



FROM THE FREEDOM TO MOVE TO THE FREEDOM TO STAY:

*Insights into the student
housing crisis in Europe*

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1. Introduction

The **housing crisis** is becoming a significant issue for students across Europe, as highlighted by the **EU Post-Electoral Survey 2024**. **Rising prices** and the **cost of living (42%)** and the **economic situation (41%)** were among the **key factors** that motivated European citizens to vote in the **June 2024 European elections (European Parliament, 2024)**. This issue has also made it increasingly difficult for students to find affordable accommodation. This problem is especially severe in large cities, where the demand for student housing far exceeds the available supply. As a result, many students are forced to live in overcrowded spaces or move far from their universities, negatively impacting their studies and overall well-being.

The difficulties that the overall student population faces are also extended to possibly increasing difficulties that exchange and international degree-seeking students can face. They encounter additional challenges when finding housing in a foreign country, such as navigating unfamiliar housing markets and overcoming language barriers. According to the **XV ESNsurvey**, finding **affordable accommodation is one of the biggest difficulties** students face during their exchange programmes.

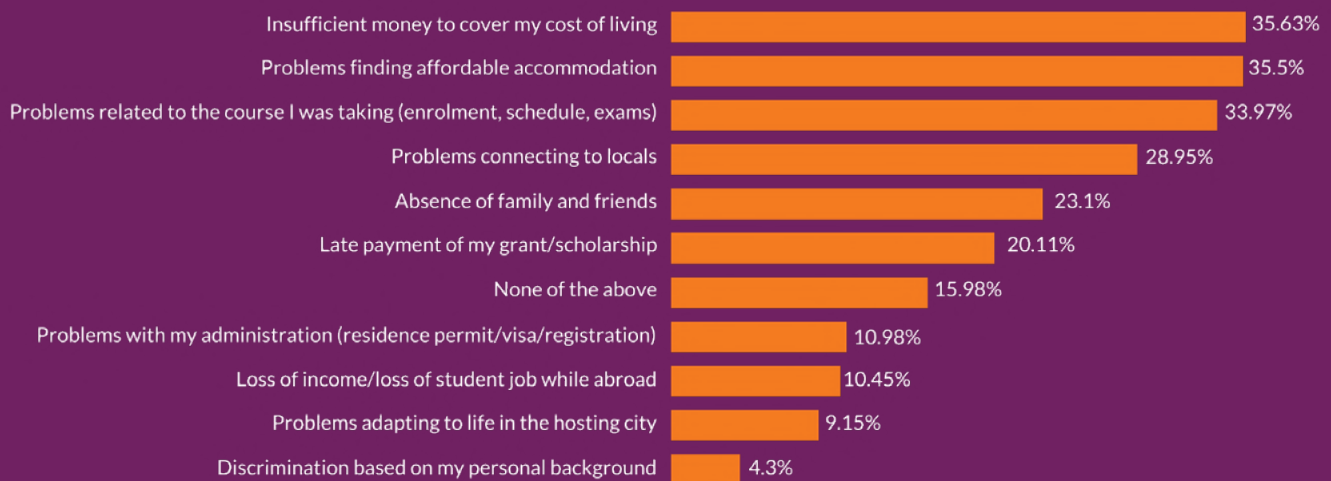


Figure 1: XV ESNsurvey- Issues encountered during the stay abroad by exchange students, percentage (general sample, N = 14,568)

While looking closer at the breakdown of expenses for exchange students, we see that **accommodation** and housing-related bills, along with living expenses such as food, account for approximately **72.71% of their total budget for mobility**. As also identified by the XV ESNsurvey, challenges related to accommodation can impact the overall experience of exchange students, likely leading to **increased feelings of anxiety and stress (42.3%)** and **reduced motivation to study (37.6%)** (Dias, Buseyne, et al., 2024).

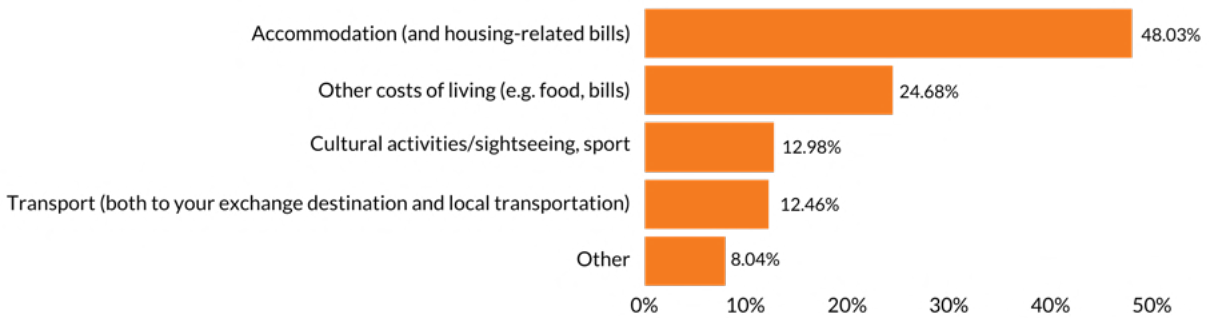


Figure 2: XV ESNsurvey- Expenditure breakdown of exchange students (N= 12,276) across various categories during their exchange programme

From this perspective, this report aims to provide a **clear picture of how the housing crisis is affecting students**, tackling not only the issue from an exchange student perspective but also comparing it with non-mobile students. The following report is based on **survey responses from 5,713 students**: 909 non-mobile students (domestic students), 3,194 exchange students, and 1,610 international students seeking a full degree.

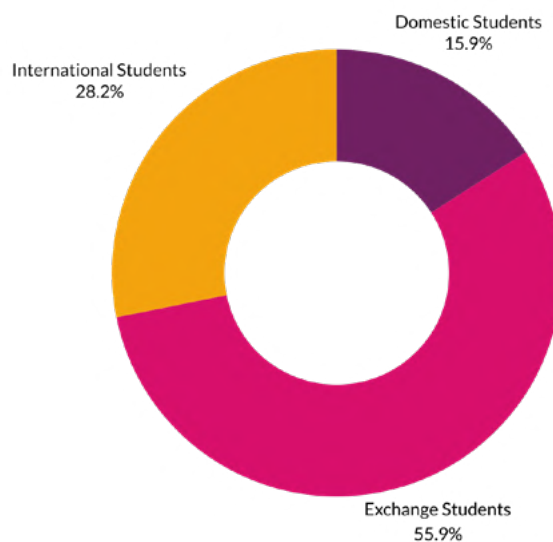


Figure 3: Status of participants, percentage (general sample, N= 5,713)

Ensuring **students access safe and affordable housing** is essential for their academic success and well-being. By working together, institutions and policymakers can improve housing conditions and help students focus on their education rather than increasing their concerns about where they will live. From this perspective, in addition to a thorough analysis of student accommodation through the survey results, this report will offer recommendations for institutions and policymakers, proposing solutions to help address these challenges.



2. Methodology of the Research

The survey upon which this report is based was conducted by the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) as part of the Home² project, co-funded by the European Union, named “**Student Housing Survey**”. The primary aim was to gather **insights into the housing experiences of mobility students in Europe**, focusing on the quality of accommodation and the challenges faced by students, especially those from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds. The results of this survey aim to provide evidence for the development of more effective public policies in the housing sector, better addressing the needs of international students and supporting ongoing advocacy for these enhanced policies.

Sample

The survey targeted **mobility students**, particularly those participating in Erasmus+ and other mobility programmes. To ensure student engagement in the survey, we have counted on the support of ESN’s national and local associations, which also helped to ensure a broad reach across various countries. It was shared through multiple social media channels to ensure a more significant participation in the survey. A total of **5,713 students responded to the study**, among which 4,013 completed it in full, and 1,700 submitted partial responses, resulting in a full completion rate of approximately 54%. Based on feedback from past research and project partners, we have chosen not to make all questions mandatory to allow respondents the option to skip questions that did not apply to or interest them. This approach helped maximise participation but resulted in a portion of partial responses, as some participants opted out of specific questions.

Survey Design and Distribution

The survey consisted of **41 questions** structured to cover four key areas: **mobility experience, housing experience, housing challenges, and housing support**. The first section collected demographic and contextual data regarding the students’ mobility, including the type of mobility programme and host country. The second section examined the quality and affordability of accommodation, while the third section focused on the specific challenges

students faced, such as availability, cost, and housing conditions. The final section explored the level of support students received when seeking accommodation, with a focus on those from disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds.

Data Analysis

The data collected was analysed using **quantitative methods**. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise key findings, providing an overall picture of student housing conditions across Europe. In addition, **comparative analyses** were conducted to explore differences in housing experiences based on demographic variables, such as nationality. In order to manage incomplete answers, the data was reviewed and cleaned to ensure that the analysis was based on reliable and valid data.

Limitations

This study has also a number of limitations. First, **the survey was designed and distributed by ESN, a volunteer-based organisation**. While this approach fostered strong student involvement, it may have affected the methodological rigour of the research. Second, the reliance on self-reported data introduces **the potential for response bias**, as participants' perceptions of their housing experiences may be influenced by subjective factors.

Geographic disparities in the dissemination of the survey were also noted, with countries such as Germany, Spain and Italy receiving higher response rates. This may limit the generalisability of the findings to the wider European student population. Additionally, while the **survey aimed to highlight the experiences of students from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds**, the reach to these groups may have been limited in some countries, **reducing the representativeness** of their experiences in the overall dataset.

In addition to the limitations related to data collection and representation, there are **methodological aspects** that should be taken in consideration. First of all, the **reliance on central tendencies** may oversimplify the findings, potentially masking the diversity of student experiences or the impact of outliers. Furthermore, the study predominantly employs **descriptive statistics** without delving into more advanced inferential methods, limiting its ability to identify significant relationships between variables, such as the **impact of housing costs on academic performance or well-being**. These factors, combined with a lack of longitudinal perspective and contextual variables like regional housing policies, underscore

the need for a **more comprehensive and multidimensional approach** to analysing student housing challenges.

Despite these limitations, the survey provides a **valuable dataset that sheds light on the housing challenges faced by mobile students across Europe**. These findings serve as a strong foundation for ESN's advocacy efforts aimed at improving student housing policies and ensuring that the specific needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged students are addressed.



3. Key Findings

KEY FINDING 1

Amenities that foster a sense of community - (Figure 19, Page 30)

Respondents ranked social lounges or recreation areas (73.68%) and outdoor spaces (74.48%) as the most important amenities for fostering a sense of community. Shared kitchens and common study rooms were also highly valued. These findings suggest that creating housing environments with shared spaces could help promote social integration and a sense of belonging among students.

KEY FINDING 2

Timing of housing confirmation - (Figure 22, Page 34)

A significant portion of students (43.11%) faced uncertainty with housing, confirming their accommodation less than 30 days before arrival. Among them, 12.06% confirmed their accommodation after arrival, forcing many into temporary arrangements such as hostels, hotels, or short-term rentals. This precarious housing situation not only increases costs but also negatively impacts students' ability to settle into their academic and social environments, adding stress at the start of their mobility experience.

KEY FINDING 3

Preferences for housing types - (Figure 27, Page 40)

A majority of students (71.40%) opted for private housing options, such as shared flats (35.29%) or dormitories operated by private providers (20.22%), while only 28.60% lived in dorms operated by HEIs. Shared housing with international students was most common (43.25%), reflecting the importance of multicultural exchanges. However, fewer students (5.44%) reported living with locals, suggesting potential barriers to deeper integration with local communities.

KEY FINDING 4

Impact of housing barriers on mobility cancellation - (Figure 33, Page 48)

Among all respondents, 5.05% canceled their mobility entirely due to insurmountable housing barriers, such as affordability issues, scams, or limited availability of accommodation.

KEY FINDING 5

Prevalence of housing scams - (Figure 34, Page 49)

Approximately one-third (34.17%) of students encountered housing scams during their mobility experience reflecting a 182.4% increase in reported scams compared to findings from the survey report *International Student Housing: How Are Exchange Students in Europe Navigating the Housing Crisis?* (ESU, ESN, 2023).

KEY FINDING 6

High housing costs as a barrier for students - (Figure 37, Page 52)

Nearly half of the respondents (49.69%) reported paying more than €400 per month for their accommodation, which represents a significant financial burden considering that the average Erasmus+ grant is typically lower. Additionally, 83.77% of students had to pay a security deposit, further compounding the financial challenges. These findings highlight the pressing need for more affordable housing options and financial support mechanisms to make mobility experiences accessible to all students.

KEY FINDING 7

Disparities in institutional support - (Figure 38, Page 54)

Only 19.9% of respondents reported receiving accommodation directly from their higher education institution (HEI), while 30.1% indicated that they received no support at all. Among students who received assistance, satisfaction with institutional housing services was rated at an average score of 5.48 out of 10. These results highlight significant gaps in institutional engagement, with opportunities for HEIs to expand their housing support services to better meet students' needs.

4. Sample Characteristic

4.1 Nationality

Based on the **4,268 responses** collected, 70.31% of the participants hold the nationality of one of the 27 Member States of the European Union, with Germany (17.43%), Italy (10.90%) and Poland (9.04%) the most recurring nationalities of the survey participants. Portugal, Spain, France, Croatia, Belgium, Romania and Austria each reached up to or less than 6% of the total respondents. While these nationalities have a smaller representation individually, when combined, they represent 27% of the participants.

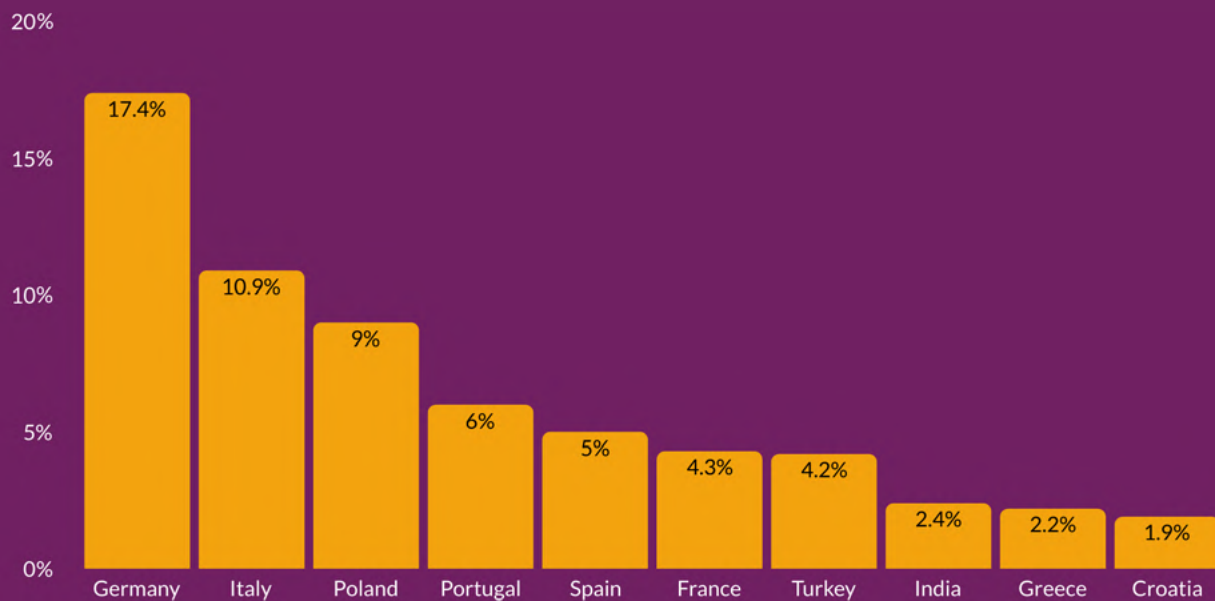


Figure 4: Top 10 respondent's nationality, percentage (general sample, N= 4268)

Moreover, it is important to note a small but relevant sample of non-EU countries, including India (2.23%) and Albania (1.59%) (see Figure 5).

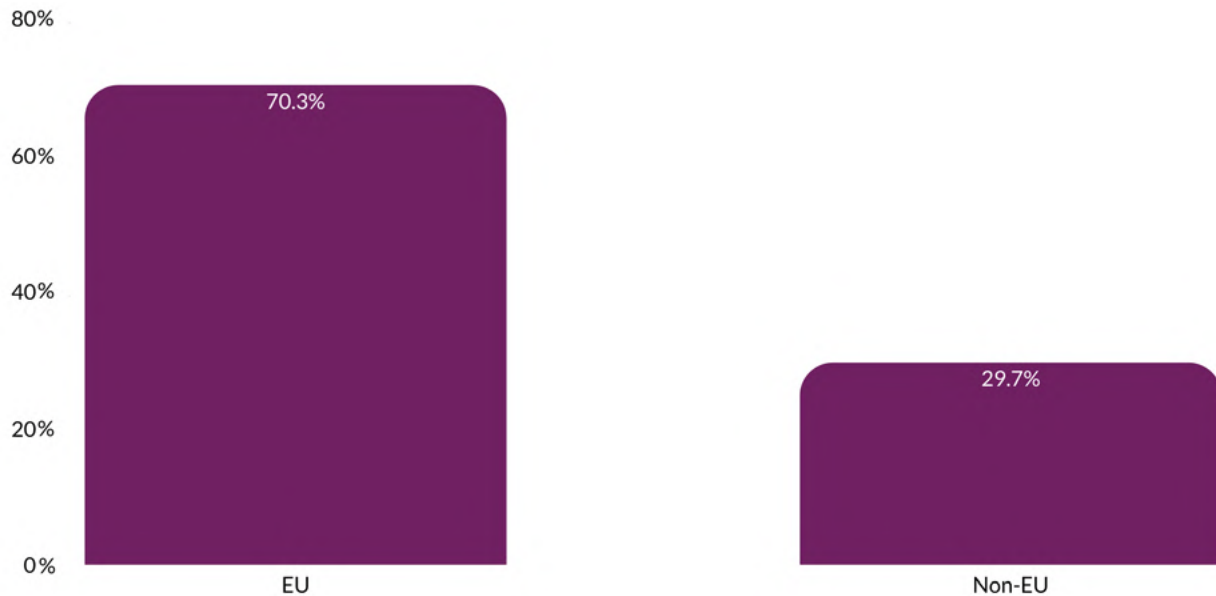


Figure 5: Nationality of Eu and non-EU participants, percentage (general sample, N= 4268)

Overall, the **data presented aligns with the findings of XV ESNsurvey and the Erasmus+ Annual Report 2022**, where the most frequent sending countries, in order, are France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Poland, Türkiye, the Netherlands, Portugal, Belgium, and Romania (European Commission, 2023).

