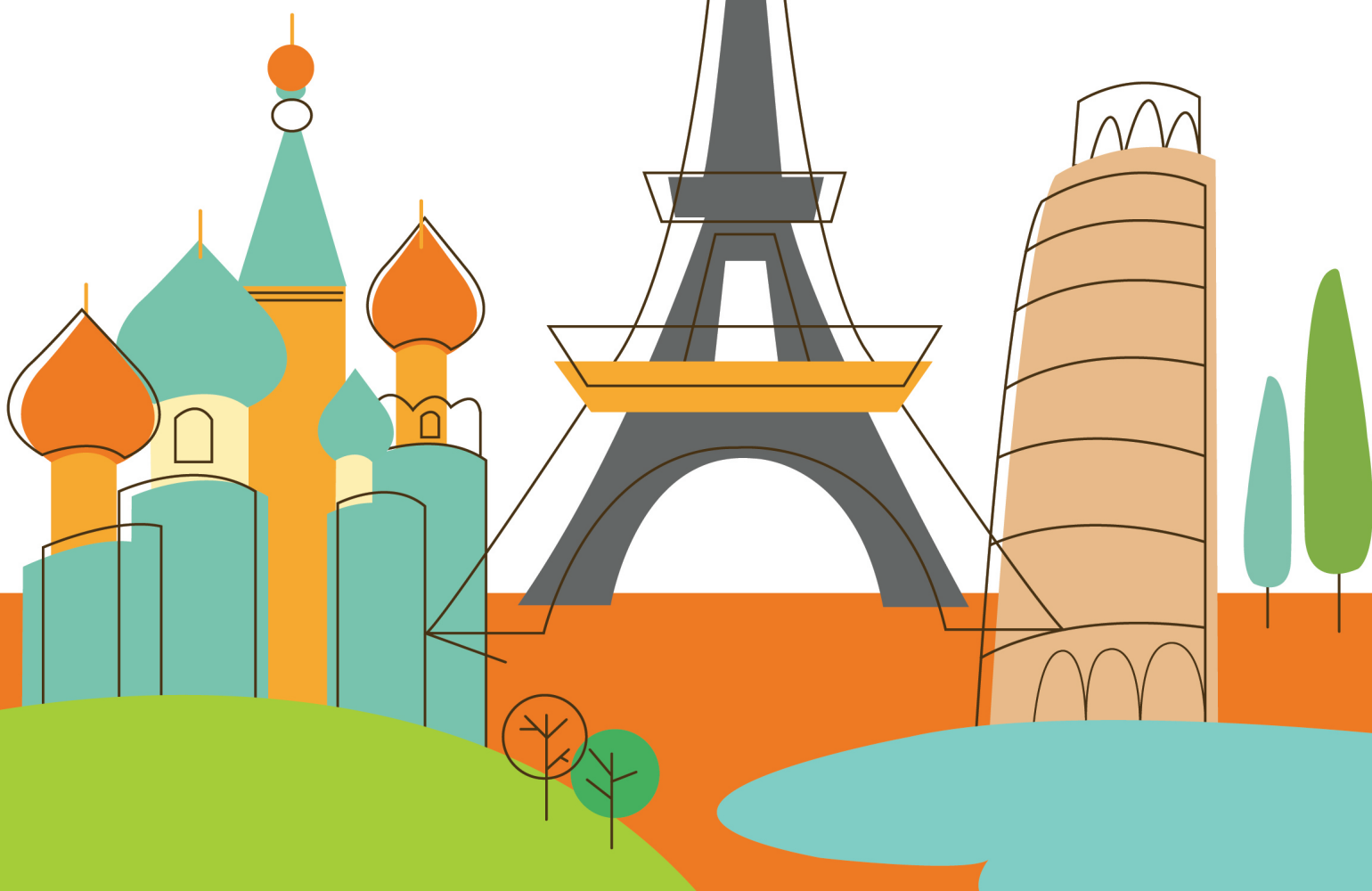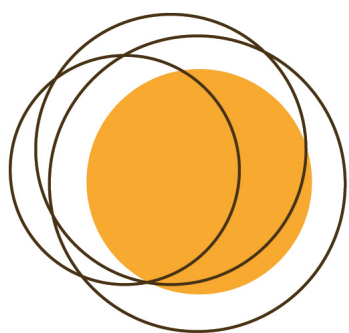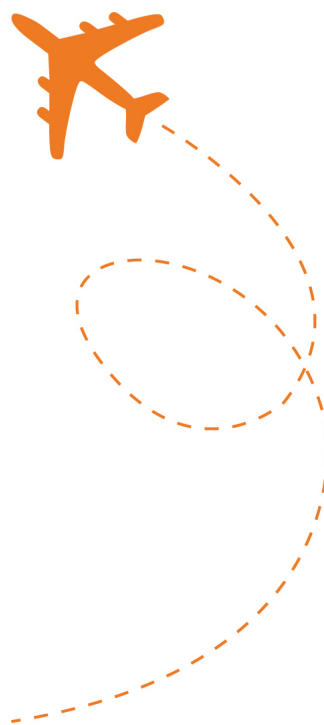# studyportals

