



Doc. 13715

19 February 2015

Student mobility

Report¹

Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

Rapporteur: Mr Christian BARILARO, Monaco, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

Summary

International student mobility contributes to a better qualified workforce and a more diversified culture all over Europe. It also improves the capacity to interact in a globalised world by fostering open-mindedness, adaptability and creativity of millions of European students. It is, however, hindered by many obstacles, such as lack of information, long bureaucratic procedures, doubts about the quality of studies abroad or their proper recognition and lack of financial resources. These obstacles must be removed.

The report therefore urges Council of Europe member States to ratify the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region and to streamline administrative procedures that have an impact on student mobility. The action of ENIC-NARIC centres and networks, which provide information and recognise academic qualifications, should also be strengthened.

In addition, the report invites the Committee of Ministers to consider revising the European Agreement on Continued Payment of Scholarships to Students Studying Abroad with a view to enhancing portability of student loans and grants and introducing new measures for financial support.

Finally, the report calls on national authorities to develop and implement policy measures to encourage the return to their home countries of graduates who take part in student mobility programmes, in particular by facilitating their access to employment.

1. Reference to committee: [Doc. 13283](#), Reference 4002 of 30 September 2013.



Contents	Page
A. Draft resolution	3
B. Draft recommendation	5
C. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Barilaro, rapporteur	6
1. Introduction	6
2. Benefits of academic mobility	7
2.1. For students	7
2.2. For universities	7
2.3. For States	8
2.4. For Europe	8
3. International student mobility trends and flows	8
3.1. International student mobility flows in Europe	8
3.2. International student mobility flows from and to Europe	11
4. Obstacles to international student mobility	12
4.1. Lack of funding and low portability of student support	12
4.2. Difficulties with regard to recognition of qualifications	14
4.3. Language barriers	16
4.4. Heavy administrative procedures	16
4.5. Side effects of e-learning	17
4.6. Limited support from the private sector for student mobility	18
4.7. The problem of the brain drain and other obstacles to mobility	18
5. Steps forward: strategies for improving student mobility	19
5.1. Addressing the factors that influence decisions to enter mobility programmes	19
5.2. Improving information and guidance on student mobility	20
5.3. Increasing availability of student funding and portability of student support	20
5.4. Improving recognition of learning outcomes	20
5.5. Enhancing proficiency in foreign languages	21
5.6. Streamlining administrative procedures	21
5.7. Enabling participation in Erasmus+ for students from Council of Europe member States which are not members of the European Union	21
5.8. Encouraging private business support for student mobility	22
5.9. Balancing mobility flows	22

A. Draft resolution²

1. The Parliamentary Assembly stresses that international student mobility is one of the core goals of the Bologna Process, which set up the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and an important tool for economic progress, social development and intercultural understanding.
2. International student mobility has contributed to a better qualified workforce and a more diversified culture all over Europe and improved the capacity to interact in a globalised world by fostering open-mindedness, adaptability and creativity of millions of European students. These positive developments, however, are hindered by a number of obstacles, such as lack of information, fear of recognition problems, long bureaucratic procedures, doubts about the quality of studies abroad, fear of prolonged studies and lack of financial resources.
3. The Assembly considers that it is important to remove these obstacles and to provide students with more opportunities to develop competences that are essential in a globalised economic environment and a positive attitude to diversity in a multicultural society.
4. The Assembly therefore calls on Council of Europe member States to review their policies and practices to enhance student mobility as follows:
 - 4.1. address factors that influence decisions to enter mobility programmes by improving personal perception, social influence and the institutional capacity of European universities and by organising public awareness campaigns on the positive impact of student mobility;
 - 4.2. increase availability of student funding and portability of student support, and in particular:
 - 4.2.1. sign and ratify the European Agreement on Continued Payment of Scholarships to Students Studying Abroad (ETS No. 69), and enhance its implementation;
 - 4.2.2. develop scholarship or grant schemes, paying attention to social, academic and geographical criteria and bearing in mind the principles of equality of opportunities and non-discrimination;
 - 4.2.3. take into consideration the standard of living and the real living costs in the host country when taking decisions regarding the amount of financial support to be provided;
 - 4.2.4. guarantee students participating in credit- and full-degree mobility the full amount of financial support provided for domestic students;
 - 4.2.5. encourage private business support for student mobility;
 - 4.3. improve recognition of learning outcomes, and in particular:
 - 4.3.1. sign and ratify the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (ETS No. 165), and enhance its implementation;
 - 4.3.2. implement the Bologna Process structural reforms, including the three-cycle degree system and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), aligning national qualifications frameworks with the Quality Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).
 - 4.3.3. evaluate recognition policies and practice at national level and participate in external quality assurance processes;
 - 4.3.4. reduce the bureaucratic burden as regards recognition of qualifications for both the State and the student;
 - 4.4. streamline administrative procedures that have an impact on student mobility – visas, social cover and residence and work permits –, and in particular:
 - 4.4.1. abolish visa fees for students enrolled in mobility programmes, and reduce the response time to applications;
 - 4.4.2. issue residence permits in a timely manner for the full period of any granted visa;
 - 4.4.3. take measures, in co-ordination with other countries, to remove administrative barriers related to the application of different social security systems and double taxation;

2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 5 December 2014

- 4.5. develop and implement policy measures to encourage the return of graduates to their home countries after taking part in student mobility programmes, to prevent the brain drain; facilitate, in particular, their access to employment, recognising student mobility as an added value.
5. With due regard to the fundamental values of academic freedom and university autonomy, the Assembly calls on higher education institutions to promote student mobility and, to that effect, to:
 - 5.1. raise students' interest and motivation, by explaining the benefits of mobility for personal fulfilment and development of personal identity, and recognise and attach more value to international student mobility;
 - 5.2. provide clear information to students about academic mobility programmes, such as the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, including on financial support they could obtain, study programmes for degree and credit mobility, requirements for accessing such programmes, application procedure, administrative procedure; offer advice and assistance to students for the submission of their applications;
 - 5.3. include international student mobility as part of university courses rather than just as an extra-curricular possibility; promote mobility as part of integrated courses, allowing students to study in partner universities on an alternating basis;
 - 5.4. provide joint degrees and promote them among the student population;
 - 5.5. provide foreign language courses and self-learning opportunities for mobile students, and offer courses taught in a language other than that of the country of residence; encourage students who take part in the Erasmus+ Programme to take full advantage of its Online Linguistic Support programme;
 - 5.6. develop training schemes for teaching staff in partner universities and provide information platforms and tools for understanding marking systems so as to simplify the conversion of ECTS credits;
 - 5.7. promote positive peer influence by developing sponsorship programmes between incoming and outgoing students; strengthen family support and the involvement of students on and off the campus.
6. The Assembly calls on the European Union to consider modalities for the possible participation in this programme of students from European countries currently not covered by Erasmus+, in particular from Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and Switzerland.

B. Draft recommendation³

1. The Parliamentary Assembly, referring to its Resolution (2015)... on student mobility, underlines the value of international student mobility as one of the key objectives of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and considers that the Council of Europe should play a greater role in encouraging the adoption of measures to foster student mobility.
2. The Assembly therefore invites the Committee of Ministers:
 - 2.1. to instruct the Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE), through its informal ad hoc working group on higher education issues to:
 - 2.1.1. develop guidelines and identify measures to remove obstacles to student mobility, including those regarding visas, social cover and residence and work permits;
 - 2.1.2. encourage the harmonisation of administrative procedures that have an impact on student mobility and to share good practice;
 - 2.1.3. make proposals for strengthening the action of ENIC-NARIC centres and networks (European Network of Information Centres in the European Region and National Academic Recognition Centres in the European Union);
 - 2.1.4. consider a revision of the European Agreement on Continued Payment of Scholarships to Students Studying Abroad (ETS No. 69), with a view to introducing new measures for financial support and new recommendations that take into account the current trends in Europe.

