

Are teacher training students internationally mobile?

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INTELLIGENCE BRIEF:

ARE TEACHER TRAINING STUDENTS INTERNATIONALLY MOBILE?¹

The EUROSTUDENT project collates comparable student survey data on the social dimension of European higher education. It focuses on the socio-economic background, living conditions and temporary international mobility of students. The project strives to provide reliable and insightful cross-country comparisons. The data presented below stem from the fifth round of EUROSTUDENT and were collected between the years 2012 and 2014. **The data are preliminary and may still be subject to minor changes.**

Relevance of international mobility for teacher training students

Higher education policy-makers suggest that international student mobility (ISM) is a driving force of European integration and that it entails advantages for students' later professional lives (EHEA Mobility Strategy, 2012). First evidence supports their claims: ISM leads students to develop structural identification with Europe during their time abroad (van Mol, 2013), it positively affects students' personality development (Zimmermann and Neyer, 2013) and it allows them to realise a steeper wage growth during their early career (Kratz and Netz, 2014). For these reasons, substantial public funds are being invested to increase the international mobility rate of students in European higher education.

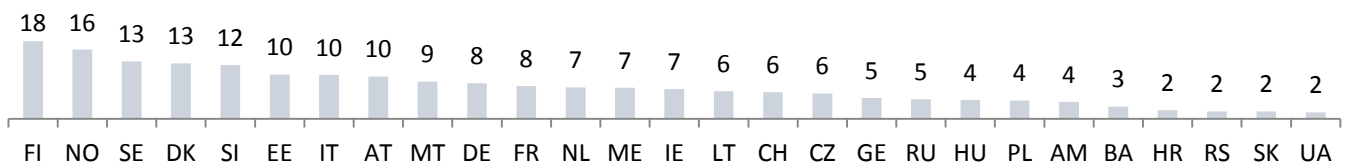
In this context, teacher training students may play a particularly important role, as they can positively influence the attitude of future generations towards ISM. Teachers will work with many pupils during their career and can explain the benefits of ISM to them. Research highlights that an early confrontation of pupils with international mobility is particularly effective in fostering a positive disposition towards ISM in the later life course (Weenink, 2014). Research also stresses the high social selectivity of ISM: In many European higher education systems, students from low social backgrounds are far less likely to go abroad temporarily (Orr et al., 2011; Netz 2013). Future teachers could again assume a multiplier function by encouraging children from different backgrounds to take advantage of the opportunities of ISM, thereby counterbalancing current selectivity patterns.

There also seem to be further individual benefits for the teachers. A major outcome of ISM is better foreign language skills (Teichler, 2011; Netz, 2012). An experience abroad is additionally linked to attributes that are desirable not only for language teachers, but for teachers in general. On the one hand, ISM is associated with increased levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy. On the other hand, it is linked to global mindedness and cultural sensitivity (Cushner and Mahon, 2002). Such dispositions and attitudes should effectively prepare teachers to handle culturally diverse classrooms, which is a challenge most teachers face nowadays.

Differences in foreign enrolment rates by country and field of study

Foreign enrolment rates differ notably between countries² in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). As Figure 1 shows, the highest foreign enrolment rates can be observed in the Nordic countries (Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark), followed by the Central European countries in the mid-range and the South-Eastern and Eastern European countries at the bottom.

Figure 1: Share of students who have been temporarily enrolled abroad during their studies (in percent)



Source: EUROSTUDENT V, K.4.

Methodological note: Cross-sectional student surveys such as EUROSTUDENT address students during their ongoing studies. As students can still go abroad after having been surveyed, student surveys tend to underestimate the eventual mobility rate of graduates. LV and RO are not displayed because case numbers for teacher training students who have been enrolled abroad are too low.

