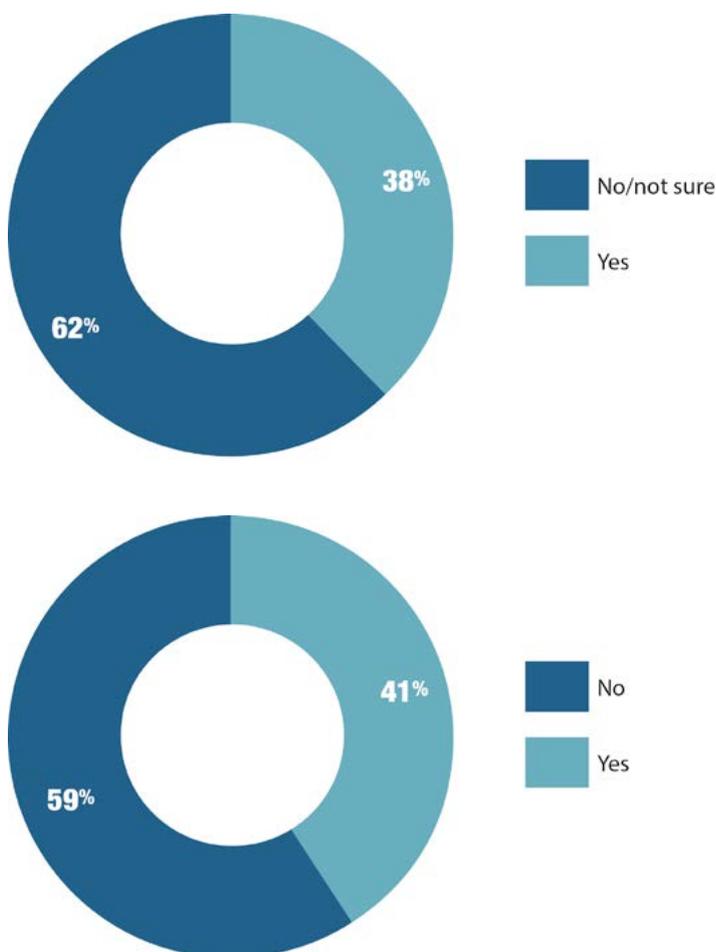
Although data collection is limited to specific cases and higher education institutions mostly do not analyse the data that is collected, 64% of the higher education institutions presume that Erasmus+ and short mobilities are the most successful types of mobility programmes for both incoming and outgoing students with disabilities.

Regarding the most popular destination countries, Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and France are most commonly listed within the top countries. The United Kingdom, Germany, the United States of America, France and Spain were most commonly listed within the top three sending countries.

Specific procedures

Figure 52 - Have specific administration procedures in place for the mobility of students with disabilities - n = 85
Noticed a significant differences in cooperation - n = 71

Approximately four out of ten of the higher education institutions (38%) have specific procedures, protocols, insurance requirements for outgoing students with disabilities in ensuring the environment is safe for them. 41% point out a significantly different cooperation with the host or home institution when it comes to meeting the needs of students with disabilities as opposed to students without disabilities.



”

At some universities, disability officers or other university staff take a very active role in the preparations for the exchange. As a consequence, the incoming student is not heavily involved in the conversations. It remains important to enter into a direct dialogue with the student as much as possible and to point out their responsibilities in the preparation of their studies abroad.

EPFIME respondent - Higher Education Institution representative

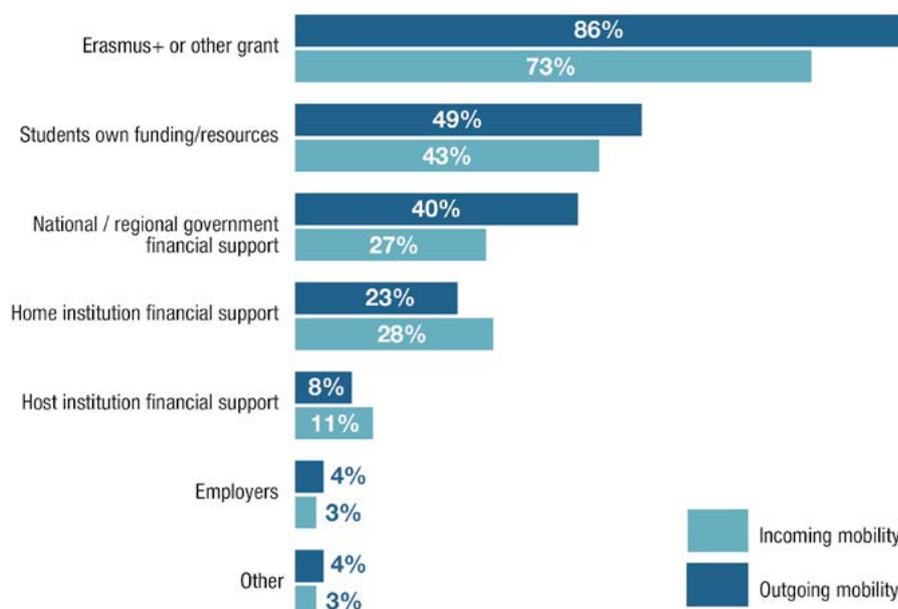
In general, the home higher education institution contacts the host institution several months before the mobility to inform the institution about the specific needs of the student and to check whether the needs of the student can be met. While 64% of the responding higher education institutions do automatically acknowledge the disability status of incoming students and the reasonable adjustment offered at the home institutions, 36% of the responding higher education institutions ask students to hand in a medical certificate regarding their condition. If this documentation does not meet the required criteria, a new diagnostic testing can be requested.

In the case of Erasmus+ mobilities, an estimate of the costs incurred by specific support services at the host higher education institution is made so that the home institution can obtain the Erasmus+ Special Needs Support for the student from the relevant National Agency. Some higher education institutions organise, where needed, a preparatory visit to the host institution.

Funding and grants

Erasmus+ grants, national/ regional government financial support, students' own funding/ resources and home institution financial support are most used to fund outgoing and incoming mobility. Host institution financial support and employers support are rarely used.

Figure 53 - Funding used for outgoing and incoming mobility of students with disabilities - n =114 (multiple answers were allowed)



The greatest barrier is the limitation of funds, which makes it difficult to cater for all the needs of students with disabilities. Outgoing students, who are not taking part in Erasmus+ or national programs, do not get funding for the additional costs due to their disability.

Some forms of financial support (e.g. sign interpreters, pedagogical help, etc.) can in principle also be deployed abroad, but some regulations are very complicated and require a lot of administration.

Incoming students are usually required to follow a full-time program because of their visa. But for some students with a disability, a full-time study program is not always feasible.

It takes a lot of time to organise the support abroad. The Erasmus+ funding is often not confirmed until very late. No guarantee that additional costs can all be covered by this funding. Students are fearful of not getting support abroad, students need a support network which would not be available abroad. It is particularly difficult for students with physical and sensory disabilities who are often reliant on family members for support needs. They may have to organise their own supports outside of college hours (e.g. Personal Assistant, transport, etc.).

EPFIME respondent - Higher Education Institution representative

Communication and information provision

Approximately four out of ten institutions (38%) provide additional information for students with disabilities about mobility programmes abroad. Among the ways used to provide this information, on campus events and information days is largely the most common one, followed by brochures, and videos. Specific materials to inform students with disabilities in an inclusive way (e.g. sign language and braille) are rather non-existent.