taking you further

Key influencers of international student satisfaction in Europe

2014

KEY INFLUENCERS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SATISFACTION IN EUROPE

2014

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CONTENTS

PREFACE

Dear reader,

Please take 1 minute to answer the following questions:

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

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

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

The first question we posed above is actually the core of a relatively new but highly popular methodology called the Net Promoter Score (NPS), which has five big advantages:

1) it measures satisfaction in a very straightforward way and the outcome can be compared with other services, products or even life experiences

2) it has a very high response rate since it is so short and easy to understand, boosting reliability and representativeness of results

3) you are not biased by any categories we made up and you only mention the aspects you really care about

4) it has been proven that this score is the most reliable indicator of social promotion and a predictor of future success

5) it truly helps to understand your target group and to motivate people at any level of an organisation to focus their activities on improving the quality of your services.

The NPS is already widely used by many renowned organisations and industries, including Proctor & Gamble, Apple, and Allianz, as well as many public institutes and governments around the world. And now, for the first time, it is applied to Higher Education in Europe on this scale. We proudly present the 2014 StudyPortals report on international student satisfaction in Europe and the key drivers that determine (dis)satisfaction). This is the third report which is published and you can find the previous reports on our webpage.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

International students are overall very satisfied with their study abroad experience. This conclusion comes from this study that incorporates 16,427 comments made by 6,923 students on the student experience exchange platform www.STeXX.eu. Almost seven out of ten international students surveyed would rate their experience with a 9 or 10 out of 10 when asked if they would recommend it to their friends. Only 8% gave a score below 6. This highly positive response shows that studying abroad is overall considered to be a very positive experience, though there are still areas for improvement.

The four factors with most influence on the student satisfaction are:

1. City atmosphere, looks and size;
2. Subject;
3. Teachers; and,
4. International atmosphere.

Figure 1: Number and percentage of respondents by satisfaction rating
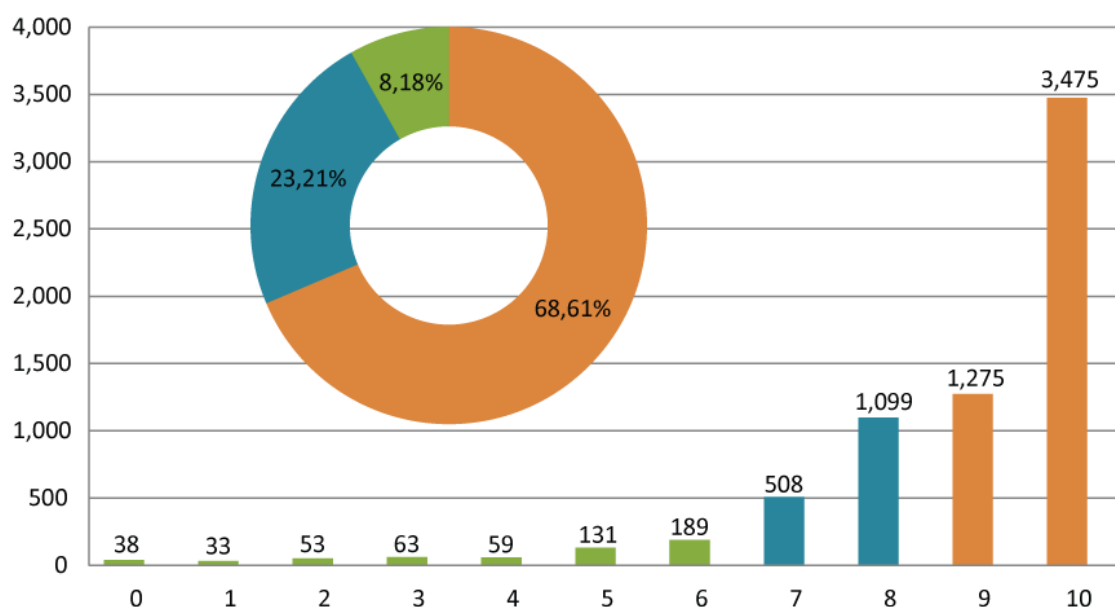
The methodology that was used to measure students' satisfaction is called Net Promoter Score (NPS); it uses a scale from -100 to +100, where 0 is average. It is popular due to its reliability and freedom from bias when compared to traditional methods of measuring satisfaction. The results, gathered during the 2013/2014 academic year, prove that overall student satisfaction is at +60 showing international education in a very positive light. In addition to NPS scores, there is also information on the average scores out of 10. The European average is 8.8 / 10, again displaying that international students are highly satisfied with their experience. This is truly a world-class result. A study mobility period abroad in Europe leads to exceptional satisfaction levels with regards to the study experience.

