



National Observatory
of Student Life

INFOS

n_o 26
November
2011

EUROSTUDENT IV : A EUROPEAN COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF STUDENT LIVING CONDITIONS

Feres BELGHITH, OVE consulting engineer
Ronan VOURC'H, OVE research engineer

This 4th edition of the Eurostudent programme is a milestone in a process started over 15 years ago. With 25 participating countries, comparisons are even greater and the overall perspective of the social situation and the living conditions of students is even more pertinent. This appears in the "Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe" report published in October 2011 and available on Internet (www.eurostudent.eu). This edition of OVE Infos takes up some of the main results, while limiting the comparison to 10 countries, selected in order to provide the most representative sample: France and the neighbouring countries for which data is available (Germany, Spain, Italy and Switzerland), two countries from Northern Europe (Denmark and Sweden), two countries from Eastern Europe (Poland and Romania) and Great Britain.

Since the publication of the first Eurostudent report in 2000, the number of participants in this research programme has been steadily increasing, and today, there are 25 countries involved. Over time, Eurostudent has become a major instrument in support of the Bologna process and in the field of research on higher education in Europe.

This edition of OVE Infos addresses the different themes of the survey, which was conducted using data from 10 different countries. Among other topics, there is a description of social and demographic characteristics of the student population, where the impact of social origin and aging are determining factors of differentiation when studying student behaviour. There is also a focus on studying conditions through questions dealing with schedules and international mobility. The description of living conditions (housing, resources and paid work) completes the overall picture.

Countries participating in Eurostudent IV

The 25 countries participating in the Eurostudent IV project are: Germany, Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Spain, Estonia, Finland, France, the United-Kingdom (represented by England and Wales), Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. All the comparative reports and the detailed results by country can be consulted on the following website: <http://www.eurostudent.eu>

Abréviations des pays retenus pour l'analyse :

DE	Germany	IT	Italy
DK	Denmark	PL	Poland
ES	Spain	RO	Romania
FR	France	SE	Sweden
GB	Great Britain	CH	Switzerland

EUROSTUDENT : for adapted, right and effective learnings

Dominic ORR, coordinateur du projet EUROSTUDENT

In 2011 we can look back on over one decade of higher education reforms within the framework of the Bologna Process in Europe. In the past, much of the attention paid to the Bologna Process has focused on new structures – Bachelor and Master levels, credit points and national qualification frameworks. However, the implementation of these structures and the ensuing protests in many countries have given cause for reflection. Across Europe ministers in many of the 47 Bologna countries also recognised this problem. In their Budapest/Vienna Declaration from March 2010, the ministers responsible for higher education within the European Higher Education Area recognised that the student protests across Europe were – at least in part – justified. They hence concluded:

“We note that adjustments and further work, involving staff and students, are necessary at European, national, and especially institutional levels to achieve the European Higher Education Area as we envisage it.”

These “adjustments” have to take the characteristics of the European student body as their starting point. The European comparison provided by EUROSTUDENT gives some insights into these characteristics. The overall comparison highlights the fact that students in European higher education tend to be Bachelor students no older than 24 years old, who entered higher education almost directly after leaving secondary school (direct transition students) and who are, in the majority, female and have parents who themselves graduated from college or university (high education background). However, interesting groups of ‘non-traditional’ students also emerge from the comparison. We can see that in one quarter of the countries, the share of students 30 years old or over is at least 18%, the share of students with a delay of longer than two years between leaving school and entering college is at least 19% (delayed transition students) and the share of students, whose parents did not attain tertiary education themselves, is at least 24%. The provision of appropriate, fair and effective higher education courses can only be successful if such characteristics are reflected upon. The comparative EUROSTUDENT data set provides a basis for such reflections.

Methodology

The data in the Eurostudent IV report was obtained through surveys in 25 European countries, between 2008 and 2010. To ensure comparable data, a series of common questions is included in the questionnaires of the surveys conducted in each country and a reference student population is selected. Basically, it concerns students enrolled in higher education curriculum preparing a 5-A level diploma, in accordance with the ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) classification implemented by Unesco in 1997. For France, the data was collected from students in the CPGE (preparatory classes for *Grandes Ecoles*), universities in the 1st and 2nd study cycles (excluding IUT technological university institutes, and Masters 2 in research), engineering and management schools, as well as artistic and cultural higher education schools. Furthermore, the scope of the Eurostudent study is limited to nationals and foreign students having completed their secondary level education in the country in question. For France, foreign students who do not hold a *baccalaureat* diploma and who are enrolled in higher education through diploma equivalence, are therefore not included in the study. The French sample includes 23,836 students questioned in 2010 as part of the *Conditions of Student Life* survey.