Figure 54 - Ways to provide information on mobility abroad towards students with disabilities - n = 114 (multiple answers were allowed)

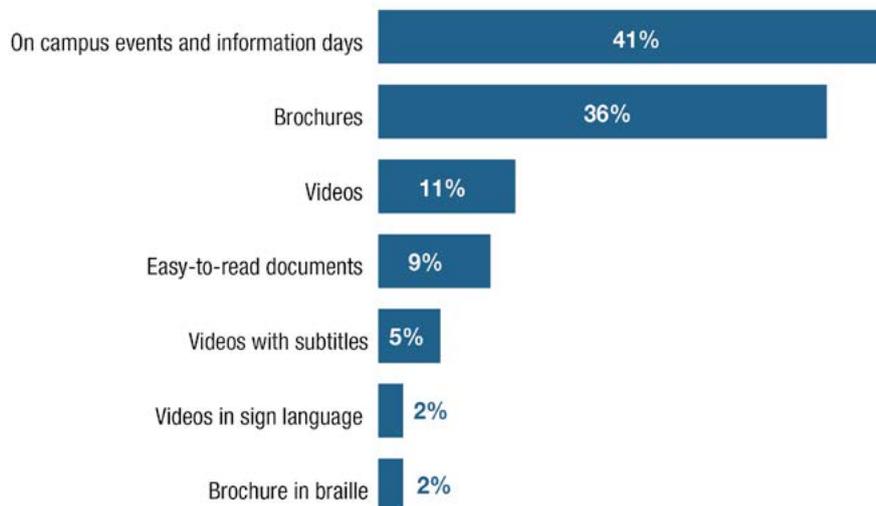
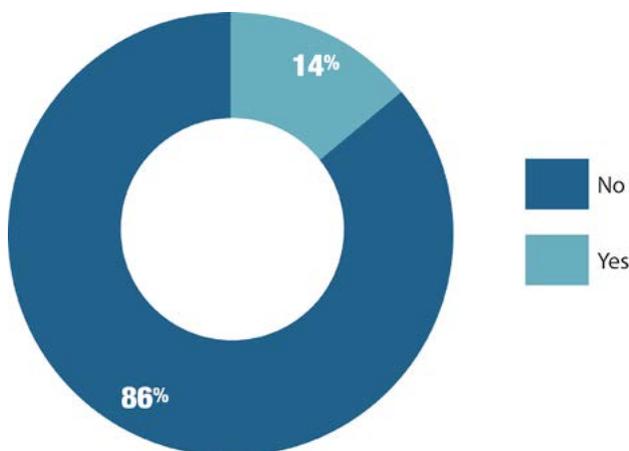


Figure 55 - Have marketing channels, social media channels or campaigns targeting students with disabilities - n = 78

Only 14% of the surveyed institutions have marketing channels, social media channels or campaigns specifically targeting students with disabilities

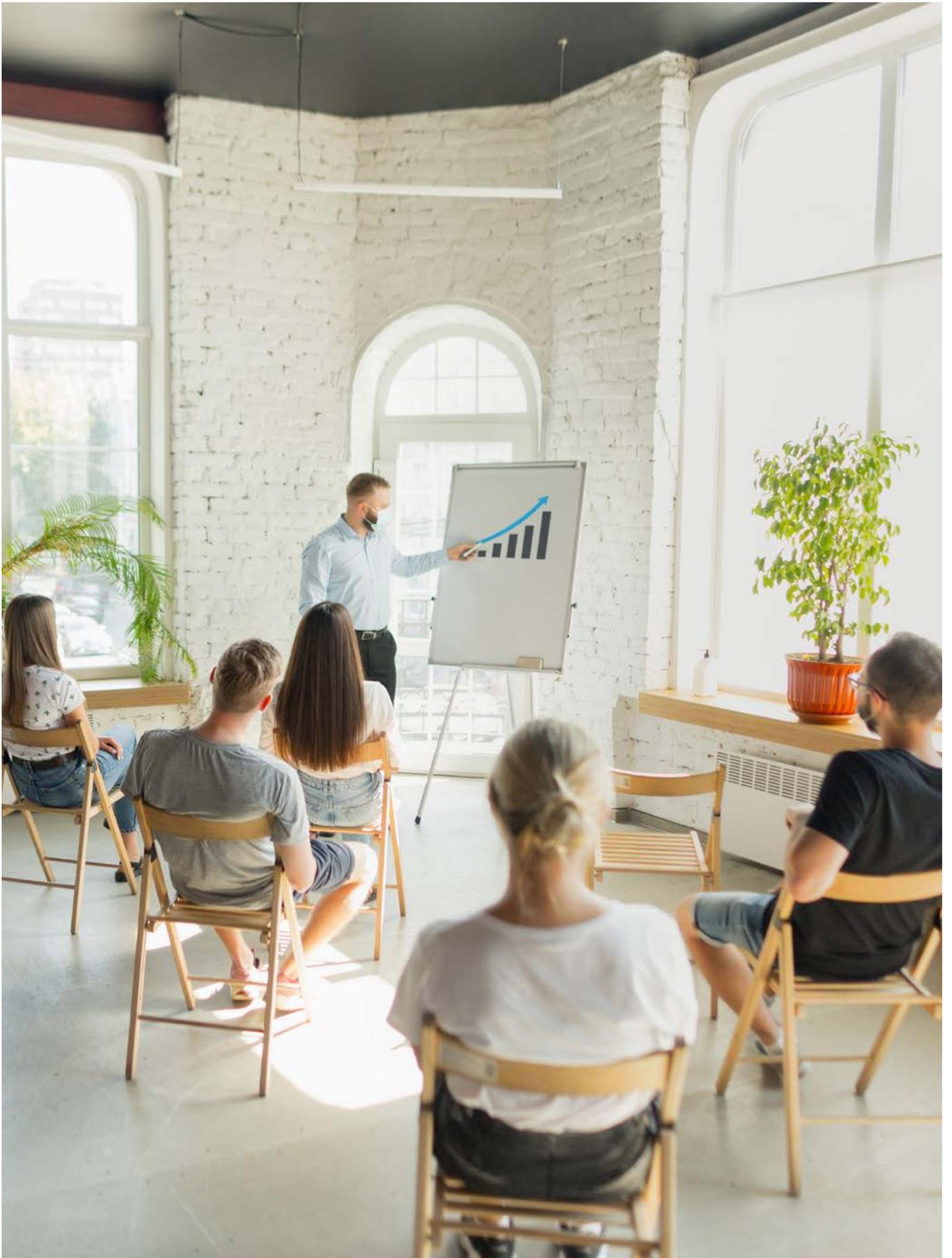


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We would see it as important to promote the Erasmus opportunity to students with disabilities, and having sent several blind students on Erasmus in recent years, we would view their stories as proof that, with determination and the correct support, such students can really make a success of the endeavour. We think the main barrier is that a change of mindset is needed, and this may in part be brought about when there is a higher rate of participation.

EPFIME respondent
Higher Education Institution representative

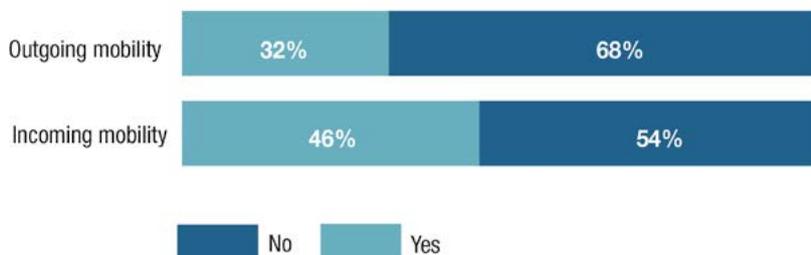




Collaboration with student NGOs

Around one out of two higher education institutions (46%) collaborate with student NGOs (e.g. Erasmus Student Network, student councils/unions) in the provision of support for incoming students with disabilities, while one out of three collaborate with students NGOs in the provision of support for outgoing students with disabilities.

Figure 56 - Cooperation with Student NGOs on outgoing and incoming mobility of students with disabilities - n = 69



While more and more institutions have their own buddy and mentoring systems to provide support to their own students, institutions value the cooperation with volunteers of e.g. ESN in the field of international students. This cooperation focuses mostly on organising campus tours with the international students and searching for buddies to support students with disabilities to overcome everyday challenges.

In the case of the support provision for outgoing mobility, one out of three of the surveyed institutions (36%) collaborate with student NGOs (e.g. ESN, student councils/unions). This cooperation focuses mostly on engaging with students with disabilities who already went abroad. These students can be good ambassadors and can therefore stimulate and prepare other students with disabilities for their mobility.