Table 1: Net Promoter Score categories

International respondents	N	%
Detractors	566	8%
Passives	1,607	23%
Promoters	4,750	69%
Total	**6,923**	**100%**
NPS (% promoters - % detractors)		**+60**

Knowing what really determines international student satisfaction is useful for anyone involved in the international tertiary education sector, from international offices at universities to policy makers encouraging international student mobility. It can be used not only to celebrate the successes of international programmes, but also to improve future students' international study experience.

KEY INFLUENCERS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SATISFACTION IN EUROPE

Reasons (not) to recommend a study abroad experience are categorised by topic. Percentage of comments in each category, including both positive and negative comments.

Figure 2: Overall results of review categories
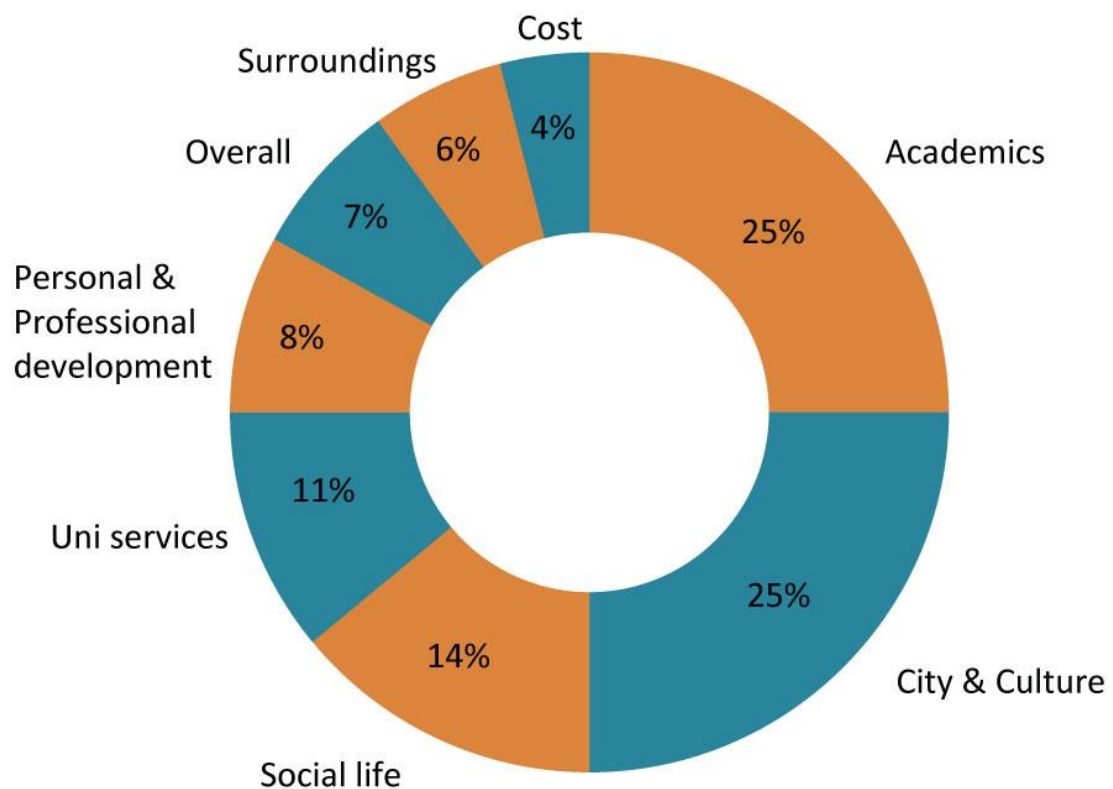
Reasons to recommend a university

