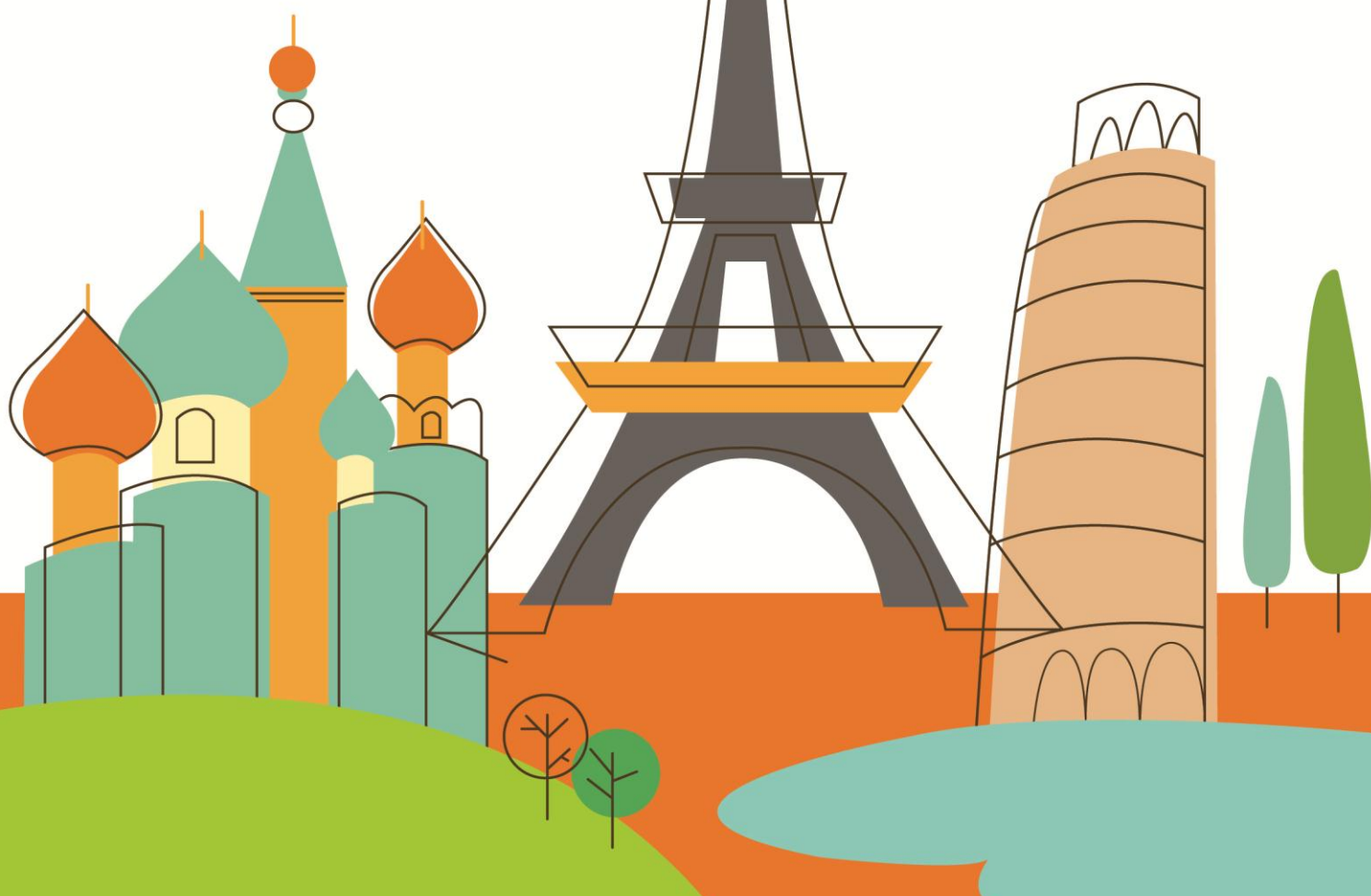
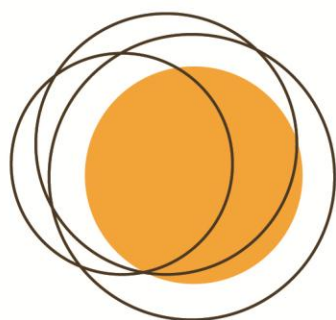


Key influencers of international student satisfaction in Europe



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ESN is an international youth organization present in more than 360 universities in Europe, helping international students and promoting internationalization in Higher Education Institutes.



ESTIEM

ESTIEM is the student organisation fostering communication and cooperation between students and universities in Europe, within the field of Industrial Engineering and Management.



SIU

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PREFACE

Dear reader,

Please take 1 minute to answer the following questions:

On a scale of 0 to 10, would you recommend your study experience to your friends?

Why? What are the main reasons why you would (not) recommend?

Please keep your answers in mind. Now imagine that we would have asked you to fill out a traditional 30 question survey about the same topic. Would you have taken the time to fill that out? Would you have kept your concentration until the end? Most probably our questions would have been divided into sections like: Application Process, Campus, Facilities, Teaching, Curriculum, Support Staff, Career Perspective, Accommodation, and Finance. Which of these aspects actually came to mind when we asked the 'Why' question above? And, looking at your answers to the questions on all those sections, would an analyst be able to determine what really drove your (dis)satisfaction?

The first question we posed above is actually the core of a relatively new but highly popular methodology called the Net Promoter Score (NPS), which has five big advantages: 1) it measures satisfaction in a very straightforward way and the outcome can be compared with other services, products or even life experiences, 2) it has a very high response rate since it is so short and easy to understand, boosting reliability and representativeness of results, and 3) you are not biased by any categories we made up and you only mention aspects you really care about. Therefore 4) it has been proven that this score is the most reliable indicator of social promotion and a predictor of future success, and 5) it truly helps to understand your target group and to motivate people at any level of an organisation to focus their activities on improving the quality of your services.

The NPS is already widely used by many renowned organisations and industries, including Proctor & Gamble, Apple, and Allianz, as well as many public institutes and governments around the world. And now, for the first time, it is applied to Higher Education in Europe on this scale. We proudly present you this report on international student satisfaction in Europe and the key drivers that determine (dis)satisfaction.

FOREWORD

By Bernd Wächter

Director of the Academic Cooperation Association, Brussels

The study *“Key influencers of international student satisfaction in Europe”* provides useful insight into the major factors impacting on students’ criteria when judging the success of their study abroad experience. It reveals that international students are more satisfied with their study experience than domestic ones. This appears surprising, but is so only at a first glance. After all, domestic and international students value different aspects of study, something this study shows too. Domestic students attach high importance to what the study calls “Academics”, i.e. the quality of teaching and learning and the quality of professors. The satisfaction levels of international students are much more dependent on personal development (“Personal growth”) and the non-academic environment (“City atmosphere”). This roughly ties in with the results of some 20 years of evaluation of the Erasmus Programme, which revealed that the major learning taking place was in soft areas, i.e. the learning of a new language, the acquisition of intercultural skills, personal maturing and learning in new social settings. We knew already that this is typical of temporary mobility (or credit mobility), where students go abroad for a semester or a year. And students on temporary mobility form a large part of the respondents of the present study.

The choice behaviour of international degree mobility students, who mostly aim to complete a whole degree abroad, is different, as far as past research is concerned. In the study “perceptions of European higher education in third countries” (ACA, 2006), ACA surveyed over 20,000 prospective international students outside of Europe. The findings of this study stand in some contrast to those of the present “influencers” study – at a first glance. In the “perceptions” study respondents were, amongst other things, asked to specify the decisive factors in choosing a country or university. Overwhelmingly, respondents opted for academic quality and reputation (“world-class”) and career prospects. Issues related to the wider non-academic environment and student life played a relatively minor role. To put it a bit bluntly: the majority of the respondents in the “perceptions” study would have gone to the moon or the North pole if they had hoped to find a highly reputed university, a good and globally recognised education, and a highly paid job afterwards.

How to explain the difference between the two studies? Two factors might come into play. First, the students sampled in the “perceptions” study were (potential) degree mobility students, i.e. such intending to earn a full degree abroad. As already indicated, and underlined in this report as well, this group is governed by very different preferences than those of international credit mobility students. Second, all respondents in the “perceptions” study were non-Europeans, whereas the present study includes a fair share of Europeans. Non-Europeans seem to have preferences different from those of their European counterparts.

A third surprising finding of the “influencers” study is that countries like Poland and Portugal score highest for satisfaction, and a country like the UK amongst the lowest (although all countries score relatively well). Portugal and Poland have amongst the lowest shares of international (degree) students in the European Union – and the UK is amongst the leaders in attracting students from abroad. Again, this striking difference might be due to the two different cohorts – full degree students and Erasmus-type credit mobility students. But, more important still, international student flows say something about *expectations* of students *before* embarking on study in another country. The “influencers” study reveals something about students’ *real* satisfaction once they are abroad. Therefore, it could be argued that countries like Portugal and Poland are undervalued in student choice, for the few students who opt for these countries are actually highly satisfied with their choice. In other words: the analysis of international student flows alone does not reveal the whole picture. It must be accompanied by research like the present one.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

International students in Europe are very satisfied with their study experience. When asked if they would recommend their experience to their friends, an astonishing 77% of all respondents answered with a 9 or 10 (on a scale of 0 to 10). The study uses the relatively new but already widely applied satisfaction survey methodology called Net Promoter Score (NPS). The main outcome of this study is a measured satisfaction level of +72 (on a scale of -100 where everybody would discourage studying abroad, to +100 where everybody would promote studying abroad). This score shows that students are more positive about their international study period in Europe than about any other product or service that they spend their time and/or money on. This is a big compliment to all those involved in internationalisation of European Higher Education.

International students were also asked for the top reason(s) *why* they would or would not recommend their study experience, which resulted in 2,982 reasons by 1,482 respondents. In line with NPS methodology, the response form was free format and therefore free from any bias that gets introduced by the structure of a traditional survey. These reasons are the true drivers of student satisfaction; the prime aspects that affected their overall opinion of their experience. Through analysis and categorization of these reasons, the *key influencers* of international student satisfaction in Europe were identified.

The results of this study help to understand what students find important, and also what not. These insights will help all stakeholders, and higher education institutes and policy makers in particular, to better focus their activities, resources and budgets.

Influencers

In order of importance, student satisfaction is driven by personal growth, a lively city atmosphere, the ability to learn a new language, interest in the subject area, innovative teaching methods and good teachers, and the intercultural experience. Negative influencers are mainly low quality of the teachers (more specifically: low language proficiency) and poorly organized university services. Below follows a categorized overview of all influencers.

Academics (21% of all reasons, 606 positive and 13 negative)

- The ranking and reputation of a university is important in choosing a university (mentioned in 9% of all reasons). Once enrolled, other aspects actually influence satisfaction: the quality of education, interest in the academic discipline and whether professors are front-runners in the field (6% of all reasons are about the subject or research area).
- Innovative teaching methods are appreciated. To experience a different educational system is an incentive to study abroad, and students express their appreciation for group work,

interactive lessons, and above all: friendly and approachable professors and teachers.

Respectively 3% and 4% of all reported reasons relate to Teachers and to Teaching methods.

