

BEING A STUDENT IN FRANCE OR IN OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: A TRANSITION PHASE TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE OR A LIFELONG EXPERIENCE ?

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THE EUROSTUDENT PROJECT

Since its inception in 1994, the EUROSTUDENT project aims at providing reliable and comparable social data on students in European countries, by collating national surveys. The data compilation focuses mainly on the socio-economic background and on the living conditions of students and provides insightful cross-country comparisons. The results presented here are some

of the main findings of the 6th round of the EUROSTUDENT project, based on the contributions of 28 countries in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) between 2016 and 2018. All analyses are based on the full report "Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe" published in March 2018. The graphs were generated using the EUROSTUDENT VI database (both sources

are on the www.eurostudent.eu website). The indicators for France are based on the Student Living Conditions Survey ("Enquête conditions de vie", CDV 2016).

Being a student means different things in different countries. For instance, in northern European countries it is not unusual for students to have already started a family and to have a solid work experience, while in France students are mostly young and quite often dependent on their parents for support. Comparing students' situations across European countries

offers perspective on students living conditions, in different State support contexts and higher education systems. This edition of OVE Infos addresses different themes of the EUROSTUDENT programme. Among other topics, the data presented highlight the main differences in characteristics of national student populations (age, educational background, students with children). There is

also a focus on the transition from secondary school to higher education and on international mobility. A description of living conditions (housing, resources, expenses and paid work) completes the overall picture.



METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

We have selected 10 countries to give an overview of students' living conditions across Europe: France and neighbouring countries for which the data are available (Germany, Italy and Switzerland), two countries from northern Europe (Sweden and Denmark), two countries from Eastern Europe (Hungary and Slovenia), and Iceland and Portugal.

To be comparable throughout the European Higher Education Area, the main

categories of the focus groups are based on international classifications: the diplomas prepared by the students are classified according to ISCED 2011 criteria. The framework of three cycles of higher education is that established in the Bologna Process. The study covers only students enrolled in higher education programmes of ISCED levels 5 to 7 (that is up to the equivalent of the Master's degree level). The scope of the survey is thus slightly narrower than that of the French survey.

Variations between data sets are observed in some countries, however: for example, the survey results in Italy and Germany do not include international students. And while most of the surveys were conducted in 2016, Italy and Iceland conducted their surveys in 2017.

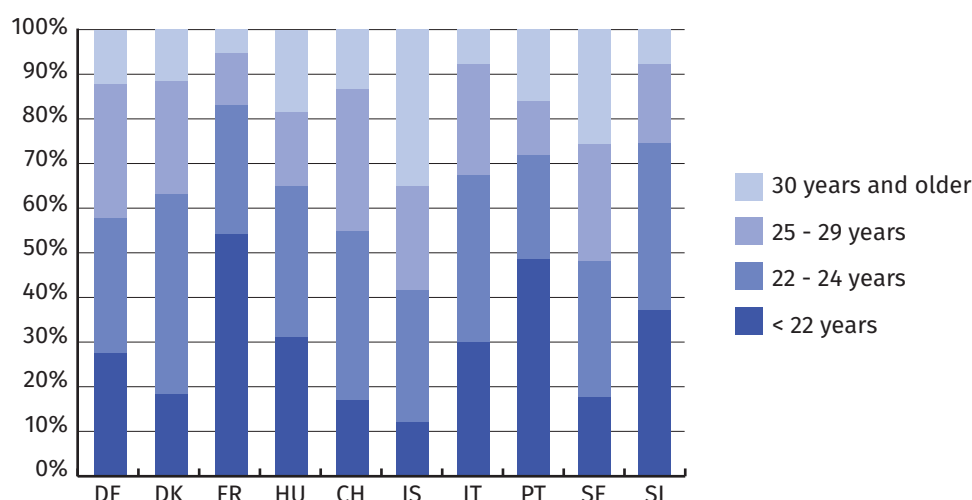
FRENCH STUDENTS: A YOUNG POPULATION

The age profile of the student population varies greatly by country. France has the youngest student population with a mean age of 22.8

years, and 83 % of its student population is under 25 years old. The mean age of the student population is above 25 years in Denmark, Switzerland, Hungary, Sweden

and Iceland. And more than half of the student population is 25 or older in Sweden and Iceland (respectively 52 % and 59 %).

GRAPHIC 1: AGE PROFILE OF STUDENTS (IN %)



Source: EUROSTUDENT VI database.

In Hungary, the relatively high proportion of students aged 30 and over (18.6 %) can be explained by the relatively high number of part-time students who often have a paid activity during the lecture period¹. In Iceland, the higher mean age of the students is partly due to the fact that most students finish secondary school at the age of 20 (secondary education starts at age 16 and lasts four years).