3. Draft recommendation adopted unanimously by the committee on 5 December 2014

C. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Barilaro, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. On 30 September 2013, the Parliamentary Assembly referred to our committee for report the motion for a resolution on “Student mobility” which I had tabled with twenty other colleagues.⁴ I was appointed rapporteur on 3 October 2013. On 10 April 2014 in Strasbourg, the Sub-Committee on Education, Youth and Sport held an exchange of views with Ms Erin Nordal, Member of the Executive Committee of the European Students Union. On 4 June 2014 in Paris, the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media held an exchange of views with Ms Fatou Estéoule, Head of the International Relations Office of the University Paris Diderot and member of the Bureau of International Relations in Higher Education (RI Sup) Network, and Mr David Crosier, Co-ordinating Author, Eurydice. On 31 October 2014, I met with Ms Vanessa Debiais-Sainton, Head of Sector, Erasmus+ Higher Education, and Ms Ragnhild Solvi Berg, Policy Officer, International co-operation, Higher Education in the World, Erasmus+, at the Directorate General for Education and Culture, European Commission. On 24 November 2014, I met with Mr Jean-Philippe Restoueix, Head of Higher Education and Qualifications Unit, Education Department, Council of Europe.

2. Student mobility is defined as any academic mobility which takes place within a student’s programme of study in post-secondary education.⁵ The scope of my report will be slightly different for two reasons. On the one hand, it will focus only on the “international” mobility of students in post-secondary education programmes (i.e. university), thus excluding mobility between institutions of a country, but including also the mobility of postgraduate students and young researchers in Masters and PhD programmes, primarily within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).⁶

3. There are two types of international post-secondary student mobility: degree and credit mobility. With “degree mobility”, students are completing a full programme of studies abroad. Consequently, they are earning a full diploma from the university where they have completed their studies. Most often this type of mobility is used by students in the second and third cycles of their higher education.

4. In “credit mobility”, students complete, most frequently, one semester or one year of studies outside their home university. When they complete the programme, they earn credits from the courses that they have finished in the host university. Those credits should be transferred to and recognised by their home university. Transferability of credits is enhanced by the implementation of the requirements of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), including its Diploma Supplement.

5. “Credit mobility” can take place in an organised manner through “joint degree” programmes, where universities from different countries sign co-operation agreements that specify student exchange conditions.

6. Mobility of postgraduate students and young researchers was until recently a marginal phenomenon in quantitative terms. These students need specific support, including, for instance, access to industrial equipment or targeted funding (including from the private sector) for their research. New opportunities are created through the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, for example through the new Marie Curie Action or Master Student Loan Guarantee facility (see Chapter 4 below).

7. In the following sections, I will highlight the benefits of international student mobility, present the current mobility flows and trends, and consider the existing barriers to student mobility with an aim to identifying measures which could improve the quality of mobility programmes and increase the number of students using such programmes. The overall goal is to encourage national decision-makers to reconsider their action (or lack of action) in this respect and to develop a more strategic approach. The design of coherent national strategies on “student mobility” is indeed a necessity within the wider framework of higher education reform processes (intended to enhance the quality of higher education and the competitiveness of the national overall economic system). This would also support the implementation of the 2012 Bucharest Communiqué, which states that in 2020 at least 20% of those graduating in the EHEA should have had a study or training period abroad.⁷

4. [Doc. 13283](#), Reference 4002.

5. “Student mobility and credit transfer”, *A National and Global Survey*, Sean Junor and Alex Usher, 2008.

6. The report will not address issues relating to the mobility of groups of population such as migrants, refugees or displaced persons.

7. Bucharest communiqué, “Making the Most of Our Potential Consolidating the European Higher Education Area”, Bucharest, 2012.

2. Benefits of academic mobility

8. Student mobility is one of the main goals of the Bologna Process establishing the EHEA. The reason is that it is highly beneficial both for students and universities. But it also benefits States and Europe as a whole.

2.1. For students

9. Academic mobility has a positive impact on the personal development of those involved.⁸ Research shows that mobility impacts on the development of the student's identity. Living in another country for some time helps students build up a better understanding of diversity and the capacity to co-operate with people of different cultural backgrounds. As Jeffrey F. Milem put it in his recent study, "[s]tudents benefit significantly from education that takes place within a diverse setting. In the course of their university education, students encounter and learn from others who have backgrounds and characteristics very different from their own. As we seek to prepare students for life in the twenty-first century, the educational value of such encounters will become more important, not less, than in the past".⁹

10. Mobility equips students with a wide range of competences and skills which are increasingly valued by employers – from foreign languages¹⁰ and greater intercultural awareness, to open-mindedness and tolerance, curiosity and problem-solving skills, quick adaptability to change and an entrepreneurial mindset. Such skills and competences do not only serve the labour market and the wider European economy, but also contribute more broadly to developing active and engaged European citizens, contributing to a holistic education for Europe's youth. In general, research shows that academic mobility encourages the employability of students who feel more confident to search for jobs abroad and who consider obstacles for labour mobility less important than their non-mobile peers.¹¹

11. The Erasmus Impact Study¹² – a new study on the impact of the European Union's Erasmus student exchange programme, delivered in September 2014 – confirms that young people who study or train abroad strengthen key transversal skills which are highly valued on the job market. It also shows that graduates with international experience are half as likely to experience long-term unemployment compared with the others and, five years after graduation, their unemployment rate is 23% lower; they can also expect greater professional responsibility and faster career advancement.

12. Finally, academic mobility increases the size of social networks of European young people, which can enhance the possibilities of finding a job in Europe through connections gained during the exchange.¹³ Again, the Erasmus Impact Study points out that international studies also offer students broader horizons and social links, make it easier for them to envisage moving abroad and double the number of those who change their country of residence or work at least once after graduation.

2.2. For universities

13. International student mobility brings valuable experience for progress to the universities which participate in the process. Student and academic staff exchanges deconstruct the stereotypes and help build bridges between the different academic cultures. This also facilitates the exchange of good practices between academic institutions. Diversity in the educational process improves the quality of education overall. These are the reasons why the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (ETS No. 165, "Lisbon Recognition Convention") clearly states that

8. Student mobility and European Identity: Erasmus Study as a civic experience?, K. Mitchell, *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 8 (4), pp. 490-518, 2012.

9. The Educational Benefits of Diversity: Evidence from Multiple Sectors, Jeffrey F. Milem, University of Maryland.

10. The recent study of the International Exchange Erasmus Student Network, "International Experience and Language Learning", found that students generally improve the language of tuition after their stay abroad. This is particularly true for English (34%), German (43.7%), French (61.9%), Spanish (68.3%) and Italian (75.8%). See "International Experience and Language Learning", Research report of the ESNSurvey 2014, Jesús Escrivá Muñoz (ed.), Emanuel Alfranseder, Paula Danciu, Julia Fellingner, Roberta Piscone, Sandra Rimavičiūtė and Jurgita Stasiukaiytė, http://esn.org/sites/default/files/ESNSurvey2014_WEB.pdf.

11. "Exchange, employment and added value", Research report of the ESNSurvey 2011, Emanuel Alfranseder (ed.), Jesús Escrivá, Julia Fellingner, Aimee Haley, Asror Nigmonov and Marge Taivere, http://esn.org/sites/default/files/esnsurvey2011_web.pdf.

12. http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf.

13. "Creating ideas, opportunities and identity", Research report of the ESNSurvey 2013, Julia Fellingner (ed.), Jesús Escrivá, Eleni Kalantzi, Karina Oborune and Jurgita Stasiukaiyte, http://esn.org/sites/default/files/ESNSurvey2013_WEB.pdf.

higher education “should be designed to enable all people of the region to benefit fully from this rich asset of diversity by facilitating access by the inhabitants of each State and by the students of each Party’s educational institutions to the educational resources of the other Parties”.

14. Incoming mobility also has a positive effect on local students who might not have the possibility to go abroad. The presence of international students immerses local students in an international environment which allows them to develop similar skills to those which exchange students obtain. This is known as “internationalisation at home”.

2.3. For States

15. International student mobility embraces several different dimensions – political, social, economic, as well as academic and cultural¹⁴ – and has a major impact on the developments in all these areas. It helps develop a highly skilled labour force and gradually modernise the education systems. Academic competences and language skills acquired through mobility help young people find jobs in the modern labour market, boost job prospects and encourage job mobility later in life. Thus, international student mobility can contribute to the economic development, and to the economic stability, of the countries concerned.

