

The feasibility of a European graduate study

Results and recommendations of the EUROGRADUATE feasibility study

Workshop “Practices and challenges of following higher education
graduates employability”

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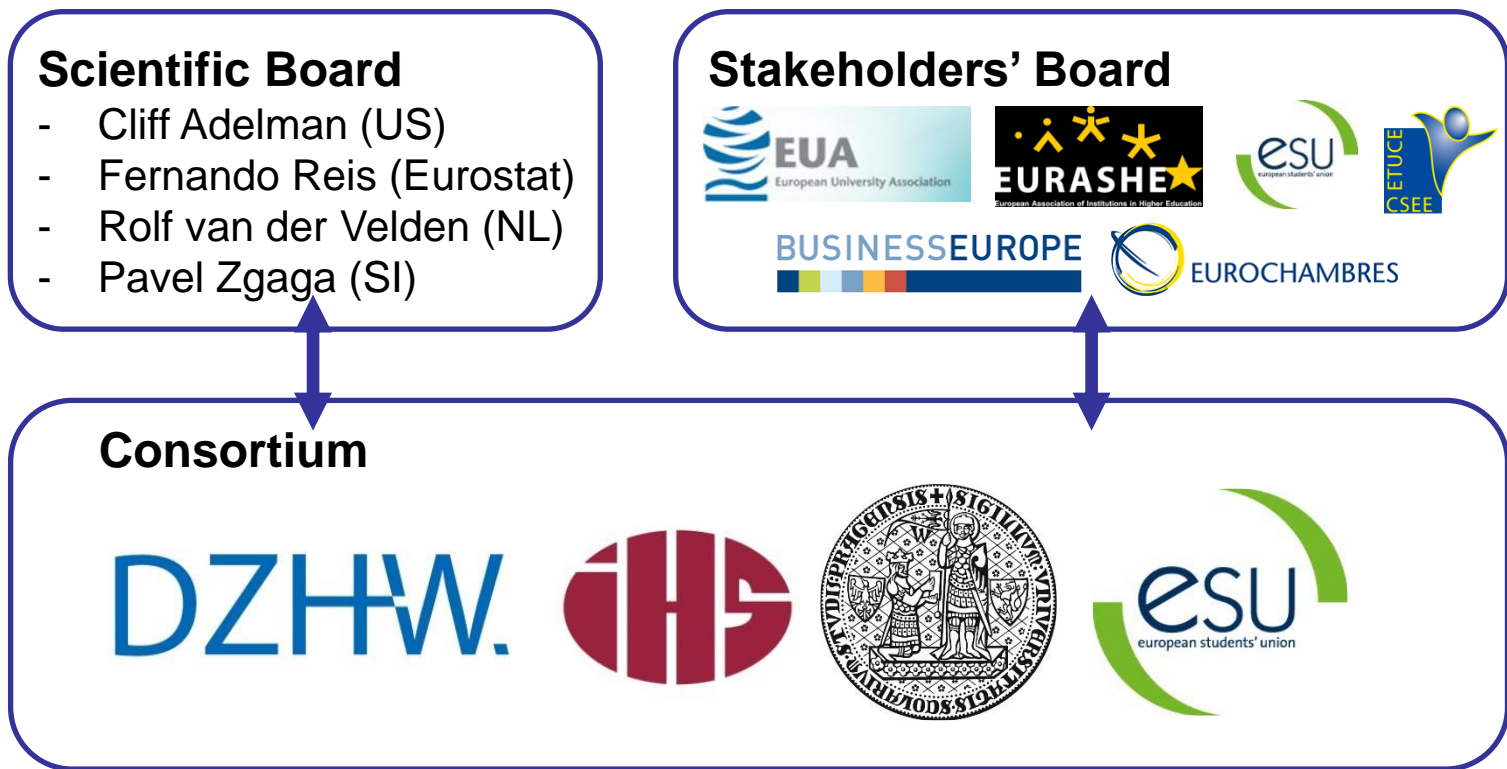
Lifelong
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Project organisation

- Project ran 10/2013-03/2016
- Funding: Lifelong Learning Programme of the EU



Reasons for the EUROGRADUATE project

- Strong & continuing political attention to higher education graduates
 - Increased worry about **graduates employment** (over-education, horizontal mismatch)
 - Economic challenges: **growth & innovation**
 - Societal challenges: **tolerance, social trust & cohesion**
- Higher education expected to address challenges
 - ... graduates match labour market needs & keep employable
 - ... develop creativity, entrepreneurship & innovation skills
 - ... promote democratic values & civic skills
- Perception of insufficient data & lack of transparency on higher education graduates (Yerevan Communiqué 2015)

Research questions

Would a sustainable European graduate study be feasible?

- 1) Is there **sufficient demand**? What would be the added value to current data?
- 2) Which **information** would the study need to provide in the view of the stakeholders?
- 3) What **design** would best fulfil stakeholders' requirements?
- 4) How could it be set up & **organised**?
- 5) Would that design & organisation be **feasible**?

