

EUROSTUDENT report

Comparison of student life in 25 European countries: flexible study options promote diversity, but students' financial difficulties remain a concern

Flexible study options such as part-time courses, online learning, and distance education help students with diverse responsibilities, such as older students, student parents, and working students. However, students' financial difficulties pose a clear challenge to achieving full inclusivity in higher education. These are some findings of the EUROSTUDENT 8 report, launched at the project's final conference in Vienna on 10-11 July 2024 with more than 120 participants from policy, research, and practice.

Hanover, 18 July 2024. "Because the topic of digitalisation was for the first time introduced to the survey, we now know, for example, whether students are studying online or in-person. This means we can look at all our data through a new analytic lens. Our findings can help HEIs to design more suitable study conditions and thus increase flexibility in study pathways", states Kristina Hauschildt, project coordinator for the eighth round of the EUROSTUDENT project. Across the EUROSTUDENT countries, 15 % of students are enrolled as part-time students, 9 % in distance learning, and 23 % study predominantly or entirely online. Flexible study modes are particularly favoured by older students, those without tertiary educational backgrounds, and students with significant work or personal commitments. Despite two thirds of students in flexible study programmes recommending their study programme, these students may require additional support to ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities for success.

At the same time, the EUROSTUDENT 8 report reveals that as in previous EUROSTUDENT rounds, students' financial difficulties remain a concern. Around a quarter of students report to be currently experiencing serious financial hardship, with higher shares among students from lower socio-economic backgrounds or reliant on public student support. On average, 29 % of students rely on their job to finance their studies and could not afford to study without working. "Compared to the last round, the share of contributions from family/partner in students' total income has increased in many countries (4 percentage points on international average)", Christoph Gwośc, a member of the author team, adds. "This could not least be a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and inflation, making students increasingly fall back on parental support. However, not all parents can afford to finance their children's studies."

Responses to the question whether students could afford to cover an unexpected required major expense (themselves or through someone else) show that 18 % of students would not be able to.

Students depending on national public student support, international students, and students with less well-off parents reported the highest inability to cover such expenses, underscoring that many study situations are (not far from being) precarious. Housing costs also place a large burden on the budget of many students, with, on cross-country average, every fourth student spending more than 40 % of their budget on housing. Financial difficulties are presumably also behind the fact that students from low educational backgrounds have less access to study resources such as reliable internet, electronic devices, and quiet study spaces in many countries, limiting their ability to engage in (online) learning. In addition, students experiencing financial difficulties are much more likely to report a low sense of well-being, compared to students who do not experience financial difficulties, indicating another potential risk posed on students from more vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds.

More results can be found in the EUROSTUDENT main report called *Synopsis of Indicators*. In addition, four topical module reports have been published. All the materials are listed below.

Additional information and download

- [EUROSTUDENT 8 Synopsis of Indicators](#)
- [EUROSTUDENT 8 topical module reports on digitalisation, impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, discrimination, and students' well-being & mental health](#)
- [EUROSTUDENT project website](#)
- [X @Eurostudenttw](#)
- [EUROSTUDENT 8 database](#)

About EUROSTUDENT

EUROSTUDENT is a network of researchers as well as data collectors, representatives of national ministries, and other stakeholders who have joined forces to examine the social and economic conditions of student life in higher education systems in Europe. The beginning of EUROSTUDENT goes back to the 1990s. In the eighth round of the EUROSTUDENT project, survey responses were collected of more than 290,000 students in 25 countries from a broad geographical spectrum. Adopting a broad, comparative perspective, the EUROSTUDENT project provides information on topic areas such as access to higher education, study conditions, as well as international student mobility, and assessment of studies with the aim of inspiring policy debates and laying the ground for further research.

The project is carried out by a consortium led by the German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (DZHW). Further members are the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS, Austria), Think Tank Praxis (Estonia), ResearchNed (The Netherlands), Malta Further & Higher Education Authority and the Federal Statistical Office (FSO, Switzerland).

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