16. This also applies to host countries. The latter charge to foreign students the costs (in full or partially) inherent to the provision of places of study, accommodation and advisory services. They also benefit from the presence of these students. According to the research conducted by the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst e.V. – DAAD), economies of host countries benefit significantly from value creation resulting from student mobility and, in particular, from positive macro-economic effects of job creation and revenues accruing to the State.¹⁵

2.4. For Europe

17. International student mobility is a powerful tool for enhancing intercultural understanding in Europe. It was found that Erasmus students were more interested in other European countries and in other European peoples and cultures than non-mobile students. The experience of studying in another country made them feel more European.¹⁶ Student mobility breaks the stereotypes and prejudices as regards other cultures and nationalities, and provides a solid basis for intercultural understanding. Moreover, by contributing to the economic development of European countries, it strengthens Europe’s economic position at global level. Student mobility, overall, plays a vital role in promoting peace, mutual understanding and tolerance and in creating mutual confidence among peoples and nations, which is one of the major goals of European construction.¹⁷

3. International student mobility trends and flows

3.1. International student mobility flows in Europe

18. The statistical data presented below refer to international degree mobility. Credit mobility, including participation in joint degree programmes, is not covered.

19. Although the Erasmus+ statistics show that mobility is increasing, it is important to keep in mind that international mobility seems currently to be a relatively minor phenomenon on the European continent.¹⁸

20. When reporting on incoming degree mobility, all but two countries (Austria and Switzerland) had shown an incoming degree mobility rate of less than 10% of the total number of students enrolled, with the majority of countries reporting incoming mobility below 5% of the total number of students enrolled (this study refers to the academic year 2008-2009).¹⁹

14. Berlin Communiqué, “Realising the European Higher Education Area”.

15. The Financial Impact of Cross-border Student Mobility on the Economy of the Host Country, C. Münch and M. Hoch, Berlin, November 2013.

16. Ibid.

17. Lisbon Recognition Convention.

18. The EU Erasmus+ Programme is designed to be implemented in the period 2014-2020 with an overall budget of €14.7 billion, which is a 40% increase compared to current spending levels. It aims to provide opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad. Erasmus+ will support transnational partnerships among education, training, and youth institutions and organisations to foster co-operation and facilitate access to employment by tackling the skills gaps in Europe.

21. Based on Eurostat data (2008-2009 academic year), the average number of students studying in the EHEA coming from abroad reaches slightly less than 4% of the total number of students enrolled (degree mobility only). It should be kept in mind that many countries only provide data on students with foreign citizenship/nationality.²⁰

22. The same study shows that:

- as regards incoming mobility, only the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Austria received more than 50 000 incoming students. Italy, Russia, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Spain had between 50 000 and 25 000 incoming students. Twenty-six countries had less than 25 000;
- as regards outgoing mobility, with more than 75 500 students, Germany has the greatest share of outgoing mobility. It is followed by France and Russia with more than 30 000 outgoing students and Ukraine, Italy, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Greece with more than 22 500 outgoing students.

23. The Erasmus Programme of the European Union has contributed to a large extent to the increase in the number of students studying abroad. In the 2012/2013 academic year, 268 143 students went to another European country to study in 33 Erasmus Programme Countries,²¹ covering roughly 5% of all students in these countries. This year was also marked by a key milestone: the 3 millionth student went abroad to study since the launch of the Erasmus Programme in 1987. The number of Erasmus students more than doubled since it was launched. Besides high student interest, this growth is a result of the increased number of countries taking part in the programme and overall growth of the Erasmus budget. The European Students Union (ESU) noted, however, that students from lower income families have fewer possibilities to study abroad. Therefore, students from these categories have rarely an opportunity to upgrade their education with studies abroad.

24. Smaller countries and countries which are not EU member States do not have a large number of students engaging in incoming and outgoing mobility. Concerning smaller countries, this is of course a direct consequence of their population size and of the reduced overall capacity of their university structures. In Luxembourg, in the academic year 2011/2012, only 424 students used the Erasmus Programme (namely 7.25% of the total number of students in the country that year), followed by 400 students in 2012/2013. For the same academic year in Liechtenstein, only 21 students used the Erasmus programme (namely 3.86% of the total number of students), followed by 23 students in 2012/2013.²² The statistical data should however be understood also in relative terms. For example, comparatively, in Spain for the same academic years, there were 38 553 students who used the Erasmus programme, which however represent only 1.86% of the total student population in Spain.²³ Spain is the largest sending country with 33 548 students who went to study abroad in 2012/2013, and also the most popular destination, receiving about 40 000 students the same year. The other popular destinations include Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Italy.

25. In the new Erasmus+ Programme, all participating Programme Country organisations (both sending and receiving) must be higher education institutions which have been awarded the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE). Every year, the European Commission – via the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency – publishes a specific call for proposals that sets the detailed conditions to be followed and qualitative criteria to be met in order to be awarded the ECHE.

26. The international component of Erasmus+, which includes international credit mobility of individuals and Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees, allows for greater mobility for students and staff to and from Partner Countries²⁴ worldwide, at all levels of higher education. All Partner Country organisations must be higher education institutions accredited by the relevant national accreditation organisation and have signed inter-

19. This refers to mobility between EHEA member States.

20. The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report (data source: Eurostat).

21. The Programme Countries include the 28 EU member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey; See “Erasmus – Facts, Figures and Trends. The European Union support for student and staff exchanges and university cooperation in 2012-2013”.

22. *ibid.*

23. “On the way to Erasmus+ – A statistical overview of the Erasmus Programme in 2011-2012”, European Commission, November 2013.

24. The following countries are listed as Partner Countries for the student mobility component of the Erasmus+ Programme: *Western Balkans (Region 1)*: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* (*All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo), Montenegro, Serbia; *Eastern Partnership countries (Region 2)*: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Territory of Ukraine as recognised by international law; *South-Mediterranean countries (Region 3)*: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine (This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the

institutional agreements which encapsulate the principles of the ECHE, with their Programme Country partners before the mobility takes place. These inter-institutional agreements also facilitate the recognition of qualifications.

27. The value of student mobility is highly recognised in Monaco. The government underlines the importance of encouraging young people to gain experience abroad. One example is the Youth Mobility Scheme, which makes it possible for young Monaco nationals aged from 18 to 30 to benefit from a visa allowing them entry to the United Kingdom for a maximum period of two years, to gain professional experience.²⁵

28. Monaco Universities cannot, however, provide programmes that will satisfy every Monegasque student's interest to enter higher education. More precisely, Monaco has one university – the International University of Monaco – offering a degree in management, finance, science and business, and two others, the “Ecole supérieure d’arts plastiques” for art and dance, and the “Institut de formation en soins infirmiers” for nursing. Countries such as Luxembourg and Liechtenstein are in a similar situation: they have only one university each, which does not offer provisions in all subject areas. This is the reason why student mobility becomes so important for smaller countries.

29. Overall, in Europe, the flow of students between the countries is imbalanced, with significant differences between the mobility flows in the European Union and mobility flows in non-EU countries. The general tendency of movement is from the eastern part of Europe to the western part.

30. Inside the EHEA, in the 2008/2009 academic year, the difference between incoming and outgoing mobility was the highest in Cyprus, the United Kingdom and Austria.

31. In Cyprus, there were about 7.5 times more students leaving the country to study abroad (12 191 students) than foreign students coming from abroad (1 615 students).

32. Similar differences in favour of outward mobility occur in Iceland (incoming: 613; outgoing: 2 120), Ireland (incoming: 5 079; outgoing: 16 751), Malta (incoming: 257; outgoing: 1 076), Republic of Moldova (incoming: 797; outgoing: 12 028), Slovak Republic (incoming: 5 545; outgoing 27 434).

33. The phenomenon of the imbalanced flow of students between countries is often coupled with another one: a significantly larger amount of students and researchers leaving their country of origin and settling to work in the host country compared to the number of incoming students who stay. This is often referred to as the “brain drain”.

34. As opposed to Cyprus, in the United Kingdom there were about 13.6 times more students who came to study from abroad (130 203 students) compared to the number of students leaving the country (9 539 students).

35. In Austria, there were about 5.5 times more students who came to study from abroad (52 191 students) compared to the number of students leaving the country (9 450 students), and in Switzerland, there were, respectively, 25 500 incoming and 8 488 outgoing students.

36. Most of the countries (17 countries) with more incoming than outgoing students are counted as “attractive countries” for higher education. There is a significant group of countries that have low level of outgoing mobility and an even lower number of incoming students, a tendency which indicates an inferior degree of attractiveness of these countries’ higher education institutions to foreign students. This group of countries includes Croatia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Turkey, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Armenia, and Ukraine.²⁶ Balancing mobility flows across the continent is one of the greatest challenges as regards student mobility.

