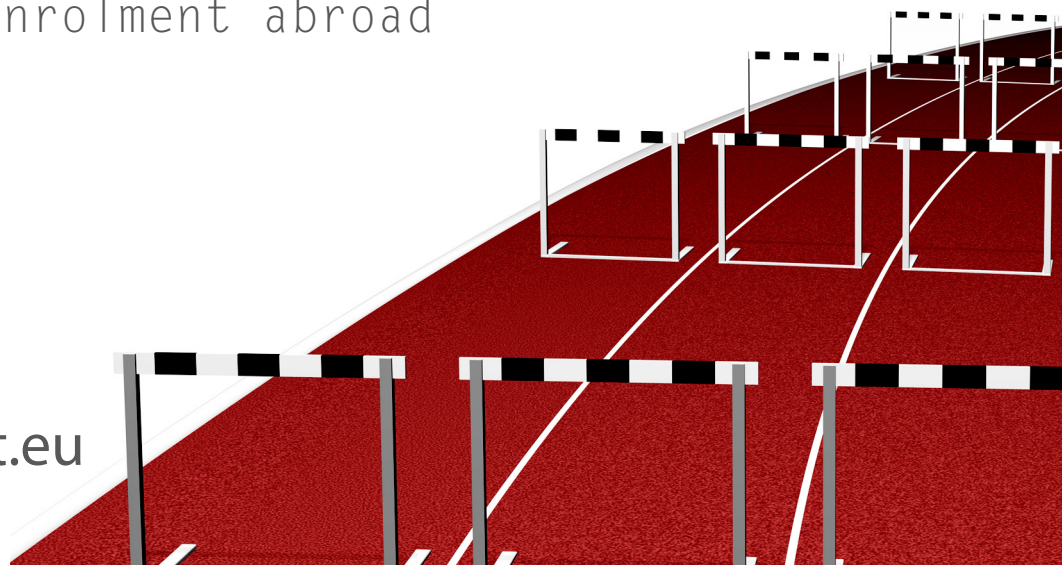


Steeplechase

Plans for and obstacles to
temporary enrolment abroad





Steeplechase: Investigating plans for and obstacles to temporary enrolment abroad in Austria, Switzerland, Germany, The Netherlands and Poland

Encouraging student international mobility is one of the central action lines of the 47 ministers responsible for higher education in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and a cornerstone of European Union policy. This is evident in the Mobility Strategy 2020 and the EU's Youth on the Move initiative. A benchmark for 20% of higher education graduates having participated in some form of study-related experience abroad by 2020 has been set in both the EHEA and the EU. This benchmark for outgoing mobility is echoed in many countries' national benchmarks. In Austria and Germany, the goal is for around half of all graduates to have had a study-related experience abroad by 2020, in Switzerland the goal is 20% and in The Netherlands it is 25%, albeit already in 2013.

In this, recent research results and policy discussions have called attention to the barriers that prevent or discourage students from taking part in temporary outgoing mobil-

ity. This has led to two central policy questions, which also frame the Steeplechase study:

- How can student mobility be supported, so that a high share of students can benefit from a study-related period abroad?
- How can it be assured that every student has the same opportunity to go abroad and that participants in mobility programmes are drawn from all parts of the student body?

The Steeplechase study follows the principles of its associated project EUROSTUDENT and recognises the value of international comparison for a better understanding of study-related phenomena. Steeplechase compares data collated and processed in a standardised way from five countries: Austria, Switzerland, Germany, The Netherlands and Poland. This comparison will mean that the final

results can be assessed for their common relevance across different countries.

Students' plans for enrolment abroad

The Steeplechase study is driven by the objective of providing information on the likelihood of undertaking temporary enrolment periods abroad as well as students' perception of obstacles to enrolment abroad. Three groups are differentiated for analytical purposes (Figure 1):

Students, who have realised a period of enrolment abroad.

Students, who have not been enrolled abroad, but who are planning a period of enrolment abroad.

Students, who have not been enrolled abroad and who do not plan a period of enrolment abroad.