Summary key findings higher education institutions

- A large majority of higher education institutions have clear procedures to recognise students with disabilities and for those students to apply for reasonable adjustments and support services.
- National and institutional targets for the participation of students with disabilities in higher education are very few.
- The vast majority of institutions collect data about the participation of students with disabilities in higher education.
- A majority of higher education institutions offer a wide range of guidance, counselling, mentoring services, and reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities, and have specific measures and practices connected to accessible buildings and curricula.
- Most often, students have to provide medical information and pass a needs assessment that will allow for the provision of personalised support, grants and funding. In most countries, higher education institutions cooperate with several organisations to ensure support services such as sign interpreters.
- The accessibility of buildings and student housing is a problem for some institutions.
- Inclusion measures or regulations, as well as targets, to ensure inclusive mobility towards students with disabilities are rare at institutional level.
- Data collection of incoming and outgoing credit mobility is limited at institutional level, and often limited to collecting mobility data about participation in the Erasmus+ programme.
- Some higher education institutions already actively encourage students with disabilities to go on outgoing mobility, but only a limited number of higher education institutions seem to actively encourage incoming students with disabilities to come to their institutions.
- International officers and inclusion officers are often not aware of the challenges faced by international students with disabilities.
- The lack of communication and collaboration between inclusion officers, international officers and other support services is an important barrier in supporting international students with disabilities effectively.
- Higher education institutions often come up with ad-hoc solutions for both incoming and outgoing students with disabilities.



Ministries of Education Survey

Sample overview

Geographical coverage

About half of the EHEA Ministries of Education responded to the EPFIME survey (23 out of the 48) when contacted through the Bologna Follow-up Group. The overview of countries participating in the survey is shown in Figure 57.

Figure 57 - Responses EHEA Ministries per country - n = 23
Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium - French Community, Belgium - Flemish Community, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom - Scotland



Function of respondents

Respondents all work directly inside the Ministry of Education of their respective country, as a director of the higher education department, expert in statistics, policy advisor for inclusion and equity, member of the Bologna Follow-Up Group or civil servant for EU and international affairs in higher education.

Policies and strategies on disabilities

Definition of disability in higher education legislation

The definitions of disability are varied and diverse across the different countries. Some countries have defined it comprehensively, while for others there is no reference to or no clear definition of disability in their higher education legislation (Cyprus, Liechtenstein). Some countries refer to a definition of disability that is broader than simply higher education and is linked to the wider context on the elimination of discrimination against people with disabilities in society (Switzerland, Romania), while others take the definition directly from the UN Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities (Belgium - Flemish Community) or from the World Health Organisation (Romania). Also, in some countries education is not a national competence but rather a regional one and as such, a “national definition” does not exist but is rather left for regional and local institutions to define (Switzerland). Finally, some countries define students with disabilities as “students with special needs” in their legislation (Ireland, Kazakhstan).

Most definitions focus on a medical impairment and refer to “individuals who have non-temporary physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments”. In some countries, a certain threshold is defined and students who reach this threshold fall into the category of student with disabilities (e.g. loss of at 33% of mental, physical

and sensory abilities in Andorra). The concept of “non-temporary” impairment is sometimes clearly defined (e.g. a period of more than six months in Austria) but remains mostly undefined and up for interpretation in most cases.

Some countries also refer to societal and “environmental barriers which can hinder the full and effective participation of these persons in society, on equal terms with the others” (cf. the definition of the UN convention), hence not only approaching the definition of disability from a medical point of view but also from a social and societal perspective (Albania, Belgium - Flemish Community, Belgium - French Community, Germany, Switzerland).

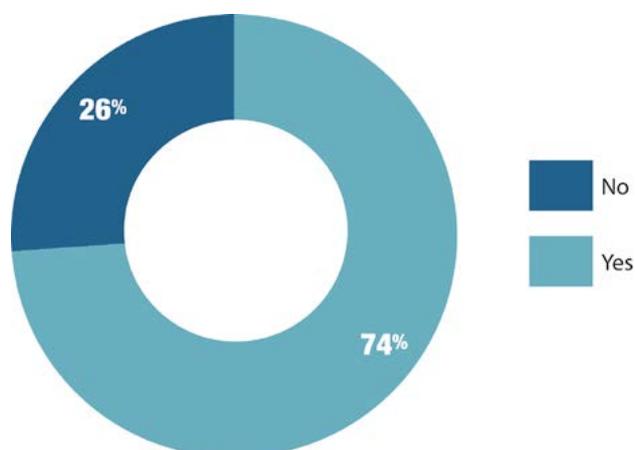
Finally, “disability” is defined broadly under Irish law. The Disability Act 2005 sets out the following definition: “disability”, in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment”.



Procedures to be recognised as a student with a disability in higher education

Around three-quarter of the responding countries (74%), have national procedures to recognise students with disabilities in higher education and to offer reasonable adjustments. Six countries declare not having them.

Figure 58 - Have procedures at the national level for the recognition of a disability and offering reasonable adjustment - n = 23



In Belgium - Flemish Community for example, the legislation offers a general framework that provides a set of basic rules for higher education institutions when establishing a specific institutional procedure for recognising a student with a disability. This framework requires higher education institutions to install clear procedures for students with disabilities to apply for reasonable adjustments and guidance on how to lodge an internal appeal against a refusal of reasonable adjustments. To support the development of an inclusive and uniform policy for the target group, the Flemish government created the Support Centre for Inclusive Higher Education in Flanders (SIHO). SIHO supports higher education institutions in the implementation of inclusion measures. In 2017, SIHO developed an inclusive support model for students with a disability. This model is a mix of general universal design measures and specific measures based on a needs assessment that allow for the provision of support based on student needs. Since 2017, higher education institutions have adopted a uniformed documentation system to be recognised as a student with a disability (based on International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health).

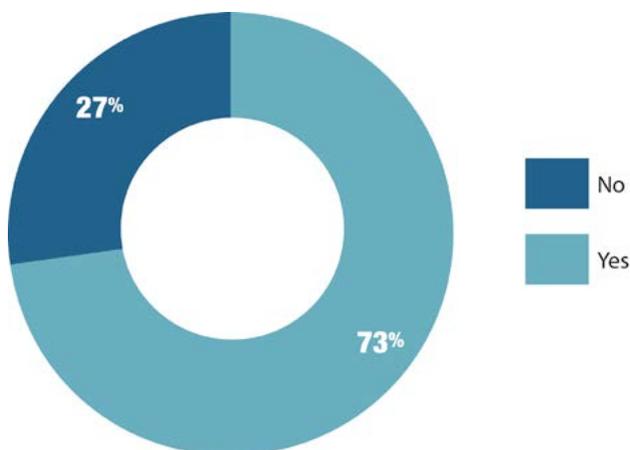
In Czech Republic, national guidance on recognising students with a disability is provided in the Financial Rules for Providing Subsidies and Grants to Public Higher Education Institutions by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. These rules are updated annually and they provide a list of categories of students with disabilities based on a “functional principle” meaning that recognising students with disabilities is not given by the medical diagnosis but by the practical impact that the disability has on their activities necessary for studies. This diagnosis based on the “functional principle” is conducted before students’ first semester and higher education institutions are responsible for the recognition procedure.

Most often, students will need to pass a needs assessment that is personalised and that will allow for the provision of support the student needs.

Data collection on students with disabilities in higher education

16 of the responding countries currently gather data on the participation of students with disabilities in higher education, while six do not gather it (Andorra, Cyprus, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Ukraine).

Figure 59 - Collect data at the national level about the participation of students with disabilities - n = 22



There are many different ways in how this data is gathered by Ministries for Education in the different countries. It can be gathered from the enrollment stage at the higher institutions (5), from higher education disability/inclusion offices (3) or directly from the high school system (2). Some countries commission a student social survey every three to four years, some record all students with disabilities, while others record only students with disabilities who request special needs support. Some countries combine systems. In Ireland, for example, the Higher Education Authority gathers disability data using the Equal Access Survey (EAS) of new entrants to higher education only. Other data is also available through the reporting associated with the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) and via annual research directly with higher education institutions conducted by AHEAD.

Increasingly in Belgium, both in the Flemish Community and the French Community, data is collected systematically at the enrollment stage by higher education institutions and shared nationally to inform inclusion strategies from the National authorities. In the Slovak Republic, the Ministry gathers data about the participation of students with disabilities in higher education in the Central Student Register. The Register is run by and available to the Ministry, with data on students who requested specific support, not all students with disabilities.