37. The process of decision-making for studying abroad is influenced by several factors, including personal, social and institutional ones. The personal factors weigh more heavily in affecting the students’ attitude and decision. The most significant personal factors are:

- student’s drive and motivations;
- perceived outcomes of personal growth through study abroad;

individual positions of the EU Member States on this issue), Syria, Tunisia; *Russian Federation (Region 4)*: Territory of Russia as recognised by international law. See the Erasmus+ Programme Guide: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf.

25. See the Monaco government’s website, <http://en.gouv.mc/Policy-Practice/Youth/Time-spent-abroad-a-valuable-asset>.

26. The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report (data source: Eurostat).

- personal identity.
38. The most significant social factors are:
- influence of peers/significant others;
 - the opinion of past participants in exchange programmes;
 - family/cultural support;
 - student engagement on and off campus.
39. Lastly, the most noteworthy institutional factors influencing their decision were effective marketing/outreach, study abroad promoted in campus/university culture, variety of programmes on offer, and effective advice.²⁷

3.2. International student mobility flows from and to Europe

40. An important element which should be considered further is the question of the international student mobility flows from and to Europe, in particular the incoming and outgoing flows between Europe and the United States and between Europe and Asian countries.
41. At global level, the United States and western European countries are the main recipients of foreign students, while Asian countries have the greatest prevalence of outgoing students. In 2012, China had 694 400 students studying abroad, followed by India with 189 500 and Republic of Korea with 123 700 students studying abroad. In Europe, Germany with 117 600 students and France with 62 400 students had the greatest number of students studying abroad.²⁸
42. According to 2012 data, the United States welcomes 18% of the total number of mobile students in the world, followed by the United Kingdom with 11%, France with 7%, Australia 6%, Germany 5% and the Russian Federation 4%.
43. The majority of the international student population in Europe is coming from non-EU member countries. For example, in the United Kingdom, the greatest numbers of students are coming from China, India and Nigeria; in France from Morocco, China, Algeria and Tunisia; in Germany from China, Turkey and the Russian Federation; and in Austria a great number of incoming students are from Turkey.
44. When students from the United States want to study abroad, most frequently they go to EU member States (United Kingdom, Germany and France), and when students from Europe want to study out of the continent they go most often to the United States.
45. The European Commission supports mobility between the European Union and the United States through the EU ATLANTIS Programme, which supports consortia of higher education and training institutions working together at undergraduate or graduate level to improve their educational services, to compare and modernise curricula and to develop joint study programmes with full recognition of credits and qualifications.²⁹
46. In addition to mobility programmes, universities or even countries sign co-operation agreements allowing students to study abroad. For example the Australian Government has a contract for recognition of qualifications with France, Spain and the United Kingdom.³⁰ Universities or faculties can also establish direct co-operation with universities or faculties from other countries. MICEFA – *Mission Interuniversitaire de Coordination des échanges franco-américains* – is an example of such a consortium, which includes most of

27. When analysing what lies behind a student's choice to study abroad, social life motivation was highlighted as one of the main determinants. See: "Study Abroad Motivations, Destination Selection and Pre-Trip Attitude Formation", Gyan P. Nyaupane, Cody Morris Paris and Victor Teye.

28. Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students, UNESCO Institute of Statistics: www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-student-flow-viz.aspx.

29. EU-USA Atlantis Programme: Bilateral cooperation in higher education: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/bilateral_cooperation/eu_us/programme/about_eu_usa_en.php#intro.

30. Universities of Australia: International Cooperation and Agreements: <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/global-engagement/international-collaboration/international-agreements-and-agreements#U5dsnvmSzgA>; and Cooperation with universities in the United Kingdom: <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/global-engagement/international-collaboration/international-agreements-and-activities/Engagement-with-the-UK>.

the universities of Paris and its region. It was created in 1985 to promote cultural and scientific co-operation between France and anglophone North America, and has 80 university partners from the United States and Canada.³¹

47. However, there are considerable differences in higher education in the United States and in Europe, which affect the exchange programmes between EHEA universities and those in the United States. When it comes to the use of joint and double degrees between the European Union and the United States, a survey found that there were several challenges, such as issuing certificates in co-operation with foreign institutions, or different practices regarding subjects studied and degrees delivered.³²

48. Educational opportunities (or lack thereof) are an important factor driving outward flows of PhD students. Studies that tend to explain what influences international students mobility stress that the quality of the host country university system, measured by the relative impact of a country's scientific publications, and especially the number of universities a country has in the top 200 of the Shanghai ranking are factors that determine the size and direction of student mobility flows in a sample of 31 European countries. For the mobility patterns of students in advanced research studies (doctoral students for example), the quality is heavily correlated with the university ranking. For example, as many British universities appear in "The Times Education Supplement" ranking, the United Kingdom becomes a dominant destination country for PhD students (the so-called "UK effect").

49. Removing barriers to student mobility in Europe could have a positive effect on improving the quality of universities. This in turn will have a positive impact on international flows of tertiary students, since they are significantly guided by quality considerations.

4. Obstacles to international student mobility

50. There are several elements which may act as barriers to mobility, such as lack of recognition of learning outcomes, lack of financial support and access to information on student mobility, or burdensome administrative procedures – in particular regarding visas, social security coverage and residence/work permits. The European Students Union (ESU) stressed that "mobility remains an opportunity for the few and the elite, as problems related especially to funding and recognition have only haphazardly been tackled".³³

4.1. Lack of funding and low portability of student support

51. From the perspective of students and their representatives, such as the ESU, lack of financial resources is the biggest obstacle to student mobility (additional financial burden associated with a foreign enrolment period, loss of opportunities to earn money, loss of social benefits and problems with accommodation in the home country), and this is even more so for students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. The Eurostudent study in 2009/2010 showed that in Croatia, Ireland, Malta, Poland, Estonia and Turkey over 70% of students cited finance issues as the main obstacle.³⁴ Similar conclusions were brought by a survey conducted by Vossensteyen et al. (2010), where 57% of non-Erasmus students say that studying abroad is too expensive to consider³⁵ and 29% of students reject Erasmus after consideration because the grant provided is insufficient to cover incurred costs.³⁶

52. Living expenses and housing costs are important cost components of foreign education.³⁷ They have a major impact on the enrolment of foreign students. Therefore, a factor that affects mobility flows is living cost differences. Regional imbalances in mobility are deepened by a lack of support to cover the changes in living costs while students are abroad, especially when students travel to countries with higher living costs than those in their home country.

31. "Mission Interuniversitaire de Coordination des échanges franco-américains": <http://micefa.org/>.

32. Kudey Matthias and Obst Daniel (2009), *Joint and Double Degree programmes in the Transatlantic Context: A Survey Report*, Freie Universität Berlin and Institute of International Education.

33. "Bologna with Student Eyes 2012", European Students Union, project coordination and editing: Magnus Malnes, Nevena Vuksanovic and Mari Simola, Brussels, April 2012.

34. "Short-term mobility and mobility obstacles", Eurostudent, 2009/2010.

35. This was confirmed more recently by the Research report "International Experience and Language Learning" of the ESNSurvey 2014, Jesús Escrivá Muñoz (ed.), Emanuel Alfranseder, Paula Danciu, Julia Fellingner, Roberta Piscione, Sandra Rimavičiūtė and Jurgita Stasiukaitytė, http://esn.org/sites/default/files/ESNSurvey2014_WEB.pdf.

36. "Improving the participation in the Erasmus Programme", by J.J. Vossensteyn, M. Beerkens et al., Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS), 2010, Report prepared for the European Parliament.

37. Study on the use of credit systems in higher education cooperation between the EU and the US, October 2011. www.ab.gov.tr/files/ardb/evt/1_avrupa_birligi/1_9_politikalar/1_9_4_egitim_politikasi/us_en.pdf.

53. The 2012 Bologna Process Implementation Report confirms that the biggest obstacle for obtaining mobility is funding. The report analysed several financial measures available in the countries and described the financial practices for mobility used in each country, such as encompassing grants and scholarships and loans. In the 2011/2012 academic year, less than half of the countries implemented financial support measures in the form of loans for outward students³⁸ in credit and degree mobility and only a few did so for incoming students. Around two thirds of countries provided grants and scholarships for both outward and incoming students for degree mobility.³⁹

54. Scholarships, grants and loans are the most frequently used financial measures.⁴⁰ Only Austria, Belgium (Flemish Community), Germany and Hungary provide other measures for degree mobility. Scholarships are used more than loans. Twenty-seven Council of Europe member States provide scholarships or grants for incoming degree mobility and 23 for credit incoming mobility. Support for outgoing mobility is slightly higher: 27 countries provide grants and scholarships for outgoing degree mobility and 30 for outgoing credit mobility.