Unequal access to higher education, depending on age, sex and social origin

Average student age varies between 21 and a half in France and 26 and a half in Denmark (chart 1). In France, Italy, Romania and Poland, students under 25 represent at least two thirds of the population. In the other countries, the average age is higher, particularly in Denmark where students over 25 represent half of the student population. The situation is quite particular in Great Britain, where 23% of students are over 30, since it is more frequent there than elsewhere to resume studies after a first professional experience.

These differences are explained in particular by the varying lengths of time between the end of secondary school education and the start of higher education. In France, Italy, Romania and Poland, three quarters of the students go into higher education once they have their diploma (91% of French students, for example), whereas in other countries, it's only over half the students. The situation in Denmark is very different, since only a quarter of the students enter higher education directly and close to 40% wait over two years to enter. Indeed, the Danish university system allows students a transition period of one year between the end of secondary education and enrolment in higher education, and attaches a certain importance to experience (in the professional field or associations...) acquired prior to enrolling.

Logically, such age differences show up in the matrimonial characteristics of students. Danish and Swedish students often live together in couples more than others. They also have on average more children: 16% in Denmark and 13% in Sweden compared to only 3% in Italy and 4% in France and Spain.

In all the European countries, there are more women enrolled in higher education, except in Germany (Chart 2). Feminisation is particularly marked in Romania, Sweden and Denmark, where women represent two thirds of the student population. However, there are major differences depending on the field of study. There are a majority of women in social sciences and humanities in all countries with the exception of Sweden, and men are predominant in the science and technology fields. In seven out of the ten countries concerned, men are on average older than women. This difference is to be viewed in light of the different performance levels between girls and boys in secondary school.

Chart 2 - Breakdown by sex

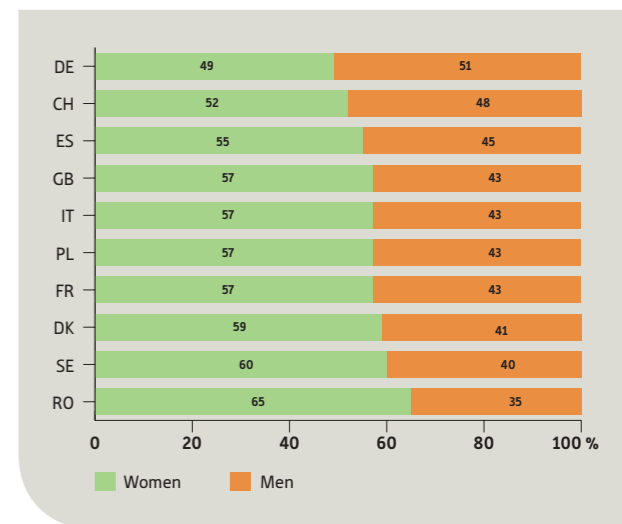
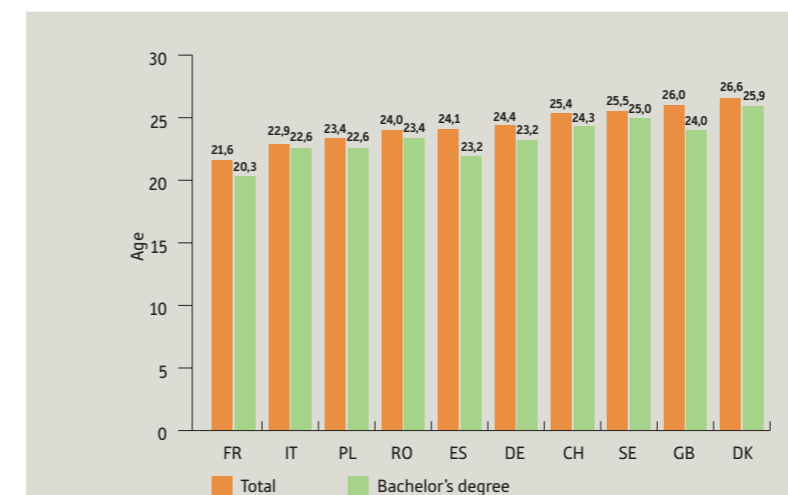
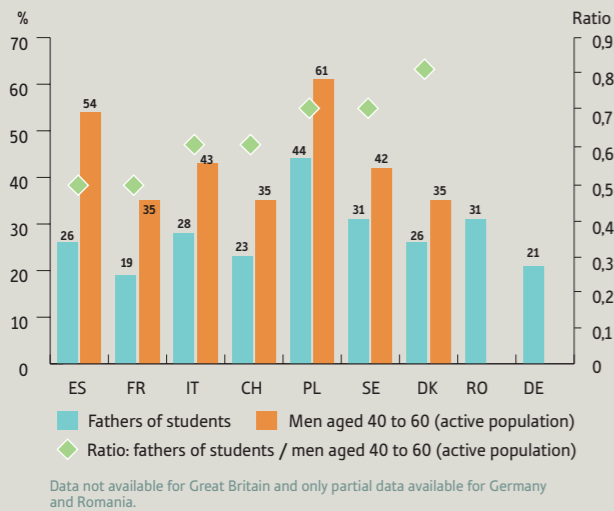