What are the perceived obstacles to mobility and how can students be supported?

Figure 1 shows that the group of students who have not been enrolled abroad at the time of surveying is higher

than 85% in all countries. The data used for this analysis come from the EUROSTUDENT cross-samples of students. This means that the data are not appropriate for determining the final mobility rate of students, as some students are still in the early stages of their study programme. For final rates, graduate data would be necessary. However, the benefit of the EUROSTUDENT data is that it enables a link between the tendency of certain groups of students not to enrol abroad and their current perceptions of obstacles. An example of this is shown in Figure 2.

The comparison shows that students who are still planning an enrolment abroad, but have not yet realised it (column "yes"), are most concerned about the additional financial burden they expect. In 4 of the 5 countries, more than half of these students consider this issue a (big) obstacle. This group could, therefore, be significantly supported through increased financial support or information campaigns on existing support, which might alleviate their fears.

Turning to those students who have not been enrolled abroad and are not planning to do so (column "no"), besides the expected financial burden, the list of obstacles



Figure 1: Students who have been enrolled abroad, who have plans to enrol abroad or who have no plans in this respect (in %)



¹⁾ For students in Germany plans concern not only enrolment abroad, but study-related experience in general. Source for this and all following charts: Social Surveys from Austria (2009), Switzerland (2009), Germany (2009), The Netherlands (2010) and Poland (2010).

perceived by more than half of these students includes the separation from their partner, child(ren) and friends (with the exception of Switzerland). In Austria and Germany, this list also comprises concerns about an expected delay in study progression (56% and 55%). In Switzerland, The Netherlands and Poland, such concerns are expressed by around one-third of students in this group (31%, 32% and 38%). In Poland many students without enrolment experience abroad are also concerned about having insufficient foreign language skills (49%).

These issues should be taken into account when designing campaigns and policies to support temporary student mobility. It is important for policy and practice that students without current plans for an enrolment period abroad are recognised as a select group as far as obstacles to mobility are concerned.

What type of student tends to have no plans for enrolment abroad?

A benefit of using the EUROSTUDENT data set for analysing mobility behaviour is the possibility of linking current

personal characteristics and the study framework of students to their propensity for being enrolled abroad. First analyses have shown which student attributes increase students' likelihood of belonging to the group of students who have not been enrolled abroad and do not plan to go abroad (Figure 3).

Whilst young students are less likely to belong to the student group without plans for an enrolment period abroad, the share of students in this group grows with increasing **age** and is highest for students who are 30 years or older. Students **without a tertiary education background**, i. e. those whose parents did not attain a tertiary education degree, are also likely to belong to the students without mobility plans. In cross-country comparison, their share lies 4 % above the country average in Poland and 15% above the country average in Germany.

Personal dependency in the sense of either having **children** or being dependent on **employment income** also increases the likelihood of students not having mobility plans. Students with a relatively high amount of self-earned income have a likelihood of not having been and



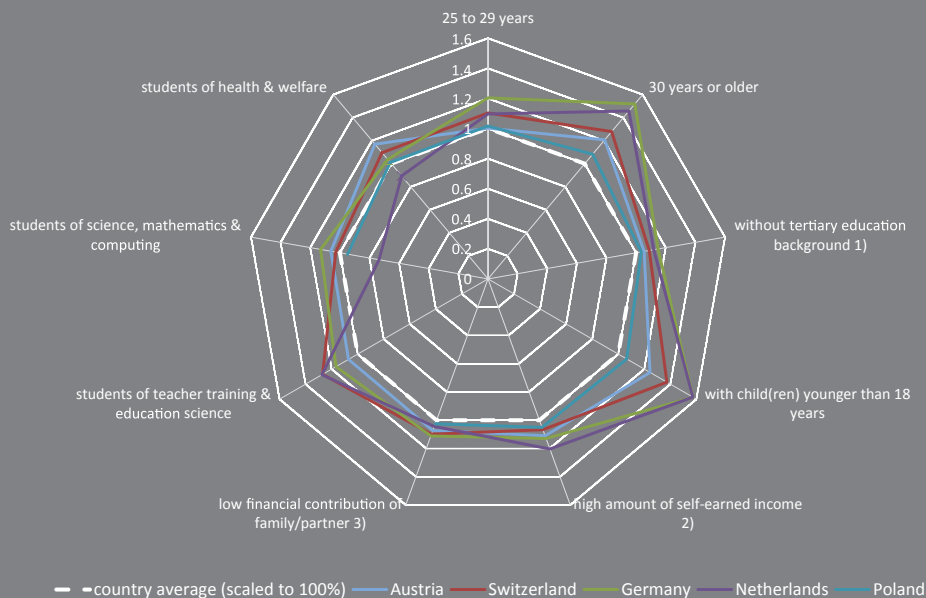
Figure 2: Perception of obstacles of students who have not realised and who are (not) planning an enrolment period abroad (in %)