55. As regards student loans, only seven countries provide loans for incoming degree mobility and only two for incoming credit mobility. Countries prefer to offer loans to support outgoing mobility of national students. More precisely, 22 countries provide public loans for outgoing degree mobility and 19 for outgoing credit mobility. Monaco (which was not part of the Bologna Process Implementation Report) voted on 11 June 2014 a new Law on the establishment of State financial aid to support the provision of student loans.⁴¹ This law states explicitly that State aid to student loans may be awarded for the preparation of competitions for education and development in disciplines directly linked to public service, economy, maintaining and increasing the influence of Monaco in the artistic, intellectual and scientific fields or for job categories where there is an insufficient number of job-holders, as well as for learning a language of wider communication by studying in a foreign country.

56. I welcome the decision to establish a Master Student Loan Guarantee facility within the Erasmus+ Programme.⁴² This facility is intended to enable young people to gain access to loans to support their studies abroad over the lifetime of the Erasmus+ Programme. The EU budget allocation will leverage financing from the banking sector for loans to mobile masters students.

57. The facility will provide a partial guarantee against loan defaults for banks or student loan agencies in participating Programme Countries. The EU partial guarantee will thus mitigate risk for financial institutions lending to a group they currently do not consider. In return for access to the partial guarantee, banks will be required to offer loans at affordable conditions to mobile students, including better than market interest rates and for up to two years to allow graduates to get into a job before beginning repayment. The management of the facility at EU level will be entrusted to the European Investment Fund, which is part of the European Investment Bank.

58. Beside these financial measures, tuition fees have a big impact on student mobility. Only 15 member States have the same tuition fees for home students and for international students.⁴³ Others have higher tuition fees for international students.

59. Indeed, enabling incoming students to work part-time can help them finance their studies in a country other than their own, dealing with financial problems in a better way. In Norway, for example, students from the European Union can work part-time for up to 20 hours per week, for up to three months, without a work permit. When students from the European Union are granted a student residence permit they are automatically awarded a work permit for part-time work. Students from outside the European Union can apply for a part-time work permit as well. The difference is that the non-EU students are not awarded a part-time

38. In France, for example, financial support programmes were mainly aimed at domestic students whose place of residence was in their home country.

39. The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report: [www.ehea.info/Uploads/\(1\)/Bologna%20Process%20Implementation%20Report.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/(1)/Bologna%20Process%20Implementation%20Report.pdf).

40. Ibid.

41. Text available on the website of the National Council of Monaco (in French): www.conseil-national.mc/index.php/textes-et-lois/propositions-de-loi/item/317-212-proposition-de-loi-portant-creation-d-une-aide-financiere-de-l-etat-aux-prets-etudiants.

42. See "Erasmus+ Programme Guide", version 3, 14 November 2014.

43. EU member States define "international students" as every nationality outside the European Union, and countries which are not EU member States, refer to "international students" for every other nationality except their own.

work permit automatically – they have to submit a statement from their higher education institution confirming that the work will not affect their studies and a letter from the employer stating that the student has a job offer.⁴⁴

60. In France, students that have a student visa can apply for a temporary work permit, which will give them the right to work for a limited number of hours per week. However, students must fulfil the financial requirements (a monthly financial guarantee of approximately €526) in order to be eligible to apply for a student visa.⁴⁵ French law authorises students to work a maximum of 964 hours a year, namely about 20 hours per week.⁴⁶ In Russia, every foreign student who enrolls for studies in a Russian university can get legal employment on the basis of his/her student visa.⁴⁷

61. Through the Bologna Process, ministers of the EHEA have agreed to the full portability of student support for both credit- and full-degree mobility since 2005,⁴⁸ meaning that grant and/or loans for credit and degree mobility are subject to equivalent requirements if students study in the home country or abroad. However, full portability is possible in only some of the 33 countries analysed (German and Flemish communities of Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Slovenia). In other countries either there was no portability (public grants and/or loans were only provided if students studied in the home country, or in exceptional cases), or there was no significant student support that could be portable (less than 10% of students receive potentially portable student support – Walloon Community of Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Latvia, Malta, Romania, Slovak Republic).⁴⁹ Most countries have yet to make this a reality. Student mobility will increase if countries guarantee students participating in credit- and full-degree mobility the full amount of financial support provided for domestic students.

62. Besides the problem of low portability, students receive inadequate support to cover the costs associated with living abroad. Surveys conducted among ESU member unions say that there is not even one country where students who are studying abroad are not facing problems related to their studying and living expenses.⁵⁰ Many students rely on support from their parents to cover costs.

63. Countries and higher education institutions exploit mobility and internationalisation by using it as a source of revenue or by perceiving it from a financial perspective. This is done through charging tuition fees for third-country nationals (outside of the EU/EEA-area) and in some cases for students within the EU/EEA-area. By charging several times higher tuition fees for students out of the European Union, European universities limit access to higher education programmes for non-EU students.

64. Tuition fees influence the level of mobility. For example, in Sweden, the number of international students from countries outside the EEA and Switzerland declined by almost 60%, from 10 234 in the fourth quarter of 2010 to 4 269 in the fourth quarter of 2011 after the introduction of tuition fees for foreign students.⁵¹

4.2. Difficulties with regard to recognition of qualifications

65. The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) has been in place for 25 years. One of the main goals of the ECTS is to provide academic mobility which brings consistency of learning outcomes in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), expands international study opportunities and contributes to the recognition of periods of study abroad. Improvement of student mobility is directly related to the implementation of the ECTS and at the consolidation of the European Higher Education Area overall. One should note, however, that the

44. www.studyinnorway.no/Study-in-Norway/Student-residence-permit/Working-permit-for-students.

45. <http://french.about.com/od/travelfrance/a/liveworkinfrance.htm>.

46. www.en.u-pec.fr/working-in-france-473540.kjsp.

47. http://eeua.ru/news/detail_layout/127.

48. "Portability of student support" means portability of public grants (i.e. public financial support that does not need to be paid back) and loans. Portability entails the possibility for students to receive public grants and loans in another country on the same terms as when they study at home or to use loans received at home for studies abroad. Student grants and loans are portable in the Dutch and German-speaking parts of Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Luxembourg, Slovenia and Sweden. In contrast, student financial support systems are most restrictive in the French-speaking part of Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Lithuania, Romania and the Slovak Republic. See EU Press Release IP-14-9 of 10 January 2014, "EU Mobility Scoreboard: more effort needed to promote studies and training abroad for students".

49. Exchange of views with Mr David Crosier, Co-ordinating Author, Eurydice, Paris, 4 June 2014.

50. "Bologna with Student Eyes 2012", European Students Union, Project coordination and editing: Magnus Malnes, Nevena Vuksanovic and Mari Simola, Brussels, April 2012.

51. "Skills beyond Schools", Education indicators in focus, OECD, 2013.

implementation of the ECTS requires substantial effort and commitment by both sending and host universities. University administrators and professors should be better trained to apply the ECTS when their university takes part in exchange programmes.

66. The recognition of knowledge acquired through a student mobility programme, and of the qualifications received as a result, is the second most common obstacle, especially for outgoing students. The 2012 Bologna Process Implementation Report shows that difficulties with recognition of mobility periods are mentioned by only eight countries for incoming mobility but by 24 in connection with outward mobility. The most common concern for credit mobility is recognition while the most relevant obstacle to degree mobility is funding.⁵²

67. As regards credit mobility, only 73% of students receive full recognition of the credits successfully gained abroad and previously included in the Learning Agreement with the host university. 24% of the students receive only partial recognition for certain courses and almost 3% do not get any of their credits recognised. Moreover, 21.6% of the students had to repeat at least some (or in 3.6% all) of their courses and/or exams upon return, regardless of receiving or not full recognition of their studies abroad.⁵³ As far as full-degree mobility is concerned, 9% of students who have taken a full degree abroad encounter problems with regards to the recognition of their degree.