Chart 1 - Average age



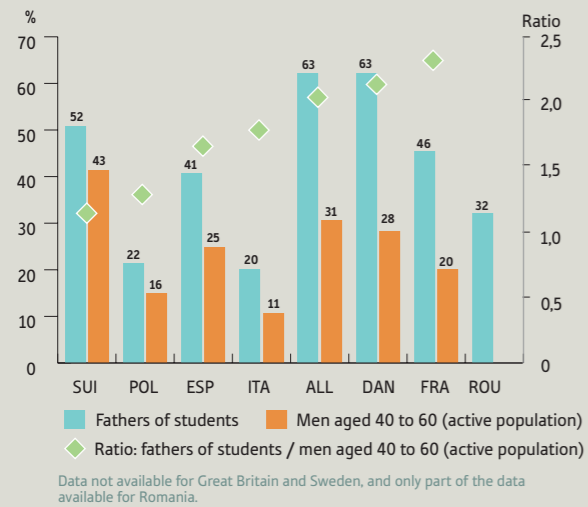
Enabling equal access to higher education for all social categories is still a major politic stake in Europe, in line with the Bologna process (See Louvain / Louvain-La-Neuve Communiqué, 2009). The social selectivity found in higher education. It is compared here with those of active men in the same age bracket (Chart 3). Here the closer the ratio is to 1, and the more egalitarian higher education may be considered (when the ratio is below 1, the socio-professional popular categories are considered under-represented in higher education). Generally, in all countries, students from the working classes are under-represented in higher education. Spain and France (with a ratio of 0.5) are the countries in which under-representation of students from working class backgrounds is the highest. At the other end of the spectrum is Denmark, where the ratio of 0.8 indicates that it is the country that is the closest to egalitarian access to higher education according to social background. Furthermore, in Poland, where 60% of active men are “blue-collar” workers, the proportion of students from working class backgrounds is the highest, (44%).

Chart 3 – Proportion of students from working class backgrounds



A second interesting indicator when analyzing students' social profiles is the parents' level of studies (Chart 4). In all the European countries considered here, the proportion of men with higher education is larger for students' fathers than for active men in the same age bracket. The share of students having fathers with higher education is larger in Germany and Denmark (63%). These two countries and France are where there is the largest difference between fathers of students in higher education and men in the same age bracket with higher education: there are close to twice as many men with higher education who are fathers of students, then among men of the same age bracket in France, Germany and Denmark. For Danish students, this somewhat alters the initial idea of equal access to higher education that was noticed previously (Chart 3).