- Improving language proficiency of faculty staff is relatively straightforward but also necessary. Even though the total number of negative comments is low, one fourth of all negative reviews in this study are about teacher quality and their English proficiency. This indicates the importance of this issue.
- Despite the fact that on-going efforts to improve recognition are needed indeed, recognition does not seem to be an important influencer of student satisfaction (mentioned in less than 1% of all reasons).

Personal & Professional development (29% of all reasons, 826 positive and 0 negative)

- Students emphasize personal growth (15%), especially regarding becoming independent, maturing, and developing soft skills such as communication, adaptability and intercultural understanding. These are generally mentioned as individual goals rather than as drivers for future job prospects (the latter only mentioned in 1% of all reported reasons).
- Learning a new language and improving language skills are prime incentives to study abroad (mentioned in 6% of the reasons).
- There is a curiosity for getting to know a different culture (4%). Students report a growing awareness and understanding of other cultures and appreciate the international atmosphere.

City & Culture (27% of all reasons, 787 positive and 5 negative)

- Around 15% of all reasons to recommend a study experience are related to the city, and mostly to the city atmosphere. Students use city size as an indicator of the atmosphere, also in their study choice.
- The surroundings and travel opportunities are of influence as well (6% of all reasons). Sea, mountains, outdoor activities and easy access to other cities or countries are valued.
- In 6% of the reasons, the country and local culture are emphasized; students express their views on local norms, ways of thinking and general welfare.
- Being able to easily communicate with local people influences student satisfaction, this includes the whether locals are open-minded and if they speak English for instance.

Cost & Funding (3% of all reasons, 87 positive and 0 negative)

- Given the low number of comments on cost and funding, financial aspects seem to be more a decision driver (whether someone will go and study abroad) than a satisfaction driver (influencing satisfaction once someone actually does study abroad).
- The few reasons related to costs and funding were generally in a positive way about free services by the university, or relatively low living costs in several countries.

University services & facilities (4% of all reasons, 117 positive and 9 negative)

- Students discuss the availability of information and whether an organisation is well-structured. A good website is important: because of its informative value, but it also gives prospective students the feeling that the university is well organized and professional.
- Bureaucratic processes and complex administrative structures can be a reason to not recommend a university.
- Friendly and supportive university staff is appreciated and reflected in whether students will recommend a university based on the quality of its services.
- It can be recommended to organize a welcome weekend or event for international students. It is a pragmatic way to make students feel at home, get to know others and take care of administrative issues right away.

Social life (14% of all reasons, 417 positive and 3 negative)

- Making new friends and meeting new people from various cultural backgrounds is one of the five most important influencers (7% of all reasons).
- The presence of student associations (or lack thereof), influence the study experience, as reported in 3% of all reasons. Particularly appreciated are the various events.
- International students look for an international atmosphere, with opportunities of exchanging cultural experiences. It can be recommended to stimulate this.

Comparison of segments

Respondents were also asked to provide information about their study level, duration of the mobility period, and their origin and destination countries. Also, in addition to 1,482 international students, 336 domestic students took part in the study as well. This made it possible to compare across segments:

- International students are far more satisfied than domestic students (NPS +72 vs. +24). Domestic students place more importance on academics, whereas international students attribute more importance to their personal development. This result seems to underline that viewing a mobility period as a wide concept – combining the academic side, personal growth and cultural experience – make the study time far more interesting.
- Credit mobility students are in general a bit more satisfied with their study experience than full degree students, albeit with an NPS of respectively +75 and +63, both scores are very high. Full degree students focus more on the reputation of a university, whereas credit mobility (exchange) students emphasize the chance to learn a foreign language and to some extent also the new friends they make.
- Bachelor (NPS +71) and master (NPS +69) students are almost equally satisfied regarding their study experience. Master students more often mention academic reasons for recommending their study experience, whereas bachelor students emphasize their social life more (12% of all reviews, versus 6% by master students). Also, bachelor students more often

talk about their personal growth, typically highlighting independence, soft skills and broadening horizons.

- All countries in Europe scored an NPS of +50 or higher, which is truly exceptional. The five destination countries with the highest satisfaction rating are Portugal, Poland, Switzerland, Finland and Sweden. It is noteworthy that they outrank traditionally popular countries like the UK, Germany and France.
- International students from Europe (NPS +74) are a bit more satisfied than non-Europeans (NPS +66). The percentage of students who go abroad for their entire degree is significantly higher amongst the non-European students though (29%, versus 11% for European students). Just like degree mobile students, non-European students emphasize academic aspects, whereas European students place more importance on personal and professional development, just like credit mobile (exchange) students.

Several recommendations for international student associations, higher education institutes, and policy makers are included at the end of this report. We are confident that a good understanding of the key influencers of international student satisfaction, together with concrete actions to improve this, will help in achieving the ambitious internationalization goals in European higher education.

INTRODUCTION

This study identifies the key influencers of satisfaction of international students in Europe. It takes direct feedback from international students on their studies and life in Europe, using a popular methodology called Net Promoter Score (NPS). The NPS is a two question survey that reveals what aspects really influence satisfaction, in this case about the international study experience in Europe. This encompasses the full range of their perception about their experience: including both educational and social aspects of an international mobility period.

Many renowned organisations in the services and consumer products industries use the NPS methodology to focus their activities, to improve their services and to guide strategic decisions and prioritization. This study is the first to apply this method in higher education. Stakeholders in European Higher Education will get a unique view on what students truly find important, and what not. As such, this report is particularly interesting for European universities, national institutes, policy makers and international student organisations.

The survey was conducted at www.stexx.eu: the Student Experience Exchange. This is a new social platform where students review their study experience and share their advice. It helps prospective students in choosing their study destination, to be better prepared and to have realistic expectations. It also shows valuable insights into the perceptions and decision making of international students and provides a clear picture of students' incentives and disincentives towards studying abroad in Europe.

In reading this report you will find what really drives international student satisfaction. You will discover differences in student needs, based on the level of education, destination and duration of the mobility period. Differences between domestic and international students are presented as well. And of course several recommendations and conclusions are presented.

We are confident this report will help to better understand the needs and desires of international students and will contribute to increasing quality of higher education and satisfaction of international students in Europe.

METHODOLOGY

NET PROMOTER SCORE

In order to analyse student satisfaction in Europe, the Net Promoter Score (NPS) methodology was used (Reichfeld, 2003). This is a relatively new but already widely spread survey tool that measures satisfaction of people towards a product or service, as well as the likeliness that people will promote it in their social network. The NPS is used by renowned organisations across the world and is highly popular as a management tool and a predictor of future growth. It gives much better insight into real drivers of satisfaction than traditional surveys: the survey is very short (2 questions only, driving high response rates and more reliable results), respondents describe the most important aspects that influenced their satisfaction in their own words (without asking any leading questions), and it has a strong communicative value with practical recommendations as outcome.

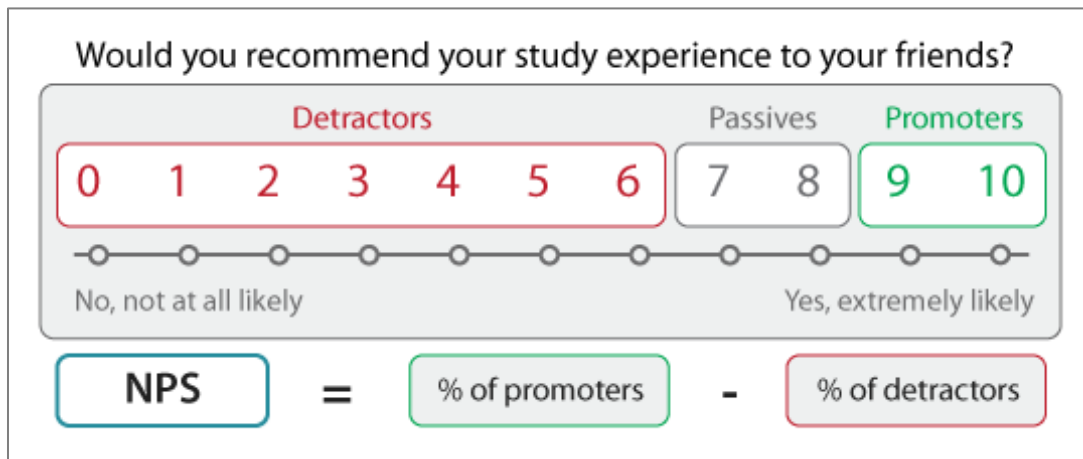
The first question of the survey is: *Would you recommend your experience to your friends?* Respondents answer on a 0 (no, not at all likely) to 10 (yes, extremely likely) rating scale. The second question is an open one, which a free text field: *“Why?”* By applying this methodology to higher education in Europe, it reveals the most important aspects that influence the satisfaction of international students. It identifies the top-of-mind reasons why they would or would not recommend their friends to study in a specific country, city and university.

The satisfaction rating explained

The outcome is therefore one overall satisfaction score (the NPS) based on the ratings. Combined with thousands of answers to the open question, prime incentives and disincentives towards studying in Europe become clear. The respondents are divided into three groups, based on the rating in answer to the question “would you recommend your experience to your friends”.

- Promoters (9 – 10)
very enthusiastic and extremely likely to actively tell their friends to go and study abroad
- Passives (7 – 8)
generally satisfied, but not such an overwhelming positive to actively promote it
- Detractors (0 – 6)
unsatisfied, likely to discourage their friends to follow their example

Figure 1: Explanation of the Net Promoter Score



The NPS is then calculated through deducting the number of detractors of the number of promoters, and dividing it by the total number of respondents. The NPS can therefore be as low as -100 (everybody is a detractor) or as high as +100 (everybody is a promoter). The higher this number is, the more satisfied international students are and the more likely they are to promote studying abroad in Europe to their friends.

By gathering information about the respondents on their education level, country of destination and duration of the mobility period, it is possible to compare the satisfaction of international students across these determinants.

COLLECTING REVIEWS

This report is based on reviews gathered online at the Student Experience Exchange platform www.stexx.eu. These reviews were directly published at this platform as well, thereby sharing the experiences with interested prospective students. A total of 1,482 (former) international students shared their study experiences through answering the NPS survey. In addition, 336 students who studied in their home country took part in the survey as well. The survey was conducted by the STeXX project consortium between January and September 2011. The STeXX project continues and now already has over 10,000 study experiences.

In addition to the relevance for the survey, these study experiences are accessible by anyone at www.stexx.eu. This helps prospective international students to choose a study abroad in Europe, to get valuable local insights, helps in preparing for an international mobility period and better matches expectations to reality.

Figure 2: Screenshot of the Student Experience Exchange platform www.stexx.eu

The screenshot shows the 'Write Review' page on the STeXX.eu platform. The header includes the STeXX.eu logo and navigation links like 'Find Bachelors', 'Find Masters', 'Find PhDs', 'Find Scholarships', and 'Find Short courses'. The main content area is titled 'Write a short review of your study experience!' and includes a list of reasons to write a review: 'help students like you to choose a study in Europe', 'learn from others by reading about their experiences', and 'share those tips that only you know'. The form contains several input fields: 'Where did you study?' (a dropdown menu), 'Level of Education' (a dropdown menu), 'Would you recommend your experience to your friends?' (a scale from 0 to 10), and 'Why? Any advice?' (a text area with a 'Reason / Tip' label). On the right side, there is a section titled 'Latest Reviews' showing two reviews with star ratings and text from students. The first review is from a student from Germany who studied at Luleå University of Technology, Sweden, and the second is from a student from Malaysia who studied in Marseille, France.