68. Foreign degree recognition issues occur particularly in connection with further education, State employment and regulated professions. Many students complain about long, and sometimes costly, administrative procedures for recognition. Tools such as the Lisbon Recognition Convention are not widely known amongst students and almost 50% of individuals who did not get their degree recognised indicate that they did not turn to potential support organisations, such as national students unions or NARICs.⁵⁴

69. It should also be mentioned that, according to a survey among the national unions of students in ESU since 2012, students either anticipate the absence from the home university or in many cases, for those who return from studies abroad, have to study for longer upon their return, because of the time spent studying abroad. This implies additional costs in the form of tuition fees and/or delayed entrance onto the labour market and the loss of income as a consequence.

70. According to the Berlin Communiqué, a Diploma Supplement describing, in English, the acquired qualifications should be issued free of charge to every student.⁵⁵ Although this recommendation was accepted by every country participating in the Bologna Process, many countries still do not issue Diploma Supplements to their students.

71. Thirty-six of the 47 Council of Europe member States issue a Diploma Supplement to more than 75% of the student population. These countries also issue Diploma Supplements in English and free of charge, following the recommendations of the Berlin Communiqué. In other countries, it is issued upon request, or not issued at all.⁵⁶

72. Only 17 member States monitor how higher education institutions use the Diploma Supplement and only 12 evaluate the recognition policy and practices in external quality assurance processes.

73. Another measure that supports the implementation of ECTS is the availability of joint degrees. In only 10 member States is the percentage of institutions that award joint degrees higher than 50%. These States include Denmark, Malta, Portugal and Switzerland, where between 50% and 75% of institutions award joint degrees. Unfortunately, this is not the case with the other countries members of EHEA. In six member States, the percentage of students who graduate with a joint degree (academic year 2009/10) is between 2.5% and 10%. In the other member States, this percentage is below 2.5%.

52. The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report.

53. Problems of recognition in making Erasmus (PRIME 2010) Study, Eren Dicle, Julia Fellinger, Luyedan Huang, Igor Kalinic, Justyna Piserá, Julia Trawińska and Edona Vinca: <http://esn.org/sites/default/files/ESN%20PRIME%20Booklet%202010%20Web.pdf>.

54. Automatic Recognition of Full Degrees, Erasmus Student Network AISBL, Emanuel Alfranseder, http://esn.org/sites/default/files/Automatic%20Recognition%20of%20Full%20Degrees_Final.pdf.

55. Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education, Berlin, 2003.

56. See for the implementation of ECTS measures and recommendations on recognition of qualifications: "The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report", [www.ehea.info/Uploads/\(1\)/Bologna%20Process%20Implementation%20Report.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/(1)/Bologna%20Process%20Implementation%20Report.pdf).

4.3. Language barriers

74. Language skills are one of the basic conditions for studying in a foreign country and therefore it is one of the most common barriers to student mobility. Twenty-five higher education systems identify insufficient knowledge of language by incoming students and 12 higher education systems do so for outward mobility. Around one third of countries provide language courses for outward and incoming students, and develop curricula/programmes in English or other foreign languages, including joint programme degrees.⁵⁷ In addition, the central role of the English language in higher education is not always taken into account. Without calling into question the goal of multilingualism and diversity in language learning, special attention to ensure widespread proficiency in the English language is needed to support student mobility.

75. The ability to speak foreign languages is also important for host university lecturers and other academic staff. Unfortunately, a significant number of academic staff representatives lack foreign language skills. Moreover, lecturers and academic staff cannot improve their knowledge of foreign languages by obtaining mobility in another country unless they enrol as students themselves. There are, in some cases, higher education institutions that provide foreign language courses for their outward staff and others that offer language courses for incoming staff. Nevertheless, while some countries highlight provision and financing of language courses as a challenge, others consider that language learning is a personal responsibility.

76. Some scholarship programmes provide language courses before the beginning of the studies abroad. In this way, students can learn the language and the culture of the host country where they are going to live. Such an example is the DAAD scholarship programme, which provides intensive German language courses for students who are enrolling for study programmes in German universities⁵⁸.

77. Also in the Czech Republic, where the number of foreign students increased recently, there are positive practices in terms of language policies. The Czech Republic provides free educational services to foreign students if they are enrolling in Czech language programmes. Besides that, they also provide a one-year paid language proficiency course, after which they are able to continue their studies in the Czech language.

78. The EU Erasmus+ Programme has financed specialised courses in the less widely used and taught languages for students going abroad as part of the programme, thus encouraging mobility from the north to the south and from the west to the east of Europe. Some 465 courses were organised in 26 countries in the 2012/2013 academic year, which represents an increase of 7% compared to the previous year. Overall, a total of nearly 55 000 Erasmus students have benefited from language courses prior to their study exchange or traineeship since 1999. In 2012/2013, 7 247 students participated in an intensive language course, which represents 2,7% of the total number of students participating in the programme. In addition, new language learning opportunities have been created, namely the Online Linguistic Support programme launched on 1 October 2014. It allows students who take part in Erasmus+ to assess and improve their language skills in six languages: English, Dutch, French, German, Italian and Spanish. National Agencies will implement this programme.⁵⁹

4.4. Heavy administrative procedures

79. Students, especially those from outside the European Union, are confronted with a number of administrative and legislative difficulties when they apply to study in another country. This is particularly the case of teaching assistants, who are postgraduate students and academic staff members at the same time. As regards academic staff mobility, which is an issue that needs to be addressed in a separate report, administrative procedure is quoted as the second most common obstacle, according to the 2012 Bologna Process Implementation Report. Legal difficulties are mostly related to the differences in the social security systems, double taxation in certain countries, along with immigration restrictions and difficulty in obtaining a visa (for non-EU countries).

80. To obtain a visa, students must prove that they have the sum required for their accommodation and subsistence for the whole period of their studies abroad. This request, though understandable, creates difficulties and, in many cases, prevents academic mobility. Students coming to the European Union from non-EU countries face additional difficulties in obtaining their visas. This includes high costs, long waiting times and appeal procedures, unclear instructions about the necessary supporting documents, and often incoherent and unclear information policies. Research from the Erasmus Student Network shows that, on

57. "The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report".

58. <https://www.daad.org/about>.

59. EU Erasmus+ Online Linguistic Support: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/online-linguistic-support_en.htm.

average, a person from a relatively poor non-EU Schengen country has to pay around €270 to obtain a visa.⁶⁰ The ongoing revision of the Visa Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, pupil exchange, remunerated and unremunerated training, voluntary service and au pairing is a key step in eliminating such barriers.⁶¹ For example, young people from Monaco who wish to study in the United Kingdom find it difficult to obtain a visa. Moreover, in the United Kingdom, school fees for EU nationals are lower than for non-EU nationals. Again, there could be reasons for such a difference, but it clearly hampers non-EU students.

81. Higher education institutions continue their dialogue with public authorities regarding immigration policy, and some countries have already adopted measures easing immigration restrictions for non-EU researchers and/or have regular reviews of such matters. Thorough implementation of the EU Scientific Visa Directive and its two accompanying recommendations (the so-called Scientific Visa Package) is an important step forward. It facilitates short and long stays (less than or more than three months) of researchers from third countries in the EU member States for the purpose of scientific research.

82. I would suggest taking into account other existing practices as regards visa arrangements. The current practice in the United States allows for specific arrangements for cultural exchange visas (type J). After the permitted stay, the expatriate is required to return home for a two-year period before applying for re-admittance to the United States. Also, some scholarships (Fulbright for example) that tend to promote development in less developed regions have similar regulations. A scholarship recipient is obliged to return to his/her home country after completing the studies, and cannot apply for a United States visa for the next two years.