Figure 60 - Collect data about subtypes/categories of disability at national level - n = 22

The reasons expressed for not gathering such data in a systematic way are various: legal restrictions, lack of appropriate data management tools, issues with data quality, lack of relevant legislation/policy. Smaller countries also indicated that due to small numbers, a systemic approach is not needed in their case but some of them have indicated they are currently looking further into general monitoring options to gain a better overview of the student population.

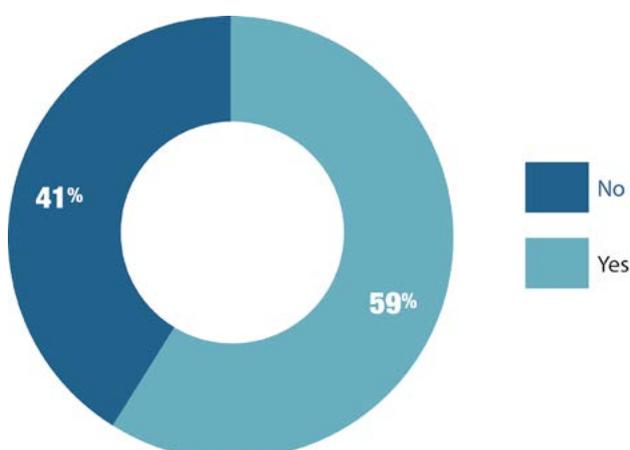
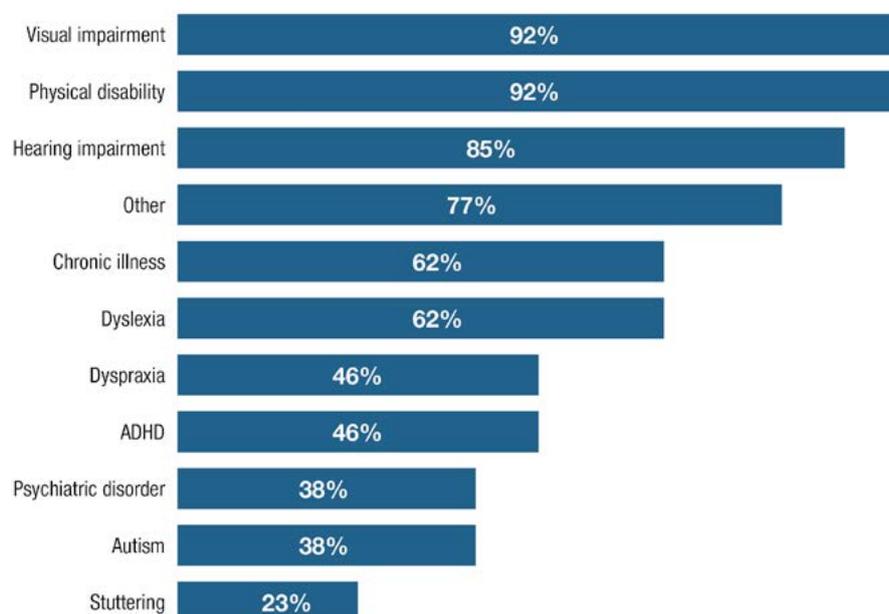


Figure 61 - Subtypes of disabilities for which data is collected at the national level- n = 13 (multiple answers were allowed)

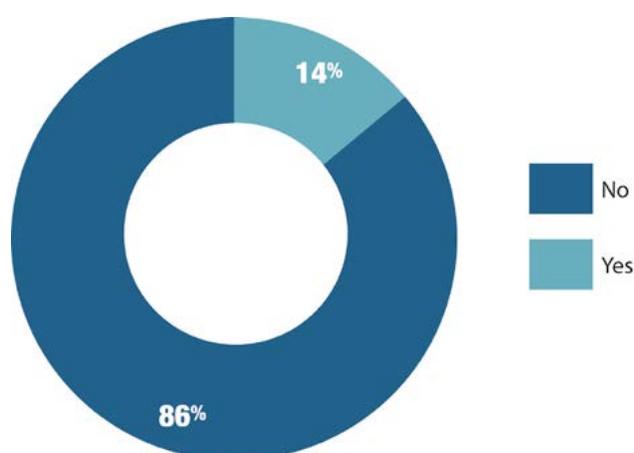
13 of the responding countries collect data about subtypes/ categories of disability such as physical impairment, visual impairment, autism, ADHD, mental health conditions. Nine countries don't collect such data.



A large majority of EHEA Ministries of Education collect data on visual impairment, physical disability and hearing disability. The next most commonly collected are dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, chronic illness, mental health illness and ADHD, autism, psychiatric disability and stuttering. Other types of disabilities mentioned are “neurological disability”, “multiple disabilities”, “behavioural disorder”, “dysgraphia”, “dysorthographia”, and “several types of speech impairment”.

Figure 62 - Have quantitative targets for the participation of students with disabilities in higher education - n = 21

Only 14% of the responding countries have set quantitative targets for the participation of students with disabilities in higher education in their countries (Czech Republic, Ireland, Kazakhstan), while 86% have not set such a target.



In Czech Republic, the target is defined in the Strategic Plan for the Scholarly, Scientific, Research, Development and Innovation, Artistic and Other Creative Activities of Higher Education Institutions for 2016–2020. The target is that the share of students with specific educational needs in higher education will be close to their share among secondary school-leavers.

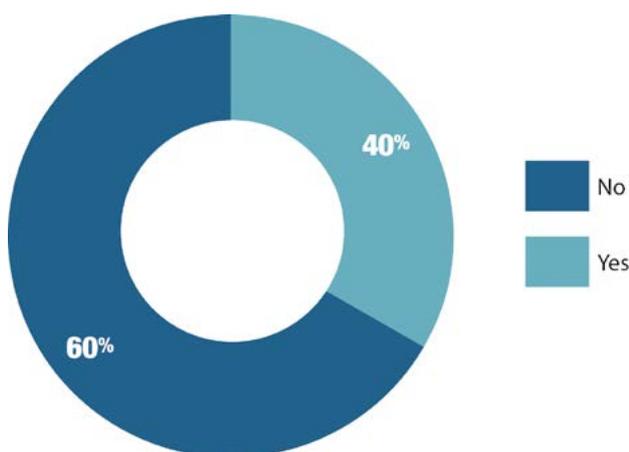
In Ireland, the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019 outlines targets for increased participation from six target groups, including students with disabilities. This National Access Plan sets the target for students with disabilities as a percentage of all new entrants to higher education at 8%. While there are specific targets for students in particular categories of disability (students with physical/mobility, students who are deaf/hard of hearing, and students who are blind/have a vision impairment), Ireland is also committed to continuing to support students in other categories of disability (for example, students with a learning disability, with mental health conditions or with neurological conditions) and to ensure that all students with disabilities can access and participate in higher education on an equal basis. A progress review on this plan was published in December 2019. The Progress Review 2019 of the National Action Plan and Priorities to 2021 increased the target to 12%.

Policies and strategies on inclusive mobility

National policy measures or regulations to ensure inclusive mobility

Eight countries currently have a set of national policy measures or regulations to ensure inclusive mobility of students with disabilities (Andorra, Austria, Belgium - Flemish Community - French Community, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, Switzerland), while 12 currently don't have such regulations.

Figure 63 - Have national policy measures to ensure inclusive mobility of students with disabilities - n = 20



In Switzerland, the Ordinance on international collaboration in the domain of education, vocational training, youth and promotion of mobility explicitly mentions that within the framework of mobility project funding, supplementary financial resources can be awarded to support individuals with disabilities (special needs). These grants aim to facilitate the access to mobility programmes for individuals with mental or physical disability and contribute to stem the additional costs these people face when participating in a mobility project.

In Kazakhstan, students with disabilities have the pre-emptive right to participate in the external outgoing academic mobility program at the expense of the state. An order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan called “Rules for the direction of study abroad, including in the framework of academic mobility” states that “when selecting applicants for study abroad, people with disabilities from childhood and children with disabilities have an advantage, who, according to a medical certificate, are not contraindicated in the relevant foreign education organizations”.

In Austria, according to the Higher Education Mobility Strategy (2016) the number of participants of underrepresented groups in mobility should be increased (students with disabilities and health impairments are considered as underrepresented groups).