City & Culture (27% of all positive reasons)

- City and culture are not commented on most; however, the comments in this category do represent the largest share of all positive comments.
- Comments on City atmosphere, looks and size make up almost 2/3 of comments in this category.
- At 5% of all comments locals also greatly influence a students' experience abroad, whether they are friendly, open minded, or helpful.

Academics (25% of all positive reasons)

- Academics is the most commented upon category.
- The structure, organization, and flexibility of the programme are the most important for a students' experience.
- Teachers, at more than 5% of all comments, make a significant impact of students' experiences. Those who are especially helpful and supportive of international students' needs are much appreciated.

Social life (15% of all positive reasons)

- Activities prompt positive feedback from students, and can range from travel, to sports, to cultural outings.
- A vast array of nightlife offered is a factor for students to recommend a city, and their experience.
- Students enjoy an international environment with a mix of local students and other students from all over Europe and the world.

University services (10% of all positive reasons)

- Modern, extensive, and well-maintained facilities comprise 25% of all positive comments within this category.
- Students place much importance upon the organization of the university, offices, faculty, and programmes.

Personal and professional development (8% of all positive reasons)

- Discovering new cultures makes up 4 out of 10 comments within this category. Students enjoy getting to know both the local culture, as well as the cultures of other international students.
- Learning a language is one of the main incentives for students to study abroad, and when this is encouraged by locals, students, teachers, and the university it is much appreciated.

Reasons not to recommend a university

Academics (35% of all negative reasons)

- The largest section of negative comments is made on a low level of education at the host university, mostly in comparison to the home university.
- An unorganized programme of studies or classes that are held simultaneously are a large frustration of international students.

University services (21% of all negative reasons)

- Many students comment negatively on accommodation: a lack of availability, too costly, poor quality, or a lack of support in finding accommodation.
- Students dislike a slow, unorganized bureaucratic process, and prefer a straightforward administration process.

Cost (13% of all negative reasons)

- While only representing a small portion of all comments, living costs are often criticized. This is especially the case in the Scandinavian countries and bigger cities.
- Students occasionally mention the lack of financial aid and insufficient funds of scholarships in countries with high living or tuition costs.

City & Culture (12% of all negative reasons)

- City atmosphere, looks, and size is not only the main reason to recommend an experience, it is also an important reason not to recommend.
- Comments about unfriendly and unhelpful local make up more than a quarter of all negative comment in this category.

Comparison of segments

International vs. Domestic students

- International students are in general happier about their study experience than domestic students.
- International student are far more likely to recommend their experience.
- Domestic student are more concerned with academics than their international counterparts.
- This is based on results from 412 domestic students who also responded to the questionnaire, in addition to the 6,511 international students, allowing a comparison between international and domestic students.

Short term vs. Full degree mobility

- Most students who rated and reviewed their experience studied abroad for 12 month or less.
- Exchange students (study abroad <12 months) are generally happier with their experience and would recommend their experience more often.
- Students who study abroad for their whole degree comment more frequently on academic aspects than exchange students.
- Students studying abroad for a short time comment more on *City & culture*.

European vs. Non-European students

- In comparison to non-European students European students rate their experience higher.
- European students mention city & culture more frequently than non-European students, whereas non-European students are more focused on academics, particularly the subjects available and quality of teachers.

Comparison of countries

The ten biggest countries for international tertiary education are listed below (according to market share based on OECD 2010 data).

Table 2: 10 most popular European countries as study destinations in the order of number of international students and their average satisfaction rate

Country	Average	NPS
United Kingdom	9.0	+67
Germany	8.8	+63
France	8.3	+43
Spain	8.6	+52
Italy	8.4	+45
Austria	9.0	+66
Switzerland	8.9	+63
Belgium	8.6	+52
Netherlands	8.7	+56
Sweden	9.1	+72
European Average	**8.8**	**+60**

Satisfaction in top 10 destinations for international students

- The popularity of a country does not reflect its student satisfaction, i.e. having the most incoming students does not always reflect in high student satisfaction.
- Students are most satisfied with their experience in Sweden, rating it a 9.1 out of 10 on average with an outstanding NPS of +72, however, Sweden only covers a small part of the market.
- Students are least satisfied with their experience in France, rating it still high at 8.3 out of 10 on average with still an outstanding NPS of +43, while France is in third place for market share in international tertiary education.
- On average, however, students remain very positive about their experience abroad, and many voice that while they enjoyed the country, the most important part is to go abroad and experience a new culture.

