

EFMD RESEARCH REPORT SERIES

2006 Report 1

The Bologna Process: Student Plans and Perceptions



A Survey by EFMD
and trendence
2006



EFMD RESEARCH REPORT

2006/1



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Methodology

This survey is a partnership between EFMD and trendence, with the support of AIESEC.
Sample survey covers 11.000 students, with 3265 fully completed responses.
The questionnaire was on-line from December 21, 2005 till March 6, 2006.

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Executive Summary

The major findings of this EFMD/trendence survey are as follows:

1. Slightly more than half of the students surveyed have no in-depth knowledge of the Bologna reforms.
2. In those countries where current awareness among students is limited, the expectations about the positive influence of the Bologna reforms is higher than in those countries where knowledge about Bologna is more widespread.
3. Of those students who have not yet studied abroad and do not plan to study abroad, one in four never really considered the idea of studying abroad and one in four is not interested to do so.
4. Western European countries are by far the most preferred destination for studying abroad.
5. Respondents identify 'language' as the factor having the strongest impact on the choice of country in which to study.
6. 'Overall reputation' is the deciding factor as to which institution Bologna students will pick for foreign study. The other key factor is future employment prospects.
7. When finishing their bachelors degree, half of the students surveyed intend to study for a masters qualification immediately. One in four students plan to gain further experience and study for a masters qualification later.
8. When completing their masters' studies, about one in every three students plans to work in their home country. About one in every three students plans to work abroad.
9. Half of the students surveyed have no awareness about mobility scholarships.

Background

40 European countries have committed to simplifying and standardising their graduate and post-graduate education systems under an agreement called the Bologna Accord. This voluntary agreement is designed to synchronise the structure and standards of courses, making it easier for students to move easily between European universities and business schools.

The Bologna Accord will be fully implemented in 2010. The Bologna Declaration was signed on June 19, 1999. It was preceded by the Sorbonne Declaration in May 1998. At the Prague meeting in 2002, the element of lifelong-learning and the promotion of the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) were further elaborated.

Bologna aims to harmonise the European higher education systems by creating a single system of degrees (Bachelor and Master qualifications) within an agreed framework and with a consistent credit and grading system-creating choice for a new and growing European pool of over 2.4 million Bachelor graduates every year. The core objectives of the Bologna process are mobility, employability and increased competitiveness.

Bologna aims to harmonise 40 different European higher education systems by creating a single system of degrees.

Until now, however, little is known about how students perceive the Bologna process and up to which extent it will indeed influence their choices for their continued education. EFMD has undertaken this unique survey in partnership with trendence and in cooperation with the international student body AIESEC to map undergraduate student intentions and behaviour in relation to the Bologna reforms.

The current state of higher education in the 40 signatory countries

This Eurydice report on how higher education in Europe is structured covers the situation in the 40 states signatory to the Bologna declaration. Courses in higher education now have a two-cycle (Bachelor/Master) structure in 33 countries. Further information can be found in this Eurydice report: Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe (2004/2005). National Trends in the Bologna Process, Eurydice (<http://www.eurydice.org>)

The aim of the Bologna process is to create greater consistency and compatibility within European higher education and to enhance its international transparency and attractiveness. Central to the Bologna reforms are the three intermediate priorities emphasised by the Ministers responsible for higher education at the Berlin conference in September 2003, namely:

- The introduction of study programmes based on three main cycles
- More effective recognition of degree and periods of study
- The promotion of effective quality assurance systems



Jan Figel
Commissioner responsible for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism

The National Unions of Students in Europe

ESIB, the National Unions of Students in Europe, published the Bologna Analysis 2005¹ in May 2005. This report concludes that there is no homogenous situation throughout Europe regarding the implementation of Bologna. It notes a big gap between the decisions taken at the European level and the national practices. The report concludes that in many countries a “Bologna à la carte” is implemented focusing on particular action lines which are linked to national priorities.

ESIB furthermore notes that the implementation of the degree structure is advancing well with every year more students enrolling in BA/MA courses. However, too often existing programmes are relabelled with little further innovation. A source of major uncertainty for students is related to the labour market. Both private companies as well as public employers seem to have little awareness of the new structures.

The ESIB findings question the announced increased flexibility through the Bologna measures. In practice, more restriction and selection seem to be applied. Most striking is the effect of the two-cycle structure on gender. Still according the ESIB report, the Bologna structure promotes gender inequalities with female students dropping out after the first cycle.