Classification

It is important to realize that even if a respondent rates his study experience with for instance a 9 out of 10, one or more of the reasons provided might still include negative ones, or vice versa. All comments were therefore classified by the reviewers with one of the following labels: negative, neutral or positive.

Categorization

All gathered reviews have been categorized by topic, after thorough analysis of the dataset range of topics. These ranged, among other things, from academic reputation, educational system and cost of living to personal growth and future job opportunities. Through the qualitative user research method Affinity Diagrams (Beyer, 1998), all reviews were categorized into seven main categories. In each category, reviews were further categorized into sub categories.

The detailed description of each category is presented below, along with examples. In one review, respondents often mention several reasons for their (dis)satisfaction at once. Hence, a review can be categorized under multiple categories at the same time, with a minimum of one and a maximum of four categories.

Table 1: Overview of review categories

Category	Sub categories				
Academics	Recognition	Reputation	Subject or research area	Teachers	Teaching
Personal & professional development	Discovering new culture	Career prospects	Learning (a new) language	Personal growth	
City & Culture	City atmosphere, looks & size	Culture, people & language	Surroundings, nature & travelling		
Cost & Funding	Financial aid	Living costs	Tuition fee		
University services & facilities	Accommodation	Campus atmosphere	Facilities & equipment	Quality of services	
Social life	International atmosphere	Making new friends	Nightlife	Student associations & activities	
Overall impression					

Academics

This category contains aspects of teaching and learning process. This covers academic factors such as: the reputation, subject or research area, teacher quality, education system and teaching methods.

“

The university has a high academic level, they provide high quality lectures and it is one of the oldest universities of Madrid. It is well known by companies and different organizations, so students have the opportunity to take advantage of these contacts in Spain and abroad.

”

Belgian student about studying in Spain

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

“

ETH has an excellent reputation.

”

Dutch student about studying in Switzerland

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 9 out of 10

“

Professional faculty where case study methods are used a lot in a very successful way, lectures are interactive, and the subjects are diverse (from marketing and HR to Project and Operations).

”

Student about studying in Serbia

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 9 out of 10

Personal & professional development

Personal growth and soft skills are typically covered in this category. This includes cultural awareness and understanding, independence and broadening one's horizon. Moreover, it includes professional development related topics, on for instance career perspective, future job opportunities, cv building and learning or improving language skills.

“

Because I came back changed, more independent, more self-aware, more tolerant, with friends all over the continent and a better understanding of how we are all surprisingly similar and deliciously different.

”

Romanian student about studying in Belgium

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 9 out of 10

“

My exchange improved my English skills, experience and made my CV more attractive on labour market.

”

Polish student about studying in Sweden

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

“

Everybody knows people in Scandinavian countries speak English very good, this improved my English. Also, you discover other ways of living and reflect on your own.

”

Polish student about studying in Finland

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

City & Culture

Typical topics include the atmosphere and appearance of the city, its size, annual events and whether it is a student city. This also includes other influencers of satisfaction, such as the location of a city, travel opportunities to (neighbouring) countries and the nature and surroundings. Finally, this category includes comments on the local culture, attitude of the people and their English proficiency.

“

Krakov is one of the oldest medieval cities in Poland. Full of beautiful buildings. It also is a great student city - many students live and party there.

”

Swedish student about studying in Poland

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 8 out of 10

“

Beautiful landscapes just around the corner, excellent outdoor activities, small but sizable town and, above all, a great student city!

”

Venezuelan student about studying in Norway

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 9 out of 10

“

I do enjoy travelling around. Turkey is just perfect place for it. I chose Isparta because it's near the sea and also close to other interesting places.

”

Czech student about studying in Turkey

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 8 out of 10

Cost & Funding

On the cost side, this includes comments on tuition fees, cooperation schemes, accommodation costs and various aspects of living costs and typical expenditures, including examples. The funding side typically includes scholarship opportunities, funding schemes and alternative ways of earning an income, such as part time job opportunities. Altogether, this covers the budget for studying and living abroad.

“

I studied in Budapest where the food is really cheap and good (there are many good restaurants in which a lunch menu will cost nearly 3.5 euro) and the nightlife too (the beer in an international bar like Szimpla is about 2 euro for a 50cl beer, in a typical Hungarian bar it would cost 1 euro, the entrance fees for discos and parties are cheap too). In Budapest there are many big markets where the prices are good and the quality too.

”

French student about studying in Hungary

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

“

With the Institute for Study Abroad I paid the same tuition as at home, this made it possible to go.

”

American student about studying in Denmark

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 6 out of 10

“

The amount of scholarship together with the cost of living is beneficial.

”

Azerbaijani student about studying in Greece

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 9 out of 10

University services & Facilities

This includes comments related to campus size, location, atmosphere and facilities (such as library, IT equipment and quality of laboratories). Service related topics include the international office, level of bureaucracy, quality of support and information provision such as website quality. Finally, it includes accommodation services provided by the university.

“

Everything is well organized and all necessary information and support is given to make the exchange run smoothly. Upon my arrival at the campus, there was a buddy waiting for me with keys to my apartment. I was given a start package with maps of the campus and surrounding areas and practical information. There is also a welcome event for exchange students so I quickly made friends and integrated into the social life on campus.

”

Finnish student about studying in Sweden

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 9 out of 10

“

This city has all kinds of services, the university even more. I never had to buy a book, everything is always available at the library of the university (and of course, for free).

”

Italian student about studying in Finland

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 9 out of 10

“

University accommodation is easy to arrange upfront and standard is very high.

”

Turkish student about studying in France

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 9 out of 10

Social life

Satisfaction influencers in the social life are included here, such as: making new friends, percentage of international people, nightlife and student activities. This also includes the network of student associations and their events.

“

The night life is awesome. The parties last until 6 in the morning and you can have a lot of fun there. Although the city doesn't offer too many cultural attractions, besides some museums, the castle and the bull fight arena and the centre is fairly small but still it was a fantastic experience and you will meet so many great and interesting people there.

”

German student about studying in Spain

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 9 out of 10

“

It is the best place on earth for meeting people of different cultures and friends for life.

”

Student about studying in Serbia

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

“

There are heaps of student associations and activities, which is in my opinion essential to make your university experience unforgettable.

”

Dutch student about studying in Spain

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

Overall impression

This category contains all comments on the overall experience. These comments are typically too general to be attributed to a specific category.

“

I just enjoyed it. And that was one of the best decisions in my life!

”

Lithuanian student about studying in Portugal
Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 8 out of 10

“

It was spontaneous. There is no specific reason, just go.

”

Student about studying in France
Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 7 out of 10

“

Simply awesome.

”

French student about studying in Italy
Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

RESULTS

The international student satisfaction in Europe was measured. A grand total of 1,482 international students participated in the survey and indicated the likeliness of social promotion. Together the respondents mentioned 2,982 reasons, thereby identifying key influencers of international student satisfaction in Europe.

Of these 1,482 international students, 180 come from a non-European country. Further on, this report also compares the influencers of student satisfaction between European and non-European students. Due to the high number of respondents that would be needed, it is not possible to compare results by country of origin.

In addition, 336 domestic students took part in the study, together mentioning 542 aspects that affected their satisfaction. As this study focuses on international student satisfaction, the response of domestic students is only taken into account in the chapter on national and international mobility, comparing satisfaction drivers between domestic and international students.

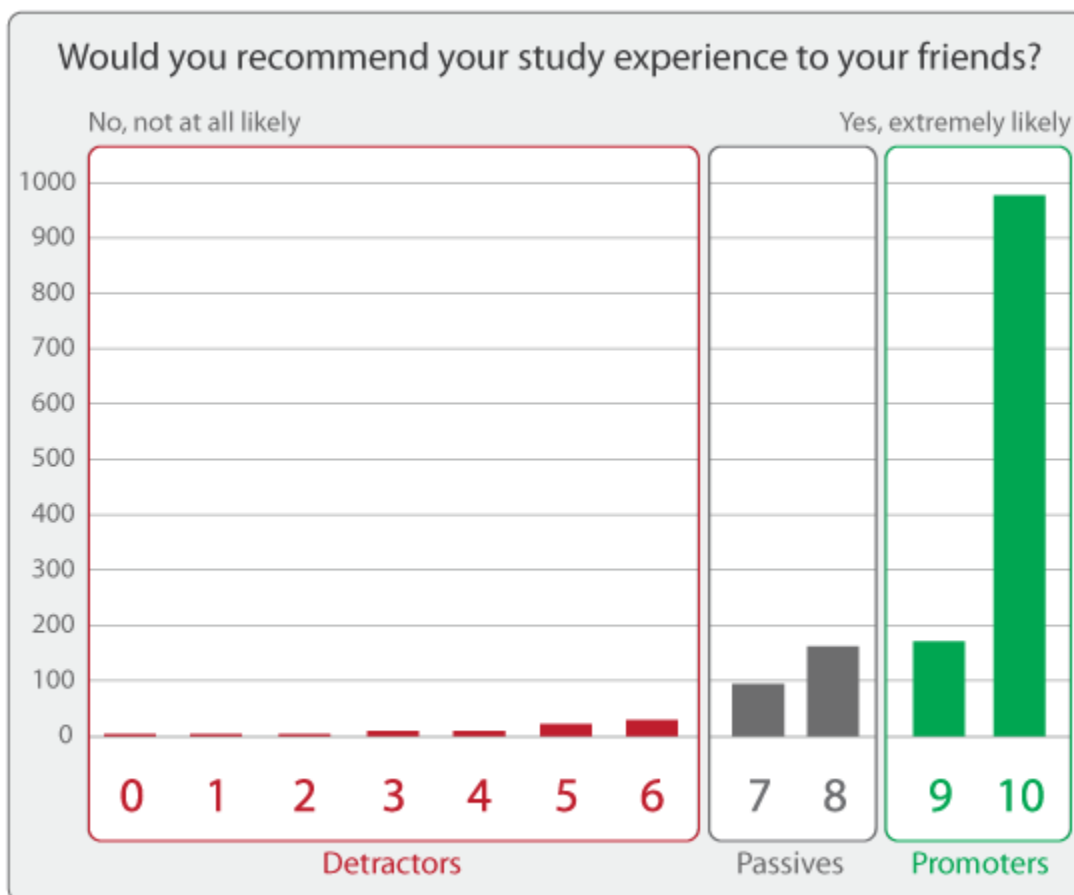
WORLD CLASS

International students in Europe are highly satisfied with their study experience at European universities. In total, 77% of all international students answered a 9 or 10 (the promoters) on the question “Would you recommend your study experience to your friends?” and only 5% answered 0 to 6 (the detractors). Together, this leads to the excellent result of +72 satisfaction rate, as can be seen in Table 2. Remember that the NPS can range from -100 to +100.