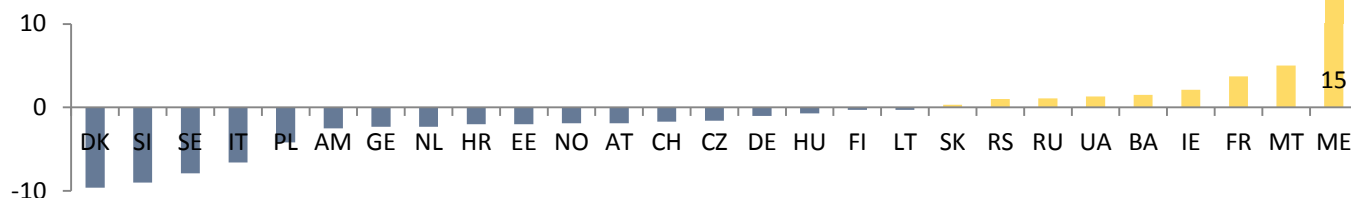
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²AM: Armenia, AT: Austria, BA: Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina, CH: Switzerland, CZ: Czech Republic, DE: Germany, DK: Denmark, EE: Estonia, FI: Finland, FR: France, GE: Georgia, HR: Croatia, HU: Hungary, IE: Ireland, IT: Italy, LT: Lithuania, LV: Latvia, ME: Montenegro, MT: Malta, NL: Netherlands, NO: Norway, PL: Poland, RO: Romania, RS: Serbia, RU: Russia, SE: Sweden, SI: Slovenia, SK: Slovakia, UA: Ukraine.

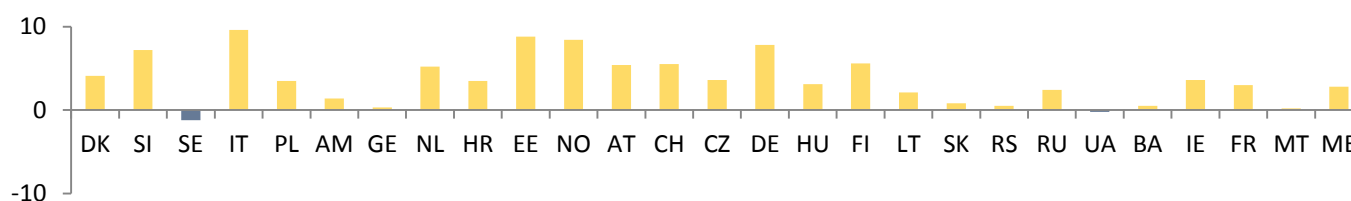
Foreign enrolment rates also differ markedly by field of study. To compare foreign enrolment rates across fields of study, Figure 2 shows the percentage point differences between the foreign enrolment rate of students in a specific field of study and the foreign enrolment rate of all students. A value above zero (=yellow bar) indicates that students in a specific field have a higher foreign enrolment rate than all students, while a value below zero (=blue bar) stands for a lower foreign enrolment rate – and thus for an underrepresentation.

Figure 2: Over- and underrepresentation of students who have been temporarily enrolled abroad by field of study (percentage point difference to share of all students who have been enrolled abroad)