The Graduate Management Admission Council

The GMAC Bologna report dedicates its chapter five especially to students and explores subject and national mobility, next to European and international mobility. The report raises a range of questions related to grants, loans and tuition fees. Further information and the full report can be found in the GMAC® Bologna Task Force Report at the GMAC website: <http://www.gmac.com>

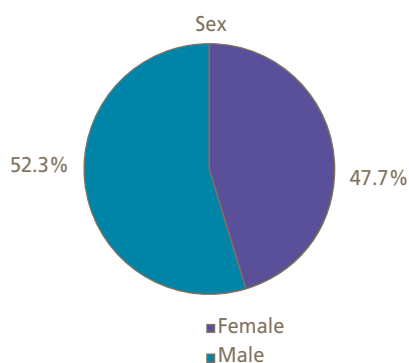
1 Bologna with student eyes, ESIB Bologna Analysis 2005, <http://www.esib.org>

Key Findings

Profile of respondents

The average age of survey respondents is 22.7 years old, with male participants being on the average 8 months older than the female students.

Slightly more male students participated in the survey (52.3 %) compared to 47.7% female students.



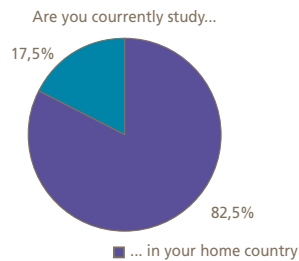
Geographical coverage

30 European countries are covered in this survey.

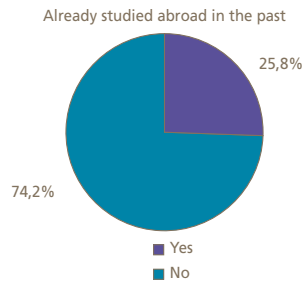


Country, level and subject of study

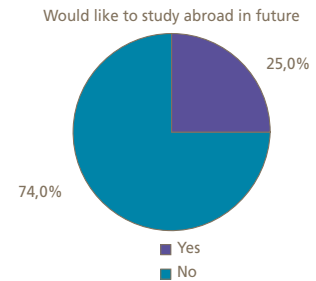
The large majority of students surveyed are currently studying in their home country.



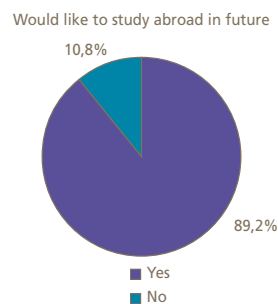
One out of four students have studied abroad in the past.



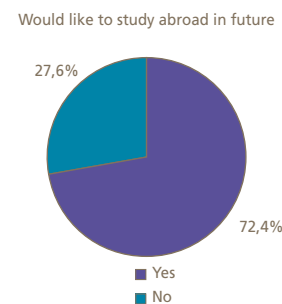
25% of the students surveyed would like to study abroad in the future.



Of those currently studying at home, but having studied abroad, about 1 in 10 would like to study abroad again.

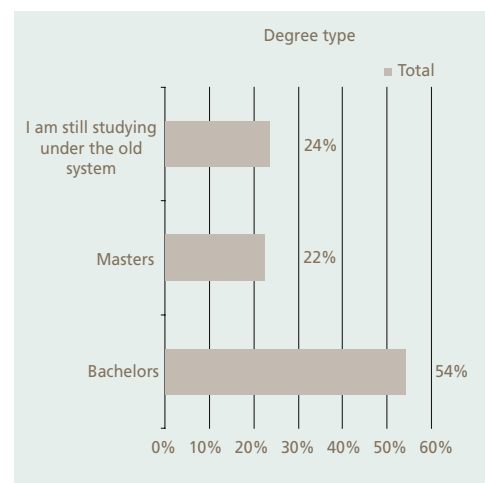


Of those currently studying at home, who have not yet studied abroad, nearly 3 out of ten would like to study abroad in the future.



Slightly more than half of the survey participants are currently studying for a bachelors qualification, about one fifth are studying for a masters.

Nearly 25% of the surveyed students are still studying under the old system.

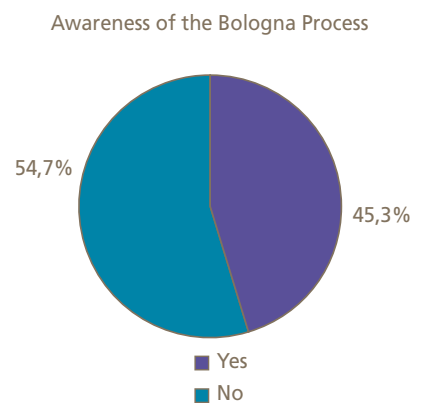


In the student population surveyed here, the main subject of study by large is business and economics.

Subject	Total
Agricultural science/Nutrition science	0.3%
Arts/Music	0.8%
Biological/Chemical Sciences	1.8%
Business/Economics (e.g. international business, finance, marketing)	72.8%
Computer Science/IT	8.0%
Engineering (e.g. electrical/electronic, chemical or industrial engineering)	8.6%
Humanities	3.3%
Languages	14.1%
Law	6.5%
Maths	3.9%
Medicine/Health	0.9%
Physical Sciences	1.2%
Social Sciences (e.g. sociology, psychology)	5.8%
Other	6.4%

Effects of the Bologna reforms

Slightly more than half of the students surveyed have no in-depth knowledge about the Bologna reforms.