In all countries except Denmark, and to a lesser extent France, students in intensive programs (more than 40 hours a week spent on study-related activities) are younger than those in less intensive programs. In France, for instance, preparatory classes for enrolment in the elite Grandes écoles are intensive programs. Students start these 2-3 years of very demanding study right after obtaining the secondary education

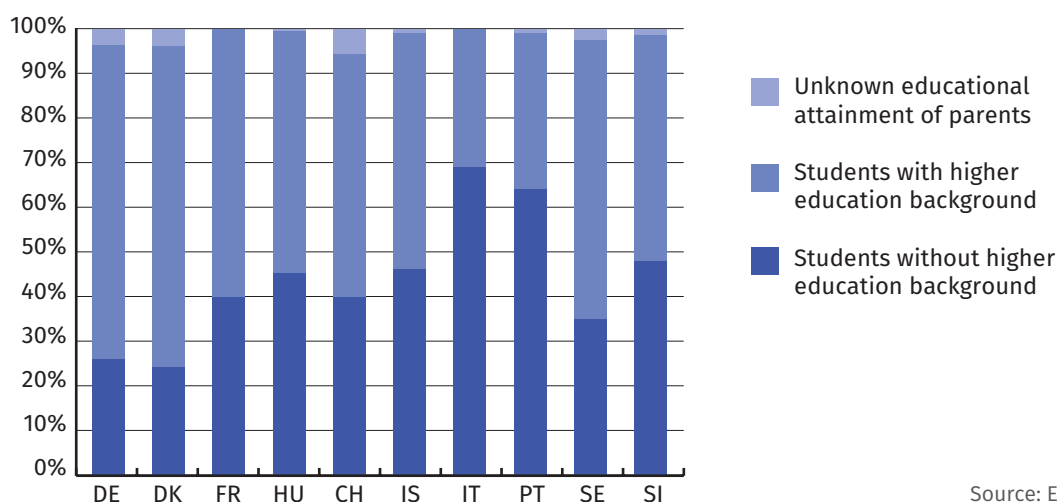
Baccalauréat diploma; the courses prepare students for the entrance exams of selective engineering or business schools mostly. Moreover, students who are dependent² on family for financial support and those who are dependent on public financial aid are on average the youngest segment, across European countries. This is correlated to the higher proportion of working students among older students.

(1) In Hungary, most students aged 30 and over have a regular paid job during the lecture period (85 %) and 93 % of those with a paid activity consider themselves primarily as workers.

(2) Students are considered "dependent" on a financial resource if the funds from the source account for more than half of their total income.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND: PARENTS MORE OFTEN WITH A HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREE

GRAPHIC 2: EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF PARENTS (IN %)



Source: EUROSTUDENT VI database.

The proportion of students without higher education background, i.e. students whose parents' educational attainment does not exceed upper secondary education, varies greatly among countries. In the selected EUROSTUDENT countries, this proportion ranges from 24 % in Denmark and 26 % in Germany, to 64 % in Portugal and 69 % in Italy.

On average across all EUROSTUDENT countries, the educational level of students' mothers does not differ from that of their fathers, with some country-specific differences. In roughly half of the EUROSTUDENT countries, students' mothers are more likely not to hold a higher education degree compared to fathers, reflecting the tendency for educational attainment in a couple to be skewed towards the male partner³. However, in slightly under half of the EUROSTUDENT countries – mainly Eastern European and

Scandinavian countries – the proportion of mothers with higher education degrees may be higher than the proportion of fathers.

Students whose father does not hold a higher education degree are under-represented in almost all EUROSTUDENT countries. Nevertheless, students from non-higher education backgrounds (as measured by fathers' educational attainment) are relatively well represented in Italy, Switzerland, Portugal and Iceland.

These findings prove the general need to keep interest in students' backgrounds, especially because even after successfully enrolling in higher education (HE), other inequalities may persist, as access to HE is not the only aspect of equitable treatment. Studies in several HE systems have shown that broader access to HE often leads to greater stratification. Vertical stratification

refers to sequential degrees at different levels (e.g. short cycle – Bachelor – Master), while horizontal stratification refers to the differentiation within a HE system, e.g. with regard to the type of HE institution, or field of study, which vary in their selectivity, academic and economic prestige, retention rates, and labour market value⁴.

(3) Van Bavel, J. (2012). The reversal of gender inequality in education, union formation and fertility in Europe. *Vienna Yearbook of Population Research*, 10, 127-154. <https://doi.org/10.1553/populationyearbook2012s127>