83. In addition to visa requirements, some administrative procedures may be perceived as being an obstacle to mobility. These include procedures for obtaining a residence permit, allowing long-term stay in a given country. The Erasmus Student Network Research study on visas and residence permits shows that:

- obstacles most often mentioned are time-consuming, expensive and unclear rules and procedures;
- in general, respondents from the European Union and Schengen area need less documentation to prove they dispose of the financial means required to obtain a residence permit;
- the average price (fee only) of a residence permit is more than three times higher for citizens from outside the European Union and Schengen area (€167.20 for relatively poorer countries) compared to EU and Schengen area respondents (€54.90);
- on average, a person from a relatively poorer non-EU Schengen country has to pay €388.30 to obtain a residence permit, while EU and Schengen citizens only spend around €104.30, and richer non-EU Schengen States need €287.80;
- it takes substantially less time for EU/Schengen citizens to obtain a residence permit taking into account the whole process. More than 50% of applicants from relatively poorer countries outside the European Union and Schengen area need more than four weeks for the whole process.⁶²

4.5. Side effects of e-learning

84. The benefits of online courses and digital learning are widely recognised and their usage is rapidly increasing. In some cases, technological progress may be seen as taking away the need for mobility. The fact that universities are now offering distance-learning opportunities through Internet is used as an argument to prevent effective travelling abroad, saying that it allows universities to save resources in the current harsh economic climate. Indeed, having access to Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)⁶³ allows students in

60. Research study on visas and residence permits, Emanuel Alfranseder (ed.), Agnieszka Czarnojan, 2013, http://esn.org/sites/default/files/201310_Visas&ResidencePermit_Report.pdf.

61. See the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, pupil exchange, remunerated and unremunerated training, voluntary service and au pairing, (COM(2013)151final), http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/policies/immigration/study-or-training/docs/students_and_researchers_proposal_com_2013_151_en.pdf.

62. Research study on visas and residence permits, Emanuel Alfranseder (ed.), Agnieszka Czarnojan, 2013, http://esn.org/sites/default/files/201310_Visas&ResidencePermit_Report.pdf.

63. Online courses can be followed through Coursera (<https://www.coursera.org/>), Udacity (<https://www.udacity.com>), Udemy (<https://www.udemy.com/>), Harvard and MIT-backed non-profit MOOC provider edX (<https://www.edx.org/>) and e-learning companies Lynda.com (www.lynda.com/), Skillsoft (www.skillsoft.com/) and Pearson (http://labs.pearson.com/tag/mooc/?doing_wp_cron=1395422861.1303749084472656250000).

European universities to follow courses in highly reputable faculties in the United States, such as Harvard University or Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). However, online learning as a different type of education cannot replace the live learning approach in education. Although it contributes to accessibility of higher education, its impact is not the same as the impact of academic mobility on a student's life. E-learning cannot replace academic mobility and the benefits it brings. Intercultural experience and cultural diversity as a big element in education cannot be provided without direct contact and interactions between people.

4.6. Limited support from the private sector for student mobility

85. Although the public sector's role is crucial, the private sector can also help improve student mobility, even though such practices are yet to be developed in Europe. One of the main reasons for this is the fact that companies have incentives to finance education only if employees stay with them and for a certain period of time. These days the labour market is characterised by dynamic staff mobility. This phenomenon occurs as a result of the ambition for career development, but also as a result of the increased number of short contracts. These types of labour mobility create resistance among the companies against investing in student mobility. They fear that qualified workers will leave the company and they will not be able to reap the benefits of their investment.

86. However, there are several successful examples of this kind of support. The Singapore-Industry Scholarship (SgIS) is offered by some of the finest enterprises in Singapore's strategic sectors in collaboration with the Singapore Government. The scholarship is aimed at nurturing a strong core of Singapore talent with the requisite skills and capabilities to steer and contribute to these strategic sectors.⁶⁴

87. In Spain, private banks contribute to the promotion of mobility through regional networks or national-level programmes. Spanish students do not receive State loans to support them while studying. In 2008-2009, private funding for outward mobility amounted to €4.01 million (or 3% of all mobility funding), while local or State banks contributed a further €7.1 million (or 7.1%). Another means by which funding for mobility has been diversified is through mixed models involving business and government co-funding. Such examples are United States Fulbright scholarships and the Endeavour Cheung Kong Student Exchange Programme which is a partnership between a property investment company and the Australian Government.⁶⁵

4.7. The problem of the brain drain and other obstacles to mobility

88. Imbalanced mobility flow is related to the problem of brain drain and brain gain. On the one hand, the western part of Europe benefits from applications from a great number of young educated people, who want to develop and promote themselves; on the other hand, the eastern parts of Europe are faced with the problem of the brain drain, when the same highly educated young people are leaving their country of origin for good.

89. Public authorities may feel reluctant to promote outgoing international student mobility for fear of the brain drain. One cannot deny that the risk exists, but the benefits of international student mobility are so important that they compensate to a large extent the negative effects that may arise following an increase in academic mobility.

90. The other factor affecting mobility flows is the requirement of reciprocity. In some cases, student mobility develops based on agreements between countries or higher education institutions, which specify the terms of student exchange programmes. This, however, is not always possible. Large European countries (France, Germany, United Kingdom) cannot expect reciprocity of benefits with smaller countries such as Andorra, Liechtenstein and Luxembourg, due to the limited number of students that can be enrolled per year in the smaller countries.

91. As opposed to sending countries fearing the brain drain, the host countries often fear that students who come to study will stay and work in the host country. Overall, among the OECD countries with available data in 2008 and 2009, the stay rate is up to 25% and the large majority of countries see over 20% of students staying on. In Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic and France, the rate is more than 30%, thereby affecting the labour market.⁶⁶

64. www.moe.gov.sg/education/scholarships/#scholarships-private.

65. Recommendations to support UK Outward Student Mobility, March 2012: www.international.ac.uk/media/1515947/Recommendations%20to%20Support%20UK%20Outward%20Student%20Mobility.pdf.

66. Education indicators in focus, OECD, 2013.

92. Finally, there are difficulties in applying the principles of equality and non-discrimination as regards participation in mobility programmes. Disabled students, for example, are under-represented in mobility programmes. Often universities are not accessible for disabled students. There is only a limited number of initiatives which help foster international mobility for disabled students. One of these initiatives is the project “MapAbility”, which provides an overview of accessible universities that disabled students can be encouraged to attend. Several criteria are taken into account, from user-friendliness of university websites to the presence of a disability office and at least one suitable hall of residence. This is followed by an evaluation of the physical accessibility of each building on campus.⁶⁷

93. The Erasmus+ Programme actively supports the participation of students with special needs by offering a supplementary grant. The number of students with special needs taking part has increased in the past few years. In 2012-2013, 388 students with special needs received additional funding to participate in Erasmus, a 15% increase compared to 2011-2012.⁶⁸ These figures are still, however, quite low, which also shows the low level of access to higher education for students with special needs.

5. Steps forward: strategies for improving student mobility

94. Financial issues and personal ties are still major obstacles for students to become mobile. However, lack of information, fear of recognition problems, long bureaucratic procedures, doubts about the quality of studies abroad or the fear of prolonged studies still play a role in the minds of potential students. In addition, many countries lack a clear strategy and measures to balance mobility flows. Monitoring mechanisms as regards mobility flows were absent until now in many parts of Europe. Not all the countries that adopt programmes or measures to tackle obstacles to student mobility monitor their effects. Even those that undertake monitoring do so often in the framework of general statistical monitoring. Countries should analyse academic mobility and create strategies to tackle the concrete weakness in their respective higher education systems.

95. This situation is expected to improve in the European Union. A Mobility Scoreboard will monitor progress in this area by regularly assessing international student mobility based on five indicators: information and guidance on learning mobility, preparation of opportunities for learning mobility (namely foreign language skills), portability of public grants and publicly subsidised loans, recognition of learning outcomes, and mobility support provided to students from low socio-economic backgrounds.⁶⁹

96. The following paragraphs include the proposals I would put forward as elements to consider in order to improve student mobility in Europe.

5.1. Addressing the factors that influence decisions to enter mobility programmes

97. Several personal, social and institutional factors affect decisions to enter student mobility programmes.⁷⁰ The personal factors include the student’s interest and motivation, and the expected benefits of mobility for personal fulfilment and development of personal identity.

98. The social factors include peer influence, family support and the involvement of students on and off the campus, including sponsorship programmes between incoming and outgoing students.

99. The institutional factors include on-campus information campaigns, the promotion of study abroad as part of the university culture and the range of offers with international courses.

100. Improving personal perception, social influence and the institutional capacity of European universities will have a major impact on raising student mobility.

67. <http://dcr.coe.int/Wires/WiresLectureF.asp?WiresID=238896>.

68. See “Erasmus – Facts, Figures and Trends. The European Union support for student and staff exchanges and university cooperation in 2012-2013”.

69. See the summary of scoreboard indicators in Annex 1 of the Eurydice Report, “Towards a Mobility Scoreboard: Conditions for Learning Abroad in Europe”, 2013: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/162EN.pdf.