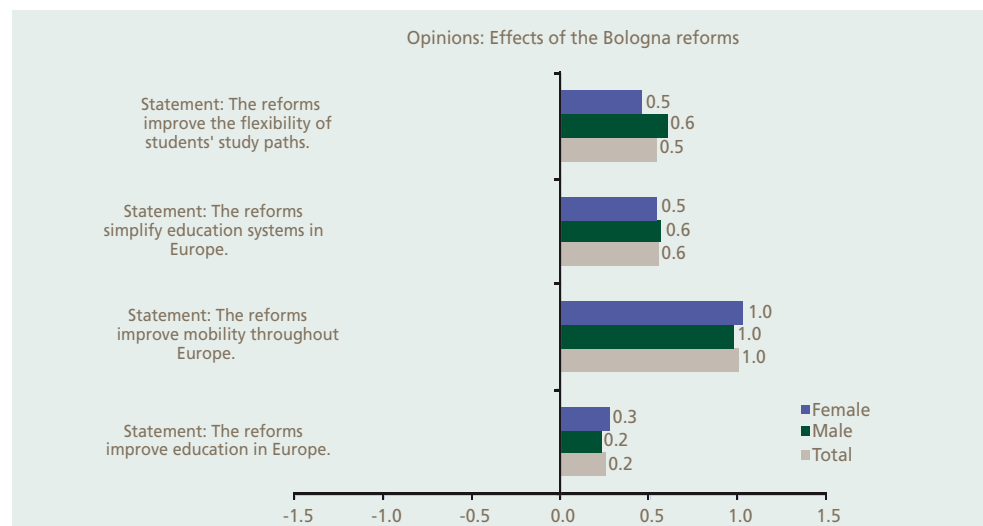


Respondents positively evaluate the Bologna reforms, in terms of:

- improving education in Europe
- improving mobility
- simplifying education systems
- improving flexibility

In those countries where current awareness is limited, expectations about the positive influence of the Bologna reforms is higher than in the countries where knowledge about Bologna is more widespread.

Students were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement using a four-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (-2) to 'strongly agree' (+2), as is illustrated in detail in the next figure.

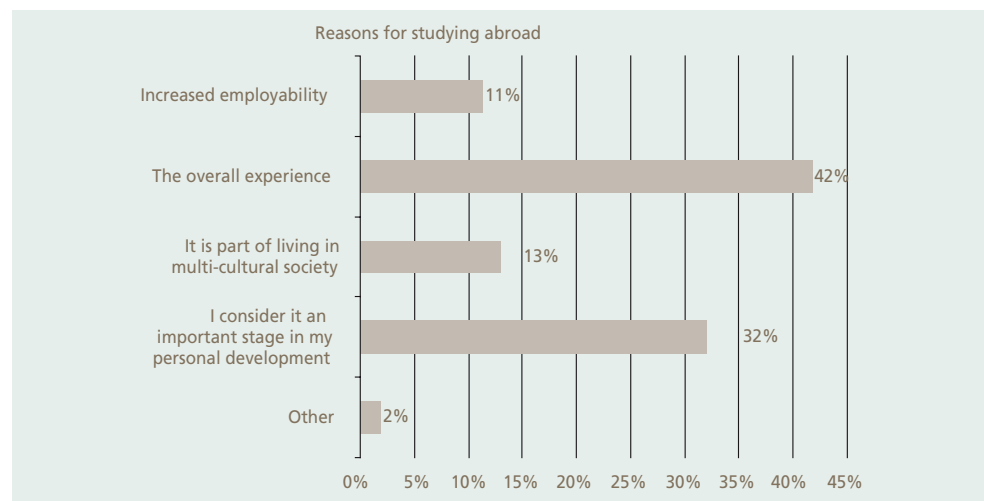


Reasons to study abroad

'Overall experience' is ranked the top reason for studying abroad by the students surveyed. Personal development is the second reason for studying abroad. These number one and number two factors rank quite consistently over the countries covered in this survey. Students in the UK are particularly keen about the overall experience of studying abroad.

Top four reasons to study abroad

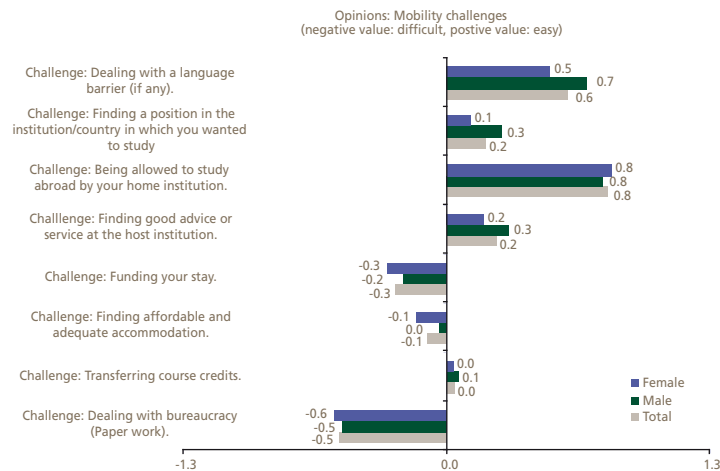
Factor	Rank
Overall experience	1
Personal development	2
Importance for the multi-cultural society	3
Increased employability	4