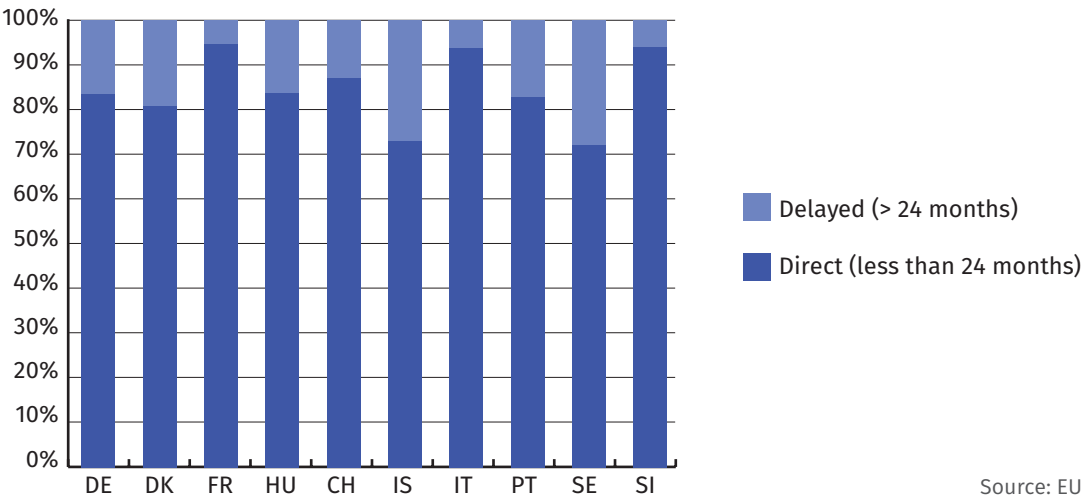
(4) G. Marconi, Equity in tertiary education: Relevance and data availability across OECD countries. The GAPS Think Piece, (24), 1-10, 2015; S. Marginson, The worldwide trend to high participation higher education: dynamics of social stratification in inclusive systems, *Higher Education*, 72(4), 413-434, 2016; M. Triventi,

Stratification in higher education and its relationship with social inequality: A comparative study of 11 European countries, *European Sociological Review*, 29(3), 489-502 (retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Moris_Triventi/publication/275143780_Stratification_in_Higher_Education_and_Its_Relationship_with_Social_Inequality_A_Comparative_Study_of_11_European_Countries/links/572b2df108aef7c7e2c6ab29.pdf), 2013.

THE DOMINANT MODEL: A DIRECT TRANSITION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Across all EUROSTUDENT countries, most students transition directly from secondary education into higher education, i.e. within two years. In France, Italy and Slovenia, more than 90 % of students transition directly, whereas in Denmark, Iceland and Sweden at least 20 % of students enter HE more than two years after leaving secondary school.

GRAPHIC 3: DURATION OF TRANSITION FROM SECONDARY SCHOOL TO HIGHER EDUCATION (IN %)



Source: EUROSTUDENT VI database.

In most countries, delayed transition into higher education is more common for the first generation of HE students in a family (i.e. students whose parents did not obtain an HE degree), non-university students, students in the field of education (incl. teacher training), and those dependent on their own earnings.

In France it should be noted that this delayed entry is quite uncommon. Indeed, most students in France follow a straight and classical path to higher education, with the idea of preparing for the job market. In Sweden for instance, the higher education period is less focused on the perspective of future job

opportunities, and constitutes a socialization experience in itself, a period of personal development⁵.

(5) N. Charles, Enseignement supérieur et justice sociale. Sociologie des expériences étudiantes en Europe, La Documentation française, Coll. Etudes & recherche 2015.

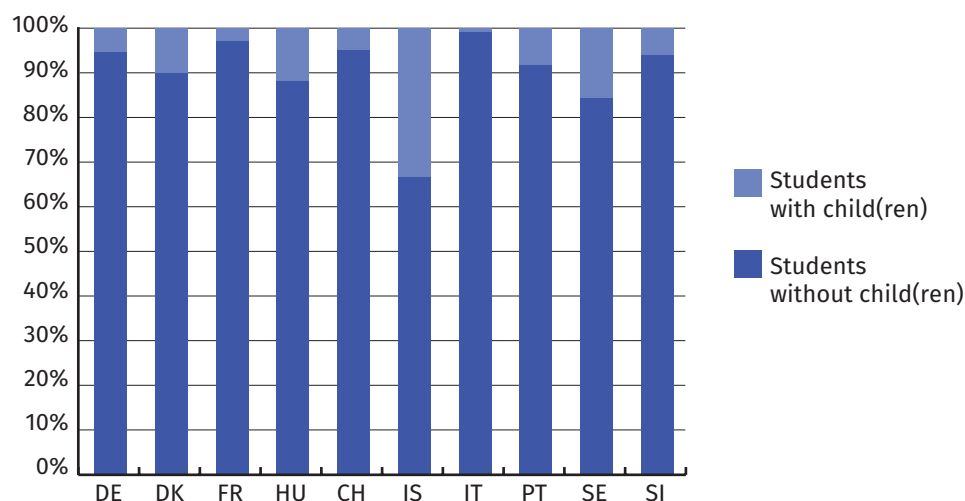
FEWER STUDENTS WITH CHILDREN

In a large majority of EUROSTUDENT countries, at most 10 % of students have children under the age of six. This group represents only 3 % of students in France. In the selected countries, the highest rates of parenthood among students are found in Iceland and Sweden, where respectively 16 % and 33 % of students have children (regardless of age). Students who are parents are more likely to be women, Bachelor students, students having followed

alternative access routes for entering HE⁶, and in institutions other than universities. Alongside this general trend, in France students with children are more often older students, in Masters' programmes and studying at universities. Studying with children in France appears to be quite difficult, for there is no specific institutional recognition and no ad hoc organizational arrangements. For instance, French students raising children report more often that they are unable

to attend all their classes, and mothers even more so than fathers – over one-third of female students with children as opposed to 16 % for male students with children⁷. By contrast, in other countries, such as Sweden, the pace of studies is flexible and can more easily be made compatible with family duties.