In 2013 the Flemish government (Belgium) has adopted the action plan “Brains on the Move”. In this internationalisation strategy, inclusion was given a central place and a benchmark was set concerning the mobility of underrepresented groups in higher education. The Flemish government strives for 33% of all outgoing mobile students to belong to underrepresented groups (among them students with disabilities). Furthermore, concrete actions have been taken to promote mobility among these groups. Monthly top-up scholarships are available for these students and at least 25% of all Flemish mobility grants should go to students from these groups.

In Belgium, French Community, national funds are allocated since 2018 for students with disabilities. This subsidy covers additional costs (purchase of specific equipment, support staff, etc.) for international mobilities (in addition to Erasmus+ mobilities) and mobilities between HEI in the 3 Belgian Communities.

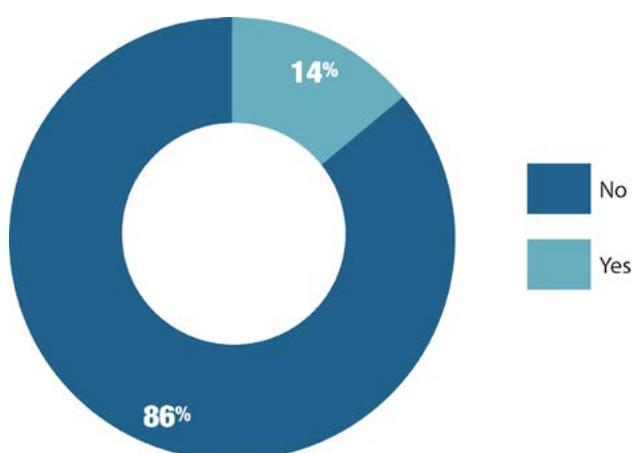
An Italian legislative decree guarantees the right to access and complete higher education to disabled people, also referring to mobility. Additional funds for inclusive mobility are provided by the Erasmus+ National Agency and by the Ministry through the Youth Fund in order to encourage international mobility.

It is important to underline that several Ministries indicated that their National Agency for Erasmus+ allocates an annual budget aside for the purpose of including students with disabilities in mobility programmes or for organising preparatory visits. The Erasmus+ programme indeed allows for a full reimbursement of all special needs costs as long as they are asked in advance and duly justified by the contact person of the higher education institution and the student.

Figure 64 - Have quantitative targets for the participation of students with disabilities in credit mobility - n = 21

National targets for the representation of students with disabilities in mobility programmes

Only 14% of the surveyed countries declared having a target at national level for the participation of students with disabilities in credit mobility programmes. Those countries are: Belgium - Flemish Community, Belgium- French community and Slovenia.



As mentioned above, the Flemish Community in Belgium, has adopted since 2013, the action plan for student mobility “Brains on the move”. Inclusion is given a central place. A rule is in place whereby at least 25% of the outgoing Flemish mobility grants have to be awarded to students from underrepresented groups. The implication is that, in order to use the full budget that is available for mobility actions, there have to be enough applications from students from underrepresented groups. So the opportunities for all mobile students and the opportunities for students of underrepresented groups are connected with each other. This compels higher education institutions to identify these groups of students and encourage them to apply for a mobility grant. As this strategy has been in place since 2013, Flanders has generated five years of comparable data on this issue, which is fairly unique in the EHEA. Statistics show that in the academic year 2018-19, 22.2% of all ‘initial mobile degrees’ are attributed to students from underrepresented groups. An obtained degree is considered to be a ‘mobile degree’ when minimum 10 credits are cumulatively achieved abroad during the educational programme leading to the degree.



There is a lack of quantitative and/or qualitative targets in the national policies on participation of students with disabilities and proper data management tools.

EPFIME respondent
Ministry of Education representative

In Belgium - French Community, there is an annual target of 1% of all Erasmus+ outgoing student mobility should come from special needs groups.

In Slovenia, there is no target at ministry level for the participation of students with disabilities in mobility programmes but some larger targets are set in the Erasmus+ 2018 Work Programme of the “Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes (CMEPIUS)”. The document indicates that “the share of learners with special needs or with fewer opportunities participating is 1%”. The target was achieved, but there were significant differences between the two groups of students. The share of students with special needs is quite low, only 0.2% (of the projects finalised in 2018). The higher education institutions are asked to report the total number of students with special needs but the reporting might take into account only those who received additional funding.



With regard to Erasmus+, National Agencies are requested to report on the participation in mobility projects of people with disabilities whereas this information is often not communicated by higher education institutions in Mobility Tool+ (official data management tool) and thus these data are most often not available.

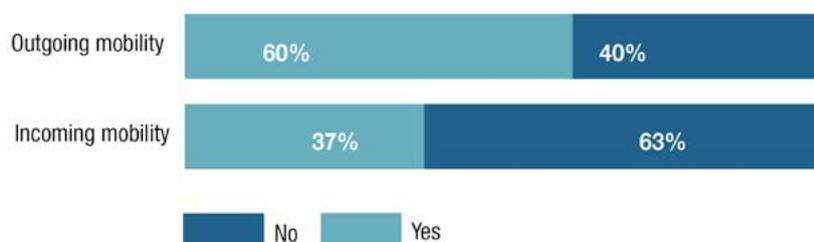
EPFIME respondent
Ministry of Education representative



Data collection on the participation of incoming and outgoing students with disabilities in mobility programmes

37% of the responding countries collect data about the participation of incoming credit mobile students with disabilities (Belgium - French Community, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Switzerland and UK-Scotland) while 63% don't collect such data. From the countries who do collect this type of data, most respondents have indicated collecting data mostly about participation in the Erasmus+ programme (80%).

Figure 65 - Collect data about the participation of students with disabilities in incoming credit mobility - n = 19
Collect data about the participation of students with disabilities in outgoing credit mobility - n = 20



The countries who are currently not collecting this data in a systematic way have mentioned various obstacles such as a lack of consensus with their higher education institutions, a lack of legal basis or relevant legislation for doing so, issues with data quality and legal restrictions.

In Germany, data on mobile students' background has in the past been collected in the nationally representative German student survey "Sozialerhebung" and will continue to be part of its successor study "Die Studierendenbefragung". Data on the mobility of impaired students in Germany are based on self-reports of students gathered in large-scale surveys, not in the form of official statistics, or collected by higher education institutions themselves. Starting with the next round of the survey (Die Studierendenbefragung, data collection spring 2021), incoming degree and credit mobile students will also be surveyed about health, including disabilities.

12 countries do collect data about the participation of outgoing credit mobility students with disabilities (Belgium - Flemish Community, Belgium - French Community, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Switzerland, UK -Scotland). Of those who do collect this type of data, most indicated collecting data mostly about participation in the Erasmus+ programme (64%).

The countries who are currently not collecting this data in a systematic way have mentioned various obstacles such as a lack of consensus with their higher education institutions, a lack of legal basis or relevant legislation for doing so, issues with data quality and legal restrictions.

Impact study on the mobility of students with disabilities

None of the responding countries has so far conducted a national research on the impact of mobility abroad on students with disabilities. Universities UK international (2019), the Irish Universities Association (IUA, 2018) and the Erasmus+ Impact Study (2019) took a first step to expand the evidence base in this area.

Information provision on mobility for students with disabilities

Half of the countries surveyed (52%) provide specific information on mobility for students with disabilities. Those countries are: Belgium - Flemish Community, Belgium - French Community, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Slovenia, Switzerland, UK - Scotland.

Among the different ways used to target students with disabilities when promoting study abroad programmes, on campus events and information days are the most common, followed by brochures and videos. Many Ministries rely on their higher education institutions to carry these out and there seems to be few national initiatives on promoting mobility to students with disabilities. In Belgium, the Ministry of Education and Training of the Flemish Community and the Support Centre Inclusive Higher Education have developed brochures and mobility portraits, specifically targeting students with disabilities.

For example, the 2015 Handbook of the Flemish Community of Belgium on study and internships abroad includes a chapter dedicated to students with disabilities. Only two Ministries (Greece and UK - Scotland) have indicated using inclusive resources such as videos in sign language, videos with subtitles, brochures in braille, and easy-to-read documents, to promote mobility towards students with disabilities.