Top three challenges for studying abroad

Factor	Rank
Dealing with the paperwork – bureaucracy	1
Financial aspects – funding	2
Financial aspects – finding affordable and adequate accommodation	3

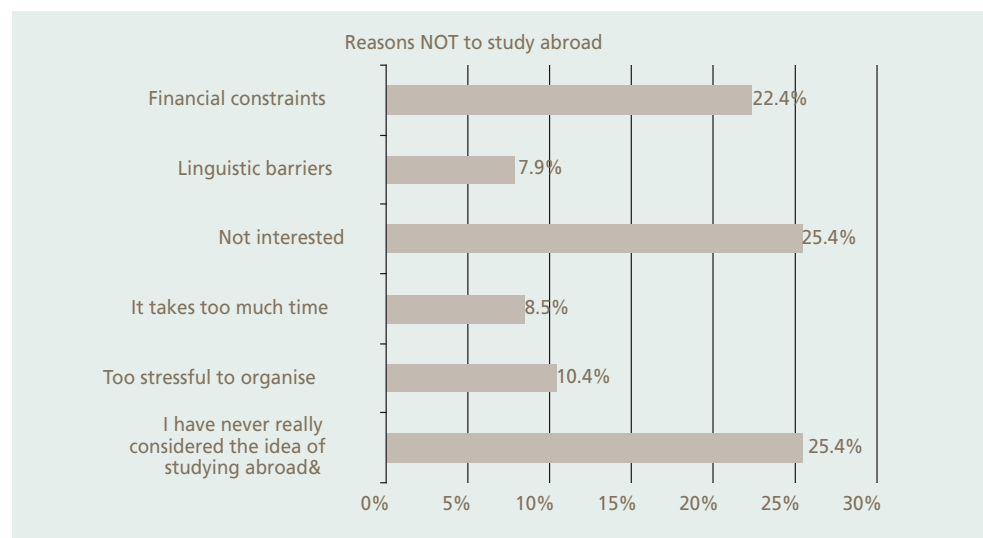
The students in this survey do not consider language as a key barrier, nor obtaining permission from the home institution.



Students were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement using a four-point scale ranging from 'very difficult' (-2) to 'very easy' (+2), as is illustrated in the figure above.

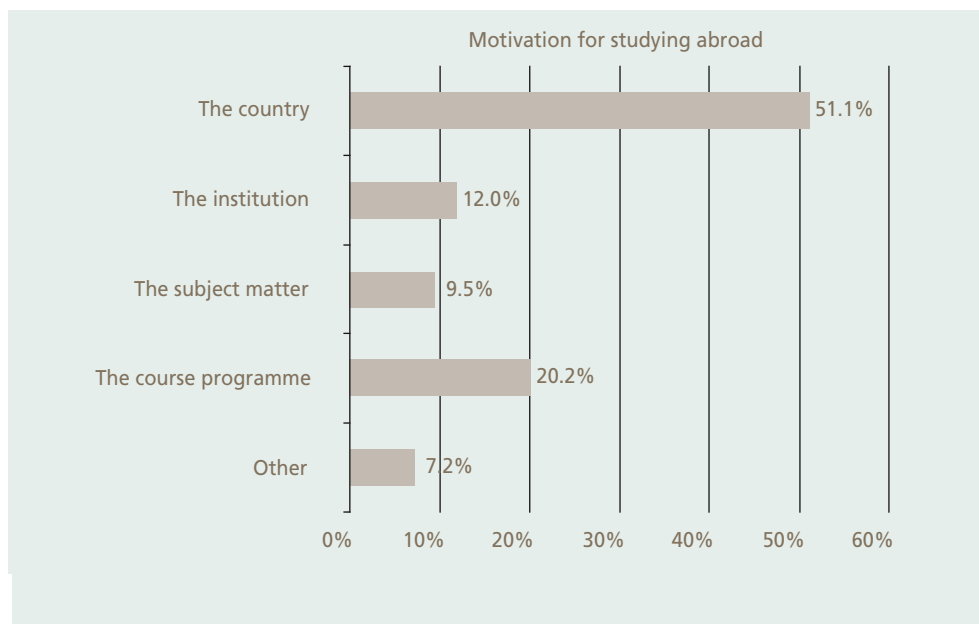
Studying abroad is no option for half of the students covered in this survey.

- Of those students who have not yet studied abroad and do not plan to study abroad, one in four never really considered the idea of studying abroad and one in four is not interested to study abroad.
- Financial constraints are seen as a major barrier to study abroad.