Chart 4 – Students with fathers who graduated from higher education studies



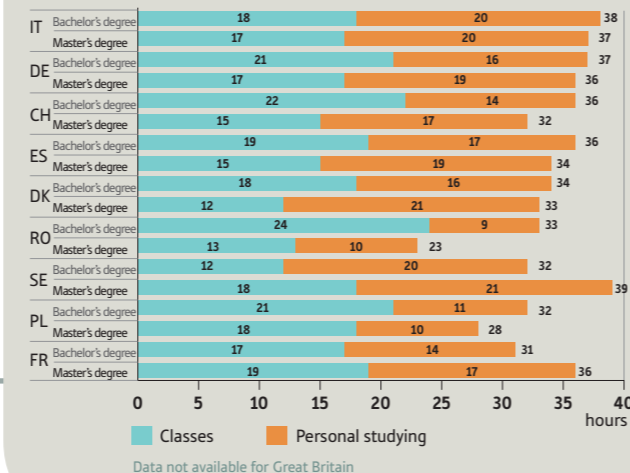
More homogenous study periods in Bachelor's degree than in Master's

Time spent studying (time spent in classes and personal studying) varies, in Bachelor's degree curriculum, from 31 hours in France to 38 hours in Italy, and in Master's degree curriculum from 23 hours in Romania to 39 hours in Sweden (Chart 5). Sweden appears to be an exception with only 12 hours spent in studies by Swedish students, against twice as much in Romania. For Master's degrees, there are on average fewer hours: it is between 12 hours in Denmark and 19 hours in France. Concerning personal studying, Swedish students are the ones who spend the most time when working on their Bachelor's degrees (20 hours) or Master's degrees, with a similar situation in Denmark (21 hours a week).

The split between class hours and personal studying also varies according to the study cycle. Generally, there is less time devoted to classes in the Master's cycle, then for Bachelor's degrees (with the exception of France and Sweden), whereas time spent for personal studying tends to increase with the more advanced curriculum. There are also differences due to the type of studies involved: in all the European countries concerned by the study, students in science and technology spend more time in classes than students in humanities. At the opposite, in two thirds of the countries, students in humanities spend more time per week in personal study than their counterparts in science and technology.

While managing this weekly schedule, time spent in employment must also be taken into consideration. On this point, Poland is where students spend the most time on jobs, with 19 hours per week during their Bachelor's degree curriculum (compared to less than 10 hours in other countries), and 25 hours during their Master's degree curriculum. As a comparison, French students devote on average 2 hours to jobs during their Bachelor's degree years, and 5 hours during their Master's.

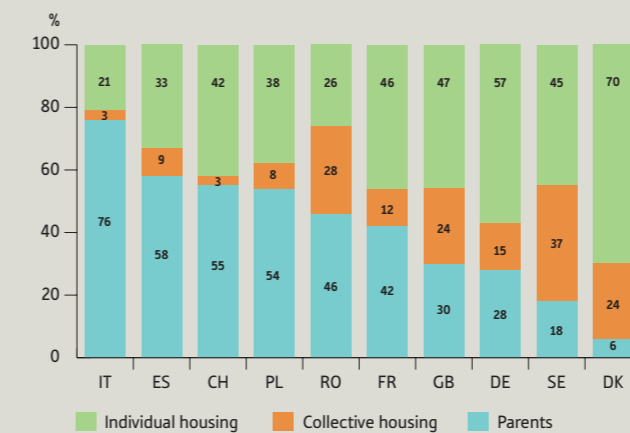
Chart 5 – Studying time



In Northern Europe, there are more students living in independent housing

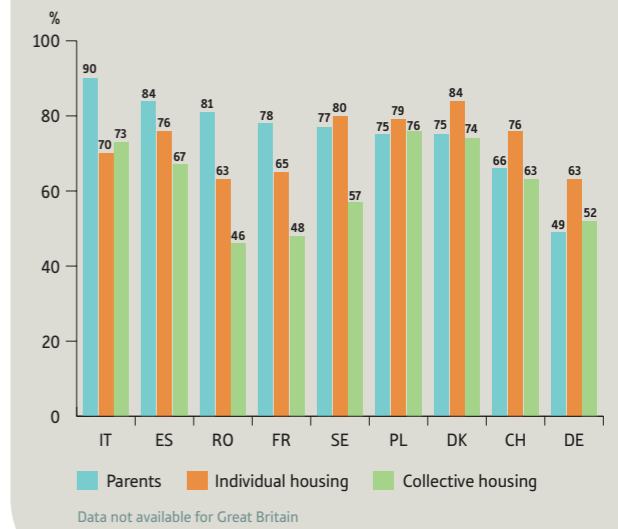
Housing is the focus point when analyzing student living conditions. There are traditionally three types of housing: living with parents, collective housing and individual housing (renting alone or as a couple, apartment sharing, etc.). Whatever the country, as students get older, they are more often found living independently. In order to better compare and eliminate age-related factors, housing has been compared for students under 25 (Chart 6). There are major differences between countries. In Great Britain, Germany, Sweden and Denmark, less than one out of three students live with parents. In these countries, there is also a relatively large number of student housing facilities, particularly in Sweden. At the opposite are the countries located in the South of Europe, Switzerland and Poland to a lesser degree, where independent housing is less available. This trend is more severely marked in Italy, where 76% of students under 25, but also 70% of students aged 25-29 are living with their parents. There are cultural factors linked to the central role of the family, but also the cost of studies and local availability of study programmes over the country that further induce students to stay at home, even if it means they have to spend time commuting. France is in an intermediate position, since when students are not in collective housing, they are evenly split between living at home and living in independent housing.