GRAPHIC 4: STUDENTS WITH CHILDREN (IN %)



Source: EUROSTUDENT VI database.

(6) Students who either do not possess an upper secondary qualification or equivalent obtained in direct relation to leaving school for the first time (e.g. Matura, Abitur, Baccalauréat), either in the country of survey or abroad, or obtained it later in life, e.g.

via evening classes or adult learning, are considered having used the alternative access route.

(7) See Arnaud Régner-Loilier « Étudier et avoir des enfants - Contexte de survenue des grossesses et conséquences sur les études », OVE infos n°36, October 2017.

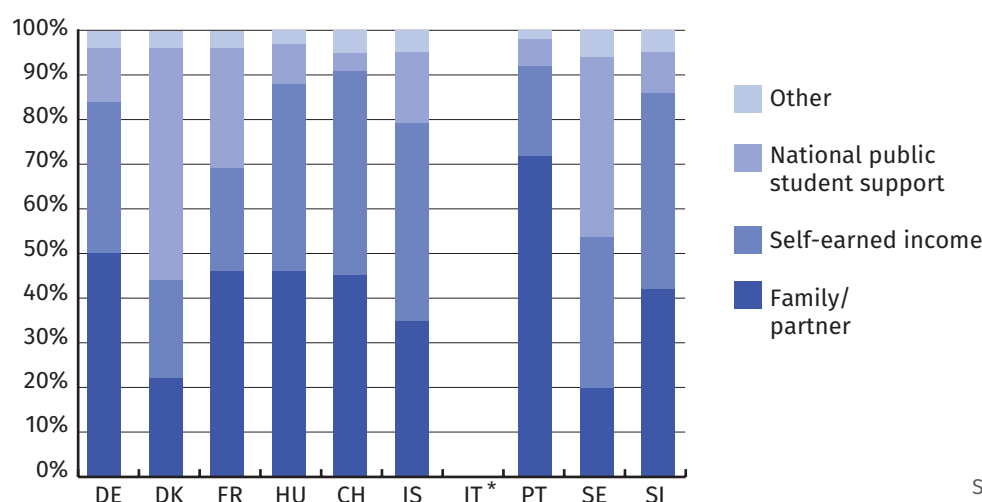
STUDENTS' FUNDING : MAINLY FROM THEIR FAMILY

From a macro perspective, the total monthly income of students, including transfers in kind (expenses paid by parents/partner/other in favour of the students), comes mostly from the family/

partner and from the student's own personal earnings. Among the selected countries, students' funding breaks down as follows, on cross-country average: contributions from family/partner 42 %, students' self-earned

income 33 %, national public financial aid 21 % and other income sources 4 %.

GRAPHIC 5: COMPOSITION OF STUDENTS' FUNDING (IN %)



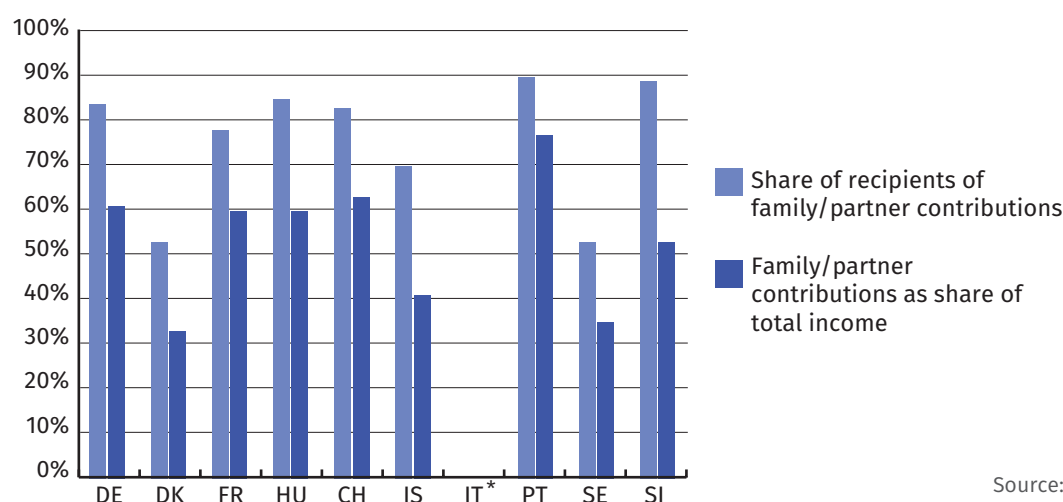
Source: EUROSTUDENT VI database.