4.2. Gender Identity

Based on the **4,304 respondents**, 63.52% of participants identify themselves as women, being the predominant gender, 33.65% as male, 1.58% as non-binary and 1.21% of the participants preferred not to answer the question about their gender (see Figure 6).

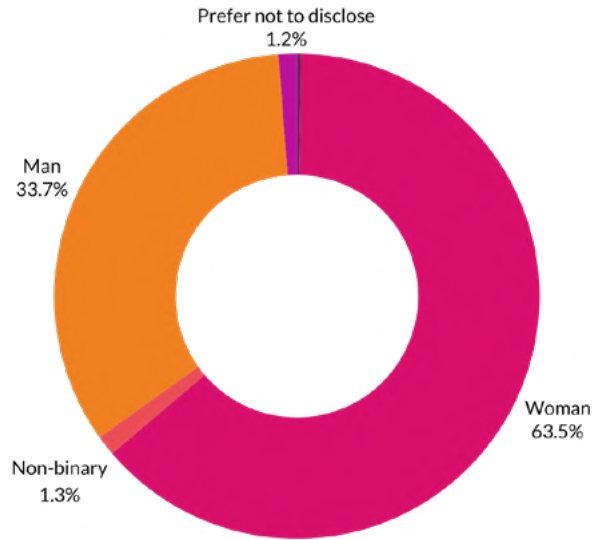


Figure 6: Distribution of gender identity, percentage (general sample, N = 4,304)

These results indicate an **over-representation of female gender** among the survey’s participants. However, they line up with the Erasmus+ Annual Report 2022, which evidences a clearly unbalanced gender distribution in the participants of mobility programmes in Europe (European Commission, 2023).

4.3 Age

Based on the age distribution of the **4,267 respondents**, 4.99% of participants were born between 1985 and 1993 (aged 30 to 39), 17.76% between 1994 and 1998 (aged 25 to 29), 68.69% between 1999 and 2003 (aged 20 to 24), 8.55% after 2003 (1922 participants younger than 20). Xxx preferred not to disclose their age (see Figure 7).

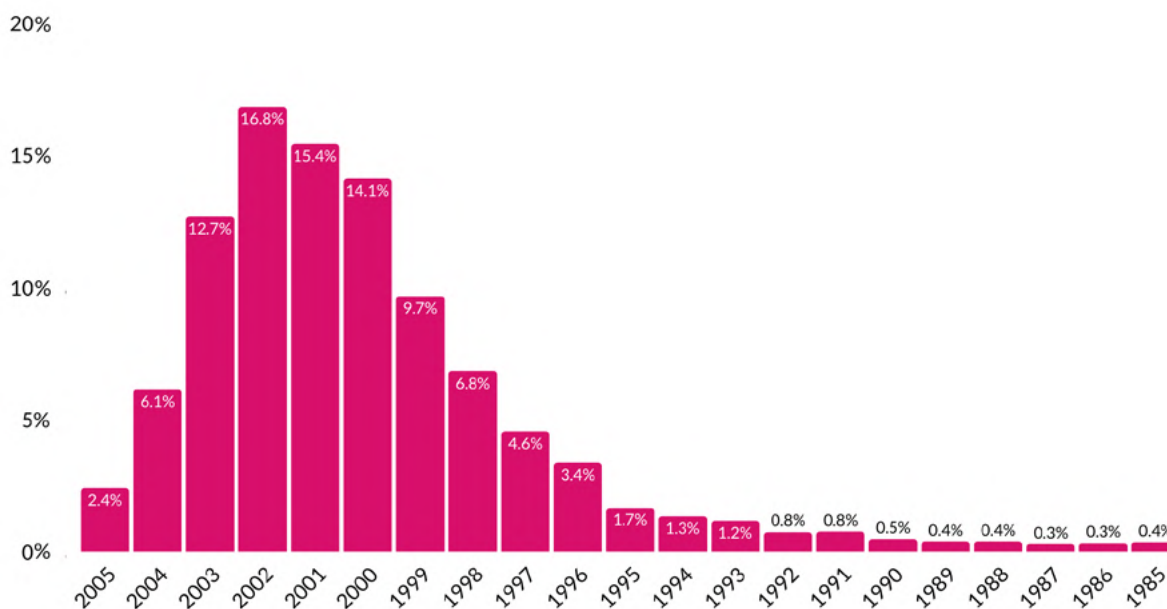


Figure 7: Distribution of the age of the participants, percentage (general sample, N = 4,267)

This finding indicates a **predominant sample of young adults between the ages of 20 and 26**, which indicates an **unequal representation among the respondents**. This can be explained by the usual age of participants of Erasmus+ mobility, which involves 80% of individuals between 21 and 26 years old (European Commission, 2023).

4.4. Parents' or Guardians' University Attendance

Based on the **4,712 respondents**, 22.67% of the participants have close family members¹ who have already taken part in a mobility experience abroad, while a large majority, corresponding 75.55%, are pioneers in student mobility, meaning they are the first in their immediate family to apply for such experience. 0.57% of the participants preferred not to answer this question (see Figure 8).

¹ Siblings, parents, and grandparents.

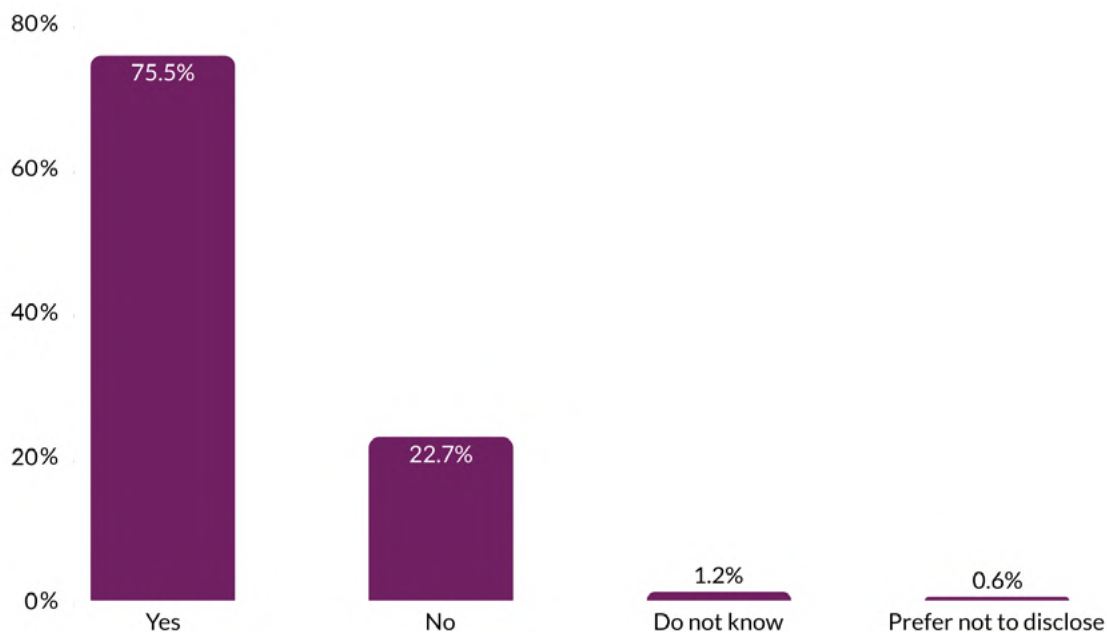


Figure 8: Distribution of respondents by the attendance of the immediate family to mobility experience abroad, percentage (general sample, N = 4,712)

4.5. Fewer opportunities

Among the **4,304 respondents**, 31.58% do not identify as students with fewer opportunities as defined by the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027² (European Commission, 2021). Among the most recurring factors, 24.42% of the students consider themselves as students from low-income families, 21.79% of students are first-in-family to go to university, 18.40% are life-long learners, 16.52% are from rural areas, and 12.15% are part of the LGBTQAI+ community.

It is also important to mention that 8.83% of students are from minority ethnic groups or have a migrant background, 7.02% have religious beliefs, 3,11% are care providers or students with dependants, and 1.95% are from ROMA and Traveller communities. 5,46% of the respondents preferred not to answer this question.

² According to the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, persons with fewer opportunities can be identified as people with disabilities, health problems, barriers linked to education and training systems, cultural differences, social barriers, economic barriers, barriers linked to discrimination or geographical barriers (European Commission, 2021).

These results evidence a **significant heterogeneity** among the survey’s sample, demonstrating the **effort to implement the inclusion and diversity priority** of the current Erasmus+ programme.

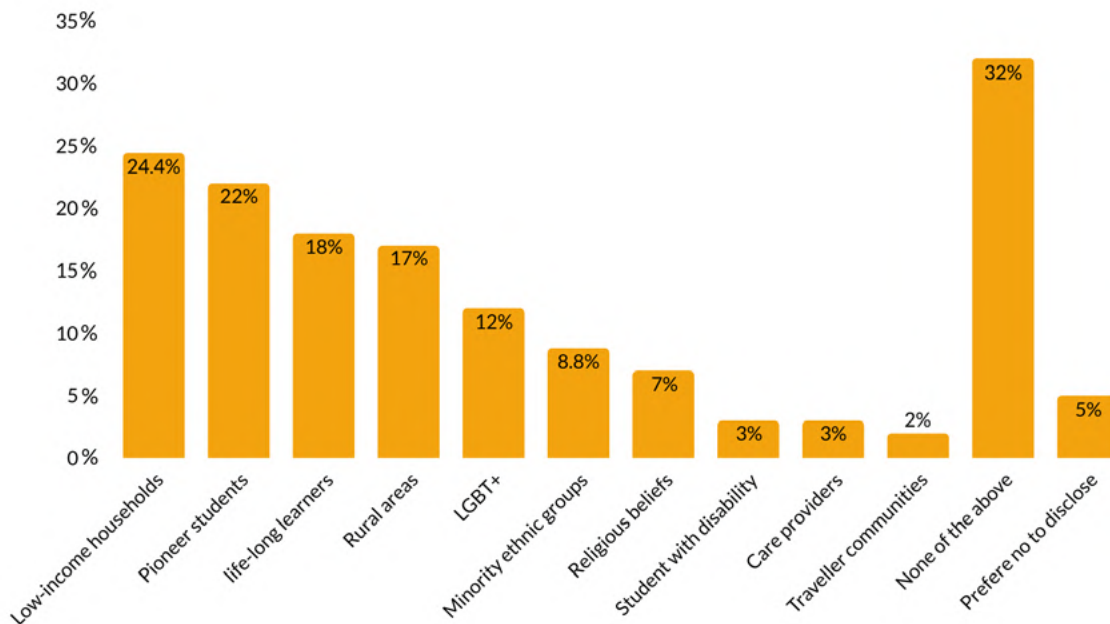


Figure 9: Distribution of respondents according to their identification of fewer opportunities, percentage (general sample, N = 4,304)³

4.6. Academic Background

Reflecting the age distribution of the sample, **52.39%** of the respondents are currently pursuing a **Bachelor’s degree**, **38.93%** have a **Master’s degree**, and **5.80%** of the participants of the survey are **currently enrolled in higher education levels⁴** (see Figure 10).

³ Participants were allowed to select multiple responses, so the percentages may total more than 100%

⁴ PhD, Doctorate degree, Post-graduate or post-doctoral certificate

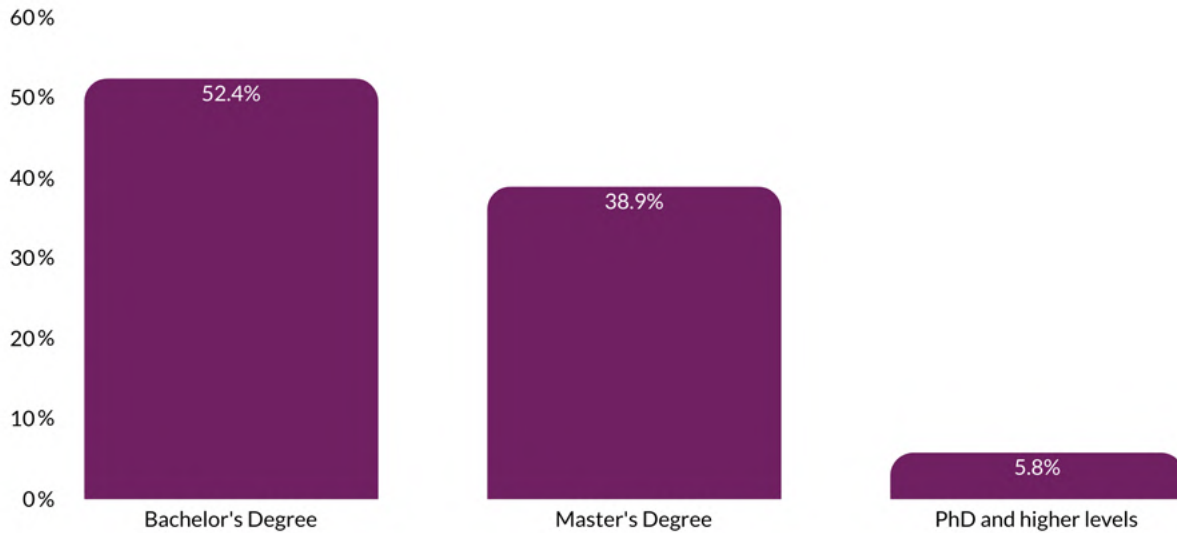


Figure 10: Relative frequencies of study levels of exchange (N=4,318)

4.7. Field of Study

Based on **3,986 responses** collected, 19.49% of participants enrolled in the field of business administration and management, followed by art and humanities at 18.04%, engineering at 16.66%, and social sciences at 13.82%.

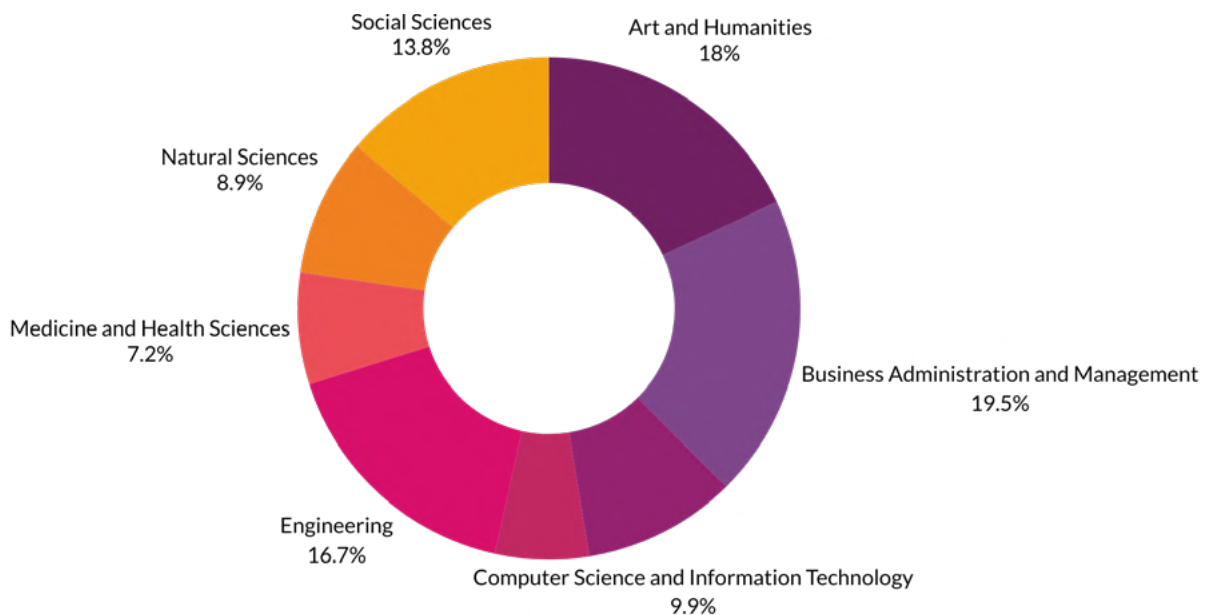


Figure 11: Relative frequencies of respondents according to the academic background (N=3,986)

Despite these four fields of education, it should be pointed out that 7.20% of the participants study in the field of Natural Sciences, 8.86% in Medicine and Health Sciences, while just 8% of the respondents are studying other fields.