Methods of the feasibility study

1. Desk-research on existing international data sets
2. EUROGRADUATE surveys in EU+EFTA countries:

Target group	Contacted	Resp. rate	N
National ministries (+ reg. BE & UK)	36	72%	26
National rectors' conferences	43	28%	12
National research groups	48	69%	33

3. Expert interviews with European or internat. level representatives: EC, institutions (EUA, EURASHE), students (ESU), unions (ETUCE), employers (BUSINESSEUROPE, EUROCHAMBRES), OECD
4. Expert interviews with researchers of international projects: European Social Survey, EUROSTUDENT, PIAAC, PISA, REFLEX, TIMSS, & U-Multirank

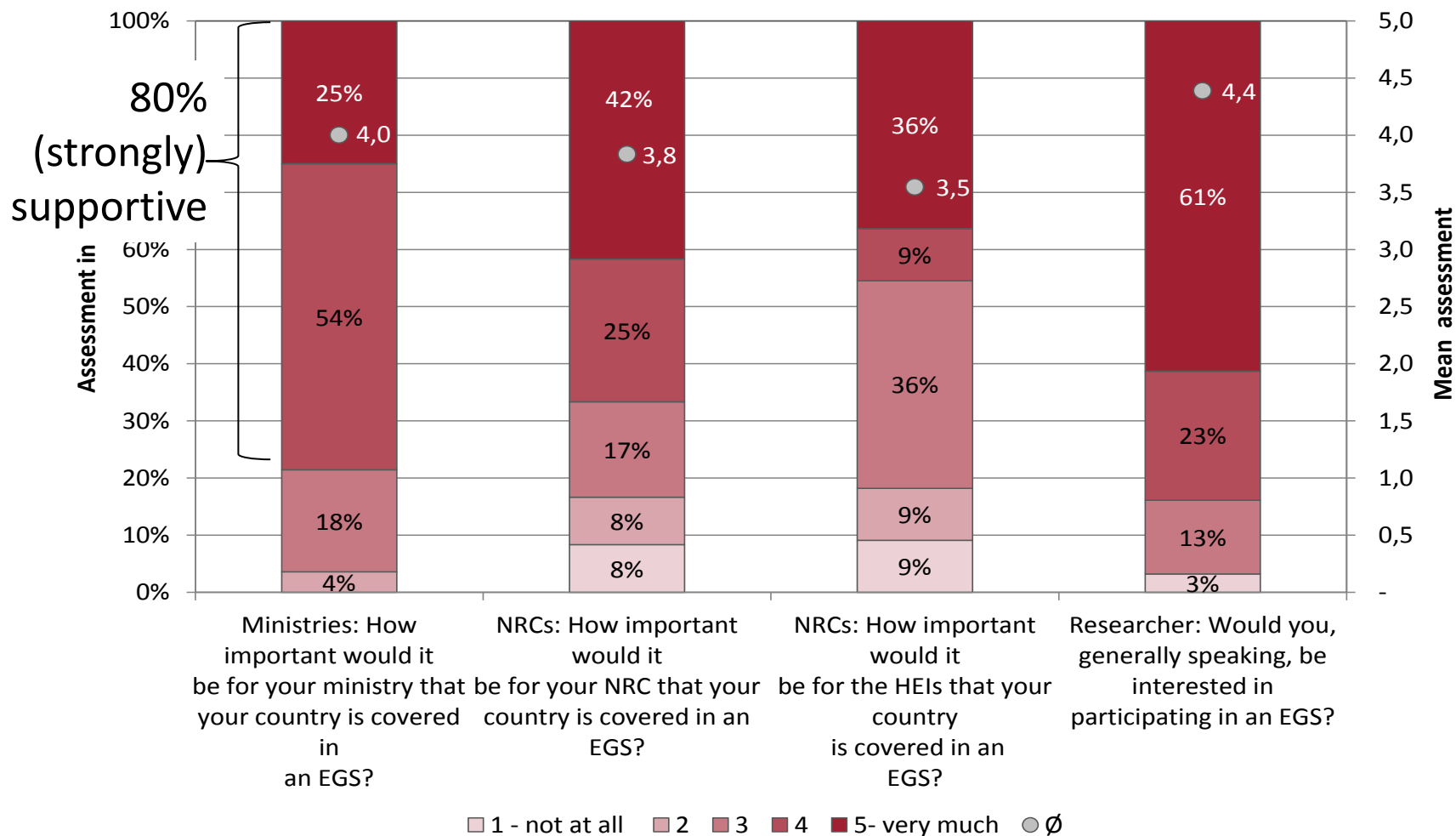
National level data capacities

- **26 of 33 EU/EFTA** higher education systems conducted graduate studies in the last 10 years
- Vast majority of countries uses **surveys**
- 5 countries **admin. studies** only (AT, DK, ES, PL, SE)
- ES, PL recently/currently build admin. data studies
- **Similarities** of studies: target groups, core contents
- **Dissimilarities**: timing of survey, size, quality, wording
→ ex-post harmonization would not work
- 6 countries with **annual surveys** (FI, HU, IE, IT, NL, UK)
- 10 countries repeat at **lower frequency**
- 11 countries without **ongoing studies** (BE, BG, CY, EL, HR, IS, LI, LV, MT, PT, SI)

