



What deters students from studying abroad?

Evidence from the Steeplechase project

1st Meeting of WG on Mobility & Internationalisation

BMBF, Berlin, 7th December 2012

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1) Introduction: The Steeplechase Project

Background

- BMBF-funded project carried out during first half of 2012
- Participants were five EUROSTUDENT IV partners: Institute for Advanced Studies (AT), Swiss Federal Statistical Office (CH), ResearchNed (NL), Ministry of Science and Higher Education / Consultant (PL), HIS Institute for Research on Higher Education (DE)

Main research question

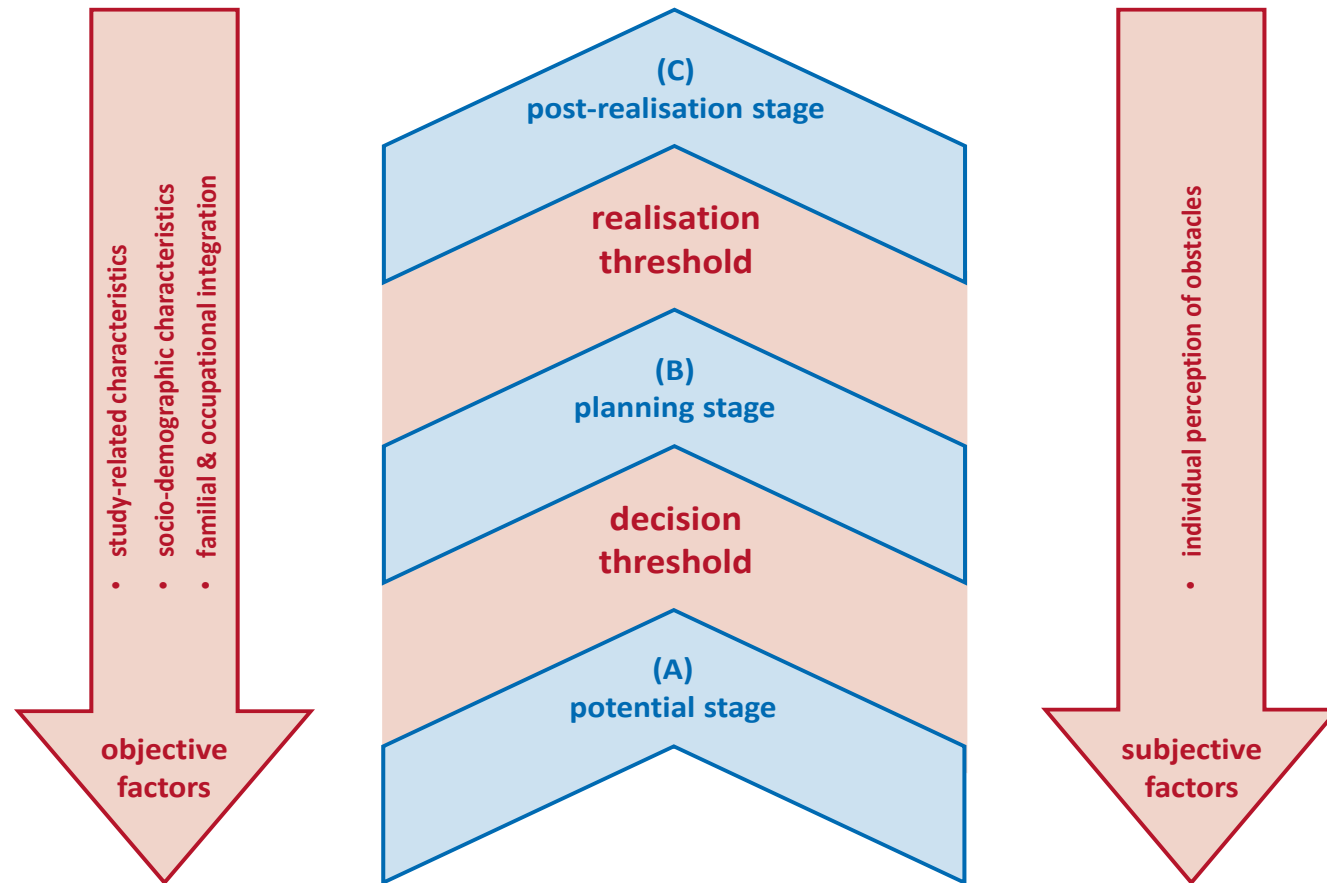
- What deters students from studying abroad? (→focus on enrolment periods abroad)

Ancillary goals

- Explore feasibility of performing internationally comparative regression analyses based on EUROSTUDENT data
- Determine the resilience of the descriptive EUROSTUDENT results

2) Research approach...