70. Exchange of views with Ms Fatous Estéoule, Head of the International Relations Office of the University Paris Diderot, member of the Bureau of International Relations in Higher Education (RI Sup) Network, Paris, 4 June 2014.

5.2. Improving information and guidance on student mobility

101. Universities should improve their provision of information to students about academic mobility programmes.

102. Students need clear, relevant and exhaustive information on: financial support they could obtain; study programmes, including degree and credit mobility; requirements for accessing such programmes; application procedure; administrative procedure, etc. They also need to be provided with advice and assistance for the submission of their applications.

103. The information should be easily accessible to all. Therefore new, creative and interactive ways for its dissemination should be used. The individual approach is very important and countries should be encouraged to open personal services or centres for providing information and detailed guidance.

5.3. Increasing availability of student funding and portability of student support

104. To address the inadequacy of financial and logistical support, scholarships or grants should be provided on the basis of social, academic and geographical criteria. Portability of public financial support for students is too limited and should be widened.

105. The European Agreement on Continued Payment of Scholarships to Students Studying Abroad, which was ratified by 20 Council of Europe member States, sets the bases for providing portability of public grants/scholarships and loans. However, it should be upgraded with a view to introducing new measures for financial support and with new recommendations that take into account the current trends in Europe.

106. The report of the Working Group on Portability of Grants and Loans recommends that countries should undertake joint actions to identify and address the situations where they can assist each other on the implementation of national systems of portable support of grants and loans for students studying abroad. This report also recommends that countries should use residence requirements as part of general eligibility criteria, in order to prevent an unreasonable burden on individual countries.⁷¹

107. Public authorities' decisions as regards the amount of financial support to be provided must take into consideration the standard of living and real living costs. Scholarships and grants, especially those for living expenses, should be in adequacy with the standard of living in the host country.

5.4. Improving recognition of learning outcomes

108. Recognition of learning outcomes is a key to fostering international student mobility. The ECTS must be fully implemented in all countries, and the ECTS user guide must be used as a basis for recognition of qualifications earned abroad. The Diploma Supplement must be issued to every student in every member country of the EHEA. In addition, countries should monitor how higher education institutions use the Diploma Supplement.

109. The Lisbon Recognition Convention requires ensuring timely recognition of qualifications. Such recognition can only be refused if the education institution can prove that the qualification is substantially different from that of the host country.

110. Despite the ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention by most of the EHEA countries, there are still legal problems preventing its implementation in those countries that have not amended their legislation to adopt the principles of the Convention.⁷² Countries should also evaluate their recognition policies and practice and should participate in external quality assurance processes. Full implementation of the Bologna Process structural reforms could significantly contribute to enhancing student mobility. The reforms include the implementation of the three-cycle degree system and of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), the aligning of the national qualifications framework with the QF-EHEA, the registration of a quality assurance agency in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) and the automatic issuing of the Diploma Supplement. This would reduce the bureaucratic burden for both the State and the student, and especially reduce the anticipated risk of students not receiving full recognition of qualifications acquired abroad.⁷³

71. Working Group Portability of Grants and Loans, Report to the Bologna Follow Up Group.

72. Report by the EHEA working group on recognition, 2012, [www.ehea.info/Uploads/\(1\)/Recognition%20WG%20Report.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/(1)/Recognition%20WG%20Report.pdf).

73. See also Assembly [Resolution 1906 \(2012\)](#) and [Recommendation 2005 \(2012\)](#) on the consolidation and international openness of the European Higher Education Area.

111. Student mobility should be part of students' home courses. It can be arranged along the lines of integrated courses for which mobility takes place on an alternating basis between the partners over the three years of bachelor studies or two years of masters studies. Mobility or placements should be foreseen as part of courses, rather than just as an extra-curricular possibility. Teaching staff should also receive training in the partner university systems and be provided with information platforms and with tools for understanding marking systems so as to simplify the conversion of ECTS credits. Institutions should be encouraged to provide joint degrees and to promote them among the student population.

112. Member States should do more to support the ENIC-NARIC centres and networks⁷⁴ (which are responsible for academic recognition and recognition for the purposes of access to the labour market, including regulated professions) in the implementation of actions undertaken in accordance with the Joint ENIC-NARIC Charter of Activities and Services⁷⁵.

5.5. Enhancing proficiency in foreign languages

113. Students need support to develop their language skills in order to be able to follow courses taught in a foreign language. This is not the case for a very large number of students. To that end, lifelong language learning should be fostered. It is also necessary to develop language courses and self-learning courses in universities and offer courses taught in a language other than that of the country of residence. I would also suggest encouraging scholarship programmes providing language courses.

5.6. Streamlining administrative procedures

114. Public authorities should strive to clarify the procedures (visas, social cover, residence and work permits), while seeking to harmonise procedures to some extent.

115. Bearing in mind the importance of youth mobility, the European Youth Forum requested the Council of Europe and European Parliament to support their demands for the facilitation of the visa regime as follows:

- maximum 60 days for a response to an appeal against a decision;
- abolition of visa fees;
- visas should be granted for the entire territory of the EU/Schengen Area;
- immediate implementation by all member States of the provisions of the Scientific Visa Directive, without derogations;
- automatic and timely issue of residence permits for the full period of any granted visa;
- an accreditation system for organisations that facilitate and ease applications

116. Administrative procedures for obtaining student visas and visas for study stay for academic staff should be guaranteed and provided with less administrative requests and with reduced requests for financial guarantees. Legal difficulties related to different social security systems and double taxation should be eliminated from the procedure. Reasonable policies for obtaining visas, which, on the one hand, ensure security for the host country and, on the other hand, enable academic mobility, should be considered.

117. Full advantage should be taken of the opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ Programme. Erasmus+ National Agencies and the Executive Agency are invited to give advice and support concerning visas, residence permits, social security, etc.⁷⁶

5.7. Enabling participation in Erasmus+ for students from Council of Europe member States which are not members of the European Union

118. The Erasmus+ Programme has become a major instrument for the promotion of international student mobility. The entire student mobility system in Europe depends on Erasmus+ conditions and facilities. Enabling participation in Erasmus+ therefore becomes an imperative if we are to reach our goals in terms of international student mobility in the Council of Europe member States.

74. European Network of Information Centres in the European Region (ENIC) and National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union (NARIC): www.enic-naric.net/.

75. www.enic-naric.net/fileusers/Charter.en.pdf.

76. See the Erasmus+ Programme Guide: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf.

119. The new Erasmus+ Programme enables the participation of a number of non-EU Council of Europe member States, but not of all of them. There are still some European countries – like my own, for example – which cannot participate in the Erasmus+ Programme simply because their countries appear in the “Other Partner Countries” Group in the Erasmus system. I believe that students from smaller countries such as Andorra, Monaco and San Marino should also benefit from the Erasmus+ Programme.⁷⁷ Students from these countries – and, generally speaking, all students from the Council of Europe member States – should be eligible for scholarships and other student support programmes in the same way as students from the Erasmus+ Programme and Partner Countries.

120. I should like to stress that small countries cannot be bound by reciprocity requirements with regard to receiving students from larger countries, simply because there is no comparable capacity in terms of the number of universities. Other forms of co-operation and participation in Erasmus+ should be envisaged with regard to these countries – like, for instance, a contribution to European bursary schemes – thus strengthening partnerships between universities all over Europe.

5.8. Encouraging private business support for student mobility

121. Public authorities should take specific measures to encourage private sector support for student mobility. Public awareness campaigns should be designed to inform about the impact of student mobility in terms of the high-quality qualifications of graduates who take part in mobility programmes and their capacity to adapt to new work environments, which is good news for the private sector. In this sense, the recommendations of the Erasmus Impact Study should be made known amongst employers organisations.

5.9. Balancing mobility flows

122. Countries should implement policies that will prevent the brain drain, and such policies should be co-ordinated at European level. Migration policies should respond to the demands of a modern economy and should be beneficial for both receiving and sending countries by managing the process to protect domestic labour markets and the economic interests of developing countries. Enabling studying abroad would increase the number of people from developing countries who could gain knowledge and experience abroad and transfer the knowledge gained to their home countries. However, residence permits should be issued with a clear message that return is obligatory after the defined period of stay.

77. At the moment, in the Erasmus+ Programme these countries are referred to as “Other Partner Countries, Region 5”, together with Vatican City State and Switzerland, and do not benefit from all the facilities offered by Erasmus+.