Chart 6 – Type of housing (students aged under 25)



Generally, students state that they are relatively satisfied with their living conditions (Chart 7). Those living at home are the ones who seem the most satisfied with their type of housing (average satisfaction rate 75%). In seven out of the ten countries concerned, more than three quarters of students living at home are satisfied with their living arrangements. Among those students living in individual housing, the average satisfaction rate is slightly lower (73%). Finally, students living in collective housing are the most critical, with an overall satisfaction rate of 62% for all countries, and a rate of 55% in those countries where more than 10% of students live in this type of housing. Denmark is the exception, and here 74% of students are satisfied with collective housing.

Chart 7 – Appreciation of housing conditions (% of satisfied students)



Economic dependence on families in most European countries

Student income varies greatly from one country to the other. Among the countries concerned here, there is a differentiation based on the origin of the income source, whether it is public or private. In five countries (Spain, Germany, France, Poland, Romania), at least half of the income comes from the family and/or the partner (Chart 8), the second source of income, in terms of size, is from employment. Even though it is in this group, the situation in France is slightly different since public funding represents the same share of income (close to 25%) as self-earned income. At the opposite, in Denmark and Sweden and to a lesser extent in Great Britain, public funding represents, in proportion, the largest share of student income. In Sweden and in Denmark, at least 60% of student income comes from public funding. In Sweden, students' own earnings provide 20% of income and in Denmark 30%, and in both countries family or partner contributions represent only a small share of total income.

The total monthly income is still greatly linked to the standard of living level of each country. Compared to the median monthly income of European students (850€), two countries are clearly at the top, Switzerland and Great Britain, where average income is at least 1,500 € (in these two countries the standard of living is comparatively high). On the other side of the spectrum, Polish and Romanian students live on less than 600 € a month.

Across Europe, employment is a common source of income for students.

The question regarding gainful employment is difficult when making a comparison on a European level. Consistency of data is a problem that is particularly important to the extent that the data collected is sensitive to the different definitions given defining student employment. The data presented here is based on a broad definition applying to jobs held during studies: therefore, formal employment that is or not in relation to studies, as well as more informal types of employment such as baby-sitting jobs or tuition, are taken into consideration. Gainful employment increases regularly with age and concerns between one third and two-thirds of students, depending on the country (Chart 9). Spain and Italy are the countries where gainful employment during the university year is the most limited (respectively 32 and 36%). Whereas Switzerland and to a lesser extent, Denmark are where gainful employment is the highest, since 74% of Swiss students and 66% of Danish students hold paid jobs during the university year. France is in an intermediate position, with half the student population holding jobs.

In all countries, with the exception of Denmark, the employment rate and the number of weekly work hours is the highest for students from lower social backgrounds.

Moderate international mobility

The Bologna process has identified international student mobility as the key European issue. In fact, one of the goals is "in 2010, at least 20% of the graduates in the European Higher Education Area should have had a study or training period abroad" (Louvain/Louvain-La-Neuve Communiqué, 2009). Enrolment abroad appears to be the most frequent study-related experience. This type of enrolment varies from 13% in Denmark, to 2% in Poland (Chart 10). In Spain and Switzerland, language courses abroad are the most common form of study-related foreign experience (17% for Spanish students and 12% for Swiss students).