Students find most motivation to study abroad in:

1. the country
2. the course programme
3. the institution
4. the subject matter



Geographical preferences

Two out of five students prefer to study abroad in Western European countries. The USA ranks second as most preferred destination for studying abroad.

For those students currently studying in their home country, the most preferred European countries to study in are:

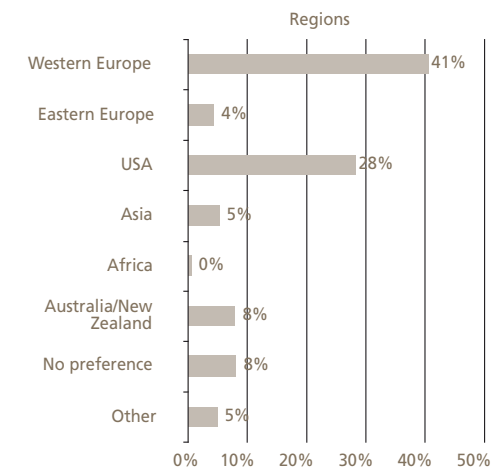
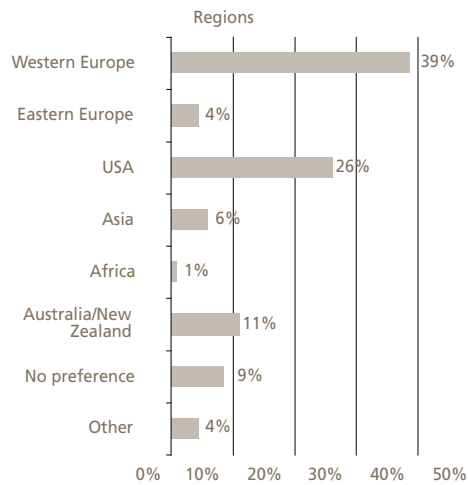
- United Kingdom
- Spain
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- The Netherlands
- Ireland
- Austria

For those students currently already studying abroad, the most preferred European countries in which to study in the future are:

- United Kingdom
- Spain
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Switzerland
- Sweden
- The Netherlands
- Denmark
- Norway

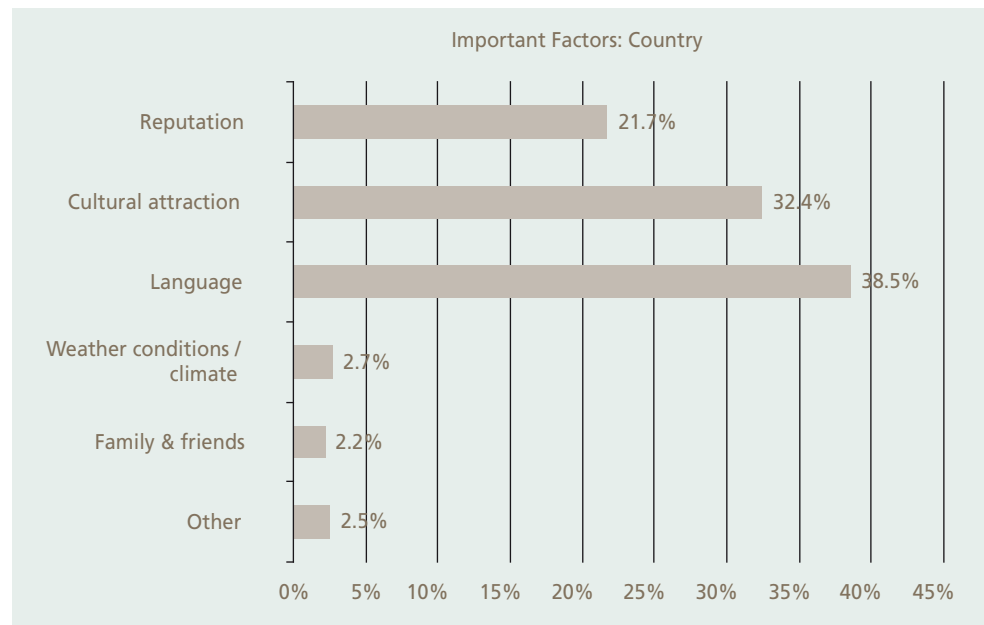
The most preferred region to study in – for those currently studying at home

The most preferred region to study in – for those currently studying abroad



Choice of country

Respondents identify 'language' as the factor having the strongest impact on the choice of the country in which to study. This is followed by 'cultural attraction' and 'reputation of the education system' as main factors.



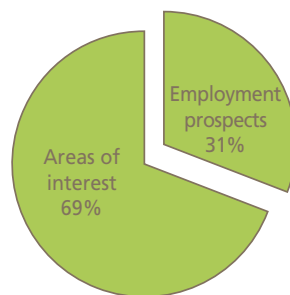
Deciding on the institution, subject and programme

'Overall reputation' is the deciding factor as to which foreign study institution Bologna students will pick. The other key factor is future employment prospects.