Figure 66 - Provide specific information on mobility for students with disabilities - n = 22

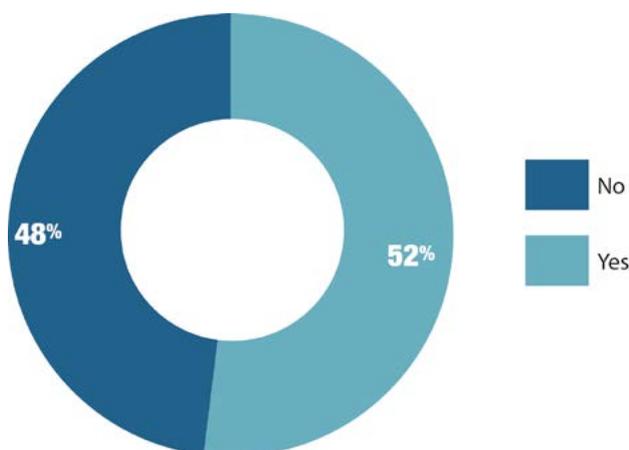


Figure 67 - Have marketing channels, social media channels or campaigns targeting students with disabilities - n = 10

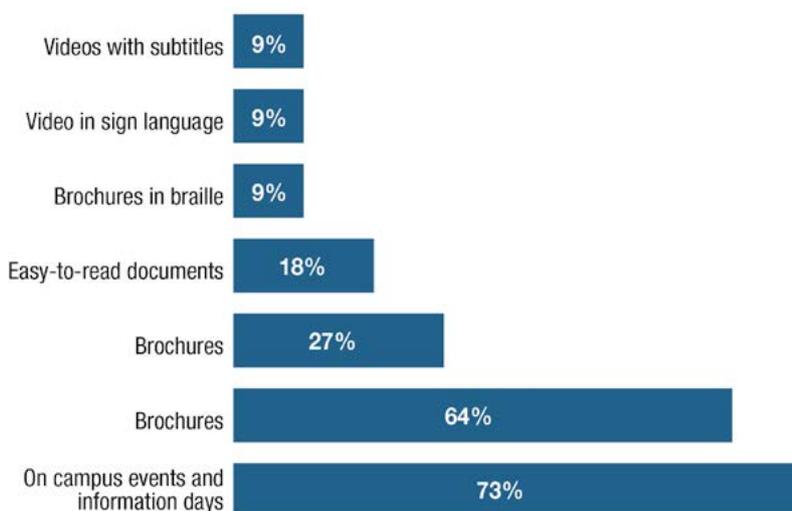
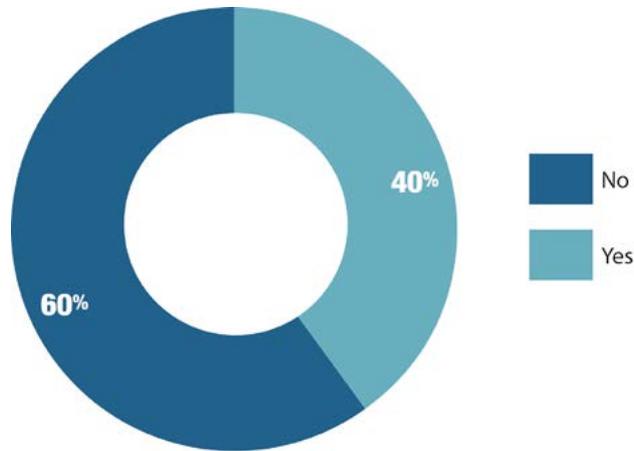


Figure 68 - Have marketing channels, social media channels or campaigns targeting students with disabilities - n = 10

Almost half of the respondents (40%) declared having a marketing channel, social media channel or campaign, specifically targeting students with disabilities.



In Greece, the Erasmus+ National Agency instructs higher education institutions to give priority to students with special needs as long as they fulfil the selection criteria, and it has published leaflets in braille for distribution to Greek higher education institutions.

Estonia promotes inclusive mobility on its website, via video testimonies (with subtitles) of students with disabilities.

Germany also promotes study abroad for students with disabilities and has specifically created a website and online campaign of two students who regularly post on their social media channels about their day-to-day life as a student with impairment abroad with a dedicated hashtag. A social media wall linked to their Instagram accounts has also been created: Tina and Julia.

In Belgium - the Ministry of Education and Training of the Flemish Community and the Support Centre Inclusive Higher Education have developed mobility portraits of six students with different disabilities to promote inclusive mobility programmes.

Figure 69 - Take initiatives to attract more incoming and encourage more outgoing students with disabilities - n = 17

No country actively tries to attract students with disabilities to their country while five countries have declared actively encouraging students with disabilities to engage in an outgoing mobility (Belgium - Flemish Community, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan).



Among the existing initiatives, the following were mentioned:

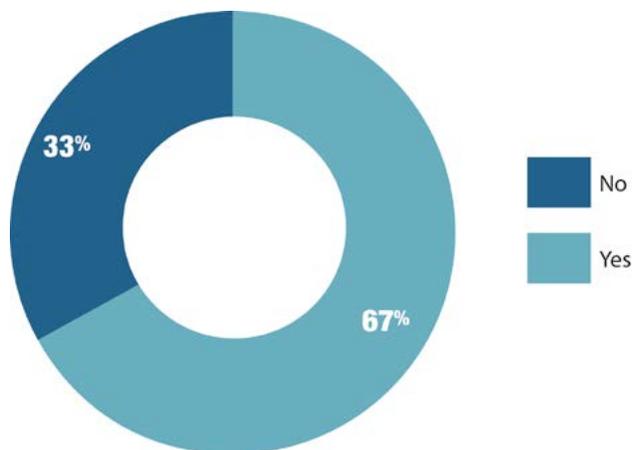
In Belgium - Flemish community, the National Agency promotes the benefits of preparatory visits for students with disabilities, via video testimonies.

In Ireland, as part of their audit and monitoring visits to Irish higher education institutions participating in Erasmus+, the HEA international section actively engages with disability officers based at each institution to communicate the opportunities available to students with disabilities to partake in Erasmus+ and of the additional supports available to them.

Mobility grants and specific support services for students with disabilities

14 Ministries (67%) provide additional specific mobility grants and/or support services for students with disabilities going on a mobility abroad.

Figure 70 - Provide specific mobility grants or support services for outgoing students with disabilities - n = 21





In Belgium - Flemish Community, once students with disabilities are selected for a Flemish scholarship for mobility, they receive a monthly top up of 200 EUR/month. The Flemish Erasmus+ National Agency, implements extra support measures for students with disabilities in Erasmus+ mobility programmes. Next to the reimbursement of special needs costs during the mobility for students with disabilities, the second measure is funding for a preparatory visit to the mobility destination and, if needed, for a trusted person/coach to accompany the student on this pre visit.

In Belgium - French Community, for people with special needs, in addition to the mobility grant, it has been decided since 2018 to allocate € 10,000 per year from the FAME budget (Fond d'Aide à la Mobilité Étudiante) and € 5,000 from the Erasmus Belgica budget for students with disabilities. The student submits an application to the National Agency via his or her institution. This subsidy covers additional costs (purchase of specific equipment, support staff, etc.).

In Germany, Students with disabilities can benefit from special funding if they go abroad with Erasmus+ or DAAD programmes.

Hungary runs the scholarship project "Campus Mundi", which is co-financed by the European Union (European Social Fund) and the Hungarian Government. Within the project, an additional support is offered for students with a disability or with a chronic illness (including also e.g. food-intolerance) that is based on their estimated extra expenses because of their disability or illness. They present their need for support, including an approximate sum and a medical diagnosis, and their request is assessed by two medical experts. Support applied for is typically for pharmaceuticals and special dietary requirements (food-intolerance), but can also mean a need for a personal attendant, or travel expenses related to a medical examination that is required to be carried out in Hungary.

In Luxembourg, the modified Law of 24 July 2014 concerning State financial aid for higher education provides for extra funding in the form of scholarships and loans allocated to students with a recognised disability. Situations of physical, mental, sensory, cognitive or psychological disability can be recognised by the ministry on the basis of a decision taken by a specialised commission.