Students considering aspect as (big) obstacle ¹⁾	Austria		Switzerland		Germany		Netherlands		Poland	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
Plans for enrolment period abroad										
Expected additional financial burden	57	65	43	52	60	70	53	54	68	74
Separation from partner, child(ren), friends	22	56	15	27	36	52	22	51	37	60
Expected delay in progress of studies	36	56	25	31	36	55	21	32	26	38
Expected problems with the recognition of the results achieved abroad	34	47	19	16	30	31	22	18	32	35
Insufficient skills in foreign languages	14	13	10	12	23	24	19	23	23	49
Difficulty in getting information	37	21	18	15	18	11	33	24	22	27
Low benefit for studies at home	15	32	8	20	21	37	12	31	17	28

¹⁾ The obstacles for an enrolment abroad are measured on a 5-point scale, which ranges from "no obstacle" to „big obstacle". The classification „(big) obstacle" encompasses the values of the two highest categories, i.e. the values of all students who consider a possible hindrance either as „obstacle" or as „big obstacle".

Figure 3: Shares of students who have not been enrolled abroad and do not plan to enrol abroad by selected attributes

Interpretation aid: 1 = relative share of all students in country (scaled to 100%),
1.2 = the share with a certain attribute is 20% higher than the share for all students in country.



- 1) Students whose parents graduated from ISCED levels 0, 1, 2, 3 or 4 are considered as students without tertiary education background.
- 2) High amount of self-earned income refers to students whose amount of self-earned income is within the third tercile of the income distribution.
- 3) Low contribution means this source of income amounts to up to 25% of students' disposable monthly income. High contribution means this source of income accounts for more than 50% of students' disposable monthly income.

not planning an enrolment abroad that lies 5% above the country average in Poland and 20% above the average in The Netherlands.

Finally, the **subject area** being studied makes a difference, with students of teacher training and education science most likely to have no plans for enrolment abroad. Their share lies 7% above the country average in Austria and 27% above the average in Switzerland and The Netherlands.

Further analyses will map perception of obstacles to students' attributes. Initial analyses show, for example, that concerns about additional financial burdens and the insufficiency of language skills are perceived more frequently among students without tertiary education background. The concern about an expected delay in the progress of studies, however, appears to be particularly intense among students under the age of 24.

On the Steeplechase study

The Steeplechase study is a further exploitation of the EUROSTUDENT IV data. The national EUROSTUDENT part-

ners survey current students on their social and economic living conditions as well as their perceptions and behaviours regarding temporary enrolment phases abroad. For the Steeplechase study, five national research teams have carried out additional analyses of their data sets in order to provide more in-depth insights into mobility propensities of different kinds of students as well as their perceptions of obstacles to an enrolment period abroad.

The knowledge emerging from this study will be relevant for developing new and reviewing existing measures and programmes designed to foster student enrolment abroad. A guiding notion of Steeplechase is that both the quantitative volume and the type of students currently embarking on enrolment abroad are affected by students' attributes and how they are taken account of by various policy interventions and support programmes.

In the next stage of the study, more elaborate statistical models will be used to further investigate mobility behaviour in relationship to students' attributes and their perceptions of mobility obstacles. The final project report will be released in autumn 2012.



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