The presented **data encounters results similar to those of the data available in Eurostat**, showing its validity. According to the data on participants in tertiary education by field of study among European Union countries, 22% of all students in tertiary education are studying business, administration or law; 15.5% in engineering, manufacturing and construction; 13.7% in health and welfare and 11.4% in social sciences, journalism and information (Eurostat, 2023).



5. Educational Background & Mobility Profile of the Sample

5.1. Type of mobility

Based on **3,508 respondents**, 80.05% of the sample is carrying out mobility within the Erasmus+ programme. 73.96% of the students have carried out an Erasmus+ for studies, 5.33% an Erasmus+ Traineeship and 0,76% an Erasmus+ Staff training programme. It is also important to note that 3.88% of respondents affirm that they went in an exchange study programme outside the Erasmus+ framework, and 1% affirm that they want to be in a traineeship programme, not in the field of Erasmus+.

Compared to the total number of participants in Erasmus+ mobilities, Erasmus+ traineeships and staff training programmes are **considerably underrepresented**. This trend is also evident in the XV ESNsurvey, which highlights **“the overwhelming popularity of study exchanges compared to other mobility types, such as traineeships or volunteering opportunities.”** This underscores **“the importance of promoting and providing equal information about all available mobility options.”** (Dias, Buseyne, et al., 2024).

Special attention should be given to international full-degree students, who represent 12.50% of the overall mobile students and **International double-degree students**, who represent 2.93% of the sample. Despite being less represented in this sample, they represent an increasing trend in universities of the European Higher Education Area (European Association for International Education, 2023) (see Figure 12).

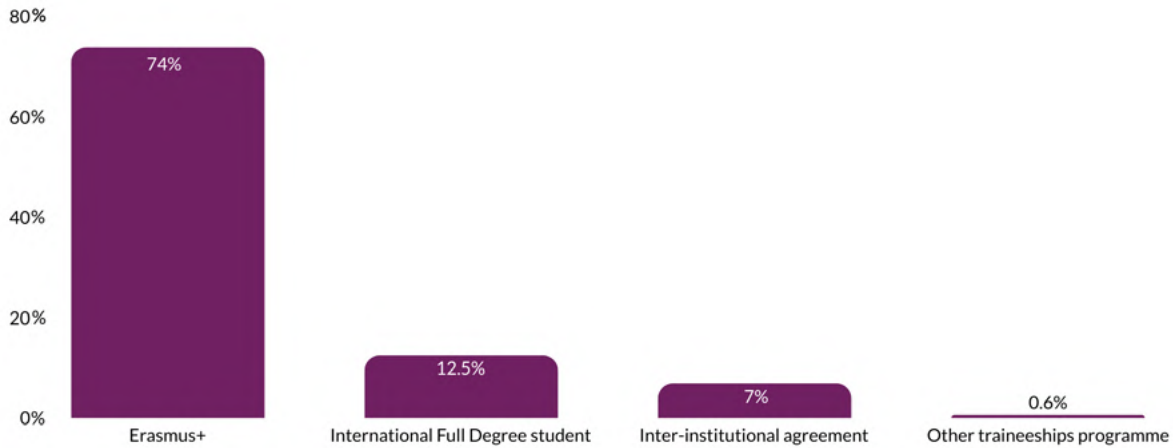


Figure 12: Distribution of mobility experience abroad (N = 3,508)

5.2. Duration of mobility

Based on **4,717 responses**, 60.08% of the participants completed their mobility between 3 and up to 6 months. 20.01% of the participants completed their mobility between a semester and a year, 13.14% in more than a year, and 5.36% between 1 and 3 months, while just 1.40% participated in a mobility course with a length of under a month (see Figure 13).

These findings show the variability in the duration of mobility experiences with a range of options that can adapt to the needs and preferences of the participants and their study programmes. The survey highlights the **popularity of mobility periods between 3 and 6 months** while also showcasing the **increasing presence of participants who opt to pursue the entire study period in a different country**.

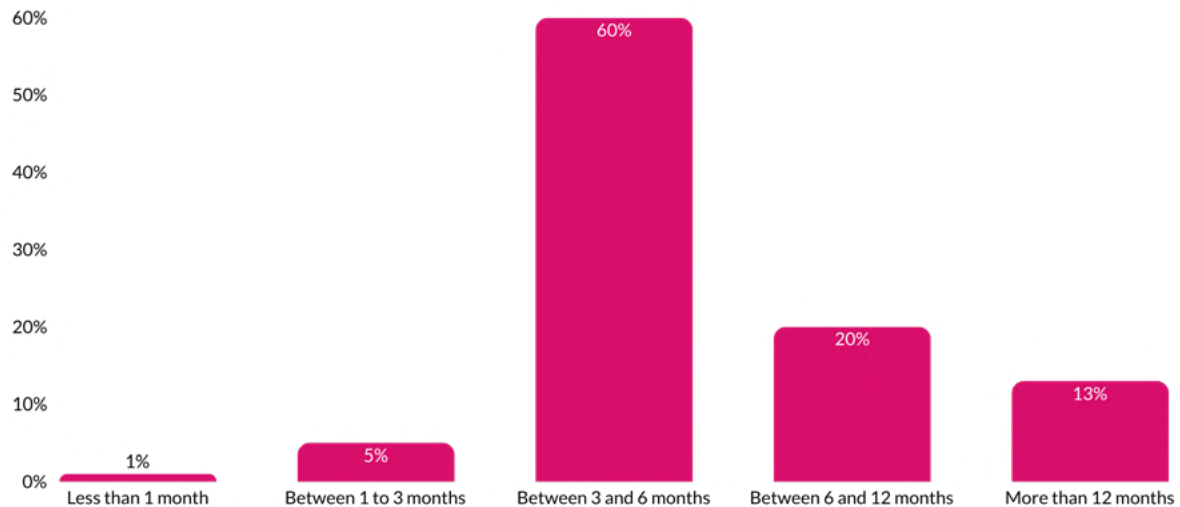


Figure 13: Distribution of the duration of the mobility period (N = 4,717)

5.3. Country of mobility destination

Based on **4,715 responses**, the most popular mobility destinations among the participants were Germany (11.41%), Spain (10.92%), Italy (8.97%) and Poland (6.66%). Other countries such as Portugal, The Netherlands and France also attract a significant number of participants (see Figure 14).

When **comparing the results** of the exchange students with the Erasmus+ Annual Report 2022, we observe that the most **frequent destinations, in order, are Spain, Italy, Germany, France, Portugal, Poland, The Netherlands, Belgium, Czech Republic and Sweden (European Commission, 2023)** demonstrating that despite the diverse range of choices available, there is **persistent popularity** of certain countries among mobile students.

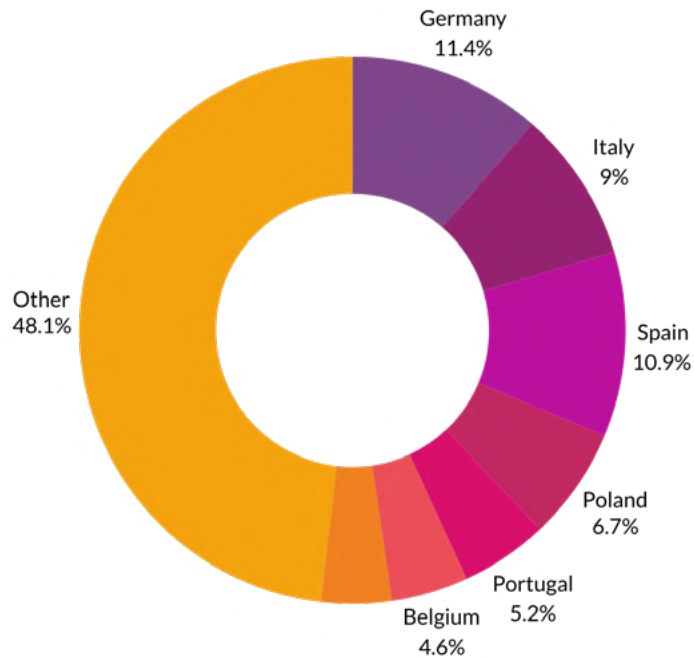


Figure 14: Relative frequency of hosting countries of mobile respondents (N = 4,715)

5.4. Cities of mobility destination

The survey data reveals a striking concentration of students in a few European cities, with **Madrid, Lisbon, and Barcelona** standing out as the **primary destinations** (figure 15). As the capital of two of the most popular Erasmus destinations, these cities alone account for a significant portion of the overall Erasmus+ student population, indicating an **overwhelming demand for housing resources** that may already be limited (see Figure 15).

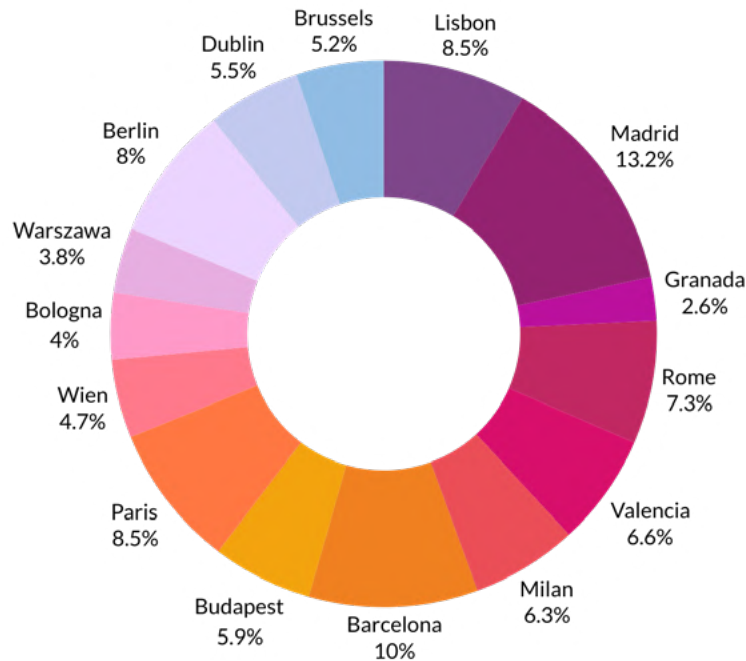


Figure 15: Relative frequency of hosting city of mobile respondents (N = 4,722)

This concentration suggests that **these cities are likely experiencing intense competition for student accommodation**, which could drive up rental prices and increase the risk of housing shortages. On the other hand, a large proportion of students (**3,804**) are grouped into the “Other” category, representing either **lesser-known destinations** or **universities based outside the main urban hubs**. This suggests that while the demand is high in popular cities, a considerable number of students are seeking alternatives, potentially due to affordability issues or the lack of available housing.

Addressing the student housing crisis would require a **targeted approach**, focusing on expanding affordable housing options in high-demand cities and enhancing the provision of information and support for students who choose alternative locations. As highlighted by the XV ESNsurvey, **students consider the provision of information essential before they go abroad**, with **15.37%** saying it is important to have information about available financial support. This emphasises the **importance of providing accurate information**, especially when we know that a destination can be a **primary destination for mobility**. The ability of students to participate in mobility is in the end, the critical factor, and if financial information is not provided in advance by the sending HEI, there is a risk that students may withdraw from going

abroad, leading to a negative impression of the Erasmus+ Programme (Dias, Buseyne, et al., 2024).

In this regard, **expanding affordable housing options** will undoubtedly be key, but **pre-departure support and mentoring from the International Relations Offices** are also essential to ensure the success of international mobility.

5.5. Motivational factors for going abroad

Out of **4,716 respondents**, 74.26% participated in mobility motivated to live abroad, 73.62% to experience a different learning environment, 67.35% to meet new people and 64.64% to gain knowledge of another culture. Among the other outstanding factors that motivate a mobility experience, there is also the willingness to learn/improve a foreign language (57.47%), advance future career perspectives abroad (49.8%) and build up a personal and professional network (39.07%).

Finally, it is important to remark that for 10.43% of the participants, mobility was a mandatory component of their study programme, 6.70% were encouraged by their family and friends, and 6.70% decided to go abroad because they had the support of professors and/or academic tutors, while just 3.58% were motivated by the existing support in finding an accommodation (see Figure 16).

This last finding can be interpreted both as a **lack of such support to find accommodation** as well as a **lack of knowledge of the existing support tools provided by Higher Education Institutions**, leading to a larger reflection on the student awareness of the Erasmus Student Charter⁵ and consequently on the HEIs duties and responsibilities.

⁵ As highlighted in the entitlements of students before mobility: “You are entitled to receive information on obtaining insurance, finding housing, securing a visa (if required), and facilities/support for those with special needs” (European Commission, 2022)

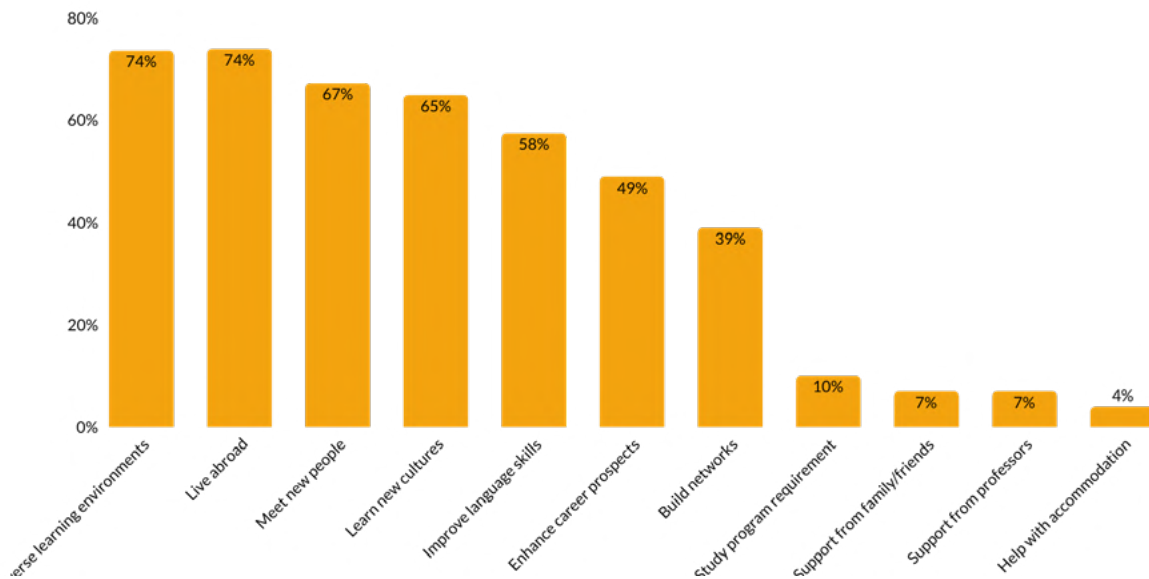


Figure 16: Relative frequency of motivational factors (N = 4,716)

5.6. Factors to consider while going abroad

When considering the Erasmus+ experience, it is important to note that **the mobility journey begins the moment students decide to apply for the programme.** It is crucial to take into account all three stages: **before, during, and after mobility.**

In this perspective, when we are speaking about the before mobility stage it's important to understand the main factors influencing participants's choice of a specific mobility destination (N = 4,721). Upon analysis, it is possible to highlight that the most influencing factor in choosing a city/country is its level of safety, with **50,6% of the participants affirming it is very important and 35% affirming it is important.**

This is closely followed by the experience of living in a different country, with **47,9% of the participants considering it very important and 29% as important.** Going deeper with the analysis, it is interesting to note that **the provision of English courses is considered very important by 47.3% of respondents and important by 24.8% of them.**

Additionally, **42.6% of the participants rated the presence of a welcoming and inclusive environment to different cultures and international students as very important and important**

by 41.9%. Similarly, the country and university lifestyle was considered by 40% as very important and 43.7% as important.

Regarding another relevant factor for this report, 40.5% of the respondents consider accommodation affordability as very important and 34.8% as important. Despite not being among the first factors, it should be noted that just 2.1% of the respondents considered it as not important at all, and just 5.3% affirmed the factor as unimportant.

On the contrary, the least chosen reason for the selection was the previous establishment of family, partners, and friends in the hosting country/city, with only 7.6% considering it as very important and 11.7% as important.

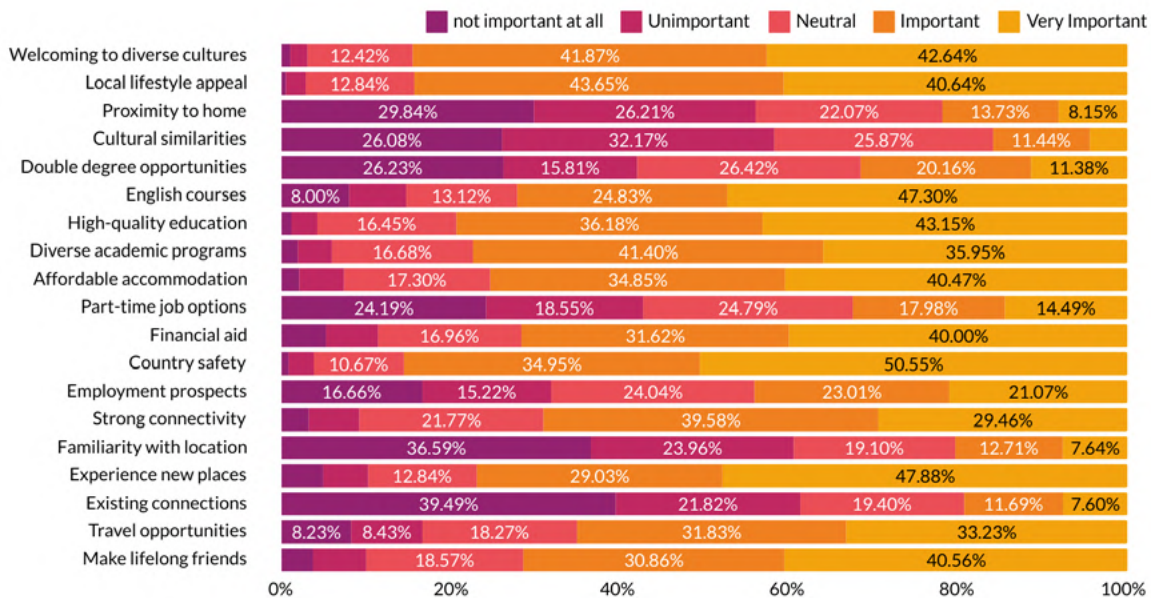


Figure 17: Relative frequency of important factors to consider when choosing a hosting city/country (N = 4,721)

6. The Search for Accommodation

6.1. Factors to consider when choosing accommodation

Respondents were asked to report on the relevance of several factors when choosing their accommodation. Specifically, they were asked to rank these once on a likert scale from very unimportant to very important. Based on 4,141 answers, the cost of the accommodation is considered the most important factor to take into consideration when choosing accommodation. Moreover, 65.54% of the participants reported that it is “very important”, and 27.58% consider it important, while only 1.38% considered it “unimportant” or “very unimportant”.