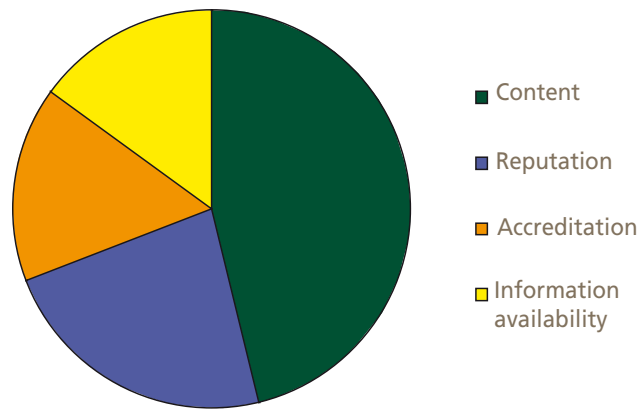
Top five factors impacting the choice of institution

Factor	Rank
Overall reputation	1
Future employment prospects	2
Available information	3
Location	4
Financial aspects	5

Students are lead primarily by 'area of interest' in their decision as to which subject to study abroad (67.6 %). Future employment prospects ranks second with 30.9 %.



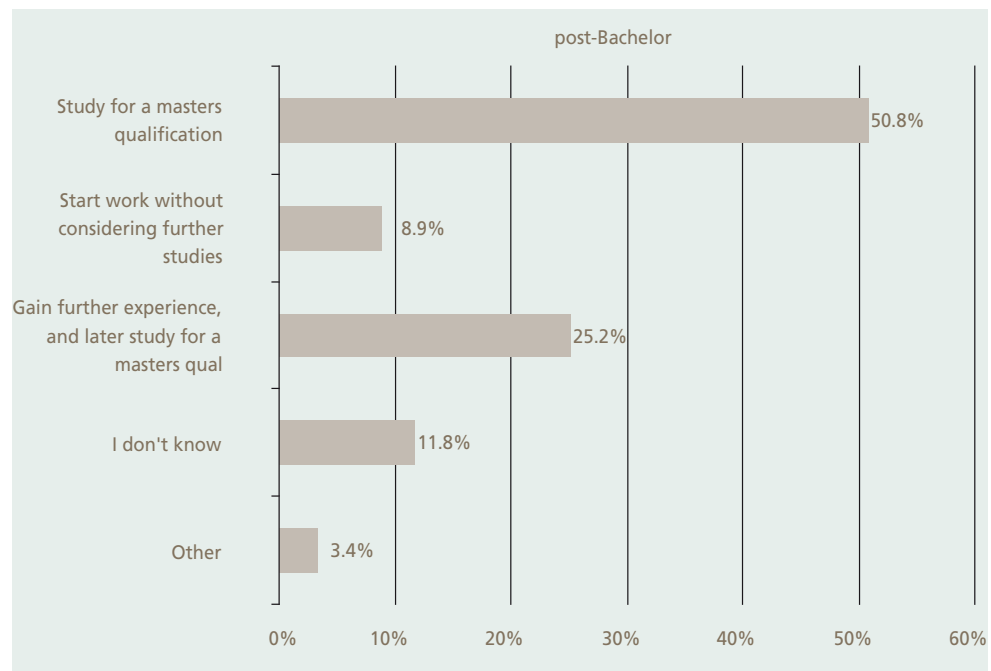
The most important criteria for choosing a foreign study programme are : content, reputation, accreditation and information availability.