Students from high social backgrounds are also the ones most likely to experience mobility: in Denmark, France, Spain and Italy, the share of students from high social backgrounds enrolled in schools abroad is substantially higher than for students from low social backgrounds.

Finally, according to the country, the share of students participating in foreign enrolment programmes such as Erasmus varies from 78% for Italy, to 72% for France and 23% for Sweden (since students from Scandinavian countries have access to another major foreign enrolment programme – Nordplus – they tend to travel less under the Erasmus programme).

Among those students who have never enrolled in schools abroad since entering higher education, there are those who plan to enrol (20% of the students) and those who do not have any plans to do so (72% of the total). There is always a larger share of students in this category who are from low social backgrounds, with the exception of Sweden.

The two main reasons stated by students who did not enrol abroad are financial reasons and separation from family (Chart 11). The differences vary from one country to another, but it is always students from lower backgrounds who state material and financial aspects. In two countries (Sweden and Denmark), it's separation from family that is the key reason given for not enrolling abroad. Finally, in Spain and Poland, insufficient proficiency is cited by respectively 41% and 51% of students who have not enrolled abroad in study-related programmes.

Chart 8 – Main income sources - students not living with parents

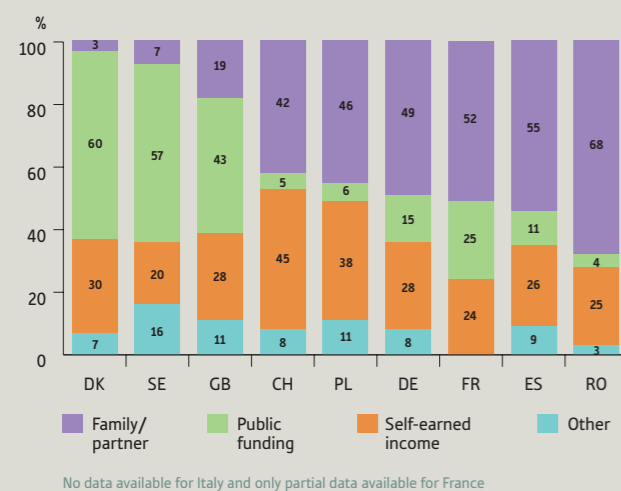


Chart 9 – Gainful employment during studies

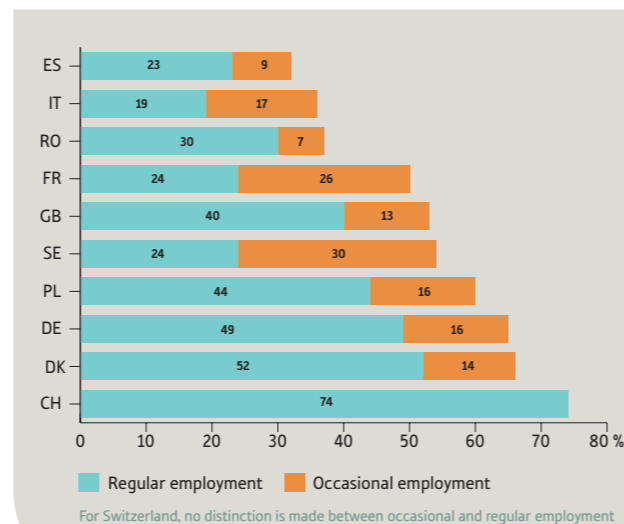
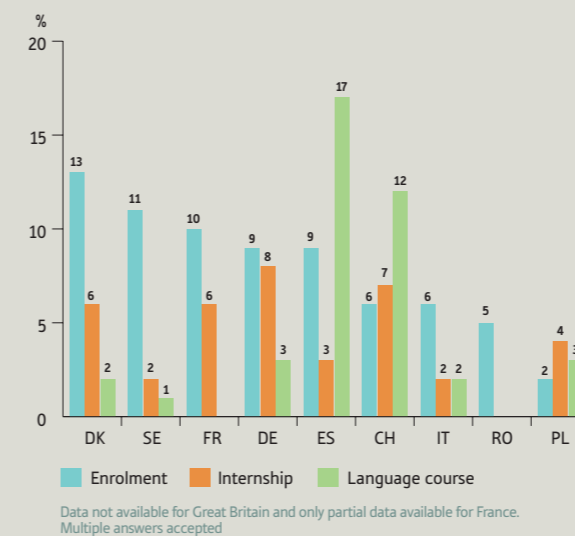
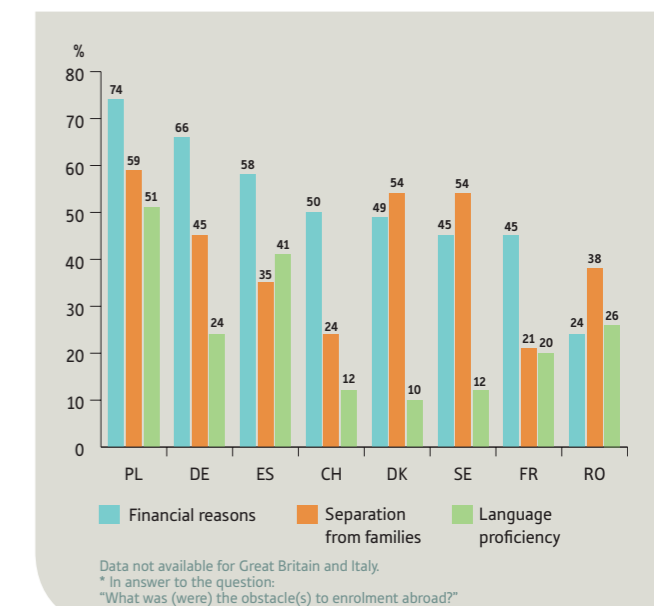