However, there are many other factors that students consider important. These include safety, reported by 61.48% of respondents as “very important”, and accommodation quality, which is recognised as “important” or “very important” by 85.75% of the sample.

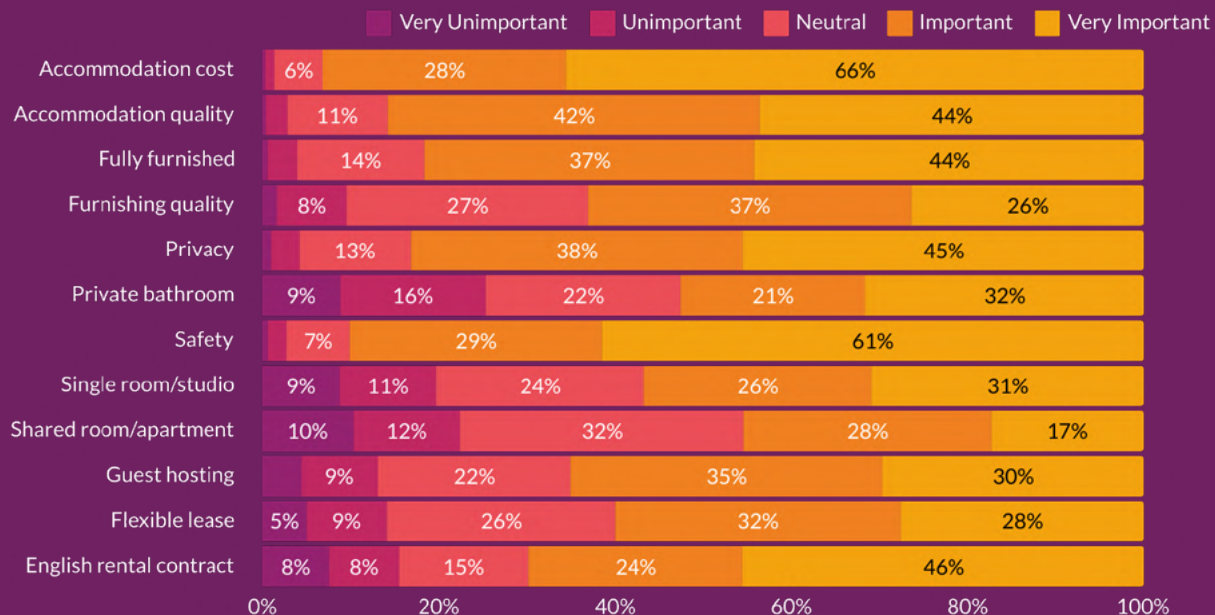


Figure 18: Relative frequency of relevant factors to choose accommodation (N = 4,141)

Other relevant factors considered “Very important” or “Important” include privacy by 83.14% of the respondents, fully furnished accommodation by 81.55% and a rental contract in English by 69.77%.

On the contrary, there were factors that were not perceived as important, such as the type of apartment and the possibility of having a private bathroom.

The findings evidence a **double nature of the housing crisis**, which, on the one hand, is characterised by the **raising of prices** while, on the other, is characterised by the **difficulty of students finding solutions that can meet their basic needs**.

6.2. Amenities that increase the sense of community

Finding the right accommodation that enhances a sense of community requires careful consideration of various factors that contribute to a supportive and engaging living environment. Certain **amenities** emerge as particularly important for fostering this sense of connection. For this reason, participants were asked to rate, on a Likert scale ranging from “Not important at all” to “Very important”, the impact of amenities in increasing the sense of community.

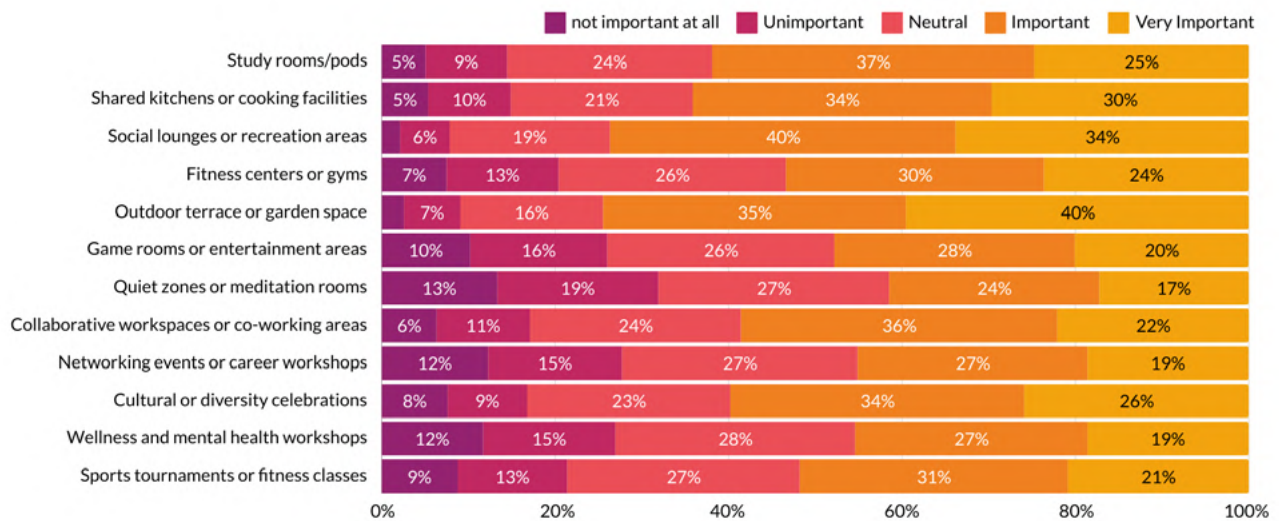


Figure 19: Relative frequency of the importance of amenities that increase the sense of community (N = 4,298)

For example, **social lounges or recreation** areas were seen as one of the most essential amenities, with 73.68% of respondents (N= 4,298) rating them as either “Important” (39.86%) or “Very Important” (33.82%). These spaces are essential for encouraging casual social interactions among residents and fostering a sense of community and belonging. Similarly, **outdoor spaces**, such as an outdoor terrace or garden space, were highly valued, with 74.48% of participants (N=4,291) considering them important or very important. These areas provide a relaxing environment where residents can gather, socialise, and engage in outdoor activities, contributing to a welcoming and community-focused atmosphere.

In terms of shared facilities, **shared kitchens or cooking facilities** were rated as important or very important by 64.13% of respondents (N=4,282). Cooking and sharing meals can be a strong community-building activity, allowing residents to bond in communal spaces. Common **study rooms or study pods** also ranked highly, with 61.89% of respondents (N=4,281) indicating they are important or very important, underscoring the need for spaces where students or professionals can collaborate and connect over academic or work-related tasks.

While **game rooms or entertainment areas** were less of a priority, with 47.78% rating them (N= 4,282) as important or very important, they still contribute to social interaction, particularly for residents who enjoy recreational activities together.

However, some amenities, like quiet **zones or meditation rooms** and **networking events or career workshops**, received a more balanced spread of ratings, with 41.47% and 45.09%, respectively, considering them important or very important. These findings suggest that while these amenities may appeal to certain groups, they may not be universally desired.

6.3. Ways to find accommodation

To have a clearer understanding on the housing crisis, the present report explores the most diffused way to find accommodation. Specifically participants were asked to choose among different options how they found accommodation. Based on **4,300 responses**, **almost 61% of students found its accommodation through different online portals**. Among these platforms, the most common way to find accommodation is dedicated websites for student accommodation in the city (20.33%), followed by social media groups for flat-sharing (13.02%), global housing providers (12.9%) and online search engines (11.95%).

Still, the most common way to find accommodation is through housing operated by higher education institutions (22.42%), which confirms its significance compared to other forms of housing, as evidenced in the Housing Report (European Students Union & Erasmus Student Network, 2023). Moreover, it is important to note that engagement of HEIs is expressed in other forms, such as providing the contact of a private, trusted landlord, which helped 4.44% of the respondents to find accommodation.

Only 12% of respondents reported finding accommodation through friends, family, and acquaintances, evidencing a possible improvement in better peer-to-peer practices such as house swapping and sharing of best practices.

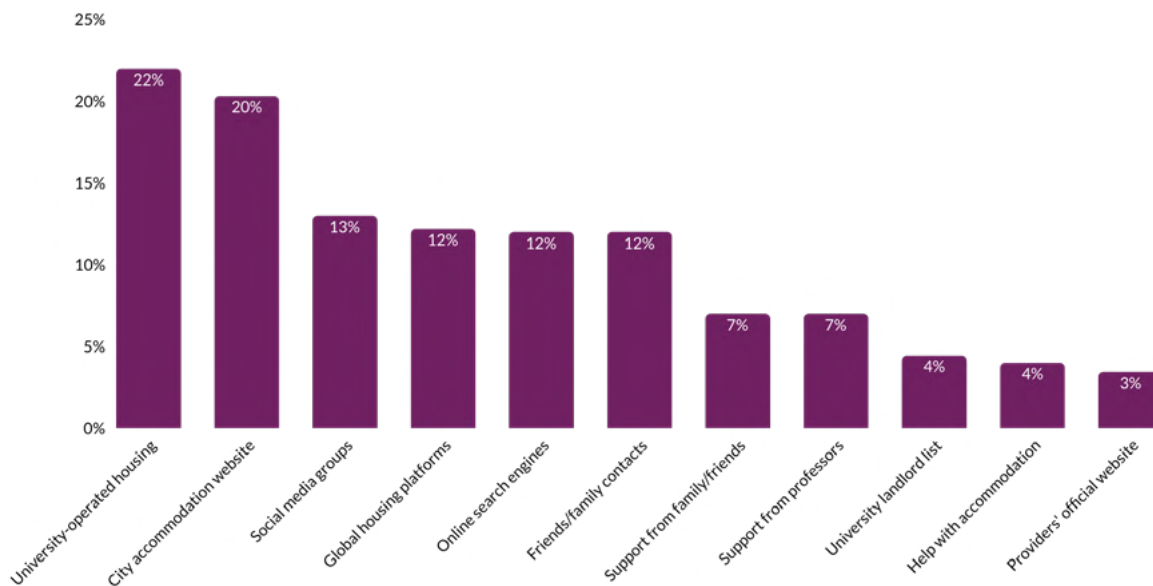


Figure 20: Relative frequency of methods to secure an accommodation (N = 4,300)

6.4. Number of housing providers contacted before finding accommodation

After assessing the most recurring methods for securing an accommodation, we now turn to the number of housing providers contacted before securing an accommodation. Based on **4,515 respondents**, 45.23% contacted less than 10 housing providers before finding their accommodation in the hosting country.

15.44% contacted between 11 and 20 housing providers, 4.98% between 21 and 30 providers, and 5.87% reached out to more than 30 providers. While these responses have a smaller representation individually, when combined, they represent 26.29% of the participants. When comparing this data with the findings from the survey report *International Student Housing: How Are Exchange Students in Europe Navigating the Housing Crisis?* (ESU, ESN, 2023), it is evident that, overall, slightly fewer students reported the need to contact a large number of housing providers. Both data sets, however, highlight that the **majority of students secured accommodation after contacting fewer than 10 providers**.

However, the number of housing providers contacted changed largely among countries. For example, 12.63% of incoming students in Italy reported contacting more than 30 housing providers, compared to 0.43% in Poland. The situation appears to be similar if one considers the Netherlands, where 12.12% of incoming students reported contacting more than 30 housing providers (Erasmus Student Network & European Students Union, 2023).

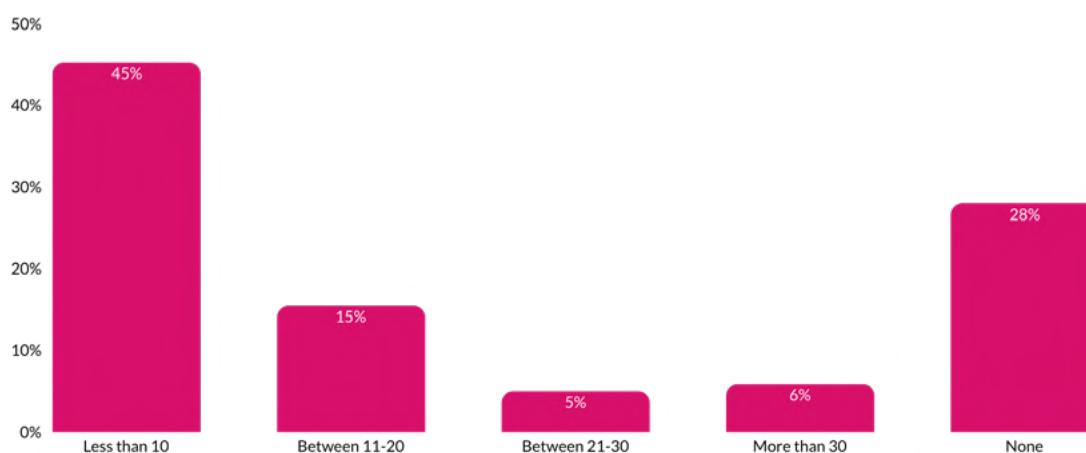


Figure 21: Relative Frequency of Number of Housing Providers Contacted Before Securing Accommodation (N = 4,515)

6.5. Timing of housing confirmation

Finding proper accommodation before arriving is a key factor for students to feel welcome and fully start their international experience aboard. Thus, respondents were asked to indicate the period of their housing confirmation. Based on **4,509 responses**, 56.89% of the sample reported having confirmed the accommodation more than 30 days before their arrival.

Among these respondents, around 31% confirmed their housing more than 60 days before their arrival, while the remaining respondents confirmed it between 60 and 30 days before arrival.

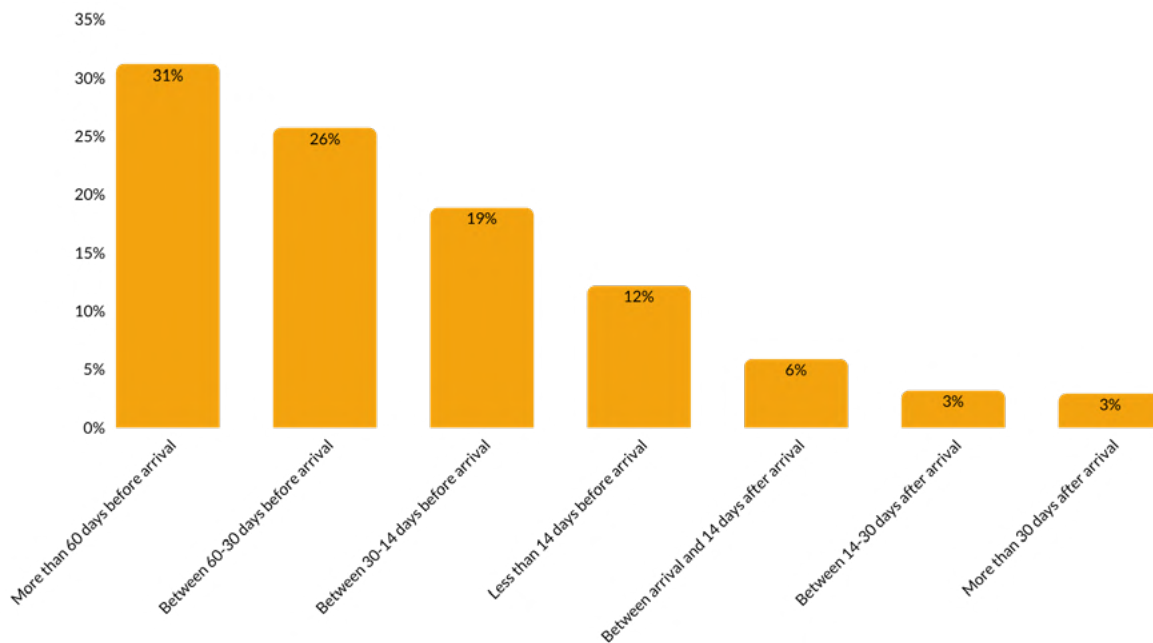


Figure 22: Relative frequency of timing of housing confirmation (N = 4,509)

On the other hand, **43.11% of the respondents were in a more precarious situation, which increased the student’s level of stress and anxiety.** Particularly, 18.85% of the respondents confirmed their housing between 30 and 14 days before arrival, 12.20% less than 14 days before arrival. A smaller but relevant minority (12.06%) received final confirmation after the arrival.