The proportion of students receiving direct or indirect support from their family/partner is the lowest in the Nordic countries, as is the share this type of support represents in student revenues. Indeed, in Sweden and Denmark, 53 %

of students receive contributions from their family or their partner and this financial support represents respectively 35 % and 33 % of the student's total income. In France, 78 % of students receive money or transfers in kind from their family or partner, and this

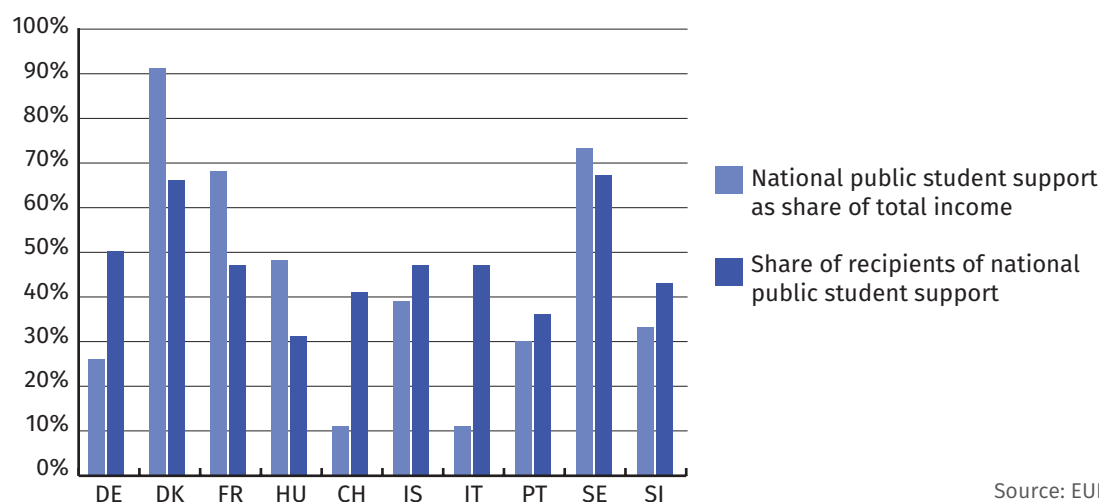
support represents 60 % of the total monthly income of the recipients. These proportions are even higher in some countries, especially in Portugal.

GRAPHIC 6: RECIPIENTS OF FAMILY/PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPORTANCE OF INCOME SOURCE (IN %)



Source: EUROSTUDENT VI database.

GRAPHIC 7: RECIPIENTS OF NATIONAL PUBLIC STUDENT SUPPORT AND IMPORTANCE OF INCOME SOURCE (IN %)



Source: EUROSTUDENT VI database.

Among the selected countries, the share of the student population receiving national public student support (scholarships, loans and other financial aid) is 43 %⁸. This share is clearly higher in France (68 %), Sweden (73 %), and Denmark (91 %). In these countries, the State is a major contributor to the recipients' income, particularly in Sweden, where 67 % of the recipients' total income comes from the State. Indeed, in Sweden grants and loans are universally available to full-time students for six years. The maximum amount per year is SEK 28 480 for grants (about €2,750) and SEK 71,680 for loans (about €6,900). Part-time students, studying on at least a half-time basis, are eligible for grants and loans proportional to their pace of study. In 2015,

72 % of the students received grants and 53 % received loans. Students with children are also entitled to a child allowance (SEK 1,050/month for one child in 2017 – about €100). Some students can receive further supplementary loans, and loans for additional costs related to their studies. This benefit is intended, for example, for students with additional costs for double housing, travel, musical instruments, etc. In addition a housing allowance is available⁹.

In France, the public student financial aid is lower, on average 47 % of the total monthly income of the recipients. This public support is given primarily in the form of scholarships for students under the age of 28, based on social criteria (family income, family structure, distance to the higher education institution, etc), but also includes housing

benefits ("APL") to cover some of the cost of housing. Recipients of scholarships receive, according to their scholarship level, an amount ranging from €100.80 to €554.50 a month for 10 months a year¹⁰. The recipients of these scholarships are also granted priority access to student accommodations and are exempted from enrolment fees at university. Other grants are also available, for example for study and internships abroad. In addition, direct public support may also take the form of government loans or grants from regional authorities. Indirect public support exists through tax advantages for the parents of students¹¹.

(8) The average is 43 % among the selected countries and 41 % for all the EUROSTUDENT countries taken together.

(9) References: <http://database.eurostudent.eu>; <http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/49729932.pdf>; N. Charles, Enseignement supérieur et justice sociale – sociologie des expériences étudiantes en Europe, La documentation française, Coll. Etudes & recherche, 2015.

(10) In some cases students are entitled to the scholarship stipend during the months of July and August between two study years.

(11) This indirect financial support is not measured here.