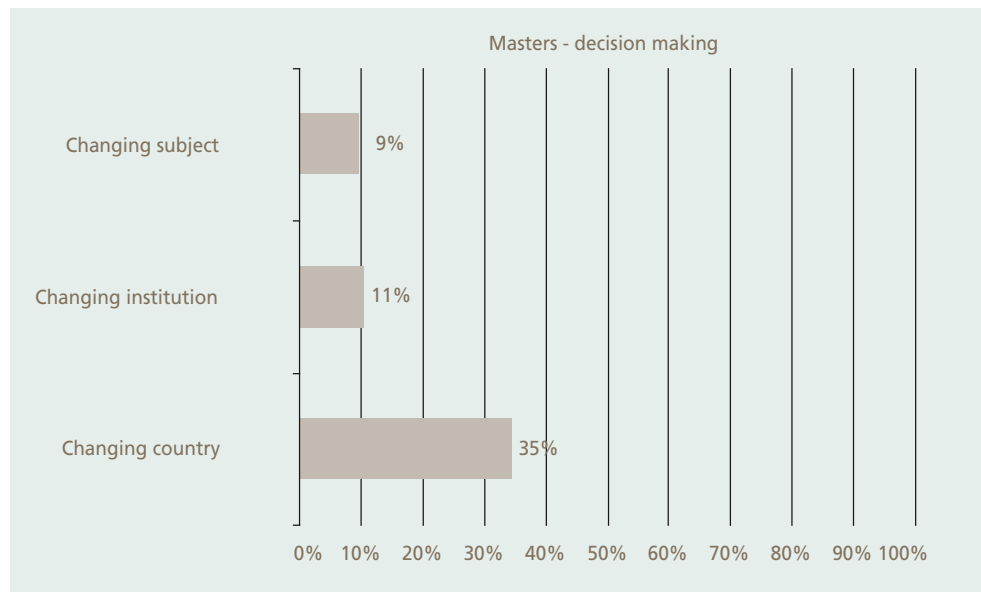
Future plans

When finishing their bachelors degree,

- Half of the students surveyed intend to study for a masters qualification immediately. This figure is fairly consistent throughout the countries covered in the survey sample.
- One in four students plan to gain further experience and study later for a masters qualification.
- About one in ten students is currently undecided.

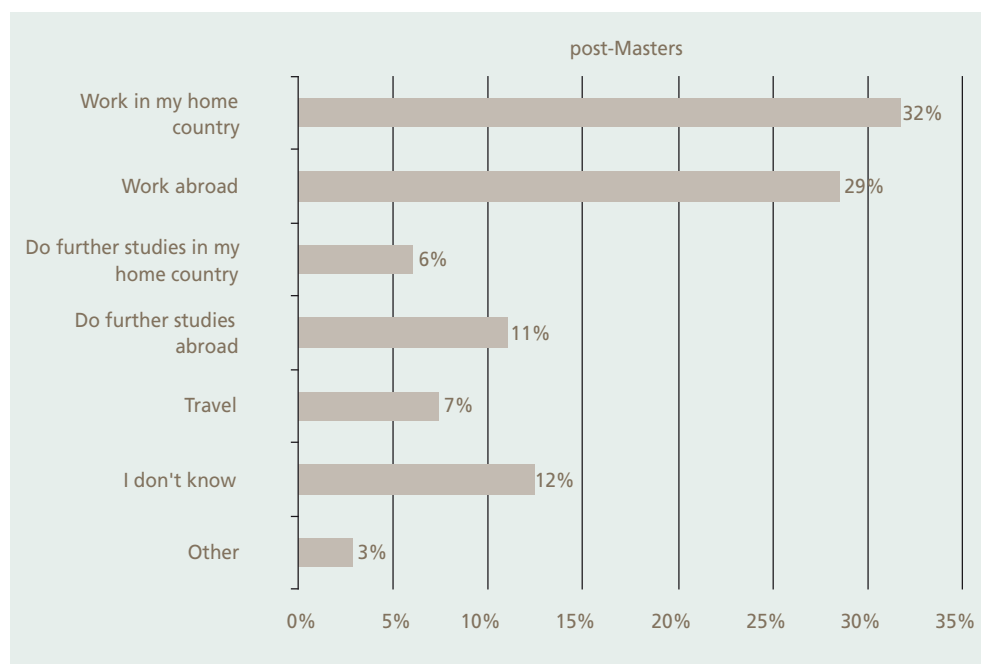


Before completing their masters' studies, one third of the students plans to change the country in which they study.



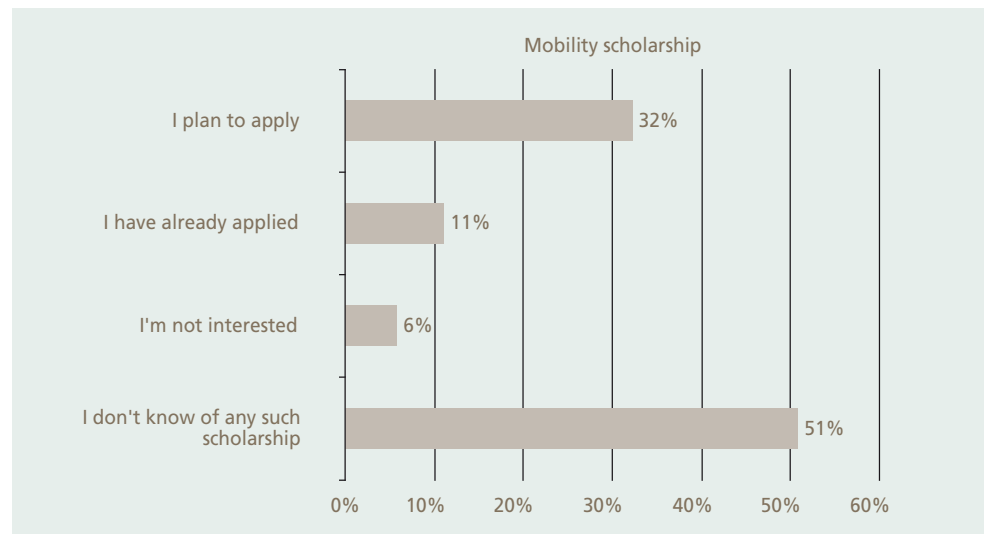
When completing their masters' studies,

- About one in every three students plans to work in their home country.
- About one in every three students plans to work abroad.
- About one in every ten students plans to do further studies abroad.