Framework for the analysis of potential obstacles to enrolment periods abroad



2) ...and hypotheses

| <i>Independent variables</i> | <i>Dependent variables</i> | |
|--|--|--|
| | enrolment period planned (decision threshold) | enrolment period realised (realisation threshold) |
| <i>Study-related characteristics</i> | | |
| Higher study years | - | + |
| Fields of study | n. h. | n. h. |
| Enrolled at university (ref.: other type) | + | + |
| <i>Socio-demographic characteristics</i> | | |
| Rising age | | |
| Female (ref.: male) | | |
| Interaction: rising age x female | - | - |
| Tertiary education background (ref.: none) | + | + |
| <i>Familial and occupational integration</i> | | |
| Responsibility for child(ren) < 18 years (ref.: no such resp.) | - | - |
| Living with parents (ref.: not living with parents) | - | - |
| Higher self-earned income | - | (-) |
| <i>Perception of obstacles to an enrolment period abroad</i> | | |
| Low benefit for studies at home | - | (-) |
| Separation from partner, child(ren), friends | - | (-) |
| Expected delay in progress of studies | - | (-) |
| Expected additional financial burden | - | (-) |
| Insufficient skills in foreign languages | - | (-) |
| Difficulty in getting information | - | (-) |

3) Data...

Information on national EUROSTUDENT surveys used for Steeplechase

| Survey characteristics | Country | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| | AT | CH | DE | NL | PL |
| Final sample size | 31,640 | 24,500 | 15,899 | 14,422 | 1,992 |
| Return rate | 17% | 64% | 32% | 19% | 38% |
| Reference period | 05-06/2009 | 03-06/2009 | 05-07/2009 | 06-08/2010 | 03-06/2010 |
| Sampling method | no method, all students in AT were invited | stratified random sample (by institution and field of study) | random sample | random sample | random sample |
| Survey method | online | online | paper and pencil | online | online |
| Weighting scheme | nationality, type of HEI, field of study, sex, age | nationality, type of programme, sex, age | <i>Länder</i> , type of HEI, field of study, sex | type of HEI, type of programme, year of study, field of study, sex | formal status (full-time/part-time), sex |

Source: Social Surveys from Austria (2009), Switzerland (2009), Germany (2009), The Netherlands (2010) and Poland (2010)

3) ...and methods

Two series of logistic regression models (decision & realisation threshold)

- Samples were prepared based on same procedures (separate data sets)
- Models include same sets of variables (exception: PL)
- Model coefficients are reported as odds ratio (no comparison of effect sizes)

Descriptive data set

- For all groups described by our independent variables, we calculated the shares of students having realised, still planning to realise and perceiving selected aspects as (big) obstacles to an enrolment abroad (→publicly available on website)

4) Empirical results: Summary statistics

Students (not) having realised and (not) planning an enrolment period abroad (in %)

| <i>Students by enrolment abroad and plans</i> | <i>Country</i> | | | | |
|--|----------------|----|-----------------|----|----|
| | AT | CH | DE ¹ | NL | PL |
| neither realised nor planning an enrolment period abroad (A) | 75 | 68 | 54 | 59 | 90 |
| not realised but planning an enrolment period abroad (B) | 15 | 26 | 38 | 29 | 8 |
| realised an enrolment period abroad (C) | 10 | 6 | 8 | 12 | 2 |

Source: Social Surveys from Austria (2009), Switzerland (2009), Germany (2009), The Netherlands (2010) and Poland (2010)

1) For students in Germany the plans concern not only enrolment abroad, but study-related experiences in general.

4) Empirical results: Regressions (confirmed hypotheses)

| <i>Independent variables</i> | <i>Dependent variables</i> | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | decision threshold | | | | | realisation threshold | | | | |
| | AT | CH | DE | NL | PL | AT | CH | DE | NL | PL |
| <i>Study-related characteristics</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Higher study years | (-) | (+ -) | - | - | | + | (- +) | + | + | (+) |
| Fields of study | n. h. | n. h. | n. h. | n. h. | n. h. | n. h. | n. h. | n. h. | n. h. | n. h. |
| Enrolled at university (ref.: other type) | + | + | + | + | n. d. | - | | | | n. d. |
| <i>Socio-demographic characteristics</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rising age | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | | |
| Female (ref.: male) | - | - | - | | | + | | + | + | |
| Interaction: rising age x female | | | - | | | | | | | |
| Tertiary education background (ref.: none) | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| <i>Familial and occupational integration</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Responsibility for child(ren) < 18 years (ref.: no such resp.) | - | | - | | | - | | - | - | |
| Living with parents (ref.: not living with parents) | - | - | - | - | | - | | - | - | |
| Higher self-earned income | (+ -) | (+) | (+) | (+ -) | | | | | | n. d. |
| <i>Perception of obstacles to an enrolment period abroad</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Low benefit for studies at home | - | - | - | - | - | | | | | |
| Separation from partner, child(ren), friends | - | - | - | - | - | | | | | |
| Expected delay in progress of studies | - | | - | - | | | | | | |
| Expected additional financial burden | | - | - | + | | | | | | |
| Insufficient skills in foreign languages | + | - | - | - | - | | | | | |
| Difficulty in getting information | + | + | + | + | | | | | | |