Where can improvements be made?

- International students want to study while they are abroad – so university courses should be aimed at a high level.
- Where courses are taught in English, the teachers should have a high level of language in order to facilitate communication and learning.
- Where courses are not taught in English, this should be clearly communicated to students before arrival.
- Universities should ensure that they have an efficient, helpful international office to aid new students settling in to their host country. It should also smooth the pathway for communications between the home and host universities.

At the end of the report, there are detailed recommendations of what international student organisations, higher education institutions and policy makers can do to improve on international students' experience of studying abroad. This report can be used to understand what exactly international students want from studying abroad and consolidate the increasing internationalisation of European higher education.

International Student Satisfaction Awards

This report shows that international satisfaction in Europe is on average very high. However, some universities have gone beyond a very high average to receive outstanding reviews from their international students. Because of their success in giving international students the best experience possible, we decided to award the universities that received an average score of over 8 (out of maximum 10 points) with an international student satisfaction award. The list of award winning universities can be found on www.studyportals.eu/awards. The awards are based on several categories:

Award for Outstanding international student satisfaction

This prize goes to those universities who have scored more than an incredible 9.5/10 on average. There are only 30 universities across Europe that have achieved this.

Award for Excellent international student satisfaction

Any universities that received an average satisfaction score between 9 and 9.4 out of 10 from their students gets this award. There are 88 universities in Europe in this category - showing that students are very highly satisfied with their experience.

Award for Very good international student satisfaction

Any university that scores more than an 8 on average will receive this award – 92 universities in total!

INTRODUCTION

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

Many renowned organisations in the services and consumer products industries use NPS methodology to focus their activities, improve their services and guide strategic decision-making. This study is the first to apply this method to higher education. Stakeholders in European higher education will get a unique insight into what students truly find important, and what they do not. Because of this, this report is particularly interesting for European universities, national institutes, policy makers and international student organisations.

The survey was conducted at www.stexx.eu: the Student Experience Exchange platform. This is a platform created by StudyPortals for students to exchange and review their experiences of studying abroad. It serves as a tool for prospective students to read reviews of different universities and cities in Europe before they make a decision on where to study. It can also be used by anyone working in international education to find areas for improvement. More than 73,000 students have already used it to evaluate their study abroad programme since it was created in 2011.

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

We are confident that this report will help improve understanding of international students' needs and desires, and that it will contribute to an increasing quality of higher education and satisfaction level for international students in Europe.

METHODOLOGY

NET PROMOTER SCORE

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

The first question of the survey is: *'Would you recommend your experience to your friends?'* Respondents answer on a 0 ("No, not at all likely") to 10 ("Yes, extremely likely") rating scale. The second question is: *'Why?'* It is open ended and provides a free text field for the answer. By applying this methodology to higher education in Europe, it reveals the most important aspects that influence the satisfaction of international students. It identifies the top-of-mind reasons why they would or would not recommend their friends to study in a specific country, city and university, without a leading question. Students only mention what they see as important.

Figure 3: Screenshot of the Student Experience Exchange platform www.stexx.eu

The Satisfaction Rating Explained

The outcome of the two-question survey is one overall satisfaction score (the NPS) based on the ratings. Through analysing the NPS combined with thousands of answers to the open question, the prime incentives and disincentives towards studying abroad in Europe become clear. The respondents are divided into three groups, based on the rating in answer to the question *'Would you recommend your experience your friends?'*

- Promoters (9 – 10)

  Very enthusiastic and extremely likely to tell their friends to go and study abroad
- Passives (7 – 8)

  Generally satisfied, but not so overwhelmingly positive that they actively promote it
- Detractors (0 – 6)