This latter category, which in this context represents the most vulnerable group, includes 5.90% of students who confirm their accommodation between the arrival and 14 days after the arrival, 3.22% between 14 and 30 days after the arrival and 2.95% who need more than 30 days to confirm accommodation.

Regarding the temporary accommodation of those students who did not find accommodation before their arrival (N=504), 35.91% stayed in a Hotel/B&B/Hostel, 33.53% booked a short-term accommodation, and 30.56% stayed at someone else’s place (friends, family, etc.) (see Figure 23).

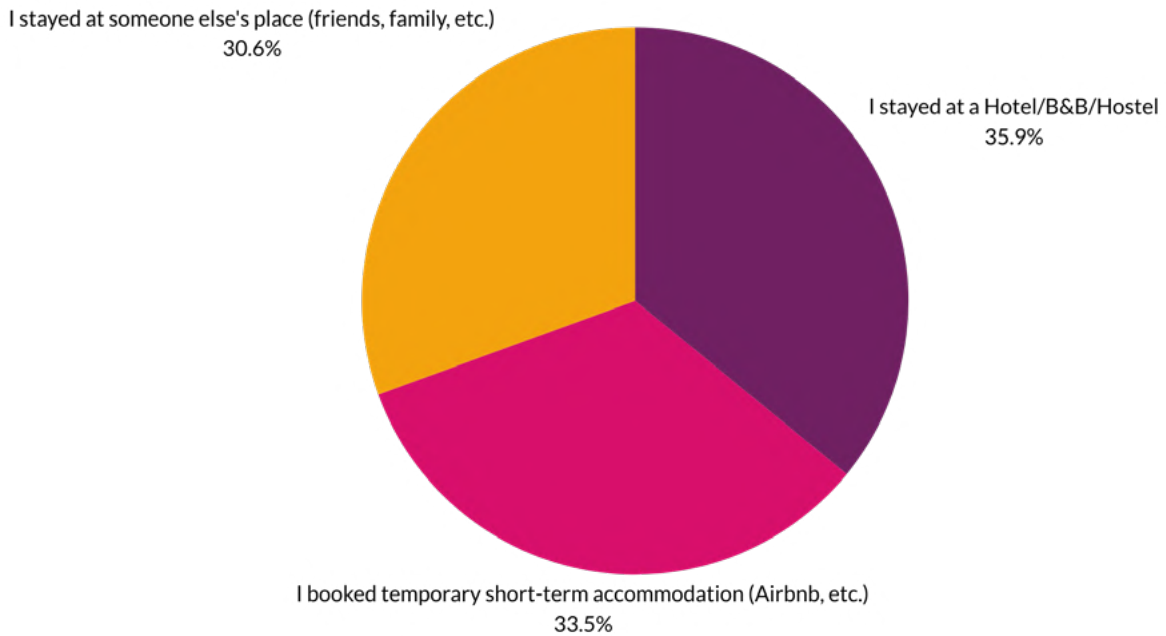


Figure 23: Relative frequency of temporary accommodation choices among students unable to secure housing before arrival (N = 504)

When comparing these results with the survey report *International student housing: How are exchange students in Europe navigating the housing crisis?* (ESU, ESN, 2023), a slight improvement is observed in students confirming an accommodation more than 30 days before arrival (56.89% vs. 51%). Additionally, the proportion of students confirming the accommodation after arrival decreased (12.06% vs. 16%), indicating some progress in reducing precarious housing situations. **These differences highlight the need to ensure people’s “freedom to stay” especially for those who wish to contribute to the development of their local community by enhancing the freedom of research and innovation (Letta E., 2024)**

In this perspective, it is important to remark how the **uncertainty caused by the lack of a final confirmation, especially after the arrival, can have an impact on the overall experience.** In fact, as presented by the **XV ESNsurvey, the challenges faced during mobility can lead to a reduction in study motivation, experience of isolation and social exclusion, and a diminished sense of belonging within the student community (Dias R. et Al., 2024).** Even though we don’t have statistical data to support it, it’s important to mention that many higher education institutions have reported an increase in the drop-out rate among students participating in Erasmus+. The unpredictability of finding suitable accommodation may be a key factor contributing to this phenomenon.

6.6. Housing situation before mobility

The search for accommodation can be challenging and influenced by many factors. Thus, we decided to explore possible correlations between the previous housing situations before mobility and the challenges to finding accommodation, defined by the number of housing providers contacted and the timing for the confirmation of the accommodation.

Overall, **most of the students, despite their previous housing conditions, can confirm an accommodation before the beginning of their mobility.** Delving deeper into the analysis, 11.41% of the participants (N=4,140) who were previously living at their childhood home found accommodation after their arrival. Almost the same percentage (11.73%) applied to respondents who were living in private apartments. Meanwhile, it is lower for students who live in the dorms (7.26%), showing the importance of ensuring affordable accommodation. The situation does not change, taking into consideration the number of housing providers contacted before confirming the accommodation.

Despite the analysis not providing insights into possible correlations, it was useful in exploring potential trends between students' previous housing situations and the challenges they face in finding accommodation. While no clear relationship emerged from the findings, **the observation that students who previously lived in dorms tend to secure their accommodation before arrival is noteworthy.**

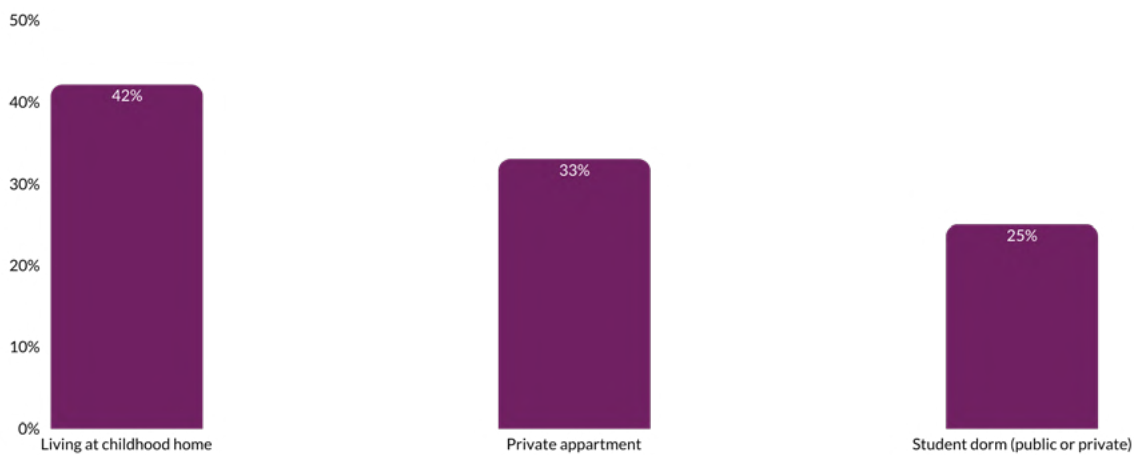


Figure 24: Distribution of previous housing conditions and accommodation search challenges (N = 4,410)

6.7. Digital services

The Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 identifies digital transformation as one of its four priorities. On this basis, respondents of HOME Squared's student housing survey were asked to identify which **digital service** could have improved their **accommodation experience**, especially taking into account the previous findings on how the highest-ranked services for accommodation searching are online services (Figure 20). In fact, 28.79% reported that video tours would have improved their experience, and 24.37% felt that online booking and payment options would have done the same.

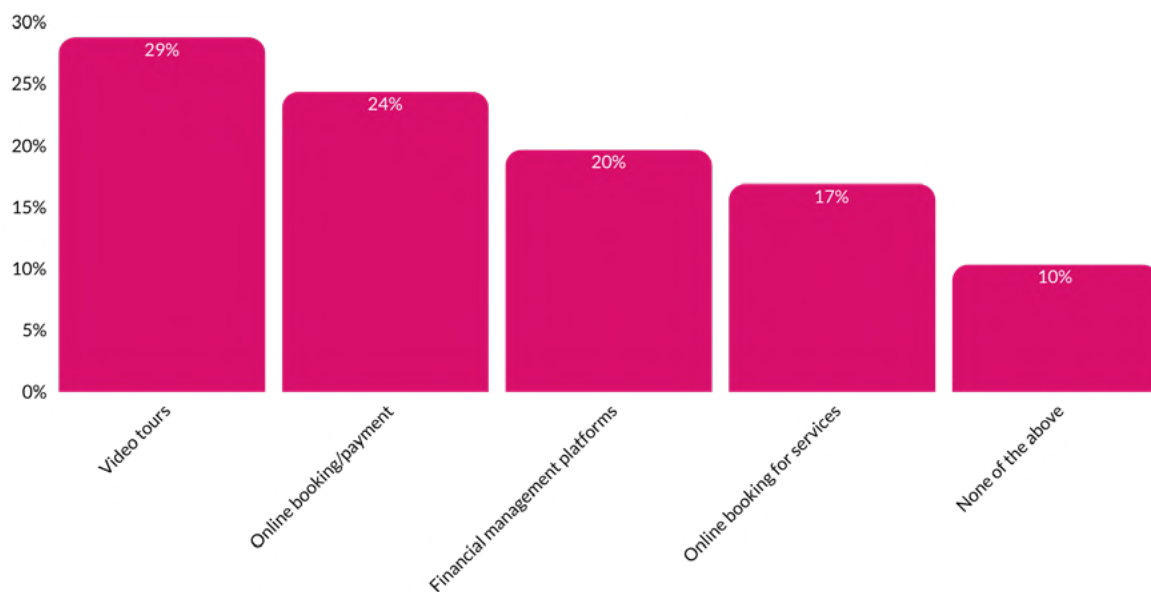


Figure 25: Relative frequency of digital tools desired for better accommodation experiences (N = 7,374)⁶

Digital services are increasingly integrated into our everyday activities and are becoming more and more familiar, especially for the younger generation, facilitating actions such as payments and bookings. For this reason, **it is important to continue advancing the implementation of these services while also implementing action to increase house seekers' trust in them, which nowadays still represents a big challenge.** Improving online services can enhance the security of booking accommodations, addressing both trust and safety concerns, especially when it is not possible to check them in person.

⁶ Participants were allowed to select multiple responses, so the percentages may total more than 100%.

7. Housing Experience

7.1. Factors for choosing accommodation

In the survey, students were asked: **“Why did you choose to live in your accommodation?”**. To respond to this question, students had to rank different aspects, the most influential factor needed to be ranked lower (i.e., a score of one), and the least important influencing factor higher (i.e., a score of five). Based on **3,737 responses**, the top-ranked reason was **affordability** (M=3.27, SD=2.89), reflecting that for many students, **financial considerations are paramount when selecting a place to live**. This ranking underscores the need for cost-effective housing options that align with students’ budgets, as affordability seems to be a decisive factor for the majority.

Access to **amenities** (M=4.54, SD=3.00) was also a key concern, indicating a **strong preference among students for equipped accommodations**. Similarly, **accommodation’s immediate availability** (M=5.75, SD=3.00) reflects **the desire for convenient access to university facilities**, minimising commute times and enhancing the overall student experience by making campus life more accessible. This suggests that many students, especially those finalising housing closer to the start of the academic year, value the convenience of readily available options.

Trustworthiness of the housing provider ranked fairly high as well (M=6.97, SD=2.95). This preference points to the importance of dependable, reputable landlords or agencies in students’ choices. **Students are likely to count on reliable services, factors that contribute to a more stable and comfortable living experience**. In cases where students have limited time to secure housing, **distance to campus** was also a **significant factor** (M=6.59, SD=3.53) reflecting **the desire for convenient access to university facilities, minimising commute times and enhancing the overall student experience by making campus life more accessible**.

Several additional factors also influenced decision-making, although to a smaller extent than affordability and safety. **Transparency of rental terms** (M=7.57, SD=2.77) ranked notably, implying that **students value clear, straightforward agreements that minimise potential misunderstandings**. Community aspects of the accommodation, such as involvement in

community activities (M=6.59, SD=3.16), indicate a preference among some students for social engagement opportunities within their living environments.

Privacy was another important factor (M=8.21, SD=3.34), suggesting that for a portion of the student population, personal space and the potential for independent living are meaningful. Privacy considerations may reflect students' preferences for quiet study environments or an enhanced sense of autonomy. Further, atmosphere (M=10.17, SD=3.44), though ranked lower overall, indicates that the ambience or character of the accommodation still plays a role in making housing more appealing, contributing to a comfortable and enjoyable living experience.

These insights suggest that while affordability remains the most critical factor for most students, safety, trustworthiness, location, and immediacy of availability also significantly shape their decisions. Understanding these priorities can support universities and housing providers in developing policies and services that meet students' most pressing needs, promoting both affordability and security in student housing.

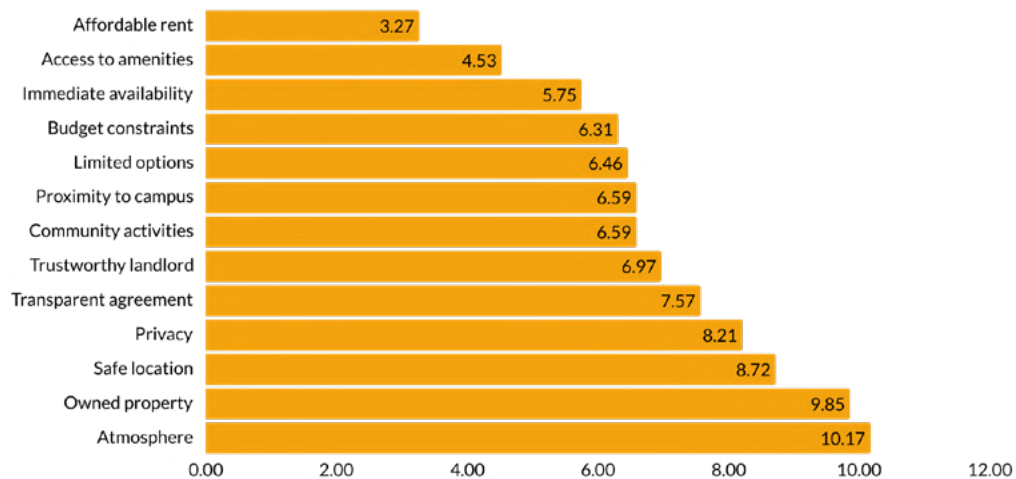


Figure 26: Average ranking of factors influencing students' accommodation choices (N = 3,737)

7.2. Type of accommodation

When it comes to the **main groups of housing providers**, on one hand the student dorms operated by the HEIs host 28.60% of the respondents, while on the other, 71.40% of the respondents are hosted by private housing providers. In particular, 20.22% of respondents stayed in student dormitories operated by private providers while the majority of students (35.29%) opted for a shared flat or house with other students which could potentially suggest a preference for independence and cost-effective living arrangements. Only 8.09% opted for a studio or to live alone, classifying it as one of the less chosen options together with homestay (2.82%) and Hotel/hostel (1.45%).

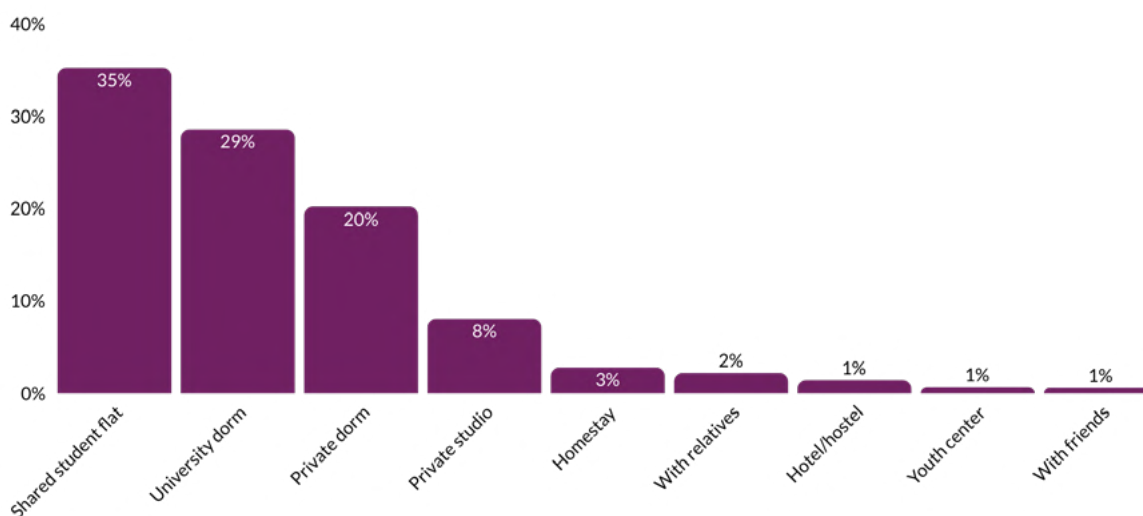


Figure 27: Relative frequency of student housing preferences (N = 4,426)

The findings highlight an **overall preference of students for residences, suggesting different interpretations**. First of all, **this type of accommodation would be considered more trustworthy than private solutions**. Secondly, students may view **the social aspect of dormitories as an added value, largely supported by specific amenities that foster a sense of community, such as social lounges, outdoor spaces, and shared kitchens** (Figure 19). These amenities not only encourage interaction and collaboration but also create a welcoming environment that reinforces the appeal of dormitory living.