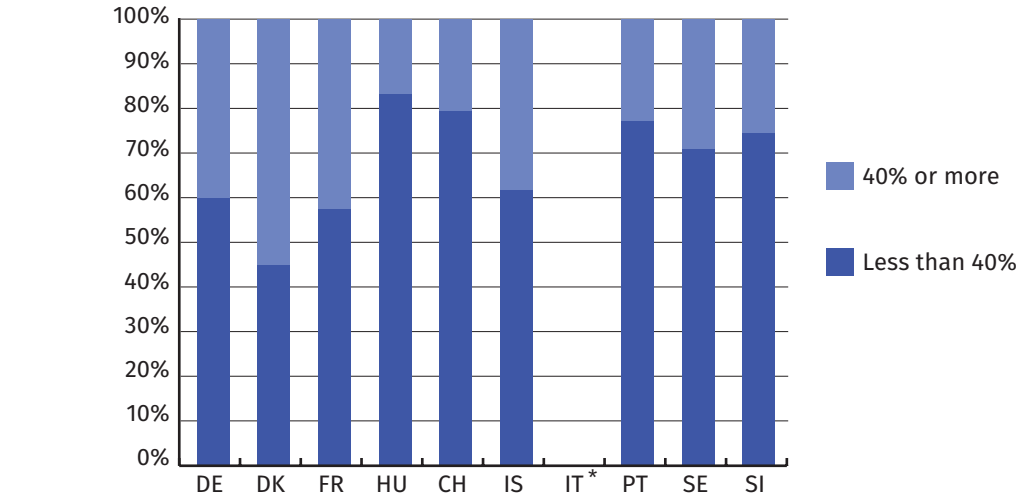
LIVING EXPENSES: THE HIGH COST OF LIVING, ESPECIALLY IN CAPITAL CITIES

Students’ total monthly expenses are allocated predominantly to living costs, and to a much lesser degree to study-related costs. On average across the selected countries, students’ total monthly expenses break down as follows: living costs paid by students represent 62 % of the total, living costs paid by students’ families/partners 29 % of the total,

study-related costs paid by students 5 % and study-related costs paid by students’ families/partners 4 % of total monthly expenses¹². Students not living with their parents spend on average more than one-third of their total expenses on housing. This is an excessive burden for many students who spend 40 % or more of their income on housing. Indeed,

17 % of students not living with parents in Hungary spend more than 40 % of their total expenses on housing, but this proportion is 42 % in France and up to 55 % in Denmark.

GRAPHIC 8: PROPORTION OF HOUSING EXPENSES FOR STUDENTS NOT LIVING WITH PARENTS (IN %)



Source: EUROSTUDENT VI database.

In a large majority of countries, housing and food costs in capital cities are higher for students living outside the parental home, compared to living in smaller cities (fewer than 100,000 inhabitants). Among the selected countries the differences in students’

housing costs are quite pronounced in France, Italy, and Portugal, with capital cities costing between €135 and €150 more per month (representing respectively in each country a difference of 41 %, 64 % and 70 %). The differences in food costs are also high

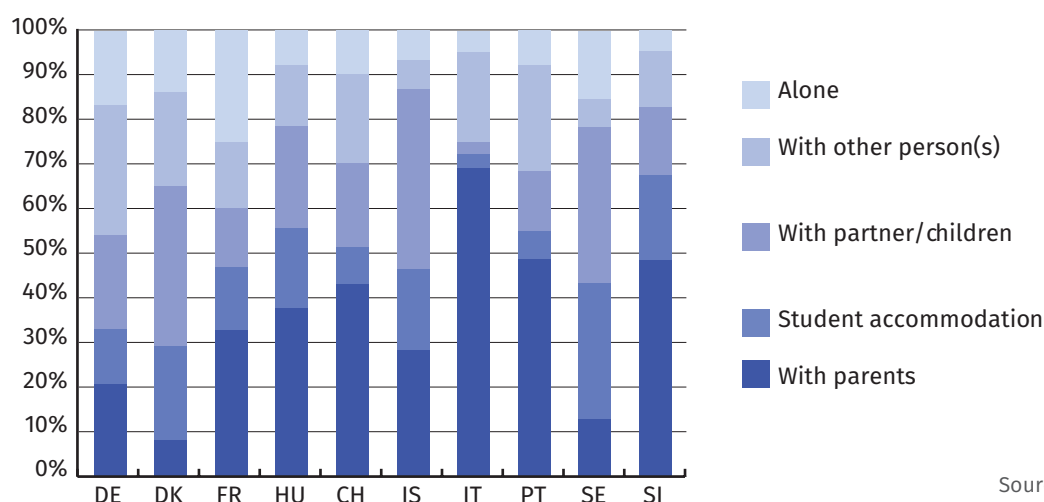
in Germany and Portugal, with food expenditure at least €50 higher per month in the capital cities (representing a difference of respectively 38 % and 30 % of this expense). This difference attains €48 in France (+ 29 %).

(12) Across all EUROSTUDENT countries, the shares are the following: 60 % living costs paid by students, 29 % living costs paid by students’ families/partners, 6 % study-related

costs paid by students, 5 % study-related costs paid by students’ families/partners. *No Data

HOUSING SITUATION: MORE STUDENTS LIVING ALONE

GRAPHIC 9: STUDENTS' HOUSING SITUATION (IN %)



Source: EUROSTUDENT VI database.