Table 2: overall result - number of international respondents and NPS

International respondents	N	%
Detractors (0-6)	78	5%
Passives (7-8)	256	17%
Promoters (9-10)	1148	77%
Total	1482	100%
NPS (% promoters - % detractors)		+72

Figure 3: number of respondents by satisfaction rating

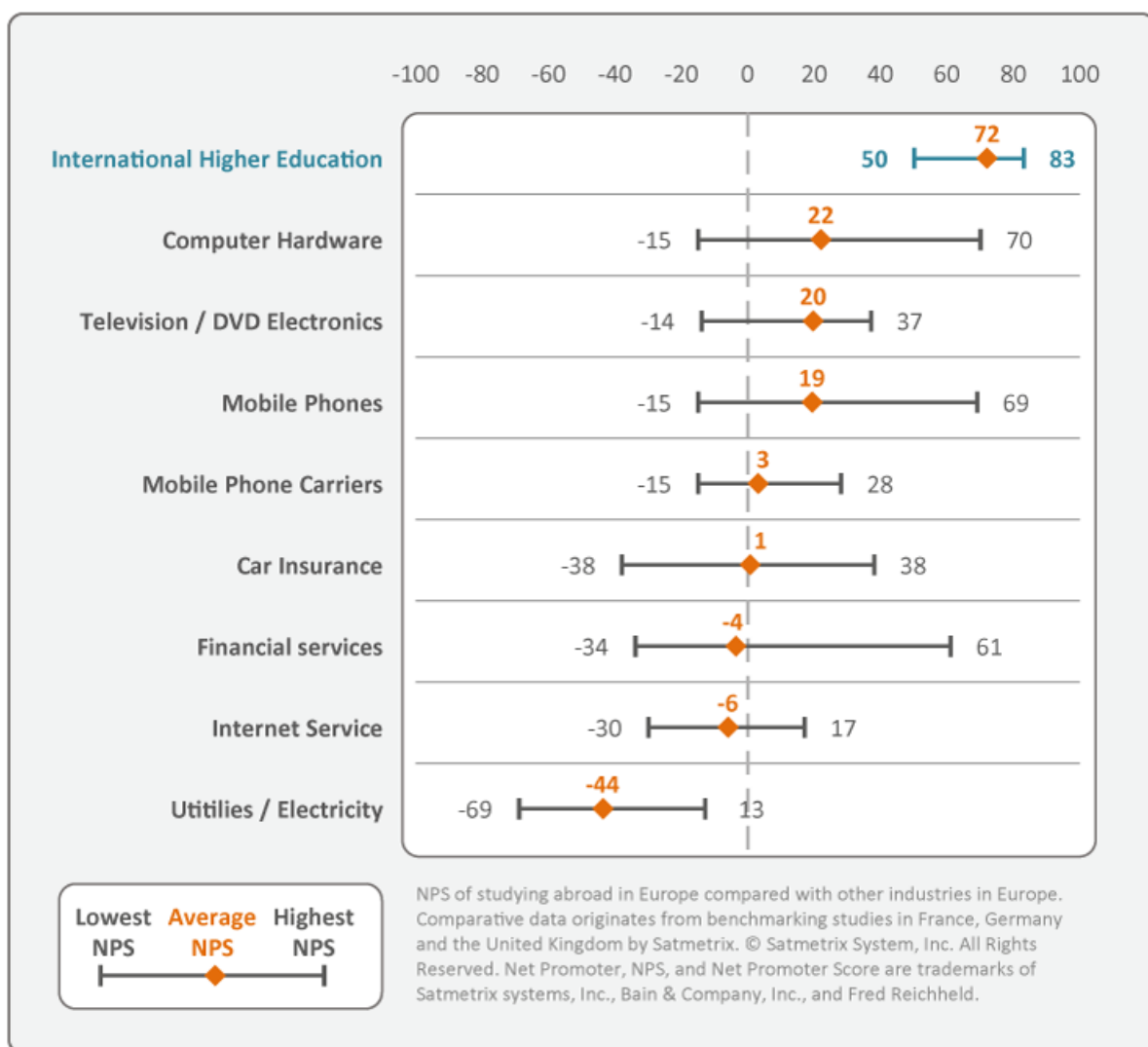


This is truly a world class result. A study mobility period abroad in Europe leads to exceptional satisfaction levels with regards to the study experience.

Per comparison: an NPS higher than 0 is generally felt to be good. An NPS score of +72 even beats top class companies that truly drive on customer satisfaction and social promotion. The trendy and user centred Apple brand for instance, reaches an NPS of +65 on average in Europe (Satmetrix, 2011), and the immensely popular social network Facebook remains at +36 (Netpop Research, 2011). Figure 4 compares the NPS of studying abroad in Europe with several industries. The lowest and highest NPS of International Higher Education relate to the NPS per country, as presented further on.

Of course, the decision on whether and where to study is quite different from buying a mobile phone or using a social network, to say the least. Nevertheless, it does indicate that a study mobility period is one of the best investments of students' time, budget and energy: international students are immensely satisfied with their study experience in Europe.

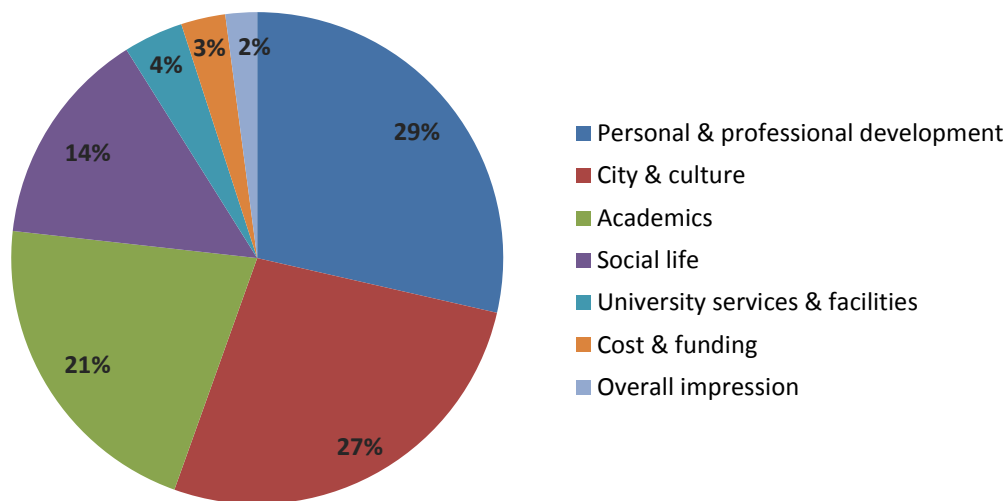
Figure 4: Comparison of NPS results across industries in Europe



INFLUENCERS

The high satisfaction level of international students regarding their study experience is mainly with thanks to Personal & professional development, City & culture, and Academics. 77% of all reasons mentioned are regarding one of these categories, as shown in Figure 5. The relatively equal spread between these categories gives a clear indication that the influence on the individual (both personally and professionally), the living environment and the learning environment together affect international student satisfaction.

Figure 5: Reasons by category



The key influencers of international student satisfaction in Europe surface when we take a closer look at the results in Table 3 (categorizing all reasons into 23 sub categories). Student satisfaction is often driven by personal growth (independence, maturing, developing soft skills), a lively city atmosphere, the ability to learn a new language, interest in the subject area, innovative teaching methods and good teachers, and the intercultural experience. In the rare occasion that someone does not recommend his or her study experience this is most often due to the quality of the teachers (more specifically: their language proficiency) and the quality of the services provided by the university. Albeit sometimes negative, these too are influencers of international student satisfaction.

These are the reasons why international students would recommend (or discourage) their friends to study abroad in Europe. This is what they report to be more important than for instance facilities, recognition, and even funding. This is what contributes to a positive experience and what drives international education in Europe.

Of course there are some segmental differences: master students emphasize academic reasons more than bachelor students (who are in turn a bit more driven by personal growth). The same difference is perceived when comparing domestic students with international students, and also when comparing credit-mobile students (who go abroad for a maximum of one year) with students who go abroad for their entire degree. These segmental differences are further elaborated on in later chapters.

Table 3: Influencers of international student satisfaction in Europe

Category	Classification				
	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total	%
Academics	13	16	606	635	21%
Recognition	1	1	5	7	0%
Reputation	1	0	258	259	9%
Subject or research area	2	9	168	179	6%
Teachers	8	3	70	81	3%
Teaching	1	3	105	109	4%
Personal & professional development	0	26	826	852	29%
Discovering a new culture	0	4	115	119	4%
Career prospects	0	1	32	33	1%
Learning language	0	8	243	251	8%
Personal growth	0	13	436	449	15%
City & culture	5	10	787	802	27%
City atmosphere, looks & size	2	4	437	443	15%
Culture, people & language	2	5	160	167	6%
Surroundings, nature & travelling	1	1	190	192	6%
Cost & funding	0	3	84	87	3%
Financial aid	0	1	10	11	0%
Living costs	0	2	67	69	2%
Tuition fee	0	0	7	7	0%
University services & facilities	9	7	101	117	4%
Accommodation	2	1	19	22	1%
Campus atmosphere	0	1	12	13	0%
Facilities & equipment	2	1	19	22	1%
Quality of services	5	4	51	60	2%
Social life	3	7	417	427	14%
International atmosphere	0	0	40	40	1%
Making new friends	0	4	212	216	7%
Nightlife	1	3	78	82	3%
Student associations & activities	2	0	87	89	3%
Overall impression	0	39	23	62	2%
Total	30	108	2844	2982	100%
%	1%	4%	95%	100%	

This table shows the number of reasons mentioned by the respondents, divided by topic (category) and classification (negative, neutral, positive). In the analysis of these results and in calculating the percentages of reasons per category, all reviews have been taken into account. After all, the question is what aspects influence the likeliness of recommending their study experience most. Therefore, whether someone is a promoter, a passive, or a detractor, and whether a review is positive or negative, the reason mentioned is still the most important influencer of their experience – even though the respondents with more extreme opinions (promoters and detractors) are more likely to actually spread their opinion.

The next chapters will focus on these categories one by one, discussing the influencers individually.

Academics

“

I had a great time; the course is well structured and interactive.

Portuguese student about studying in Denmark
Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 9 out of 10

”

“

The university combines academics and practical experience very well by involving a lot of companies in our study. We even have a business club for our study which includes a lot of different companies that give us lectures or offer a company visit. Furthermore having courses in small groups is quite normal so that you can be really interactive with your teacher!

German student about studying in the Netherlands
Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

”

“

I can't recommend it. Too many courses in one semester (up to 9), professors are "Gods" there, the structure of the studying material is horrible, some professors can't speak fluent English so it is not possible to understand them, and the lectures are from 9 am to 7 pm so you don't have any time for other activities or studying. Finally, to succeed, you should study very hard, spend all your free time at the library, otherwise you would not pass the exams.

Moldavian student about studying in Italy
Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

”

“

I chose this Vet School because of its high reputation in the field of veterinary science.

Chinese student about studying in United Kingdom
Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 8 out of 10

”

Reputation of the university (9%)

The reputation and ranking of university are one of the most mentioned aspects in this study. Reading through the reviews however, reputation is often mentioned as a reason to choose a specific university (before going there), rather than as a reason to recommend that particular university to their friends (while or after studying there). Students who already study somewhere are more likely to recommend a university on more personal experiences, such as quality of the teachers and the academic programme, rather than the overall reputation of university.