It is important to note that there are significant variations in housing choices across Europe. For instance, in Norway, Poland and the Czech Republic, a large percentage of students

(63.33%, 62.25% and 64.29%, respectively) stayed in **dormitories operated by Higher Education Institutions**. Other countries, including Spain (5.35%), Portugal (7.69%), and Italy (10.40%), reported a **minimum level of students living in a dorm operated by HEIs**. In comparison, it showed high percentages of respondents living in shared flats and houses (respectively 70.05%, 71.28% and 64.22%).

More generally, the data evidences **the importance of a double engagement from both public and private housing providers, to face the students' housing crisis**. Indeed, as stated in the Student Housing Report, a range of housing choices can enhance the overall experience and satisfaction of students during their mobility programmes (European Students Union & Erasmus Student Network, 2023).

7.3. Satisfaction with quality standards

When respondents were asked about **the quality standards of their housing**, the majority of them expressed general satisfaction on a Likert scale (1 = very dissatisfied, 5 = very satisfied). These could indicate that **students' challenges are mainly related to research on accommodation rather than actual quality standards of the housing**.

72.92% of the respondents were "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with the friendliness towards international students, similarly 70% with the location, 62% with their private room equipment and 54% for the equipment of the common space.

It is important to remark that among the most rated quality standards, there is a good value for money, with 23.10% of students being "Very Satisfied", 31.89% "Satisfied", 25.24% "Neutral", 14.13% "Unsatisfied" and 5.64% being "Very Unsatisfied".

The lowest levels of satisfaction were associated with the offer of social and multicultural events/activities (40.52% were "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied") as well as the support for student's well-being (40.67% were "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied"). **The first finding could reflect a new perception of accommodations, which could lead to an increase in housing for social gatherings and the sharing of moments with fellow students**. On the other hand, **the low satisfaction with student support for well-being raises important questions about student's housing needs and the role of accommodations in the overall success of the experience**.

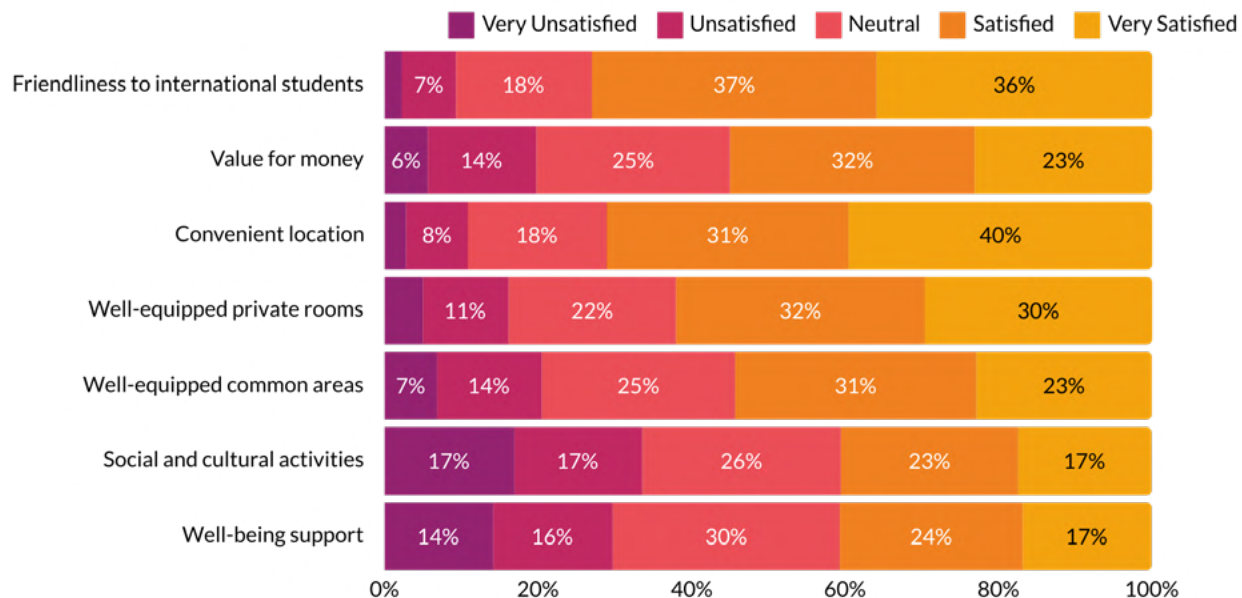


Figure 28: Distribution of satisfaction levels for housing quality (N = 4,148)

Overall, the data highlight different levels of satisfaction with the accommodations based on the country. In particular, higher levels of satisfaction were registered in Sweden (45.24%), Greece (42.65%) and Poland (36.62%). Incoming students going to countries typically more touched by the housing crisis, such as the Netherlands, Italy and Portugal still considered their mobility as satisfying.

7.4. Proximity to services

Based on 4,129 respondents, 71.05% were “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with the location of their accommodation. However, to better understand the average distance from the students’ accommodation to relevant services, students were asked to indicate in an ordinal scale with categories ranging from “0 minutes” to “more than 30 minutes”. When students were asked to rate the walking distance between their accommodation and various services, 60.51% (N= 5,105) reported living more than 20 minutes away from their university, making it the most distant service to reach. Similarly, 63.37% of the respondents (N= 5,364) live more than 20 minutes away from the city centre. The previously mentioned areas are among the most expensive in terms of housing. Still, it is important to reflect on the consequences of distancing students from their universities, which could have an impact on the student’s

experience, including demotivation in class attendance, the limitation of social life, and consequent integration with the local community.

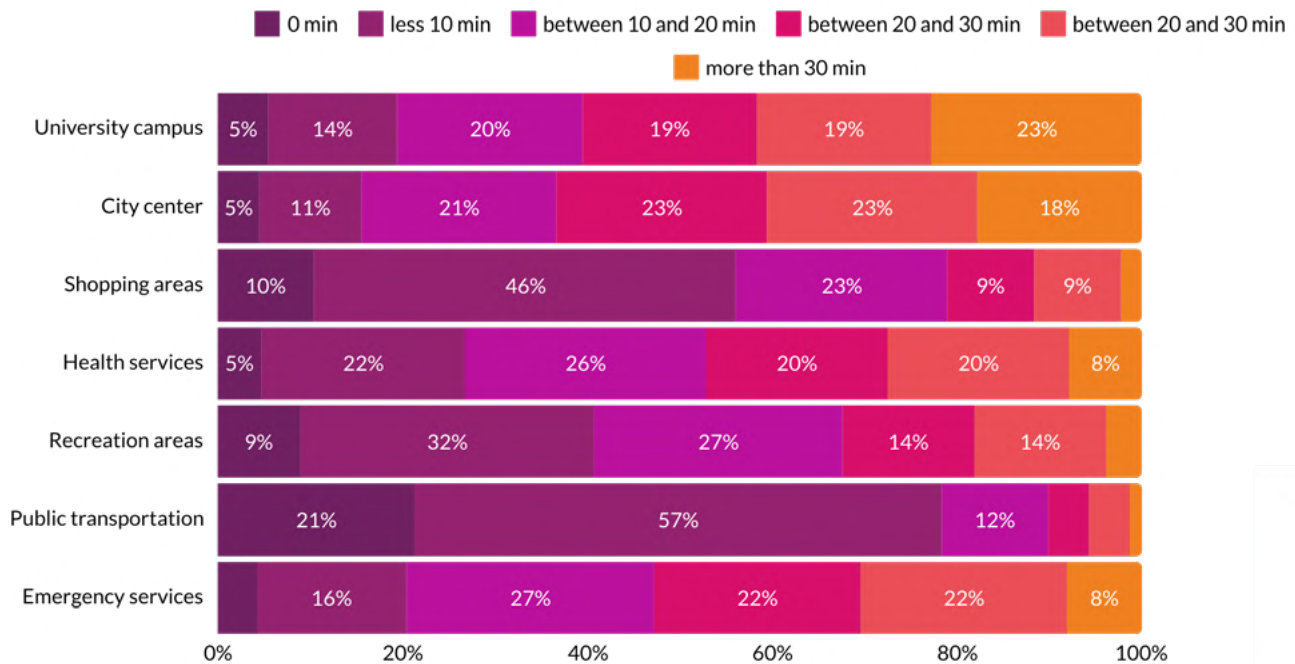


Figure 29: Distribution of walking distance to services (N = 4,219)

The distances get shorter when we take into consideration food shops and public transport, with 56.09% and 78.35% of the respondents living less than 10 minutes away from them. This could indicate that there is a necessity for students to move to other areas in the city to find affordable accommodation, requiring access to public transport and first-need goods.

The findings highlight the importance of proximity to key services. Among the **4,140 respondents**, 89.66% rated being near public transportation as “Very Important,” with a similar 89.59% indicating it as either “Important” or “Very Important.” Proximity to their university was valued similarly, with 80.99% rating it as “Important” or “Very Important.” Additionally, 63.31% of respondents rated closeness to recreational areas highly, while 39.61% emphasised the importance of being near public services (see Figure 30).

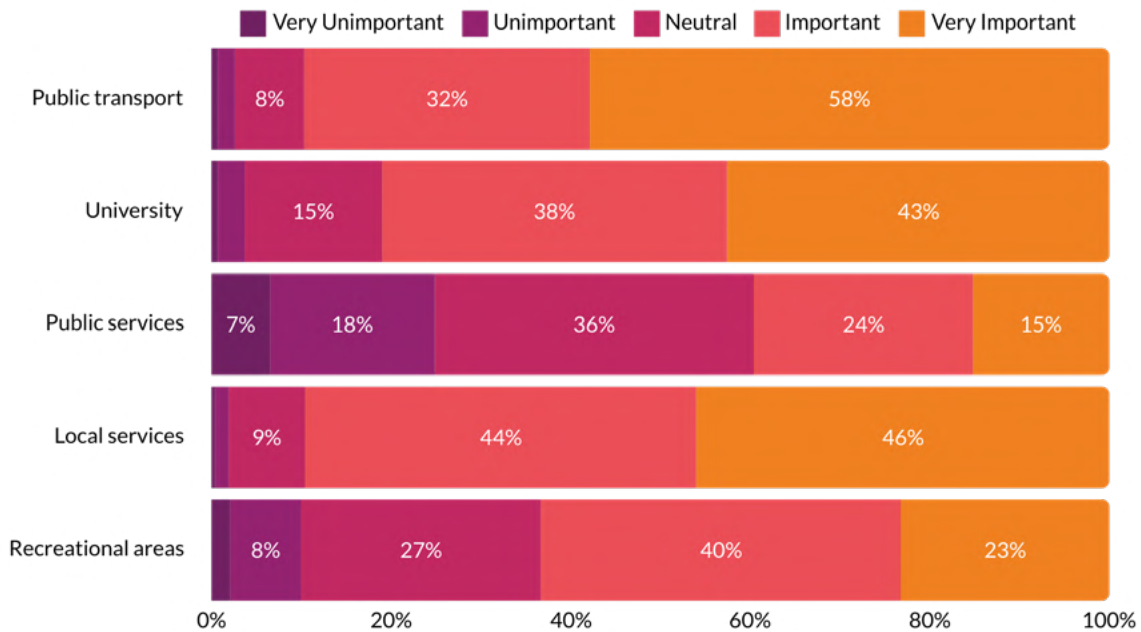


Figure 30: Distribution of the importance of proximity to key services from accommodation (N= 4,140)

7.5. Sharing the housing experience with others

Given the recurring importance of social aspects in accommodations, **respondents were asked who they lived with during their study abroad**, selecting from a range of predefined categories. Based on **4,099 responses**, during their mobility experience, 43.25% of the respondents lived with international students from other countries, 18.74% lived with international students from their own country, 16.35% lived alone, and 12.25% lived with domestic students. Sharing accommodation with members of the local community who are not enrolled in Higher Education appears to be way less frequent, involving just 5.44% of the sample. This last tendency could have different origins, and **the possibility that students are discriminated against and deprived of the right to rent specific accommodation should not be excluded** (see Figure 31).

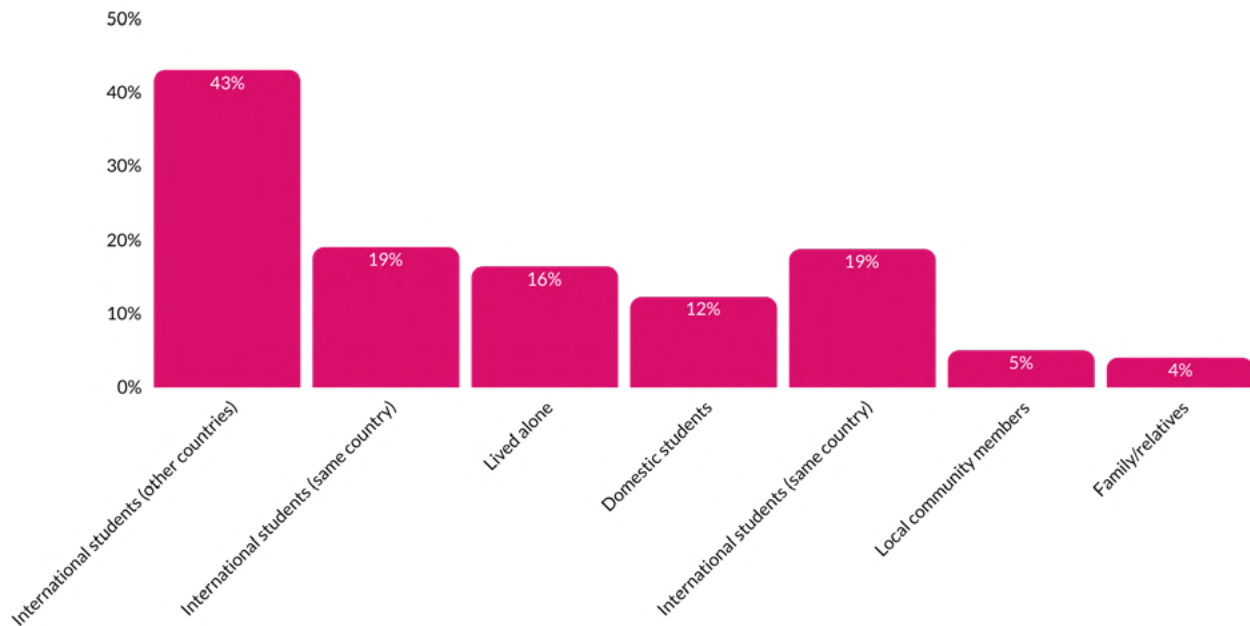


Figure 31: Relative frequency of living arrangements during study abroad (N = 4,099)

7.6. Skills, growth, and community building in shared accommodation

Over the years, many research studies and reports have proved **the economic effect of mobility**; in particular, **it has improved the productivity of the labour force and reduced the level of unemployment in different regions of the European Union (Müller, K. 2020)**. However, **we can not limit Erasmus+ to an academic experience**; it is important to recognise the full learning potential of the programme.

With this objective in mind, **it is important to analyse the priority students associate with sharing their accommodation and to with other students**. In this sense, during the survey participants were asked to reflect on their experiences of sharing accommodation abroad with other students and to identify which aspects they considered important to gain during their stay. The results show that **55.95% of the respondents (N= 4,513) highlighted multicultural skills as important**, **49.52% emphasised personal and academic growth**, and **46.58% valued a sense of belonging to the living community**. A final mention should be given to the opportunity of networking related to this experience, with almost 50% of the respondents

highlighted the importance of creating community and university connections. This last finding is fundamental, especially in light of the scientific report “**Does student mobility during higher education pay**”, which evidence the possibility of mobile graduates developing a preference for the international environment, increasing their mobility capital, leading them to search for a job abroad (European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2013). This also resonates with the need at the EU level to build networks and increase mobility capital, enabling individuals to leverage shared spaces for professional and personal advancement (Letta E., 2024).

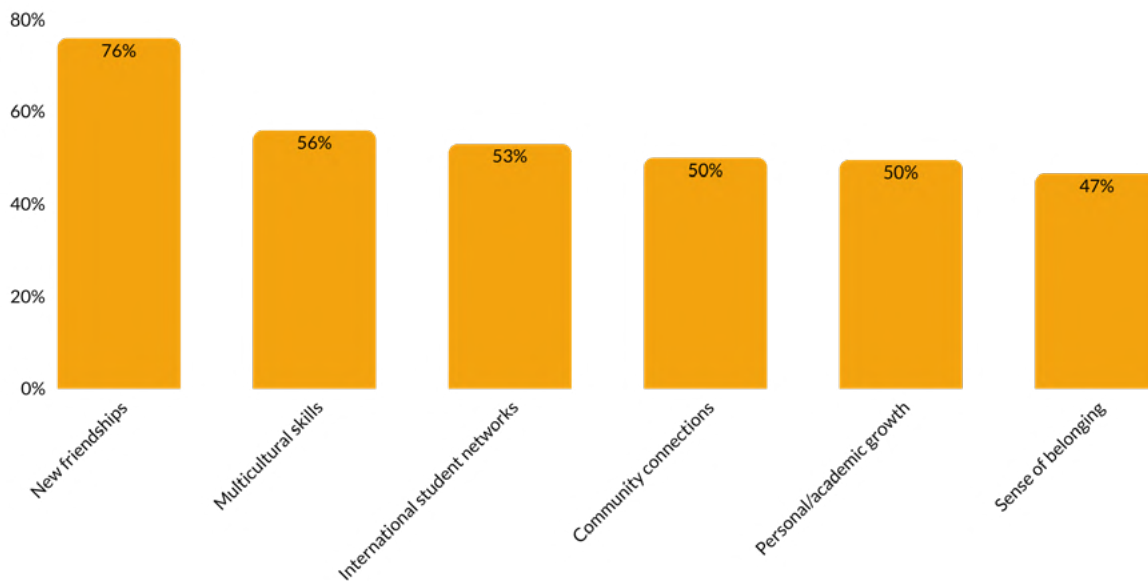


Figure 32: Relative frequency of self-assessed skills developed during shared accommodation abroad (N = 4,513)

8. Housing Challenges

8.1. Type of challenges while looking for accommodation

In cases where the accommodation search is particularly challenging, there are **many barriers that students have to overcome before confirming their housing**. In detail, the most recurring challenge for 60.93% of participants was the **high accommodation costs**, followed by **scams** (34.17%), **scarcity of accommodation offers** (32.14%) and **higher quality accommodation** (27.77%).