Living with parents is the most common housing situation for students in about two-thirds of the countries. This is the case in France, Hungary, Switzerland, Italy, Portugal and Slovenia. In the remaining one-third of countries, the largest proportion of students are those living with their partner and/or children, for instance in Denmark, Iceland and Sweden. Across all countries, 15 % of students live with other persons (elsewhere than in student housing). Living alone (other than student housing) is the least common housing situation in these countries: on cross-country average, only

11 % of students do not share their living space. In France however, 25 % of students live alone, the second most common housing situation.

As students tend to leave their parents' homes when they get older, the proportion of students living with their partner and/or with their children increases, with variations across countries: for example in Denmark 17 % of students aged 22 or less already live with their partner/children, whereas this proportion is much lower in the other countries for students of the same age and

is only reached by students aged 22 to 24 in Iceland, and 25 to 29 in most other countries, except in Italy and Portugal where students tend to be 30 years or older before they start massively to live with their partner or have children. Nonetheless, among all selected countries the proportion of students living alone increases with age. For students aged 22 and under, this proportion ranges from 3.3 % in Italy to 23.1 % in France. For students 25 to 29 years old, this proportion varies between 5.8 % in Italy to 26.3 % in France.

FEWER STUDENTS HAVE STUDIED TEMPORARILY ABROAD

Among the selected countries, the largest proportions of students who have been temporarily enrolled abroad¹³ are found in Denmark, Germany, Iceland, and Sweden, where 10 % or more of students have been enrolled abroad. In France, the proportion of students who have studied temporarily abroad is relatively low compared to neighbouring countries. On average among EUROSTUDENT countries, women students, university students, and standard access route students¹⁴ are more likely to have studied abroad compared to their respective counterparts, but this

pattern is not reflected in all countries.

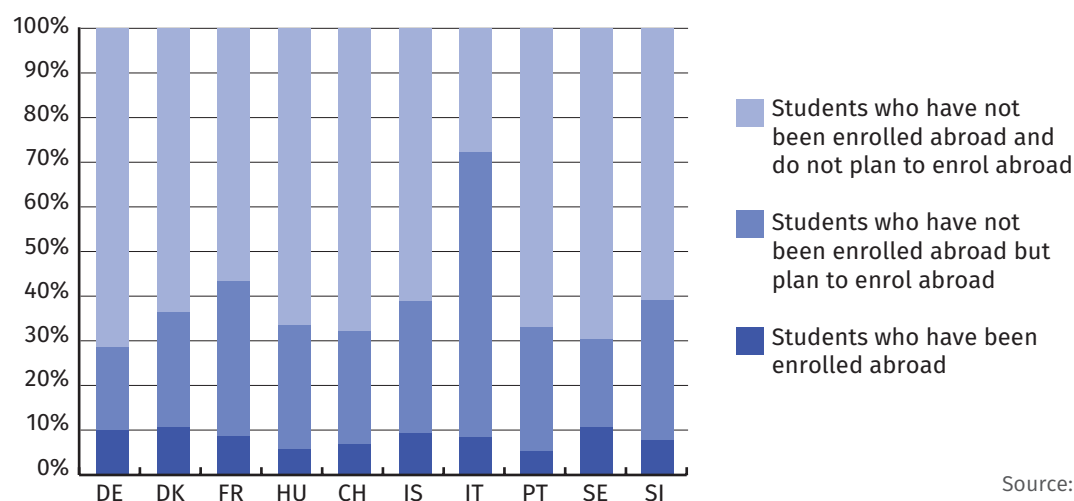
Temporary enrolment abroad varies depending on the fields of study. The lowest levels of enrolment abroad are found, on average, in the field of “Information and communication technologies” (ICTs). Inversely, students in “arts and humanities”, “social sciences”, “journalism and information”, and “business, administration and law” are more likely to have studied abroad than is the average.

In France, university students tend to be

less mobile than students at other types of institutions (particularly business schools). Overall up to 36 % of students at business schools have been enrolled abroad. This difference stands true even when the analysis is restricted to the second cycle level: up to 43 % of students at business schools have been enrolled abroad, compared to on average 15 % of students at the same level at universities.

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GRAPHIC 10: TEMPORARY ENROLMENT ABROAD (IN %)



Source: EUROSTUDENT VI database.

(13) The focus is therefore on students who have returned to their home institution after temporary enrolment in a foreign institution - e.g. in an Erasmus(+) exchange programme.

(14) Students are considered to have followed the standard access route if they possess an upper secondary school qualification or equivalent obtained directly when leaving

school for the first time (e.g. Matura, Abitur, Baccalauréat), either in the survey country or abroad, as opposed to “alternative access route students” who either do not possess such a qualification, or obtained it later in life, e.g. via evening classes or adult learning.