Nevertheless, the number of reviews on this topic still stresses the importance that students place on reputation and rankings in decision making. Universities that receive positive comments on their reputation are not only typical top 100 universities though. It can be universities renowned in a specific study discipline or universities that are high ranked within a certain region or country.

Subject or research area (6%)

The specific field of study or research is one of the top influencers of student satisfaction. This is often expressed through showing appreciation for their specific academic field. Students are most likely to recommend their own study programme, rather than their academic field in general. In other words: when it comes to the subject area, students show loyalty towards their own university. This is especially the case if the quality of the study programme is high or if the faculty being well-known in the field. As such, highly specialized study programmes are more often recommended because of their academic field than others.

Teaching (4%)

Teaching method can contribute to student satisfaction. Students focus their attention on the quality of the study material and particularly express their appreciation for interactive study methods. Interesting presentations, working in small groups and the possibility of asking questions are all positive influencers. Moreover, students appreciate if company visits and other ways of gaining practical experience are included in the curriculum.

A high workload can be seen as a positive influencer since it results in a higher learning outcome and creates a sense of pride with students when they successfully complete their study. However, it is more often a negative than a positive influencer of student satisfaction. Finally, students appreciate well-structured courses and clear communication of all requirements.

Comments on teaching methods are not limited to the specific programme or university. Some students are for instance looking to experience a different education system or academic environment from their home country. Also, approximately half of the students recommend the education system in a country in general. This is mostly the case if a country is known for innovative teaching methods and group work. Finland, Denmark and the Czech Republic are typically recommended in this respect.

Teachers (3%)

Foremost mentioned in this category is the English proficiency of teachers, which really is a decisive factor in whether a student will recommend a particular university. Out of all negative comments, 27% is regarding teacher quality and their English proficiency. On a positive note, several universities (and countries in general) are recommended because of the high level of English proficiency.

When professors are internationally renowned or highly skilled within their area, it is also a reason to recommend a study experience. Finally, a passionate style of teaching and approachability of the professors is of influence. A close and relatively personal interaction with professors is much appreciated by students, as well as professors being available and supportive.

Recognition (7 reviews, <1%)

Few comments are dedicated to the recognition of (parts of) a degree. Some students indicate their choice of university was affected by the fact that their university recognized their diploma or courses, or because there was a bilateral agreement between the home and host university. However, recognition is not a top of mind reason for recommending a study experience. One reason for this could be that students will only comment on recognition in a negative way. It is likely that there are more attractive reasons to study somewhere than the mere absence of recognition issues. Moreover, a considerable part of the respondents was still studying at the time they participated in the survey. If any recognition issues occur, this will most likely happen at the end of their study period whilst returning home or applying for a different university.

Personal & professional development

“

You come back changed, more independent, more self-aware, more tolerant, with friends all over the continent and a better understanding of how we are all surprisingly similar and deliciously different.

”

Romanian student about studying in Belgium
Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 9 out of 10

“

Besides the courses, I have attended Intensive English Language and French Language courses. I really like the way they teach languages, and I realized the weakness of my English and French. Thanks to the great language environment here, I think my English and French are better than before.

”

Chinese student about studying in Belgium
Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

“

Abroad education gives a new dimension to CV.

”

Indian student about studying in Germany
Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 9 out of 10

“

Because I think that it is the best experience one can have in his student life. Go abroad, away from his family, from his friends, and get confronted to many new cultures, languages, people, and different approaches in teaching.

”

French student about studying in Norway
Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

Personal growth (15%)

Within personal & professional development, personal growth is the most important reason to recommend an international study period in Europe. Students emphasize the chances to grow and develop as a person. This includes soft skills such as independence, adaptability and communication skills. Many students refer to their international study experience in terms of the realisation of their dreams and aspirations. Many comments of international students are regarding personal growth, and this is irrespective of the destination country. Students emphasize the positive aspects of being abroad, living away from home and spending time on their own in an unknown environment. Turkey especially jumps out when it comes to personal growth: 24% of all comments about studying in Turkey are regarding personal growth.

Learning (a new) language (8%)

Many students emphasize learning and improving language skills as a reason to study abroad. Some of the motivations are practical, some aspirational, some intellectual and others sentimental. Some students specifically choose their destination to learn a language. The possibility of talking to native speakers is considered a very effective way of improving their language skills. Moreover, respondents express their interest in getting to know the people and the culture of the language they are learning. Other students simply recommend to go abroad anywhere, since this will undoubtedly lead to improving one's English proficiency.

Respondents express their appreciation of language courses organized by the university. They see many benefits from learning (a new) language what generally contributes to their personal development and career perspective. France, Spain, Germany and Switzerland are by far the most mentioned when it comes to learning a new language: for all of them, more than 12% of all reviews is dedicated to this category.

Discovering a new culture (4%)

Experiencing a different culture is often mentioned as a reason to study abroad. Many students recommend a mobility period since it builds their knowledge and understanding of the destination country. This can also be of interest due to a specific field of study, or the desire to learn a language.

In addition to the interest in a specific destination, many students are very positive about the intercultural experience with fellow international students. An international mobility period implies meeting, working and living with students from different cultural backgrounds. Students report a growing awareness and understanding of other cultures and how this makes them grow as a person. Moreover, they are aware that experience in an international study environment will increase their chances on the international job market.

Career prospects (1%)

Students typically mention an improved CV or the attractive location with for instance many multinational companies located in their area.

Albeit many students seem to be aware of the positive influence of an international mobility period on their career prospects, few students specifically mention this as a reason to recommend their experience. Students do emphasize personal growth, gaining international experience and improving language proficiency for instance, but generally as individual goals rather than as drivers for their future job prospects. This does not imply that future job opportunities are important in the eye of international students. However, it does indicate that it is not the most important reason to recommend a study experience at a specific university.

City & Culture

“

Switzerland is an amazing country with beautiful landscape, you can visit great places like Basel, Bern, Lausanne, Geneva, Lugano. Any destination you choose, be fascinate and magical.

One of the best experiences I had travelling by train in Switzerland was taking the Glacier Express, 7 hours touring the country from west to east, marvelling at the great landscapes of the Alps.

”

Mexican student about studying in Switzerland

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

“

It is a small city in Poland and I don't like crowded cities. People are so kind to foreign people. I just love it.

”

Turkish student about studying in Poland

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

“

Maacutelaga has a lot to offer, like a Picasso Museum, a Film festival, very nice teahouses, tapas bars, clubs and very few tourists in comparison to other cities along the Costa del Sol :)

”

German student about studying in Spain

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

“

Sweden is a fair, peaceful, developed and rich country.

”

Chinese student about studying in Sweden

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

City atmosphere, looks and size (15%)

International student satisfaction highly depends on the city where the university is located. In fact, around 15% of all reasons to recommend a study experience are related to the city, and mostly to the city atmosphere. Typical contributors of a good city atmosphere are a variety of events, coffee places, bars and restaurants. The city size is often specifically mentioned as a way to indicate the atmosphere. There is no consensus on the ideal city size though, this mostly depends on the past experiences and background of a student: those coming from a large city typically look for discovering a smaller and cosier city, and vice versa.

Another contributor to city atmosphere, and thereby student satisfaction, is the percentage of students in the city. Several respondents indicate they would recommend their study experience based on the fact that they were living in a nice student city, describing a young, lively and vibrant environment that is much sought after.

Finally, 4% of all reasons to recommend a study experience are related to the looks or appearance of the city. Typically valued are historic buildings, canals and sightseeing opportunities.

Surroundings, nature & travel opportunities (6%)

In addition to the city itself, the surroundings and travel opportunities are a driver of student satisfaction. Being located close to the sea is for instance of positive influence, or if the university is surrounded by beautiful nature or offers outdoor activities such as mountaineering or skiing close by. These are all reasons to recommend a certain university or region.

This is not limited to the direct surroundings of the city or university though; if a city has good travel connections to other parts of the country or even neighbouring countries, this positively influences the likeliness of being recommended. Locations are recommended for different reasons and there is no ideal location. But a central location with easy access to nearby cities or countries is certainly a positive driver of student satisfaction.

Culture, people & language (6%)

Numerous respondents bring forward the country and local culture as main reasons to recommend a study destination. Some particularly chose their university based on their love for the country, others chose their destination more randomly but really started appreciating it once they were actually living and studying there.

Students express their (often positive) views on local norms, ways of thinking and general welfare of the society. An open-minded attitude of local people is appreciated and makes international students feel welcome. An often mentioned reason for choosing and recommending a study destination, is whether students are able to easily communicate with local people. The English proficiency of local people is of high influence here.

Cost & Funding

“

Also the costs are reasonable, considering that you don't have to pay for education fee.

”

Iranian student about studying in Finland

Explained why he rated the study experience with a 8 out of 10

“

The cost of the education is not that high compared to the quality of the education that we receive. For me, coming from a third country (as the Dominican Republic) where not too many master programmes exist in my field, the cost to get into this university, was by comparison not expensive at all. They have some exceptions for people like me who came from a country where this master doesn't exist.

”

Dominican Republic student about studying in Belgium

Explained why he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

“

Athens is not a cheap, the accommodation is relatively cheap but the rest is expensive: supermarket, or going out for a coffee or drink. Few scholarships available and few part time jobs too.

”

Student about studying in Greece

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

Living cost, financial aid & tuition fee (3%)

The financial aspects of a study period abroad are of little influence on international student satisfaction. Few remarks are related to costs or funding. There are probably two reasons for this. First, students are likely to consider their financial situation before they start studying abroad. Those who are not able to afford it will not go and will therefore not be taken into account in a survey on international student satisfaction. Second, it is likely that for those who do go and study abroad, monetary aspects are not the most important driver of satisfaction; rather a prerequisite.

The comments were generally regarding living expenses (where Estonia, Poland and Czech Republic come out very positive), advice on expenditures, or positive remarks on what was available for free. Some respondents commented on the availability of a scholarship or the tuition fee.

University services & facilities

“

The university accepts a lot of international students every year and they know what they are doing when it comes to internationalization. Their webpage is easy to figure out and if you apply in good time, they arrange accommodation in one of the University homes (dorms) - which is also very cheap.

”

Danish student about studying in Belgium

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 9 out of 10

“

The accommodation was nothing I expected. As much as the university stresses that it has been the university of the year, this achievement was reached just by preferring quantity over quality. The accommodation system of the University is so chaotic. First of all, when applying for the accommodation at the University, you are never sure that you would be eventually given some. In the first 3 weeks, there were many students staying at the Holiday Inn cause the university took some 750 students over its abilities and did not have sufficient accommodation.

”

Slovakian student about studying in United Kingdom

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 4 out of 10

“

The international relations department of the university is very friendly and helpful. They help you finding accommodation and give you orientation. The library of the university is new and great, they have little rooms for having team work and the environment is nice.

”

Turkish student about studying in Spain

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 7 out of 10

Quality of services (2%)

The quality of the services provided by the university is found to be important. This typically relates to university wide services, such as the international office. Students emphasize availability of information and a well-structured organisation. An informative and easy to navigate website is an important part thereof. A good website also gives prospective students the feeling that the university is well organized and professional.