Assessment of international data sources

- Existing international data sets (e.g. EU-LFS, PIAAC, ESS) very limited as regards **low numbers of HE graduates** in sample and/or **content**
 - **Detailed information on HE missing** in all international data sets
- **Lack of comparative, comprehensive, & regular data on HE graduates**

Demand for a European graduate study



Source: EUROGRADUATE. $n=28$ (ministries), $n=12$ (NRCs, first question), $n=11$ (NRCs, second question); researchers $n=31$.

Contents of a European graduate study

Topics	Minist.	NRCs	Res.
Transition to labour market	4,6	4,4	4,8
Generating & sustaining employability	4,5	4,0	4,4
Skills mismatch	4,4	3,5	4,3
Competencies during studies	4,3	3,8	4,0
Quality of HE	4,0	3,9	4,0
Returns to education	3,9	3,6	3,9
Mobility of graduates	3,9	3,8	3,5
Equity	3,8	3,8	4,1
Competencies after graduation	3,8	3,3	3,9
Mobility during studies	3,4	3,4	3,4
Comparison of individual HEIs	3,1	2,5	2,3

Source: EUROGRADUATE. Mean values on 5-point scale (1="strongly disagree", 5="strongly agree").

Q: "[...] Which topics or political issues should a European graduate study contribute to?"

Recommendations: Information & content

- Core research topics
 - Transition to labour market
 - Generating & sustaining employability
 - Quality of higher education, competencies acquired, & skills mismatch
 - International mobility
 - Democratic values & active citizenship
- Focus/additional topics per repetition of study
- Country- & institution-specific extensions

Characteristics of a European graduate study

Characteristic	Minist.	NRCs	Res.
Done on a regular basis	4,5	4,3	4,5
Results relevant to HE policies & steering	4,4	3,4	4,4
Covering mid- & longterm developments	4,2	4,1	4,6
Provide in-depth analyses	4,1	3,8	4,0
Provide aggregate-level indicators	3,9	3,8	3,9
Provide micro level data for research	3,5	3,5	4,1
Allow comparing regions	3,4	3,1	3,9
Allow comparing HEIs	3,2	3,0	2,6
Short-term developments sufficient	2,8	3,3	2,1

Source: EUROGRADUATE. Mean values on 5-point scale (1="strongly disagree", 5="strongly agree").
Q: "[...] Which qualities should a European graduate study have?"

Recommendations: Information & content

- Regular information
 - Repetition every 4 years
- Level of reporting: national/system level
- Option of regional/institutional breakdowns
- Long- & short-term perspective
 - Panel study covering early transition & career trajectories
 - Respondents surveyed 1, 5, & (optionally) 9 years after graduation
- Monitoring & in-depth analyses required
 - Provide aggregate & individual level data

Recommendations: Data collection

- Method: online survey
- Centralised survey in collaboration with national-level research teams
- Avoid different methods of data collection in participating countries
- Allow for differences in methods of contacting & reminding graduates if necessary

Expected outputs

- Comparative **monitoring report**
- **Focus reports** on specific topics
- Secured **online reporting tool** for countries & institutions
- Open **online database** for students, graduates, & public
- Scientific **use file & publications** by external users
- Improved **data capacities**
 - Build capacities in countries without studies
 - Improve quality & availability of data on graduates

Feasibility, risk factors, & measures

TELOS scheme of feasibility

Technical

- Online surveys widespread
- Survey instruments available

Legal

- Lawful procedures available
- *Risk: Country-specific conditions not yet fully known*

Schedule

- Based on previous experience
- *Risk: unforeseen problems & long transition*

Economic

- Demand high
- Cost-effectiveness
- *Risk: funding not sure*

Operational

- Experienced teams at nat./int. level
- *Risk: conflict with existing studies*

→ pilot project for smooth transition

Conclusions

- **Existing data not well suited** for comparative monitoring & analyses of higher education
- A European graduate study would help **building capacities**
- **Demand** for a European graduate study high
- Possible to set-up **coherent design** matching stakeholders' requirements
- A European graduate study would be **feasible**
- A **pilot study** is recommended as next step

Global planning

- European Commission announced tracking initiative for 2nd quarter of 2017
- EUROGRADUATE pilot study 2017-2019
- EUROGRADUATE I (2019-2022)
 - Organisational set-up: 2019
 - Field phase: 2020
 - Data cleaning & preparation of international data set: 2021
 - Data analysis and reporting: 2022
- EUROGRADUATE II (2023-2026)
- Further information: **www.eurograduate.eu**