The mobility rate of students also depends on their socio-economic origins¹⁵: across EUROSTUDENT countries the proportion of students who have been enrolled abroad are higher among students with higher education backgrounds than among students without this family background. On cross-country average, this difference amounts to 4 percentage points among the selected countries. Overall, larger

proportions of students with higher education backgrounds have also done an internship or work placement programme abroad, compared to students without HE backgrounds; the difference between students with and without HE background is less marked than for study abroad, and this pattern is not found in all countries. In Italy and Slovenia there is no difference between the two groups with respect to internships/

work placement abroad.

In France, students with higher educational backgrounds have more often been enrolled abroad or been abroad for an internship. This remains true when looking at the professional status of the parents: in France, students whose parents are executives or intellectual professionals have more often been abroad in the course of their studies.

TABLE 1: TEMPORARY ENROLMENT ABROAD BY EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND - PROPORTION OF STUDENTS (EN %)

	Without/with higher educational background	Students who have been enrolled abroad	Students who have not been enrolled abroad but plan to enrol abroad	Students who have not been enrolled abroad and do not plan to enrol abroad	All students
DE	Without	7,51	3,7	78,8	100
	With	11,22	1,3	67,5	100
DK	Without	7,92	1,57	0,51	100
	With	11,92	7,76	0,3	100
FR	Without	6,13	0,3	63,6	100
	With	11	37,65	1,41	100
HU	Without	3,7	21,1	75,21	100
	With	7,73	3,5	58,7	100
CH	Without	61	9,77	4,21	100
	With	82	9,76	2,3	100
IS	Without	6,62	1,3	72,1	100
	With	11,93	6,55	1,61	100
IT	Without	7,16	4	28,91	100
	With	11,96	2,92	5,11	100
PT	Without	3,8	23,1	73,1	100
	With	8,73	6,9	54,41	100
SE	Without	8,81	6,17	51	100
	With	12,52	1,96	5,61	100
SI	Without	6,52	46	9,61	100
	With	9,33	8,25	2,51	100

Source: EUROSTUDENT VI database.

(15) See for instance M. Ballatore, ERASMUS et la mobilité des jeunes Européens, éd. Puf, coll Education et société, 2010.

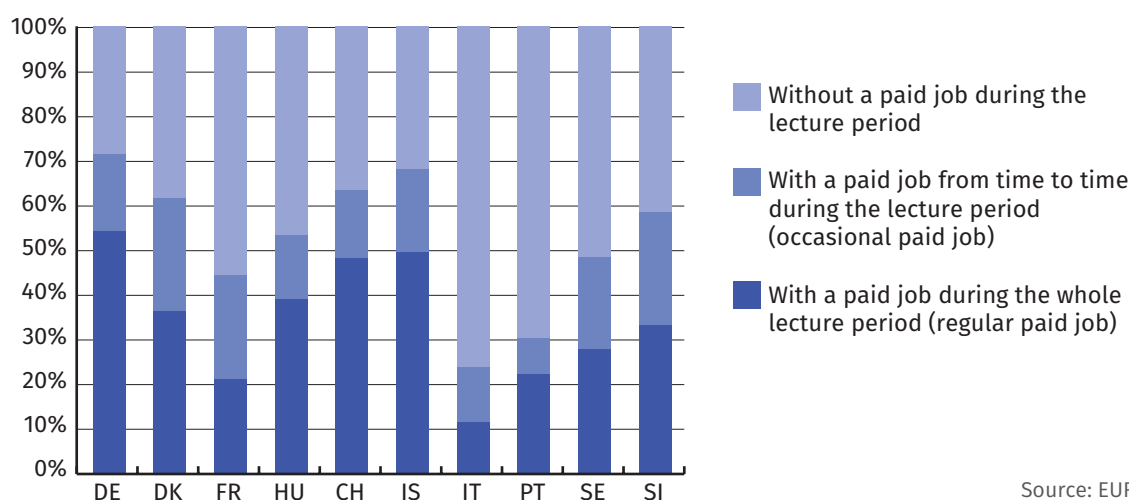
WORKING STUDENTS: DIFFERENT SITUATIONS

On average, slightly more than half of all students across all EUROSTUDENT countries hold paid jobs during the lecture period, and

one-third have regular jobs. When taking the lecture-free period into account, roughly 70 % of students are employed in paid work. The majority of employed students work

during both the academic year and the summer break. The proportion of students with paid jobs during the lecture period tends to increase with age.

GRAPHIC 11: STUDENTS' EMPLOYMENT DURING THE ACADEMIC YEAR (IN %)



Source: EUROSTUDENT VI database.

Among the selected countries, the smallest proportions of students with paid activity during the lecture period are found in Italy, Portugal and France where at most 44 % of students have a paid activity (occasional or regular).

In Italy, moreover, the share of students with a paid activity has fallen over the past three years, confirming a decline that appears to be a direct consequence of the economic crisis, which has had a heavy impact on the youth labour market and temporary jobs¹⁶.

In France, about half of all students have a paid activity, and 45 % of these activities are internships, study-work programs or related to the student's studies.

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(16) See <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-eurostat-news/-/EDN-20170811-1>

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