Support from the university staff and international office is also much appreciated. First, students like to have the feeling that university staff is there for them and everything is “well organized”. This often leaves a positive or negative impression. Especially when being abroad, students want to feel someone is looking after them. Second, events for international students are highly appreciated. Any event that brings international students in touch is of positive influence on student satisfaction. This is particularly the case during the first weeks of a mobility period; several respondents specifically valued a welcome weekend for instance.

Facilities & equipment (1%)

Campus facilities are also mentioned as reasons to recommend a specific university. Depending on the academic discipline, high quality laboratories are for instance of influence. Most prominently mentioned is the need for a pleasant and comprehensive library. Additionally, campus equipment and variety of services such as: vouchers for meals, free entrance cards and sports facilities are mentioned.

Accommodation (1%)

Housing is not such a big topic as one might think it is, considering that moving abroad inherently leads to having to find accommodation. Those who do mention accommodation, generally discuss the services provided by the university (such as the possibility to arrange accommodation in advance), whether it is located on campus and if it is close to social life and other international students. Hygiene and accommodation cost are of course of influence.

Campus atmosphere (13 reviews, <1%)

Some respondents specifically mention the atmosphere of a campus as one of the reasons to study there, especially if the campus has a modern appearance. To others, the size of the campus (in number of students) and the proximity to the city centre is important. These are typically supporting statements and rarely mentioned as the sole reason to recommend a university.

Regarding University services & facilities in general, Sweden seems to be a good practice example: 7% of all reasons to recommend studying abroad in Sweden, are with regards to this category.

Social life

“

Studying abroad is a unique experience. You broaden your horizon, see a foreign culture, have a great time, and best of all: make many new friends.

”

German student about studying in Estonia,
Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 9 out of 10

“

The members of the student organization will treat you like a family member, show you the best places and most likely also organize a trip to Alanya for a couple of days. They will make a throw a party for you, they will cook for you, they will come sit and chat with you.

”

Hungarian student about studying in Turkey
Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 9 out of 10

“

Good university, but cold country. People are difficult to become friends with and it is boring.

”

Iranian student about studying in Sweden
Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 7 out of 10

“

It was amazing to be surrounded by so many different nationalities. We all had a lot in common. We shared our cooking, languages, cultures, clothes, photos. It was unforgettable.

”

Turkish student about studying in Poland
Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 9 out of 10

Making new friends (7%)

Students attach high importance to making new friends and meeting new people. This is the most important influencer of their satisfaction while talking about social life, and one of the five most important influencers in general. Many respondents report on their appreciation of meeting new people from various cultural backgrounds, making friends for life and finding life partners. This social aspect can turn an international study period into an unforgettable experience.

They admire also an international atmosphere while studying (See another part of this report). Students also see several advantages generate through the cultural experience and exchange.

Student associations & activities (3%)

Students mention the presence of student associations and student unions as an influencer of their satisfaction. They like the different types of activities organized by student associations, such as integration events, trips and visiting tours that help with acclimatizing to the new environment, people and culture. Students attach high importance to welcome program, cultural and informal meetings and conferences. They appreciate a student's association guidance especially during a few first weeks of studying and settling in a new place (personal tutor, buddy program). As such, the presence of active local and international student associations (or lack thereof), influence the entire study experience.

Nightlife (3%)

A vibrant nightlife is another reason for students to recommend their study experience, albeit making new friends and other student activities are considered to be more important. When discussing nightlife, respondents generally value a diverse offer of bars and clubs, as well as dorm parties.

International atmosphere (1%)

International students look for opportunities of exchanging cultural experiences. A mix of cultural backgrounds and spending time together with international colleagues creates a special study atmosphere and adds value to the study period. Being a part of it is seen as an opportunity to broaden one's horizon and facilitate personal development. Cultural events and activities (such as international nights, food tasting and learning the way of cooking) enrich the student perception of international atmosphere.

Overall impression

“

I didn't choose Lund, Lund chose me and I am so happy about that! :)

”

Polish student about studying in Sweden

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 9 out of 10

“

I tend to let the chips fall where they may.

”

Norwegian student about studying in Slovenia

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

“

It was simply awesome!

”

French student about studying in Italy

Explained why s/he rated the study experience with a 10 out of 10

Overall impression of the experience (2%)

Some respondents did not indicate a specific reason why they would or would not recommend their international study experience. Instead, they expressed their overall impression. These comments were generally very positive and focused on motivating prospective students to study abroad in Europe.

COMPARISON BY SEGMENTS

National and international mobility

In addition to the 1,482 international students, 336 domestic students participated in this study as well. The results show a considerable difference between satisfaction scores of domestic and international students, with an NPS of respectively +24 and +72. International students in Europe are thus much more satisfied with their study experience than domestic students.

Table 4: student satisfaction in Europe by mobility

Mobility	N	NPS
Domestic students	336	+24
International students	1482	+72
(Unknown)	30	+27
Total	1848	+63

This result is in itself not surprising. Studying in a foreign country is likely to bring more moving experiences and lasting memories than studying in one's country of origin. We also have to take into account that a majority of the international students in the sample group are short term credit mobility students (mostly exchange students), whereas the domestic student sample is more comprised of full degree students. Nevertheless, international full degree students still rate their study experience at an impressive NPS of +63, as can be seen in Table 6. This is still a huge difference with the domestic students' satisfaction level of +24.

The main differences in the drivers of satisfaction can be found in Personal & professional development and in Academics. Domestic students dedicate almost half of all reviews to academic aspects, especially highlighting the importance of a university's reputation, the quality of the teachers and their interest in a specific subject or research area. With over 20% of the reviews being on academics, international students too place high importance on this topic. The most noticeable difference however, is that international students typically emphasize their personal growth, language skills, and interest in discovering a new culture. They also express their enthusiasm of meeting new people and making friends, an aspect that is almost not mentioned at all by domestic students.

Table 5: influencers of student satisfaction in Europe by mobility

Category	Domestic students					International students				
	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total	%	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total	%
Academics	13	16	231	260	48%	13	16	606	635	21%
Recognition	0	1	0	1	0%	1	1	5	7	0%
Reputation	2	6	117	125	23%	1	0	258	259	9%
Subject or research area	3	6	44	53	10%	2	9	168	179	6%
Teachers	5	3	49	57	11%	8	3	70	81	3%
Teaching	3	0	21	24	4%	1	3	105	109	4%
Personal & professional development	2	1	32	35	6%	0	26	826	852	29%
Discovering a new culture	0	0	2	2	0%	0	4	115	119	4%
Career prospects	1	0	12	13	2%	0	1	32	33	1%
Learning language	0	0	3	3	1%	0	8	243	251	8%
Personal growth	1	1	15	17	3%	0	13	436	449	15%
City & culture	0	6	122	128	24%	5	10	787	802	27%
City atmosphere, looks & size	0	5	105	110	20%	2	4	437	443	15%
Culture, people & language	0	0	5	5	1%	2	5	160	167	6%
Surroundings, nature & travelling	0	1	12	13	2%	1	1	190	192	6%
Cost & funding	0	3	11	14	3%	0	3	84	87	3%
Financial aid	0	1	0	1	0%	0	1	10	11	0%
Living costs	0	2	9	11	2%	0	2	67	69	2%
Tuition fee	0	0	2	2	0%	0	0	7	7	0%
University services & facilities	1	1	28	30	6%	9	7	101	117	4%
Accommodation	0	0	3	3	1%	2	1	19	22	1%
Campus atmosphere	0	0	11	11	2%	0	1	12	13	0%
Facilities & equipment	0	0	3	3	1%	2	1	19	22	1%
Quality of services	1	1	11	13	2%	5	4	51	60	2%
Social life	1	2	64	67	12%	3	7	417	427	14%
International atmosphere	0	0	6	6	1%	0	0	40	40	1%
Making new friends	0	0	8	8	1%	0	4	212	216	7%
Nightlife	0	1	16	17	3%	1	3	78	82	3%
Student associations & activities	1	1	34	36	7%	2	0	87	89	3%
Overall impression	0	6	2	8	1%	0	39	23	62	2%
Total	17	35	490	542	100%	30	108	2844	2982	100%
%	3%	6%	90%	100%		1%	4%	95%	100%	

Study duration

The majority of the international students studied abroad for a period of 10 months or less. In total, 1205 of the respondents are so-called credit mobility students, opposed to 197 international students who studied for at least one or more academic years abroad in Europe (degree mobility students).

Table 6: international student satisfaction in Europe by duration

Study duration	N	NPS
Credit mobility (<1 year)	1205	+75
Degree mobility (>1 year)	197	+63
(Unknown)	80	+56
Total	1482	+72

Full degree students are in general a bit less satisfied about their study experience than credit mobility students, albeit with an NPS of +63, their satisfaction level is still very high. The discussed topics and reasons for (not) recommending their study experience are for both credit and degree mobility students quite similar. The most noticeable difference is in Academics: 27% of all reviews by degree mobility students are on academic topics, which is 7 per cent point higher than credit mobility students. This difference is mostly related to the reputation of the university; students who spend more than one year at a university focus more on the reputation or ranking than short term (exchange) students. The latter on the other hand, more often recommend their experience because of the chance to learn or improve on a foreign language (Personal & professional development) and to some extent also because of the new friends they make (Social life).

Table 7: influencers of international student satisfaction in Europe by duration

Category	Credit mobility (<1 year)					Degree mobility (>1 year)				
	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total	%	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total	%
Academics	11	9	483	503	20%	1	6	91	98	27%
Recognition	1	1	5	7	0%	0	0	0	0	0%
Reputation	1	0	202	203	8%	0	0	44	44	12%
Subject or research area	1	5	132	138	6%	0	3	26	29	8%
Teachers	7	1	59	67	3%	1	2	9	12	3%
Teaching	1	2	85	88	4%	0	1	12	13	4%
Personal & professional development	0	21	726	747	30%	0	5	81	86	24%
Discovering a new culture	0	3	99	102	4%	0	1	12	13	4%
Career prospects	0	0	26	26	1%	0	1	4	5	1%
Learning language	0	7	217	224	9%	0	1	16	17	5%
Personal growth	0	11	384	395	16%	0	2	49	51	14%
City & culture	2	8	662	672	27%	3	2	85	90	25%
City atmosphere, looks & size	0	3	363	366	15%	2	1	53	56	16%
Culture, people & language	1	4	127	132	5%	1	1	17	19	5%
Surroundings, nature & travelling	1	1	172	174	7%	0	0	15	15	4%
Cost & funding	0	2	58	60	2%	0	0	20	20	6%
Financial aid	0	0	5	5	0%	0	0	4	4	1%
Living costs	0	2	52	54	2%	0	0	11	11	3%
Tuition fee	0	0	1	1	0%	0	0	5	5	1%
University services & facilities	7	5	83	95	4%	0	2	11	13	4%
Accommodation	1	0	15	16	1%	0	1	1	2	1%
Campus atmosphere	0	1	10	11	0%	0	0	1	1	0%
Facilities & equipment	1	0	15	16	1%	0	1	1	2	1%
Quality of services	5	4	43	52	2%	0	0	8	8	2%
Social life	3	5	366	374	15%	0	2	45	47	13%
International atmosphere	0	0	29	29	1%	0	0	9	9	2%
Making new friends	0	3	193	196	8%	0	1	18	19	5%
Nightlife	1	2	70	73	3%	0	1	7	8	2%
Student associations & activities	2	0	74	76	3%	0	0	11	11	3%
Overall impression	0	35	15	50	2%	0	0	7	7	2%
Total	23	85	2393	2501	100%	4	17	340	361	100%
%	1%	3%	96%	100%		1%	5%	94%	100%	

Level of education

Most of the respondents reviewed a study experience at bachelor or master level. The number of PhD and Postdoc candidates that took part in the survey was too low to be representative. Therefore this section focuses on the comparison of international student satisfaction on bachelor's and master's level.