Among the challenges that students face in finding accommodation, it is also important to mention the **language barrier between landlords and housing providers** (27.15%), **misleading advertisements** (6,9%), and **complex rental agreements** (19.46%).

In addition to this, there are less diffused but still relevant challenges that students face. These include **ethnicity/nationality discrimination** (2.21%), **lack of registered contract** (12.37%) and **the strict tenancy law for internationals** (10.14%).

Significantly, the challenges encountered during the accommodation search had **profound consequences for students' academic journeys and international experiences**. Among all respondents, **5.05% were compelled to cancel their mobility entirely due to insurmountable housing barriers** (see Figure 33). However, if compared with previous surveys, the number of beneficiaries that decided to cancel their mobility because they did not find a permanent accommodation decreased by 5.95% (ESU & ESN, 2023). Still, **this finding is particularly alarming as it highlights how logistical challenges can directly undermine students' educational and cultural exchange opportunities**.

The cancellation of mobility not only disrupts individual academic trajectories but also has broader implications for international education systems and host institutions and may disproportionately impact students from underprivileged backgrounds or those less familiar with local housing systems, further exacerbating inequality in international education.

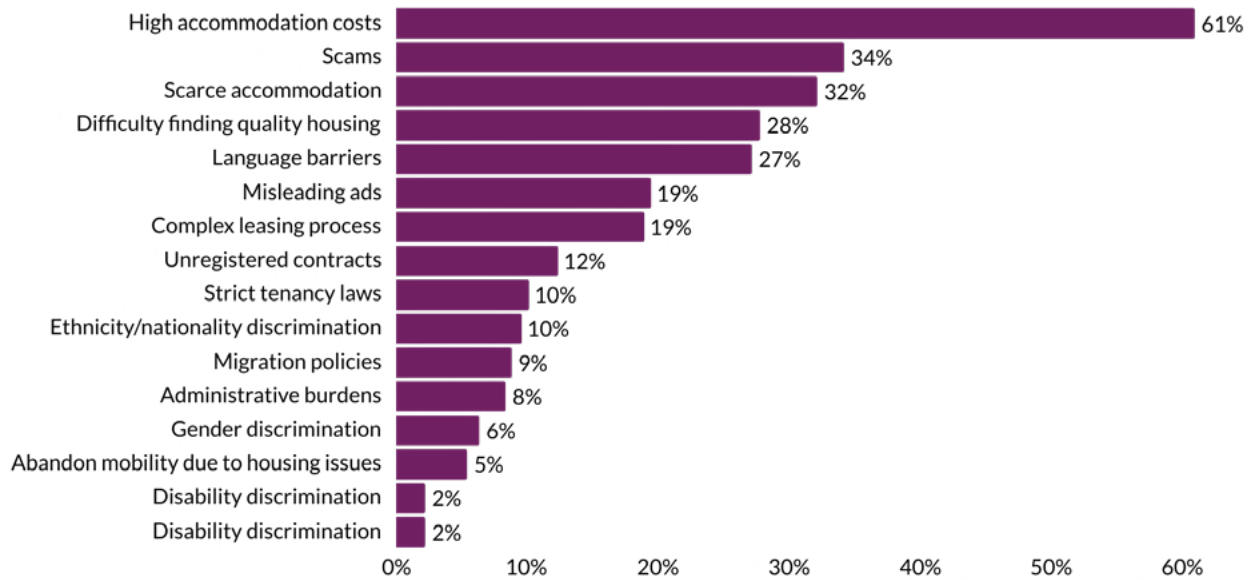


Figure 33: Relative frequency of challenges faced during accommodation search (N = 4,203)

8.2. Scams

The survey shows that **around two-thirds of the respondents have experienced housing scams during their mobilities**. The high recurrence of this phenomenon turns it into a **key problem in mobile students' experience especially when considering a 182,4% increase compared to findings of the survey report International student housing: How are exchange students in Europe navigating the housing crisis? (ESU, ESN, 2023)**. This result suggests the **need for better monitoring processes and more precise tools to ensure the accuracy of data collection and comparison**. Nevertheless, it is important to **raise awareness on the matter and improve tools to discourage this behaviour**.

17.48% of the respondents encountered rental properties that do not exist or that the landlord does not own (fake listing), 17.38% experienced overpayment when compared to the average price for similar rooms and 14.83% were scammed by false quality standards. When considering the less recurring ones, it is also worth mentioning the lies about the features of the properties (11.32%) and the phishing emails and messages (9.16%) (see Figure 34).

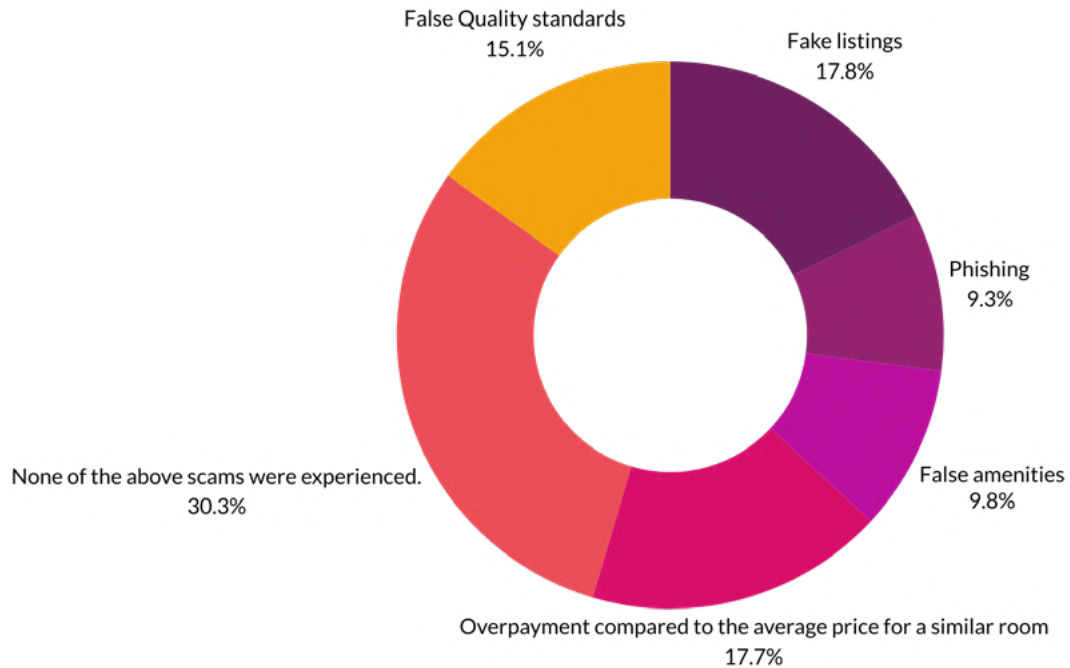


Figure 34: Relative frequency of experiences scams during mobility (N = 7,139)⁷

Despite the general diffusion of scams, **it is important to evidence national variation across countries in Europe.** More specifically, Italy registered the highest number of scams, with 11.37% of respondents experiencing at least one, followed by Germany, with almost 10.76% of participants reporting scams. The situation is completely different if compared to Scandinavian countries such as Norway, where just 1.24% experienced scams.

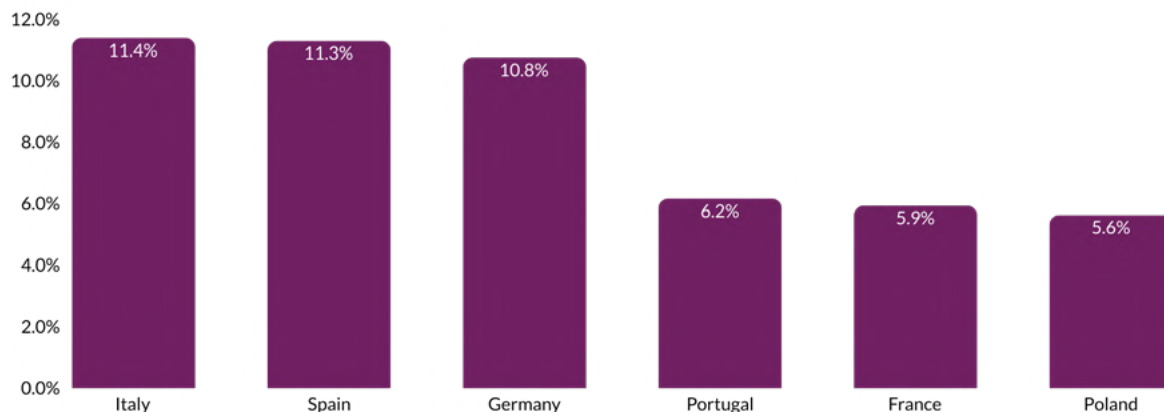


Figure 35: Top 5 Nation by the relative frequency of experiences scams during mobility (N= 5147)

⁷ Participants were allowed to select multiple responses, so the percentages may total more than 100%

Preventive measures against scams should constitute a priority for Higher Education Institutions and all stakeholders that play a role in the facilitation of student mobility. Collaboration between local and regional authorities, in conjunction with law enforcement agencies, is imperative to ensure the effective implementation of such measures.

It is crucial for students to be equipped with the knowledge to report the incident to the appropriate authorities and contact their respective sending and hosting institutions. These institutions must assume responsibility for monitoring developments in this area, maintaining records, and providing guidance to students to ensure a positive and effective experience.

8.3. Rental agreement

Building on the discussion of scams, it is important to explore the role of rental agreements in these experiences. To investigate this, participants were asked if they have a formal rental agreement. Based on 4,507 respondents, 80.76% affirmed having a formal rental agreement, 13.47% did not have a formal agreement, and 5.77% preferred not to reply to the question.

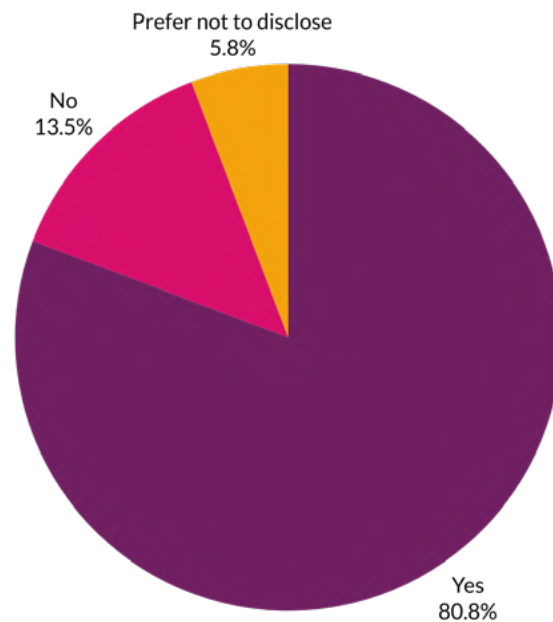


Figure 35: Relative frequency of formal rental agreement status among respondents (N = 4,507)

Going deeper into the analysis, it is possible to identify different trends based on the hosting country. More specifically, Portugal registered the highest lack of rental agreement, with 21.72% of respondents not having one, followed by Italy, with almost 20.70% of participants reporting a lack of formal agreement. The situation is completely different if compared to the Czech Republic, where just 2.27% do not have a formal agreement.

8.4. Security deposit

One of the most significant barriers linked to accommodation is a security deposit. This can also represent an economic barrier for most of the participants since it is common to receive the first payment for the Erasmus+ grant only 30 days after arrival (Dias, Buseyne, et al., 2024). In this sense, **it is required that all students and their families have enough liquidity to cover a security deposit, which can change from case to case.**

Based on **4,480 responses**, just 18.73% of the students were not required to pay a deposit. At the same time, it was reported that 38.46% of respondents paid a security deposit corresponding to one month or less of the monthly rent, 22.77% paid between 1 and 2 monthly rent as a security deposit, 16,56% paid two rents or more. In contrast, 3.48% of the students preferred not to answer this question.

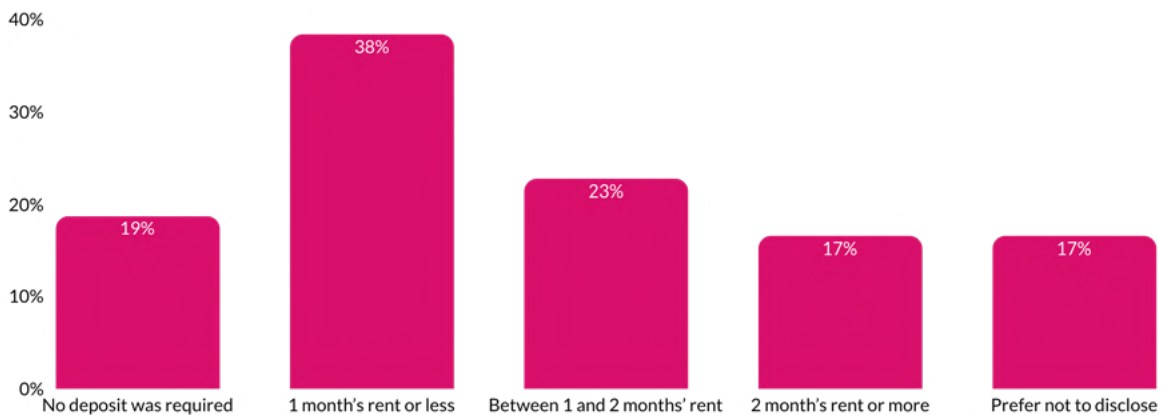


Figure 36: Relative frequency of security deposit amounts among respondents (N=4,480)

8.5. The cost of housing

As already shown, almost half of mobility students spent more than 400€, raising the living cost for mobility students to around 790€ monthly (European Students Union & Erasmus Student Network, 2023). To have a clearer understanding of the economic burden represented by the housing crisis, respondents were asked: “How much did/do you spend monthly to pay for your current accommodation (in EUR)?”. This was a multiple-choice question, and students could select from predefined ranges of expenditure.

Let us now consider the average grant for exchange students, which, according to the XV ESNsurvey, is roughly 470€. This indicates that the current grants do not allow to fully cover the housing costs completely and, in fact, students and their families are required to compensate for a lack of funds to around 322€ monthly with their own finances.

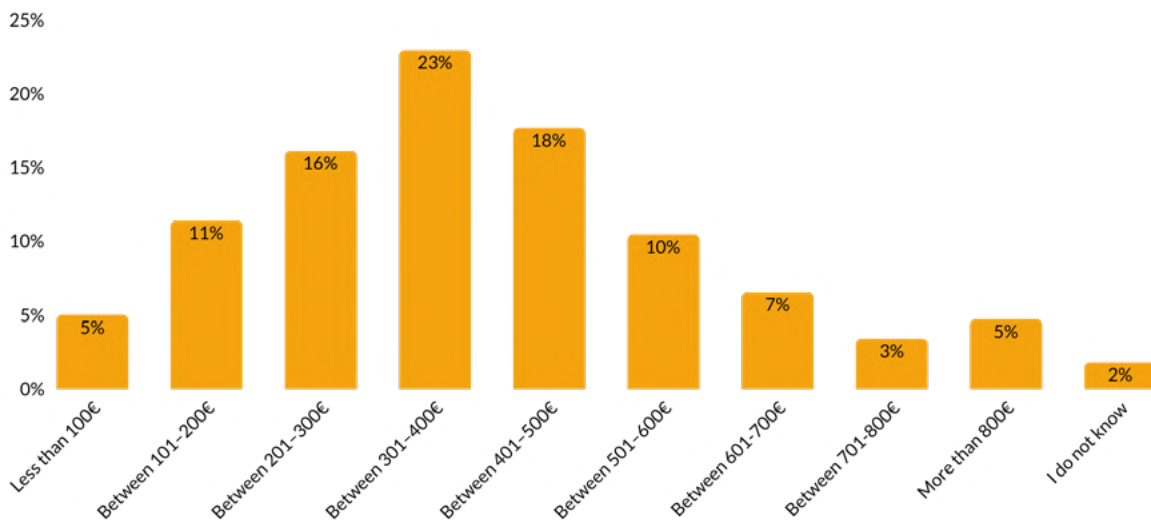


Figure 37: Relative frequency of accommodation costs (N = 4,513)

In detail, the average amount students pay in rent each month, 22.93% of respondents answered between 301 and 400€, 17.68% pay between 401 and 500€, 10.46% pay between 501 and 600€ while 14.65% pay more than 601€ each month.