Movetia is the Swiss National Agency for the promotion of exchange and mobility and is funded by the Ministry of Education together with other federal and regional sponsors, as well as private funders. Due to the fact that Switzerland is currently not associated to the Erasmus+ Programme, Movetia implements the Swiss-European Mobility Programme SEMP for higher education as an alternative mobility scheme to Erasmus+. Additional funding for programme participants with special needs are applied for at Movetia.

”

In our country, if you are unemployed, parenting alone or having a disability and are getting certain payments from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP), a person may take part in a second-or third-level education course and get a Back to Education Allowance (BTEA). If a BTEA recipient undertakes an Erasmus+ mobility, the DEASP considers the financial support received as an "income" and the beneficiary faces the prospect of having the BTEA reduced.

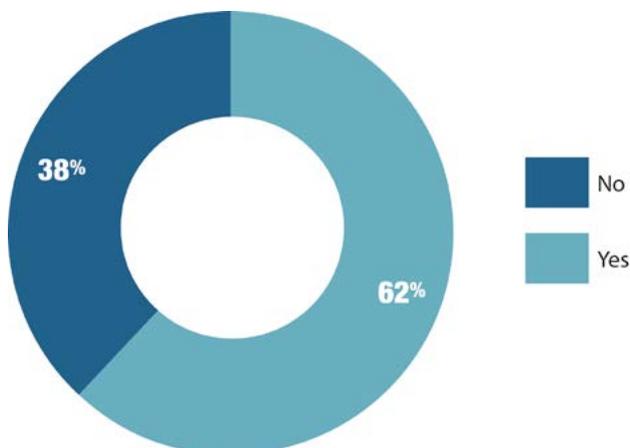
EPFIME respondent
Ministry of Education representative

Portability of grants and support services

In 13 countries out of 21 (62%), national grants and support services for students with disabilities are said to be transportable abroad for an international mobility programme, while this is not the case in the remaining eight countries (38%).

When this is not possible, the main obstacles to the transportability of grants and support services indicated are the lack of legislation and regulations in the country for doing so.

Figure 71 - Allow the portability of national grants or support services abroad - n = 21



”

Students with a need for care and/or assistance meet great difficulty because the provision of services is limited. For example, our legislation mentions that “Entitlement to social care insurance benefits is suspended as long as the insured are abroad”. But there are also exceptions for long-term care allowance which can be paid in any EU or EEA countries (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) and Switzerland. Long-term care allowance for long-term care insurance can only be claimed for a maximum of six weeks in non-EU countries.

EPFIME respondent - Ministry of Education representative



”

With all social welfare payments in our country, the beneficiary must satisfy the rules for each scheme to qualify, one of which is you must be habitually resident in the country. Habitually resident is taken to mean you must be habitually resident in the State on the date you make the application and you must remain habitually resident in the State after you apply. This provision has been used to include those beneficiaries who wish to undertake a temporary learning/training mobility under Erasmus+, allowing them to keep their social benefits while on a study mobility abroad.

EPFIME respondent
Ministry of Education representative



Mobility grants or support services for incoming students with disabilities

A large number of the responding countries (80%) do not provide any additional mobility grant or support service for students with disabilities coming to their country for a mobility period. The main obstacles mentioned are the lack of legislation and the lack of financial means. It is important to highlight that the question was phrased in such a way as to capture both credit and degree mobility.

Figure 72 - Provide specific mobility grants or support services for incoming students with disabilities - n = 21

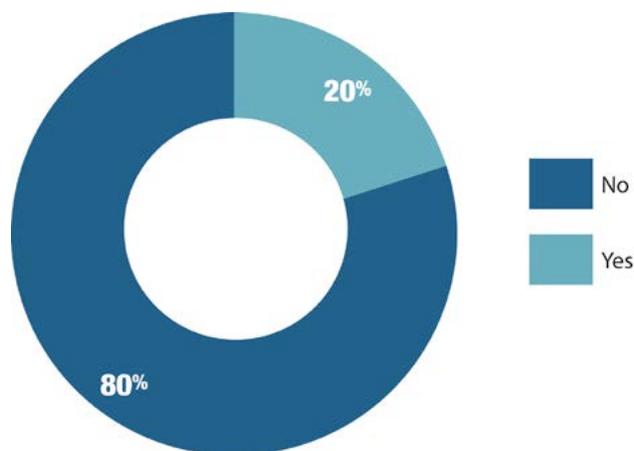
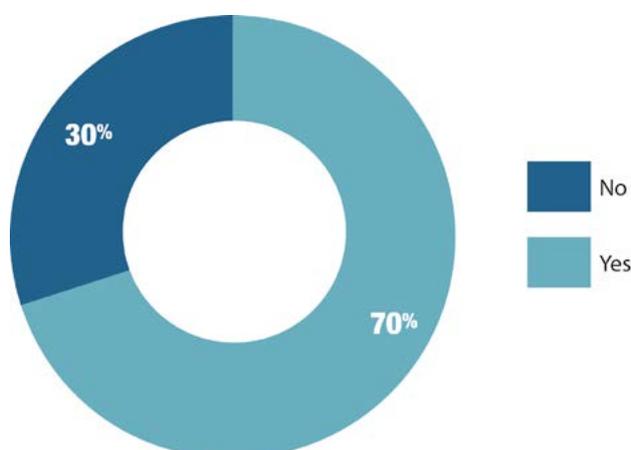


Figure 73 - Allow access to other public grants or support services for international students with disabilities - n = 20

A majority of respondents (70%) have indicated that international students with disabilities can apply and benefit from the same public grants and support services from the Ministry of Education as a local student would.



In Belgium - French community, there is no distinction between Belgian and international students in the official decrees.

In Estonia, all students participating in degree studies, regardless of whether they are domestic or foreign students have the right to apply for public grants. However, there is one restriction in place, some grants are available to students studying in public higher education institutions and some of them are available for all students (including grants for students with disabilities, need-based allowance).

In Ireland, under the terms of the Student Grant Scheme, grant assistance is awarded to students attending an approved course in an approved institution who meet the prescribed conditions of funding, including those relating to nationality, residency, previous academic attainment and means. All students who meet the eligibility criteria may be awarded grant assistance.

In UK - Scotland, incoming students with disabilities can access support services in the same way as home domiciled students. Each university offers the same service for all students with disabilities. However, such international students are not able to access public grants.

When this is not possible, respondents have indicated a lack of relevant legislation on the matter as the main obstacle and a subsequent lack of provision in the national budget.



Specific barriers could be also the lack of translators to a particular sign language or the lack of coordinators for student support (disability/inclusion officers). Improvement of cooperation between support coordinators and international officers is crucial but challenging.

EPFIME respondent
Ministry of Education representative

Summary key findings Ministries of Education surveys

- The definitions of disability are varied and diverse across countries. Most definitions focus on medical impairments and refer to individuals who have long-term physical impairments, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments.
- Around three quarters of the responding countries collect data on the participation of students with disabilities and have national procedures to recognise students with disabilities in higher education and to offer reasonable adjustments. Legal restrictions or lack of legal framework are the most frequently mentioned reasons as why data is not collected at national level.
- Only 15% of the surveyed countries have put a target in place for the participation of students with disabilities in higher education.
- Inclusion measures or regulations, as well as targets, to ensure inclusive mobility towards students with disabilities are rare at national level.
- Data collection of incoming and outgoing credit mobility and monitoring is not common at national level, and often limited to collecting mobility data about participation in the Erasmus+ programmes.
- Half of the countries surveyed provide specific information on mobility for students with disabilities. Many Ministries of Education rely on higher education institutions to do so and there seem to be few national initiatives on promoting mobility towards students with disabilities.
- None of the responding countries actively try to attract students with disabilities to their country, while few countries have declared actively encouraging students with disabilities to engage in an outgoing mobility abroad.
- None of the surveyed countries have so far conducted national authority research on the impact of mobility abroad on students with disabilities.
- In half of the surveyed countries, national grants and support services for students with disabilities are said to be transportable abroad for a mobility programme, while in other countries this is not the case. When this is not possible, the main obstacles indicated are the lack of legislation and the lack of regulations.
- A large number of countries do not provide any additional mobility grant or support service for students with disabilities coming to their country for a mobility period.
- The lack of portability of grants and support services as well as the lack of additional mobility grants are the main barriers in other mobility programmes (non-Erasmus+), and have a strong impact on student participation and on higher education staff who can feel responsible for the student.