Table 8: international student satisfaction in Europe by level of education

Education level	N	NPS
Bachelor students	649	+69
Master students	332	+71
PhD / Postdoc	25	+64
(Unknown)	476	+78
Total	1482	+72

The level of education (degree level) does not seem to affect the satisfaction on an international study experience in Europe. With an NPS of respectively +69 and +71, bachelor and master students are almost equally satisfied regarding their study experience.

There is however a difference in their reasons to recommend their study experience. Albeit here too bachelor and master students have relatively similar reasons, master students mention academic arguments a bit more often, mostly expressing their interest in a specific subject or research area. Bachelor students emphasize their social life more (12% of all reviews, versus 6% by master students), in particular regarding making new friends. Also, bachelor students more often talk about their personal growth, typically highlighting independence, soft skills and broadening horizons.

Table 9: influencers of international student satisfaction in Europe by level of education

Category	Bachelor students					Master students				
	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total	%	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total	%
Academics	2	6	258	266	24%	3	6	159	168	32%
Recognition	0	0	2	2	0%	0	1	0	1	0%
Reputation	0	0	116	116	10%	1	0	68	69	13%
Subject or research area	1	3	63	67	6%	0	4	53	57	11%
Teachers	1	1	28	30	3%	2	1	12	15	3%
Teaching	0	2	49	51	5%	0	0	26	26	5%
Personal & professional development	0	10	298	308	27%	0	9	111	120	23%
Discovering a new culture	0	1	57	58	5%	0	3	37	40	8%
Career prospects	0	0	9	9	1%	0	1	12	13	2%
Learning language	0	3	88	91	8%	0	3	28	31	6%
Personal growth	0	6	144	150	13%	0	2	34	36	7%
City & culture	0	6	294	300	27%	3	2	149	154	29%
City atmosphere, looks & size	0	3	161	164	15%	2	0	77	79	15%
Culture, people & language	0	3	62	65	6%	1	2	33	36	7%
Surroundings, nature & travelling	0	0	71	71	6%	0	0	39	39	7%
Cost & funding	0	1	37	38	3%	0	0	18	18	3%
Financial aid	0	0	2	2	0%	0	0	3	3	1%
Living costs	0	1	33	34	3%	0	0	11	11	2%
Tuition fee	0	0	2	2	0%	0	0	4	4	1%
University services & facilities	3	1	41	45	4%	1	3	17	21	4%
Accommodation	1	0	7	8	1%	0	1	3	4	1%
Campus atmosphere	0	0	6	6	1%	0	0	1	1	0%
Facilities & equipment	1	0	7	8	1%	0	1	3	4	1%
Quality of services	1	1	21	23	2%	1	1	10	12	2%
Social life	0	2	130	132	12%	0	1	33	34	6%
International atmosphere	0	0	19	19	2%	0	0	9	9	2%
Making new friends	0	1	62	63	6%	0	0	7	7	1%
Nightlife	0	1	24	25	2%	0	1	7	8	2%
Student associations & activities	0	0	25	25	2%	0	0	10	10	2%
Overall impression	0	23	12	35	3%	0	9	7	16	3%
Total	5	49	1070	1124	100%	7	30	494	531	100%
%	0%	4%	95%	100%		1%	6%	93%	100%	

Country of study

To provide a detailed comparative analysis of student satisfaction across the different European countries, more respondents would be needed. Any destination country with less than 20 respondents is not taken into account, but ideally one would have several hundred respondents per country. Nevertheless, Table 10 provides an indication.

Table 10: international student satisfaction in Europe by country of study

Destination country	N	NPS
Portugal	29	+83
Poland	39	+79
Switzerland	108	+79
Finland	157	+78
Sweden	170	+78
Belgium	41	+78
Norway	49	+78
Czech Republic	33	+76
Spain	119	+74
Austria	32	+72
Denmark	62	+71
Estonia	34	+71
Italy	73	+70
Slovenia	22	+68
Germany	108	+67
France	109	+63
Netherlands	67	+63
United Kingdom	71	+61
Greece	43	+60
Turkey	24	+50
(All other countries)	92	+76
Total	1482	+72

It is noteworthy that non-traditional study destinations such as Portugal, Poland and Switzerland lead the scoreboard. These are not the top-of-mind countries when students consider to study abroad. Traditionally popular destinations with a high percentage of incoming students, such as the United Kingdom, Germany and France, are in the middle league and not quite outperforming the others.

The result set is too small to really compare on a country by country basis, but when comparing for instance the top and bottom 5 study destinations, there are no apparent differences in the reasons to recommend or not recommend studying there. This indicates that the drivers of student satisfaction in the best and less well performing countries are similar and different countries will have to learn from each other.

This does not mean that all countries or study destinations are identical of course. Important drivers of student satisfaction include the culture, the local atmosphere, and the surroundings and travel opportunities. These are all location specific influencers. Moreover, the attitude of local people and the ability to communicate with them (in most cases this means their English proficiency), are location and culture specific.

One would expect some correlation between the popularity of a study destination (for instance measured in number or percentage of incoming students) and student satisfaction. After all, students share their experiences and destinations with more satisfied students are likely to be more socially promoted (and therefore become more popular). However, these results show this is not the case.

It might be that the expectations of students regarding a study destination (based on which they choose their destination) do not match the actual satisfaction that results from actually having studied there. This might be linked to awareness, or better: a lack thereof. Many studies have identified the need for more transparency through meaningful information provision (ESU, 2010; ACA, 2006). For instance, many students might still choose to study in an English speaking country; unaware of the vast offer of English taught programmes in other European countries. The European study choice website www.mastersportal.eu for instance, currently lists more than 4800 English taught Master's in non-English speaking European countries (StudyPortals, 2011). This would imply that students might actually make a different decision in case they were better informed. It remains a guess what influencers are at play here of course, but it is likely that this at least contributes to this phenomenon to some extent.

European and non-European students

The majority of the respondents in this study come from a European country (1255 respondents). With 180 students from other continents however, it is possible to draw some conclusions on whether European students are more or less satisfied with their international study experience than non-European students. The results are presented in Table 11. Since only European students can take part in the Erasmus programme and it is likely that this has a significant influence on the duration of the mobility period, the duration is presented in this table as well.

Table 11: international student satisfaction by origin

Origin	N credit mobility	N degree mobility	N unknown duration	N total	NPS
European students	1080	144	31	1255	74%
Non-European students	121	52	7	180	66%
(Unknown)	4	1	42	47	51%
Total	1205	197	80	1482	72%

The results show that European students are generally more satisfied with their international study experience in Europe than non-European students. However, percentage of students who go abroad for their entire degree is significantly higher amongst the non-European students (29%, versus 11% for European students). Therefore, it is likely that at least a part of this difference can be explained by the duration of their mobility period.

Comparing the influencers of student satisfaction between European and non-European students, similar findings can be observed as before (see Table 12). Just like degree mobile students, non-European students more often emphasize academic aspects, in particular the reputation and the subject or research area. European students on the other hand, place more importance on personal and professional development and in particular personal growth, just like credit mobile (exchange) students.

These figures provide a first insight on how students from different origins have different needs and desired, but not more than that. To investigate the drivers of student satisfaction by continent (or even country) of origin, more respondents will be needed.

Table 12: influencers of international student satisfaction in Europe by origin

Category	European students					Non-European students				
	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total	%	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total	%
Academics	13	13	484	510	20%	0	3	103	106	30%
Recognition	1	1	3	5	0%	0	0	2	2	1%
Reputation	1	0	208	209	8%	0	0	46	46	13%
Subject or research area	2	7	127	136	5%	0	2	32	34	10%
Teachers	8	3	59	70	3%	0	0	8	8	2%
Teaching	1	2	87	90	4%	0	1	15	16	5%
Personal & professional development	0	24	727	751	30%	0	1	84	85	24%
Discovering a new culture	0	4	99	103	4%	0	0	11	11	3%
Career prospects	0	1	26	27	1%	0	0	5	5	1%
Learning language	0	8	211	219	9%	0	0	24	24	7%
Personal growth	0	11	391	402	16%	0	1	44	45	13%
City & culture	3	10	674	687	27%	2	0	82	84	24%
City atmosphere, looks & size	1	4	379	384	15%	1	0	45	46	13%
Culture, people & language	1	5	133	139	5%	1	0	15	16	5%
Surroundings, nature & travelling	1	1	162	164	6%	0	0	22	22	6%
Cost & funding	0	3	64	67	3%	0	0	17	17	5%
Financial aid	0	1	3	4	0%	0	0	6	6	2%
Living costs	0	2	57	59	2%	0	0	8	8	2%
Tuition fee	0	0	4	4	0%	0	0	3	3	1%
University services & facilities	9	7	87	103	4%	0	0	8	8	2%
Accommodation	2	1	15	18	1%	0	0	2	2	1%
Campus atmosphere	0	1	11	12	0%	0	0	1	1	0%
Facilities & equipment	2	1	15	18	1%	0	0	2	2	1%
Quality of services	5	4	46	55	2%	0	0	3	3	1%
Social life	2	7	365	374	15%	1	0	47	48	14%
International atmosphere	0	0	31	31	1%	0	0	7	7	2%
Making new friends	0	4	191	195	8%	0	0	21	21	6%
Nightlife	1	3	68	72	3%	0	0	8	8	2%
Student associations & activities	1	0	75	76	3%	1	0	11	12	3%
Overall impression	0	34	19	53	2%	0	3	3	6	2%
Total	27	98	2420	2545	100%	3	7	344	354	100%
%	1%	4%	95%	100%		1%	2%	97%	100%	

CONCLUSION

This study has given a unique insight into what aspects really drive international student satisfaction in Europe. It provides a categorized overview of these drivers, including practical examples. Overall, the result can be considered a big compliment to all organisations involved in internationalization of higher education. International students in Europe are very satisfied with their study experience.

The reviews of the students showcase many positive outcomes of their international mobility period. In addition to the academic education, most prominent learning outcomes are soft skills such as improved communication skills and language proficiency, increased intercultural awareness and understanding, and maturing. This shows that international cooperation and mobility in higher education ensures “personal, social and professional fulfilment”, one primary goals of European cooperation in higher education (ET2020, 2009).

Influencers

The key influencers of international student satisfaction in Europe are identified in this study, with personal growth, city atmosphere, making new friends, surroundings and traveling, and academic subject forming the top five influencers. Most mentioned aspects that influence the choice of destination are the reputation of the university and the opportunity to learn or improve on a language. It shows that international student satisfaction is driven by three main aspects: the personal and professional development of the student in question, the city and culture where one studies, and the academic environment.