Chart 10 – Study-related experiences abroad since entering higher education



With regard to enrolment in foreign schools, mobility varies according to the selected field of study. Generally, students in social sciences and humanities enrol more often abroad than students studying science and technology: there is a 4-percentage point difference in Romania, and a 14-point difference in Denmark. The situation in France is interesting because it's the only European country where students in science and technology enrol abroad more than students studying humanities (17% compared to 12% for the second category).

Chart 11 – Obstacles to enrolment abroad



Notes

- 1 An education programme organized between Nordic countries, and implemented by the Nordic Council (there are five participating countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden) that concerns children enrolled in elementary school and high school, students but also their teachers as well as the organizations and institutions involved in professional training for adults.

TO FIND OUT MORE:

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF STUDENT LIFE IN EUROPE

Synopsis of indicators. Final report. Eurostudent IV 2008-2011-12-05

Dominic Orr, Christoph Gwosc, Nicolai Netz, W. Bertelsmann Verlag, 2011

This report compares the results of surveys conducted in several European countries and provides a wide range of data on the social conditions of student life. It compares the living conditions and socio-economic levels of students within the European higher education area, by using data collected from 25 European countries from 2008 to 2011.

To download the document:

<http://www.eurostudent.eu>



NOW AVAILABLE

“LES MONDES ÉTUDIANTS”, or “STUDENT WORLDS”

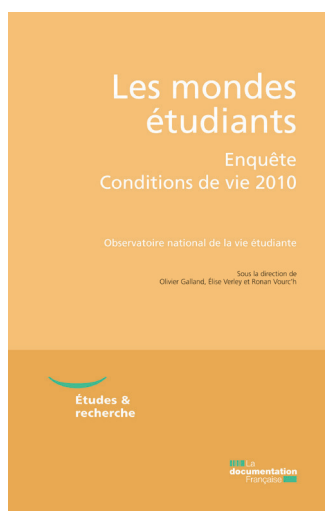
Enquête Conditions de vie 2010

published in French, under the leadership of Olivier Galland, Elise Verly and Ronan Vourc'h

Using data from the 6th survey on student living conditions, this publication analyzes the combined effects of changes in the social profiles of student populations and the variety of study programmes and career paths. It describes the different student profiles, their orientation and fields of study in higher education, their attitudes and aspirations, in particular with regard to one of the major branches of higher education.

To order this document:

<http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr>



Observatoire national de la vie étudiante

6 rue Jean Calvin - CS 20509 - 75237 PARIS Cedex 05 - FRANCE

Phone: 33 (0)1 55 43 57 92 - Fax: 33(0)1 55 43 57 19

Email: ove@cnous.fr - Website: <http://www.ove-national.education.fr>

OVE INFOS

Publication manager: Monique Ronzeau

Design: De Visu

© OVE 2012 - ISSN : 1638-8542