Conclusion and next steps

This research examined the needs and expectations on inclusive mobility of students with disabilities, higher education institutions and national authorities across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), focusing both on incoming and outgoing mobility. It is notable in itself that such a high number of students with disabilities, higher education institutions and Ministries of Education from a large range of countries across the EHEA responded to the bespoke surveys. This testifies to the importance of the topic and the interest to contribute to it across the EHEA. The data provides not only valuable insights of the student perspective, but also of the strategies and approaches, challenges and success factors of those higher education institutions and Ministries of Education in the EHEA, working on the topic of inclusive mobility. It can thus be a useful source of information for higher education institutions and national authorities, including those who are developing their understanding of the complexity of the related issues.

The research clearly indicates that there are significant additional barriers for students with disabilities in preparing for and engaging with mobility programmes. This is confirmed by the very low participation numbers. For those who succeed in going on mobility abroad, the experience can be transformative and lead to increased academic performance, the development of an openness to different cultures, greater self-awareness, advocacy skills, coping and resilience skills. Many of the barriers students with disabilities face are systematic: lack of clear information provision, lack of portability of national grants and support services between countries, one-size-fits-all approach and lack of cooperation between different responsible stakeholders in higher education institutions. Without the possibility to take their support system with them abroad or without the certainty they will be able to receive a similar support system in the host country, students with disabilities are unlikely to undertake, or in some cases even consider, a mobility abroad. The European Higher Education Area, the European Commission, national authorities and higher education institutions, are responsible for ensuring a systemic approach to mobility programmes that addresses the additional needs and challenges of students with disabilities.

Based on the research findings, the following outputs to establish a policy framework on inclusive mobility, will be created to support stakeholders to make mobility programmes more inclusive for student with disabilities:

- A booklet of policy recommendations and good practices;
- A framework on inclusive mobility with objectives and action points for higher education institutions, Ministries of Education and National Agencies;
- A guideline to encourage higher education institutions to implement a sustainable inclusive mobility strategy at institutional level;
- A self-assessment tool for higher education institutions, national agencies and Ministries of Education to assess the inclusiveness of their own practices and policies;
- An online platform, www.inclusivemobility.eu, where information on inclusive mobility for students with disabilities, higher education institutions, national authorities and wider stakeholders, can be found.





Glossary of terms

Credit mobility

A temporary form of mobility – usually a maximum of one year – aiming at the acquisition of credits in a foreign institution in the framework of ongoing studies at the home institution. ‘Home’ and ‘Host’ institutions are used to describe the origin and destination of the mobility period

Degree mobility

A long-term form of mobility which aims at the acquisition of a whole degree or certificate in the country of destination.

Disclosure

The action to make one’s disability known.

Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE)

Provides the general quality framework for European and international cooperation activities a higher education institution may carry out within Erasmus+. By signing the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE), higher education institutions commit to provide all the necessary support to mobile participants, including linguistic preparation.

Erasmus+ Special Needs Support

Financial support to cover disability-related costs such as personal assistants, sign language interpreters, customised living accommodation, etc. in Erasmus+ mobilities.

Free mover

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

Grant

Any public financial support that does not need to be paid back. Such financial support can be targeted (available only for a specific target group) or mainstream (available to all or the majority of students).

Home institution

Institution where the student is currently enrolled as a degree seeking student and may be eligible for financial aid at the same institution. This institution is in charge of selecting students and sending them abroad.

Host institution

Institution in charge of receiving students from abroad and offering them a study/traineeship programme or a programme of training activities.

Inclusive Mobility

Creating adequate conditions to learn, work or volunteer abroad for people with fewer opportunities, by addressing their diverse support needs. It is a needs-based approach to what the individual beneficiary needs to ensure a safe and exciting mobility period abroad. It is important to not generalise needs, needs are specific and the individualised aspect in it is highly important. What the person/beneficiary says they need is what they should receive. It is not only about academic mobility but also about the social aspects that play an important role in the experience abroad and the potential link to connect with the local community (Inclusive Mobility Alliance, 2019).

Incoming mobility

Refers to students that moved (i.e. crossed a national border) to a specified country to study.

Inter-institutional agreement

Mandatory agreement in the context of Erasmus+ between the host and the home institution prior to the start of the mobility period. By signing an inter-institutional agreement, the institutions commit themselves to respecting the quality requirements of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education in all aspects of the organisation and management of mobility and agree on a series of quantitative and qualitative measures to ensure mobility of high quality and impact.

Learning agreement

The home and host institution, together with the students, must have agreed on the activities to be undertaken by the students - in a 'Learning Agreement' prior to the start of the mobility period. These agreements define the target learning outcomes for the learning period abroad, specify the formal recognition provisions and list the rights and obligations of each party.

National Authorities

Refers to structures with responsibility for the strategic orientation and organisation/management of higher education institutions.

Outgoing mobility

Refers to students who left their country of residence (i.e. crossed a national border) to study elsewhere (in which they are counted as incoming mobile students).

Personalised services

Information and guidance provided to individuals on a one-to-one basis addressing the specific needs of the individual. Personalised services can be provided through counselling services with dedicated staff both face-to-face and online.

Portability

Possibility to take abroad the support available to students in their home country, for credit mobility (credit portability) or degree mobility (degree portability).

Preparatory visit

Visit organised at the future host institution before the actual mobility takes place, in order to visit the facilities, the campus, the city and get acquainted with all aspects of accessibility and support services available

Reasonable adjustments

Necessary and appropriate adjustments to the environment to ensure persons with disabilities can participate on an equal basis with others (e.g. installing a hearing loop facility, allowing some extra-time for exams, etc.).

Short-term mobility

Mobility with a duration shorter than one month.

Students with disabilities

Students who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UNCRPD).



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- Figure 42 Have targets for participation of students with disabilities
- Figure 43 Type of support provided for students with disabilities
- Figure 44 Have measures and practices in place to ensure building accessibility
- Figure 45 Have measures and practices in place to ensure that curriculum are accessible
- Figure 46 Have mentioned inclusive mobility in institutional strategic plan
- Figure 47 Have mobility targets for students with disabilities
- Figure 48 Take initiatives to encourage outgoing mobility
- Figure 49 Take initiatives to attract incoming students with disabilities on mobility
- Figure 50 Collect data about students with disabilities' participation in incoming and outgoing mobility
- Figure 51 Reasons expressed for not collecting data of students with disabilities in incoming and outgoing mobility
- Figure 52 Have specific administration procedures in place for the mobility of students with disabilities (left) - Noticed a significant differences in cooperation (right)
- Figure 53 Funding used for outgoing and incoming mobility of students with disabilities
- Figure 54 Ways to provide information on mobility abroad towards students with disabilities

- Figure 55 Have marketing channels, social media channels or campaigns targeting students with disabilities
- Figure 56 Cooperation with Student NGOs on outgoing and incoming mobility of students with disabilities
- Figure 57 Responses EHEA Ministries per country
- Figure 58 Have procedures at the national level for the recognition of a disability and offering reasonable adjustment
- Figure 59 Collect data at the national level about the participation of students with disabilities
- Figure 60 Collect data about subtypes/categories of disability at national level
- Figure 61 Subtypes of disabilities for which data is collected at the national level
- Figure 62 Have quantitative targets for the participation of students with disabilities
- Figure 63 Have national policy measures to ensure inclusive mobility of students with disabilities
- Figure 64 Have targets at national level for the participation of students with disabilities in credit mobility programmes
- Figure 65 Collect data about the participation of students with disabilities in incoming credit mobility and outgoing credit mobility
- Figure 66 Provide specific information on mobility for students with disabilities
- Figure 67 Type of support use to provide information on mobility towards students with disabilities
- Figure 68 Have marketing channels, social media channels or campaigns targeting students with disabilities
- Figure 69 Take initiatives to attract more incoming and encourage more outgoing students with disabilities
- Figure 70 Provide specific mobility grants or support services for outgoing students with disabilities
- Figure 71 Allow the portability of national grants or support services abroad
- Figure 72 Provide specific mobility grants or support services for incoming students with disabilities
- Figure 73 Allow access to other public grants or support services for international students with disabilities





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