4) Empirical results: Regressions (rejected hypotheses)

| Independent variables | Dependent variables | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | decision threshold | | | | | realisation threshold | | | | |
| | AT | CH | DE | NL | PL | AT | CH | DE | NL | PL |
| <i>Study-related characteristics</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Higher study years | (-) | (+ -) | - | - | | + | (- +) | + | + | (+) |
| Fields of study | n. h. | n. h. | n. h. | n. h. | n. h. | n. h. | n. h. | n. h. | n. h. | n. h. |
| Enrolled at university (ref.: other type) | + | + | + | + | n. d. | - | | | | n. d. |
| <i>Socio-demographic characteristics</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rising age | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | | |
| Female (ref.: male) | - | - | - | | | + | | + | + | |
| Interaction: rising age x female | | | - | | | | | | | |
| Tertiary education background (ref.: none) | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| <i>Familial and occupational integration</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Responsibility for child(ren) < 18 years (ref.: no such resp.) | - | | - | | | - | | - | - | |
| Living with parents (ref.: not living with parents) | - | - | - | - | | - | | - | - | |
| Higher self-earned income | (+ -) | (+) | (+) | (+ -) | | | | | | n. d. |
| <i>Perception of obstacles to an enrolment period abroad</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Low benefit for studies at home | - | - | - | - | - | | | | | |
| Separation from partner, child(ren), friends | - | - | - | - | - | | | | | |
| Expected delay in progress of studies | - | | - | - | | | | | | |
| Expected additional financial burden | | - | - | + | | | | | | n. d. |
| Insufficient skills in foreign languages | + | - | - | - | - | | | | | |
| Difficulty in getting information | + | + | + | + | | | | | | |

5) Implications

(1) Hierarchy of obstacles

- Different factors become relevant at successive stages on the way to an enrolment abroad (example: information deficits)
- Might have to be reflected better in the existing mobility support measures
- Informational campaigns, for instance, could provide students at the planning stage with information on technicalities and students at the potential stage with information on the advantages of mobility phases and possibilities to realise it despite familial and professional commitments

5) Implications

(2) Multiple disadvantages

- Multifaceted mechanisms hindering students from studying abroad: not just one or two obstructive factors, but a whole bundle of factors apparently exerting an influence simultaneously
- Some student groups face multiple disadvantages (e. g. aged students with non-academic background and familial obligations)
- Next to large wholesale support measure, additional set of target group-specific measures might be needed to reach those students

5) Implications

(3) Commonalities between countries

- There are country-specific obstacle profiles, which must be tackled by country-specific measures (example: German students' fearing to delay their studies)
- However, commonalities between countries prevail, although countries covered represent student populations with entirely different mobility behaviour
- May justify policies at intergovernmental and supranational level (e. g. addressing the persistent social and age selectivity, the negative effect of familial integration and study field-specific difficulties)

5) Implications

(4) Moments of political intervention

- While obstacles like lacking finances might 'simply' be attenuated by making additional scholarships available, others have to be tackled before they become manifest in HE (example: students from low social background lack travelling habitus acquired during school time)
- Interdependency between HE policy and school policy becomes visible also in low mobility aspirations of future teachers (unlikely to act as role models for their prospective students devoid of own mobility experiences → multiplier effect not exploited)
- Path-dependent nature of mobility behaviour makes the moments of political intervention crucial

5) Implications

(5) Reachability of mobility goals

- In all countries examined through Steeplechase – and in all of the 17 further EHEA countries for which data are available (Orr, Gwosć & Netz, 2011) – less than half of the student population has either foreign enrolment experience or plans
- Changing composition of student bodies could jeopardise the aim of further increasing mobility rates, as it is precisely groups of students facing multiple disadvantages currently being encouraged to enrol in higher education
- Policy might head towards a dilemma, as the expressed goals of increasing mobility rates and achieving equitable access to international experience might be conflicting
- Internationalisation at home as possible solution? → schism between advantaged student groups enjoying first-class geographical mobility and disadvantaged students' contenting themselves with second-class mobility at home?

Further information on the Steeplechase project

Project website

- contains a brochure, the data processing manual and a comparative data set including aggregate group indicators
- URL: <http://www.eurostudent.eu/about/associated/steeplechase>

Discussion paper

- Netz, N., Orr, D., Gwosć, C. & Huß, B. (2012). What deters students from studying abroad? Evidence from Austria, Switzerland, Germany, The Netherlands and Poland (Discussion Paper). Hannover: Hochschul-Informations-System GmbH.
- URL: http://www.his.de/publikation/vortrag/index_html?reihe_nr=X1575

Journal article

- Netz, N., & Gwosć, C. (submitted). What deters students from studying abroad? Evidence from five European countries and its implications for higher education policy. *Higher Education Policy*.



Thank you for your attention!

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