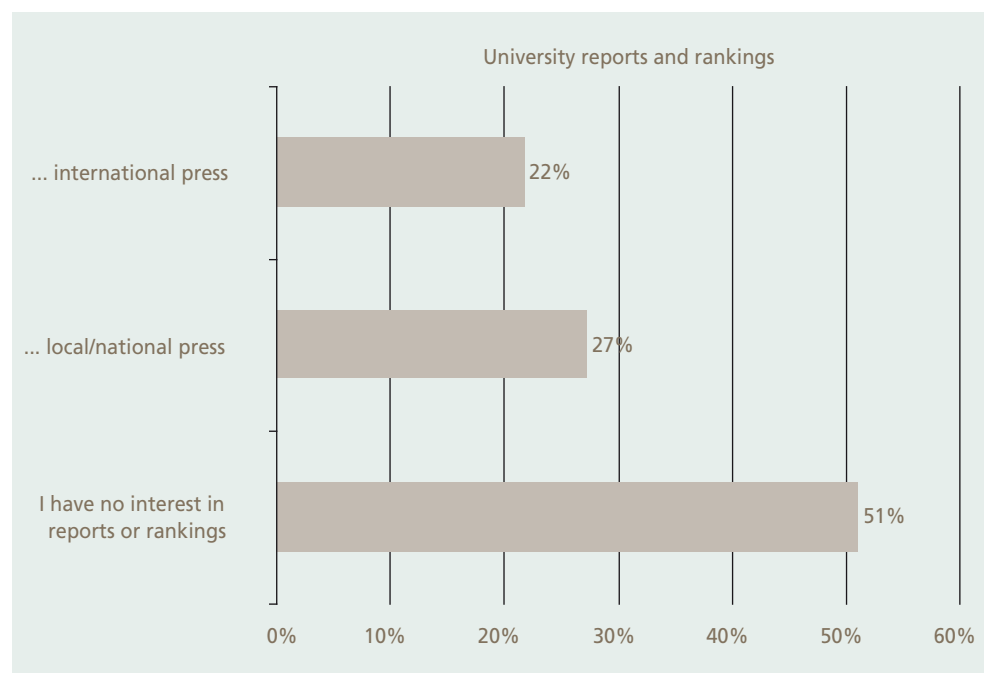
Scholarships

In general, about half of the students surveyed have no awareness about mobility scholarships.



Rankings

One in two students of those surveyed say to have no interest in rankings or university reports. 22% analyse rankings in the international press, whilst 27% analyse university reports and rankings in the local or national press.





EFMD is an international membership organization, based in Brussels, Belgium. With more than 600 member organizations from academia, business, public service and consultancy in 65 countries, EFMD provides a unique forum for information, research, networking and debate on innovation and best practice in management development.

EFMD is recognized globally as an accreditation body of quality in management education and has established accreditation services for business schools and business school programmes, corporate universities and technology enhanced learning programmes.

EFMD has over 30 years of experience in the coordination of projects & activities that fosters an active dialogue and exchange between companies and academic organizations

In a proactive manner, it contributes to a search for, and generation of, new ideas for a continual enhancement of management thinking and practices

- Maintains a series of on-going activities enabling its members to learn, share and network which helps contribute to a better understanding of the continual changes in the business and management education environments
- Initiates short events on highly topical issues bringing business executives and distinguished academics together
- Provides a context and environment that leads to professional networking and bridges the divide between the academic & business world
- Runs the European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS), which is the leading international system of quality assessment, improvement, and accreditation of higher education institutions in management and business administration. 92 schools have so far been accredited from across 28 different countries
- Manages international projects in Asia, CIS and the Arab World and has strong relationships with sister associations in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Central America, United States, Canada & Australasia
- Provides the platform for exposure to new learning environments. He generates and disseminates knowledge throughout the network for the benefit of its members. This ability to share allows for a better understanding of the latest developments in management development.

trendence

Since 1999 trendence has been producing comprehensive personnel marketing studies by surveying various target groups about their professional career development and aspirations, as a neutral market research institute. Located in Berlin with a diverse and dynamic team, trendence delivers credible and conclusive international research to multinational corporations and educational institutions throughout Europe.

Utilising a team of specialist analysts and consultants and working in conjunction with organisations throughout Europe, trendence has developed a powerful reputation amongst companies and the leading European universities for providing robust and comprehensive market research and consulting services. These services and products include regional and national surveys of student perceptions, career expectations and communication channels, brand analysis, print and web media analysis, strategic personnel marketing consultation services, as well as trendence's own print and web media publications.

This collaboration with EFMD represents an ongoing effort by trendence to work together with non-commercial entities and universities to analyse and understand the challenges faced by students and providers of higher education alike in an ever-changing environment.



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The EFMD was founded in 1971.

It is a not-for-profit international
association (AISBL)