The analysis of housing costs reveals significant differences between countries, showcasing the varied financial burdens on students across Europe. Germany, Spain, and Austria display a concentration of students in the 301–400€ range, making it the most common category

overall. However, **affordability** is more evident in countries like the Czech Republic and Croatia, where a significant proportion of students report costs between 101–300€, reflecting a lower financial burden. In contrast, Ireland emerges as the most expensive country, with 44% of students paying more than 800€ per month, far higher than in any other country analysed. Mid-range costs, particularly 401–600€, dominate in countries like Italy and Belgium, emphasising moderate yet substantial costs related to housing.

8.6. Support received from Higher Education Institutions

The effectiveness of the support provided by HEIs in assisting students with finding accommodation is a critical factor that influences student well-being, academic success, and overall satisfaction with their educational experience. Thus, respondents were asked: “What type of support did you receive from your higher education institution in finding accommodation?”

Based on the responses from **4,307 students**, 29.6% received information on how to find accommodation through their institution’s website, making this the most common form of support. Meanwhile, 19.9% of students had their current accommodation provided by their institution, offering significant relief from the challenges of searching for housing. Additionally, 15.7% received direct contact with housing providers, and 18,9% were informed about the general housing market and regulations, indicating that many institutions rely heavily on guiding information.

More personal support was less common, with only 12.9% of respondents receiving contacts of other students or participants who could offer insights into the housing situation. However, it is concerning that 30.1% of students reported receiving no support from their HEI, and 22.5% did not ask for any assistance (see Figure 38).

These figures reveal significant gaps in institutional outreach and engagement. The similarities with the findings from the report *International student housing: How are exchange students in Europe navigating the housing crisis?* (ESU, ESN, 2023) suggest that **the challenges in institutional support for student housing remain persistent, with many students continuing to face inadequate assistance and a significant proportion left to navigate the housing market on their own.** Institutions need to expand their housing support services and provide the information in an accessible online format, ensuring that students are not only aware of available resources but also have access to more direct and practical help, especially in competitive or unfamiliar housing markets.

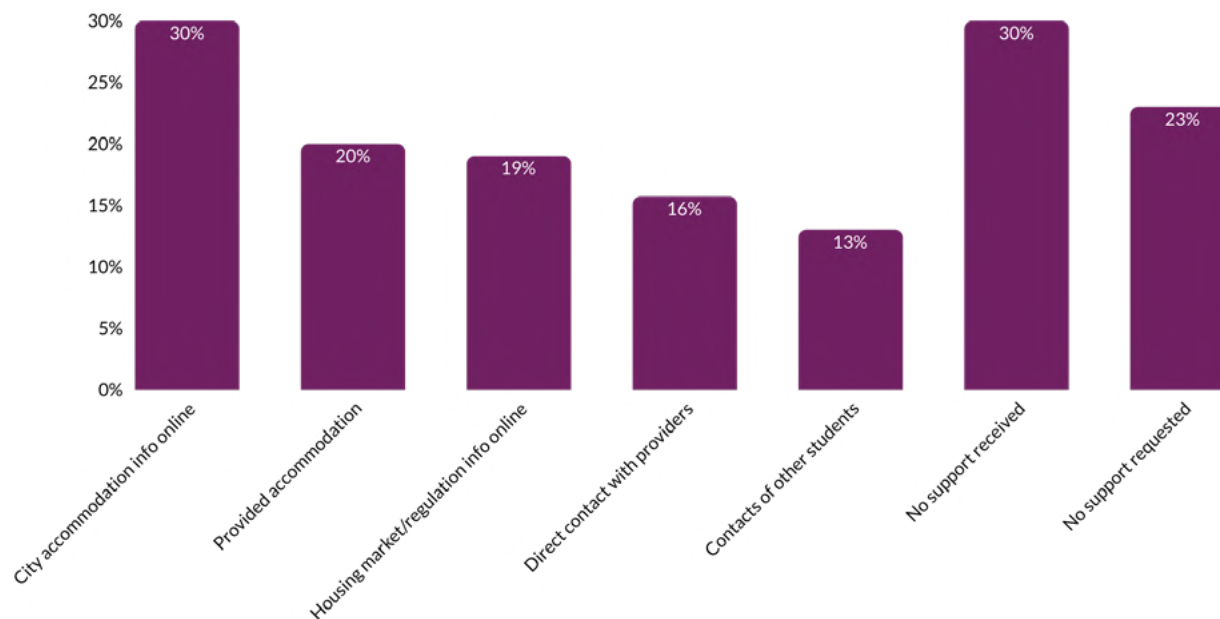


Figure 38: Relative frequency of institutional support in student accommodation search (N = 4,307)

Students were also asked to **rate their satisfaction with the service provided by Higher Education Institutions on a 10-point Likert scale** (ranging from very dissatisfied to very satisfied). According to the data, the average satisfaction score is 5.48. This moderate mean suggests that, while many students acknowledge some level of institutional support, there is a clear need for improvement.

Further analysis shows that the median and mode scores are both 6.00, indicating that a substantial number of students rated their satisfaction just above the midpoint. However, the lower mean score implies that a significant number of students rated their satisfaction well below this, pulling down the overall average. This discrepancy points to uneven experiences across different institutions, or even within the same institution, where some students received adequate assistance while others did not.

The standard deviation of 3.15 highlights a wide dispersion of responses, reflecting the variability in the quality of support offered by HEIs. The coefficient of variation of 0.57 underscores the inconsistency of student experiences relative to the mean. In practical terms, these figures suggest that while some institutions may be delivering effective, reliable support, others are falling short, leaving students to navigate the often complex and competitive housing markets with insufficient guidance.

This inconsistency is particularly concerning given that access to affordable and secure housing is not only fundamental to a student’s ability to succeed academically but also to their mental and emotional well-being. For some students, particularly those arriving from abroad or from low-income backgrounds, inadequate support in finding accommodation can lead to prolonged housing insecurity, higher financial burdens, and increased stress, all of which are avoidable with stronger institutional frameworks in place.

The findings also point to a crucial gap between the expectations students have of their institutions and the reality of the support provided. Given that the median and mode both sit at 6.00, it is evident that while many students consider the support acceptable, few regard it as excellent. This should signal to policymakers and university administrators that the current efforts are not meeting the full range of student’s needs and that there is a substantial opportunity for improvement.

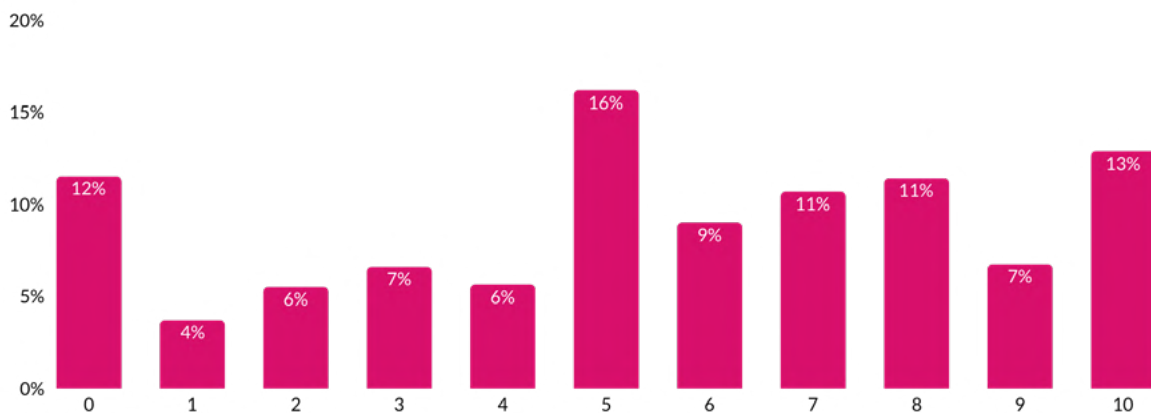


Figure 39: Distribution of Student Satisfaction with Institutional Accommodation Support (N = 4,307)

When analysing satisfaction at the level of the country of enrolment, significant differences emerge. **Lithuania (9.00), Cyprus (8.33), and Norway (7.50)** lead with the **highest satisfaction scores**, indicating that **HEIs in these countries are particularly effective in providing housing support**. On the other hand, **Ireland (2.56), Denmark (3.00), and Greece (3.64)** show the **lowest satisfaction scores**, highlighting **considerable challenges in institutional housing support**. Similarly, if taking in consideration **the mobility destinations of respondents**, countries such as **Norway (7.50), Finland (7.37), and Sweden (7.22)** had the **highest scores** while **Italy (3.71), Portugal (3.86) and Greece (4.38)** registered the **lowest level of satisfactions**. These disparities emphasise the need for targeted interventions in countries with lower satisfaction levels to ensure a more equitable and consistent experience for students across regions.

9. Recommendations

The following recommendation builds on the finding of the HOME² student survey and the experience of Erasmus Student Network in supporting students all over Europe. They aim to **increase and improve the support available to students in securing accommodation while enhancing its overall quality.**

The recommendations target mainly **Higher Education Institutions participating in mobility programmes**, but also other **key actors** such as **local and regional governments, National Agencies, and European institutions**. HOME² Consortium strongly believe that **collaboration between different actors is critical to improving the housing support provided to international students**. It is important to note that some recommendations were already highlighted in the previous ESN policy and research documents, and for this publication, they have been adapted and further enhanced to reflect evolving needs and insights.

General considerations on quality housing for exchange students

- **National and Regional authorities should prioritise the expectation of public student housing, with a special focus on countries where it is less prevalent, such as South European countries.** Besides benefiting the whole student population, student housing can have great benefits for internationalisation and student mobility if the particular needs of mobile learners are taken into account. Therefore, expanding student housing should be considered in internationalisation strategies.
- **EU Structural funds should be used to support the creation of new student housing in regions where it is less prevalent,** which will also support the internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions while alleviating the housing situation of all students.internationalisation strategies.

- **Mobile students with fewer opportunities should be given priority access to higher education institution housing**, with hosting Universities ensuring that all the benefits available to local students also apply. Providing direct financial support to incoming students through cheaper housing options can help to make Universities more inclusive.
- **The new Monitoring Framework of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education should be used to increase the attention to student housing at the national level.** National Agencies should regularly incorporate discussions between ECHE holderson their housing support mechanisms and should be given a mandate by NationalAuthorities to carry out initiatives related to international student housing.
- **The new Commissioner for Energy and Housing, alongside Local and National Authorities, must prioritise addressing the structural challenges of student housing in Europe.** It is crucial to ensure accessible and affordable student housing is available for both national and international students. These efforts are vital to sustaining mobility programmes, particularly with the introduction of new mobility opportunities, and to guarantee that students can continue to study abroad in a safe and secure environment.

Before Mobility

- **Housing aspects should be considered when signing inter-institutional agreements**, making sure that there is a basic understanding of the housing conditions in the hosting cities.
- **Sending and hosting Universities should agree on their exact responsibilities in housing information and provision throughout their mobility journey.** Sending Institutions should be able to provide students with a general understanding of the housing situation of the destination city, based on the information provided by theHigher Education Institution and on feedback from students.

- **Students should be supported to find their housing before moving to their exchange destinations, in order to avoid complications once they move.** Universities, student organisations and public authorities should collaborate to ensure students are aware of the housing situation in the hosting country, and that they have an understanding of the relevant legal aspects.
- **Higher Education Institutions should work side by side with student organisations to enhance the outreach and awareness of the Erasmus Student Charter.** This document outlines the rights, responsibilities and duties of international students before, during and after their mobility, making it essential for students to be well-informed about their entitlements and obligations. Moreover, students should be made aware of the mechanisms available to report complaints and issues as specified in the charter. By collaborating with student organisations, HEIs can ensure effective peer-to-peer support, a highly valued resource among international students. This partnership also equips student organisations with critical knowledge about the charter, fostering a more informed and supportive student community.
- **Sending Higher Education Institutions should ensure and promote a diverse range of mobility destinations,** aligning these options with students' desired experiences and financial capacities. HEIs must provide tailored guidance by dedicating time to understanding students' financial backgrounds and expectations. This personalised mentoring will help students select destinations that balance affordability with academic, cultural, and professional aspirations, ensuring a more inclusive mobility experience.
- **Sending Higher Education Institutions should diversify mobility options by promoting destinations that are less over-populated.** Encouraging students to consider these alternatives helps alleviate the challenges associated with overcrowded areas while offering unique academic and cultural experiences that might otherwise be overlooked. HEIs should actively showcase the advantages of less over-populated destinations, such as lower living costs, reduced competition for housing, and opportunities for deeper cultural immersion.

During Mobility

- **Higher Education Institutions should help to set up peer-to-peer housing support mechanisms in their institutions** which can help students going to an exchange to let their rooms to other students coming to their exchange destination.
- **Higher Education Institutions should prioritise mixing local and international students in student dorms, contributing to internationalisation at home.** At the same time, institutions should put in place incentives to increase interaction between local and international students also through house-sharing schemes, which can increase the interest of local students in internationalisation from the beginning of their Higher Education journey.
- **Universities and local governments should collaborate to ensure rent conditions for students are fair. In order to support students to afford their deposit payments,** HEIs should make sure grants are paid completely upfront before the mobility starts, avoiding the payment of any parts of the grant after the end of the mobility.
- **Higher Education Institutions and municipalities should incentivise the sharing of accommodation among local and international students** as part of their internationalisation strategies, including such aspects in the management of buddy systems and similar schemes.
- **Inclusive housing strategies must be developed to address the needs of underrepresented groups,** including students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, students with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ students. Housing providers should be incentivized through institutional or government programs to adopt inclusive practices and support diverse student populations.
- **Higher Education Institutions and local governments should prioritise measures to ensure the prevention of scams.** These can include:

- **Informative materials and sessions on tips and tricks to find reliable housing.** After receiving the confirmation of their exchange destination, students should be fully informed about these issues, either through the creation of materials or the organisation of information sessions by the hosting higher education institution.
- **Legal advice on aspects such as contracts.** Setting up legal support systems can be a great way to ensure scam prevention. In most cases, students only need basic legal advice. Specific systems, such as support positions in International Relations Offices or collaborations with the housing/legal departments of the higher education institution can be organised.
- **Initiatives to support the renting of houses to students.** Reliable housing providers should be encouraged to rent rooms to students. Local authorities should encourage agreements between tenants' and landlords' organisations in realising advantageous housing contract frameworks for students.
- **Creating verified databases of trusted landlords and housing providers** including comprehensive details such as property locations, rental terms, average costs, and reviews or feedback from past student tenants to ensure transparency and reliability. To maintain the validity of the database, HEIs should implement a regular checking process, verifying the legitimacy of each listed landlord. The database should also be easily accessible to students through user-friendly platforms.

After Mobility

- **Hosting institutions should incorporate evaluation mechanisms so students can share their experience living in the city,** including on the quality of support measures, as well as to signal housing-related problems during the mobility period where the hosting higher education institution could give support. It is recommended to include stakeholders from local authorities and to co-create these evaluation mechanisms with student representatives, so there is a clear understanding of the main trends that need to be considered in these evaluation mechanisms.

- **National Agencies should implement stricter monitoring of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) to ensure that housing information is provided well in advance and that recognition procedures are applied in full compliance with the charter commitments.** This would facilitate a smoother reintegration process for students returning from mobility and help maintain their trust in the Erasmus+ Programme. Additional tailored support measures should be envisioned for higher education institutions that are not fulfilling the objectives in their ECHE applications to encourage them to continuously improve the academic experience of their students.
- **Sending higher education institutions should set up feedback systems to collect information from their outgoing students while on exchange and when they return** regarding the housing situation, and to engage with prospective students to inform them about housing aspects.
- **Higher Education Institutions should carry out an annual analysis of the changes in housing trends from their incoming exchange students,** and consider the findings for the planning of housing support initiatives.
- **Higher Education Institutions should collaborate with student organisations to create comprehensive guides supporting students' reintegration after their mobility experiences.** While many students have highlighted the benefits of receiving guidance materials for going abroad, there is an equally important need for resources that assist them upon their return. A well-structured guide offering information on further opportunities, post-mobility engagement options and reintegration activities can provide essential support for students, helping them navigate the often challenging transition back into their home environment and can provide a valuable opportunity for individuals to gain awareness of the skills they have acquired. Such a guide could include practical advice, local networks to join, career and skill-building resources, and opportunities to continue engaging with international experiences. By providing these resources, institutions and student organisations can ease the adjustment period for returning students, ensuring they feel supported and empowered to build upon the skills and connections they gained during their mobility journey.

10. Charts & tables

- **Figure 1:** XV ESNsurvey - Issues encountered during the stay abroad by exchange students, percentage (general sample, N = 14,568)
- **Figure 2:** XV ESNsurvey - Expenditure breakdown of exchange students (N= 12,276) across various categories during their exchange programme
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- **Figure 4:** Top 10 respondent's nationality, percentage (general sample, N= 4268)
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- **Figure 34:** Relative frequency of experiences with scams during mobility (N = 4,203)
- **Figure 35:** Relative frequency of formal rental agreement status among respondents (N = 4,507)
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- **Figure 37:** Relative frequency of accommodation costs (N = 4,513)
- **Figure 38:** Relative frequency of institutional support in student accommodation search (N = 4,307)
- **Figure 39:** Distribution of Student Satisfaction with Institutional Accommodation Support (N = 4,307)

11. Abbreviations

B&B - Bed and Breakfast

CV - Coefficient of Variation

EAIE - European Association for International Education

EC - European Commission

ECHE - Erasmus Student Charter for Higher Education

ERASMUS - European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students

ESN - Erasmus Student Network

ESU - European Students' Union

EU - European Unionon

HEI - Higher Education Institution

JCR - Joint Reserch Center

IRO - International Relation Office

M - Mean

N - Sample size

SD - Standard Deviation

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