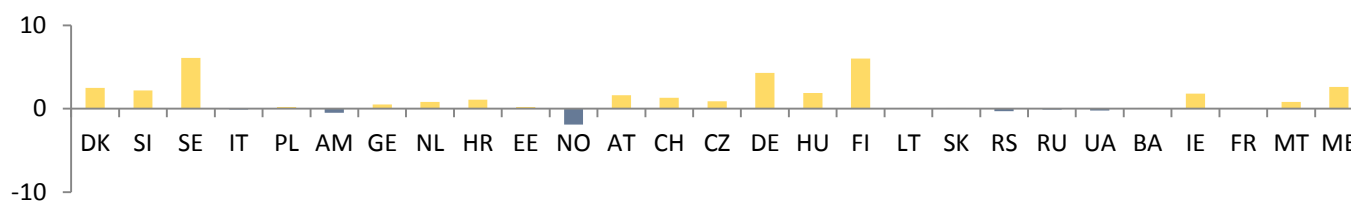
Teacher training and education science



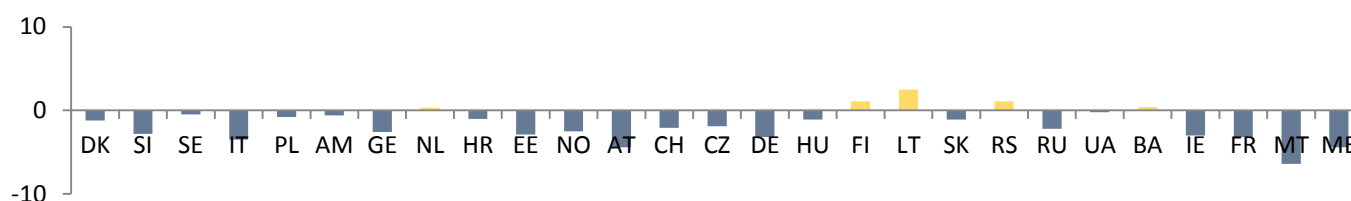
Humanities and arts



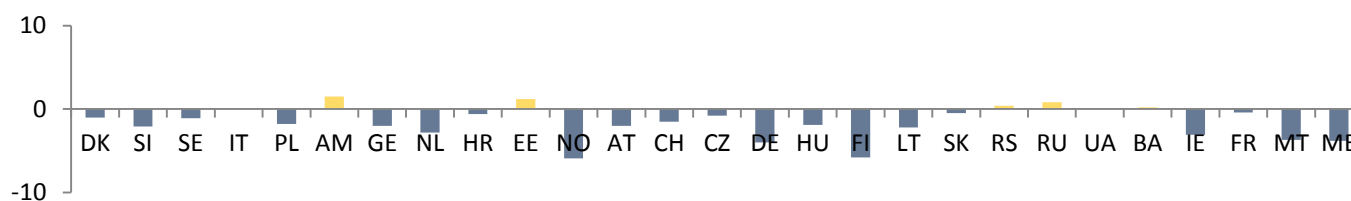
Social sciences, business and law



Science



Engineering, manufacturing and construction



Source: EUROSTUDENT V, K.4.

This comparison shows that teacher training students are underrepresented among those studying abroad temporarily in most countries. The largest underrepresentation of teacher training students is to be found in countries with a very high overall share of students who have been enrolled abroad (cf. Figure 1 and Figure 2). In a few countries, teacher training students are (slightly) overrepresented: Serbia, Russia, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ireland, France, Malta and especially in Montenegro. In Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Malta and Montenegro, they even have the highest foreign enrolment rate of all fields considered here.

Teacher training is not the only field in which students are relatively unlikely to study abroad temporarily. In most countries, students of science and of engineering are also underrepresented among those enrolling abroad, with a degree of underrepresentation mostly resembling that of teacher training students. In contrast, students of social sciences, business and law and particularly of humanities and arts have comparatively high foreign enrolment rates in most countries. This is not surprising, considering that a stay abroad is an opportunity for students to personally experience foreign cultures, which is what students of humanities and social sciences tend to be particularly interested in.

What might be the reasons for the comparatively low foreign enrolment rate of teacher training students?

To begin with, it should be noted that teacher training students are a very heterogeneous group. The structure of teacher training courses depends on the teaching level that students are training for (e.g. primary vs. lower or upper secondary levels). In most European countries, pre-primary and primary teachers are trained according to a concurrent model (practical training in schools alongside possible studies), whereas the study programmes of lower and upper secondary teachers are organised in a consecutive model (practical training after completion of studies). The duration of teacher training programmes varies substantially by teaching level, from two to seven years depending on the country under observation (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2013). Moreover, teacher training programmes all tend to include pedagogical elements, but they differ greatly regarding the subject-related knowledge that students acquire. There is thus no uniform teacher training in European countries (Zgaga, 2008). Teacher training students often follow the same courses as non-teacher students in form and content. It can therefore be assumed that they also face the same field-specific barriers to ISM.

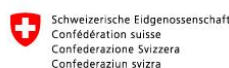
The comparatively low foreign enrolment rate of teacher training students may be also explained by their lower incentives for going abroad. Due to the heterogeneity of educational systems across countries, teachers are usually bound to work in the country in which they studied. They hardly compete on the international labour market. Moreover, whilst ISM is associated with a slight monetary compensation in most fields of study, this is not the case in the domain of teaching (Netz, 2012). Leaving aside language students, the opportunity costs of a stay abroad may thus be higher for teacher training students.

Implications for higher education policy

If policy-makers in the EHEA aim to substantially increase ISM rates, it could be helpful to introduce a focus on ISM early in students' educational histories. In this context, the training and qualification of future teachers assume particular importance, as they may function as mobility ambassadors. Existing exchange programmes (e.g. ERASMUS+) could place a stronger emphasis on improving the mobility opportunities of teacher training students. There might also be a need for harmonising the structures of teacher training and teacher employment across European countries. This could make ISM more attractive for teacher training students. Finally, any attempt to improve mobility opportunities for teacher training students should take into account their great diversity.

EUROSTUDENT V final report and final conference

Of course, there are other important questions when it comes to the international mobility of students: How do patterns of international student mobility differ between different socio-demographic groups of students, e.g. by sex and social background? How do students organise and finance their enrolment periods abroad? To what extent are their stays abroad recognised at home? Which are the main obstacles to an enrolment period abroad? And what is the degree of internationalisation at home? These questions will be investigated in the new EUROSTUDENT Synopsis of Indicators – to be released at the final conference on 25th-27th February 2015. See conference website for details: <https://socialdimension-he.eu/>



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