The results also suggest that the quality of teachers (and especially their language proficiency) and university services (mostly regarding availability of information and bureaucracy) can have a negative impact on student satisfaction. To put it positively, this shows students' appreciation for well-arranged administrative services and for teachers who are able to communicate well in the language of tuition.

The NPS survey methodology is in particular useful to identify the key drivers of satisfaction and social promotion. As such, it is also useful in defining what aspects are *not* as important as one might initially imagine. This study has shown that neither finances (tuition fee, scholarships, and living costs), nor university facilities (e.g. sports facilities), nor accommodation have a big impact on the overall study experience. One has to keep in mind that this study only surveyed those who actually studied abroad, thereby leaving out students who did not go due to for instance accommodation or funding issues. Albeit these aspects might indeed be basic needs, the results do indicate that more luxurious facilities, accommodation or financial situation are less likely to contribute to the student experience than for instance the resulting personal growth, the city atmosphere, or the academic subject and teacher quality.

Comparison of segments

International students are far more satisfied with their study experience than domestic students, with the key differences being that domestic students place more importance on academics, where international students attribute more importance to their personal development. Together with the three main aspects driving student satisfaction set out above, this seems to underline that viewing a mobility period as a wide concept – combining the academic side, personal growth and cultural experience – make the study time far more interesting.

This is in line with the ESNSurvey2008, “Exchanging Cultures” (ESN, 2008), where students said to be most satisfied with the atmosphere of the city and country where the university was located, the social life, the university facilities and the contact with the host country’s culture. The present study shows the importance of personal growth and the city atmosphere as well, but also highlights students’ emphasis on academic topics. The ESNSurvey2008 also reported that 76% of the exchange students are satisfied with their studies and 92% of the exchange students satisfied with their stay abroad. The present study measured very high satisfaction levels as well.

The study did not show a difference in satisfaction levels between bachelor and master students, only a difference in the influencers of this satisfaction. Master students are slightly more influenced by academic aspects. The same difference is observed with regards to the duration and the international dimension of the mobility period: students who study abroad for more than one year are more affected by academic aspects than exchange students, and domestic students more than international students. It is likely that domestic, full degree and master students are indeed more concerned about academic aspects. At the same time, international, exchange and bachelor students might be more affected by the cultural impressions and experience a more intense personal growth, thereby knocking academic aspects off the first place.

Specifically discussing exchange students, the Problems of Recognition In Making Erasmus (PRIME) (ESN, 2009) study indicated that only 73% of the exchange students receive full recognition. Academic recognition is therefore a barrier to mobility as it is likely to negatively impact the motivation for students to study abroad. The low number of comments on recognition issues in the present study does not contradict these findings. This study only enquires after the *most important aspects* that influenced one’s study experience, whereas PRIME specifically focuses on *recognition aspects*. In other words: even if recognition issues occur, it might not be the single most important aspect that shaped their experience. Moreover, respondents to this study all studied abroad, meaning they already overcame barriers to mobility such as lack of awareness and difficulties in funding.

Student feedback highly valuable

Of course the goal of internationalization is not only to meet needs of international students and increase their satisfaction. Some students might for instance complain about the workload although it is in their interest. Nevertheless, it is an important indicator of the current state of play and a study like the present one can provide valuable insights. We are confident this structured feedback from the student perspective will help to improve quality of higher education in Europe and the experiences of international students across Europe in particular.

In order to do so, several recommendations for important stakeholders in European higher education are presented in the following chapter. Through increasing international student satisfaction, prospective students will be motivated to study abroad in Europe. We are convinced this is one of the most important drivers towards achieving the ambitious internationalization goals in European higher education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Student associations

Respondents expressed their appreciation for local student organisations. Students attach high importance to a variety of activities, which includes social gatherings, trips and cultural events organized by student organisations. These activities are often organized by international student associations.

Student associations can be open to students from any discipline, like AEGEE and ESN, or specifically for students from the same academic background, such as the European Students of Industrial Engineering and Management (ESTIEM). These organisations typically organize social and cultural activities both for international as well as former international and domestic students. Assistance with finding housing and administrative tasks is also much appreciated and sometimes provided by the local student union. Norway and Austria in particular score well when it comes to student associations and activities: in these cases, respectively 9% and 8% of all reasons to recommend a study experience in these countries were because of this.

The following recommendations for international student associations are formed on basis of the reviews in this study.

1. Organize a welcome event at the start of every semester. This has a positive impact on the satisfaction of international students, it helps them to make friends, introduces them to new study environment and even a new culture.
2. Frequently organize social and cultural events, this is highly appreciated by international students and will help them to have a great time.
3. Promote active involvement of both local and international students. This helps international students to connect with locals. Moreover, participation in international events increases international mobility.
4. Focus on smooth cooperation with the university as this will benefit both parties.
5. Act as a matchmaker between universities. Several new partnerships between universities have been created as a result of study mobility initiated by members of student organisations.
6. Share experiences and advice of your members with (prospective) international students. This will help to encourage studying abroad, to prepare for a mobility period, and to form realistic expectations.

Higher education institutes

Higher education institutes naturally have a big impact on the satisfaction of their students, and a big stake in increasing the student satisfaction level. Not only does the NPS measure student satisfaction, it also measures how likely it is that students will recommend them to their friends. As such, the NPS has proven to be a predictor of future growth. The identified influencers might help to focus efforts, resources and budgets.

Through carefully analysing and acting upon the results of this study, higher education institutes can increase the satisfaction level of their international students and thereby attract more international students in the future. The following recommendations are based on detailed analysis of student reviews, and particularly focused on aspects that can be influenced by the institution:

Teachers and Teaching

1. Provide (obligatory) language training to all student focused staff in the official language of tuition (in most cases English). Language proficiency of professors has a high impact on the quality of education and is the single most often mentioned reason to not recommend a university.
2. Encourage a close working relationship between academic staff and students. Personal guidance and the opportunity to ask questions are highly appreciated and contribute to quality of education. 13% of all Academic related reasons are about teacher quality.
3. Use student-centred, interactive teaching methods, group work and field visits. To many students this type of education is innovative and in fact a reason to study abroad. The importance of student-centred learning generally considered to be of high priority (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, 2009; ESU, 2010; EUA, 2010) and also clearly highlighted by international students in this study.

Services and facilities

4. Provide a tutor or mentor as contact person for every international student. This is the first point of communication and can help incoming students with taking care of administration, housing and other practical matters. It makes them feel welcome.
5. Facilities are generally not a big influencer of student satisfaction, less than 1% of all reasons is dedicated to Facilities & equipment. However, these reasons are very specifically about the comprehensiveness of the library and the high quality subject specific facilities such as laboratories. Therefore, when investing in facilities: focus on the library and laboratories.
6. Promote and support student associations. Through their activities, network and services they positively contribute to student satisfaction. The level of support from the institution often determines how active student associations can be.

Personal growth and social life

7. Facilitate personal growth of students in any way possible. Maturing, becoming independent and broadening horizons are often mentioned and highly valuable results of international mobility.
8. Connect international students with each other and with local students, for instance through organizing events (if possible, in collaboration with local student associations). Start by organizing a welcome event at the start of every semester, if possible together with the local groups of international student organisations. This facilitates social interaction, makes students feel welcome and is an excellent opportunity to get administrative obligations taken care of.

Communication

9. Emphasize the following in external communication, these topics are generally highly appreciated by students:
 - a. Any of the points above.
 - b. Drivers of student satisfaction that are beyond the control of your institute, such as city atmosphere or local culture. Regional and cultural aspects are certainly a decisive factor when choosing where to study (almost one third of all influencers is on this topic).
 - c. Reputation and ranking, also if your institute is not listed in the top 100 universities. Universities renowned in a specific study discipline or regionally strong universities are also much sought for.
10. Poor service quality is the second most mentioned reason to not recommend a university. This is often related to bureaucracy, which is an important negative influencer of student satisfaction. Therefore, focus on the quality of the services and information provision towards current students, this can prevent student retention and increase satisfaction. The same conclusion is highlighted in the Trends 2010 study (EUA, 2010).
11. Make important study choice information such as enrolment date and annual tuition fee easily accessible for prospective students. Many students indicate their choice of university depends on information availability, particularly emphasizing website quality. Not only is this information critical in their choice, it is also a way for students to assess the general service level and quality of the institution as a whole.

All these aspects will help to increase quality of study mobility even more. Finally, there is a big difference in student satisfaction of international and domestic students. Whereas this report focuses on international student mobility and the needs and satisfaction drivers of domestic students are not identical, it is likely that domestic student satisfaction too can be lifted to another level through learning from these international student experiences.

Policy makers

Increasing international mobility is an important topic on (European) policy level and the goals are ambitious. By 2020 at least 20% of all higher education graduates in the European Higher Education Area should have had an education or training period abroad (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, 2009) and by the same year the aim is to have a 40% tertiary education attainment (ET2020, 2009).

In order to achieve these goals, we advise the European Commission, National Institutes and other policy makers involved, to commit to increasing international student satisfaction in Europe. This will increase quality of higher education in Europe and social promotion thereof, and thereby stimulate mobility as well as tertiary attainment in general. We recommend prioritizing quality of education, supporting the development of innovative teaching methods, stimulating intercultural experiences and focusing on effective ways of promoting the European educational offer.

Despite all the necessary efforts on more regulation and unified systems (such as recognition, learning outcomes, etcetera), we tend to forget how well it is actually going and what a unique educational offer Europe has. This study shows that the current situation is already very good, but sometimes Europe lacks focus on the practical aspects: help universities to develop language proficiency of their faculty staff, emphasize the promotion of the European offer and its advantages, and facilitate students to share their success stories – this is after all the best promotion channel one can imagine.

Based on the present study we therefore recommend:

1. Continue and increase financial support of mobility. This helps students to develop the competences they need in a changing labour market and will empower them to become active and responsible citizens.
2. Further promote and raise awareness on international study opportunities in Europe, both to European as well as non-European students. Despite the considerable offer of internationally focused programmes in Europe, many students are still not aware of this offer. Budgets within the Lifelong Learning Programme as well as the Erasmus Mundus programme aimed at promoting and increasing awareness are in no relation to their importance and therefore need to be increased significantly in future funding programmes.
3. Increase transparency in European higher education through facilitating better and more unified information provision that matches the information need.
4. To be aware of the value of an international mobility period other than the academic reasons. An international mobility period contributes to personal, social and professional fulfilment; it significantly stimulates personal growth and prepares students for an intercultural and international working environment.
5. Support higher education institutes in training of university staff in foreign languages, especially to achieve a high language proficiency in their language of tuition.
6. Further stimulate student-centred learning and use of innovative learning methods.

7. Support international student organisations in their activities. Student organisations have shown in various ways to contribute considerably to student satisfaction, personal & professional growth and stimulate mobility.
8. To further grow the Youth on the Move programme (Youth on the Move communication, 2010) to increase its impact. Key aims of this flagship programme are underlined in this study (e.g. developing modern education systems, promoting attractiveness, supporting transnational learning and exploiting full potential of EU funding programmes), emphasizing its importance and potential.

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