  Unsatisfied, likely to discourage their friends to follow their example

Figure 4: Explanation of the Net Promoter Score
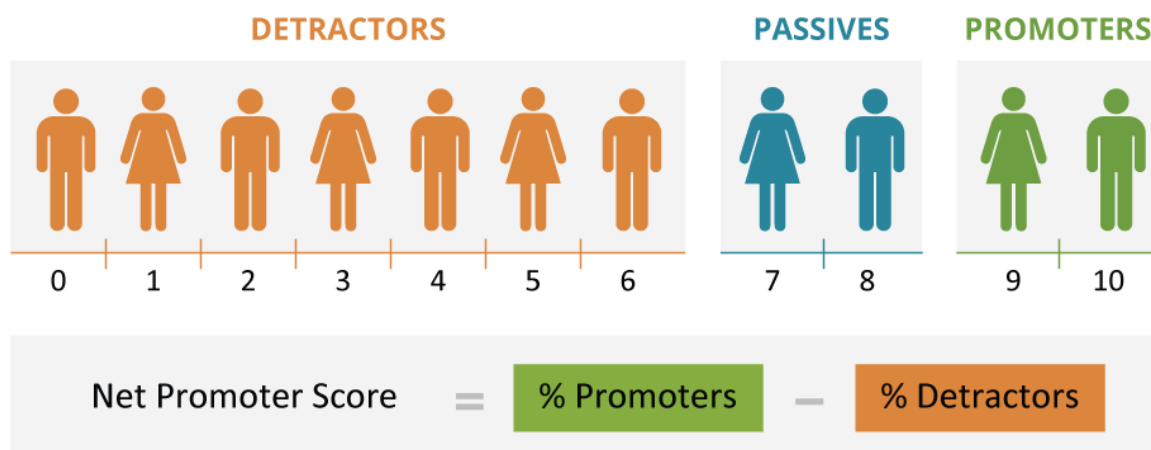
The NPS is then calculated by deducting the number of detractors from the number of promoters, and dividing it by the total number of respondents. The NPS can therefore be as low as -100 (everybody is a detractor) or as high as +100 (everybody is a promoter). The higher this number is, the more satisfied international students are and the more likely they are to promote studying abroad in Europe to their friends. An NPS score higher than +50 is considered excellent.

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

COLLECTING REVIEWS ON STEXX

This report is based on reviews gathered online of the 2013/2014 academic year at the Student Experience Exchange platform www.stexx.eu. STeXX is a social platform where students share their study experiences and review their university. These real life stories and first hand experiences in any European country help other students in their study choice and preparation, and are the basis for this study.

The grand total of reviews used in this analysis falls at 6,923 incorporating those from 6,511 (former) international students and 412 domestic students. There are actually more individual reviews on STeXX. However, this study incorporates only those reviews which include a score out of 10 for the experience, meaning that not all reviews can be used here. In addition to those lacking a score, there were also a number of duplicates and unusable reviews (due to spam content, offensive remarks or incomprehensibility, amongst others). Finally, some respondents did not specify their country of origin and thus made it impossible to determine if they were international or domestic students. Unless otherwise mentioned, all the data in this report refers to that for international students only.

In addition to the relevance for the survey, these study experiences are published on www.stexx.eu. This gives prospective students access to previous students experiences. Reading these, they are not only able to make a more informed decision on where to study; they also have a much better idea of what to expect from their time abroad, as well as valuable local insights. In doing this, it helps them prepare for an international mobility period and aids them in better matching their expectations to reality.

Categorization and Classification

Firstly, it is necessary to clarify some terms which will be used throughout this report.

Review – refers to the entirety of a student's answer to the question '*Why?*' when asked for the reasons to recommend their study abroad experience to your friends. There are 6,511 reviews by international students and 412 reviews by domestic students incorporated into this study. Here is an example of a review:

> " *I would recommend this university, because it is a truly international environment. The teaching staff is dedicated and help students with their projects. The University itself is a modern facility, making the process of studying enjoyable.* "
>
> Polish student about studying in Denmark
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10

Comment – each individual part of a student's *review* is treated as a separate reason to recommend, that is to say that if they mention the quality of their teacher, the great city atmosphere and the friendliness of the locals, it will count as three separate comments. Up to four comments per review are counted in this study, with the result that there are 16,427 comments for recommending studying abroad given by international students. In the example above, the three separate comments are highlighted in different colours – "because it is a truly international environment" is the first comment, and is categorised as Social life, International atmosphere. The second, "The teaching staff is dedicated and help students with their projects", is classified as Academics, Teachers. Finally, the third comment, "The University itself is a modern facility, making the process of studying enjoyable", is treated as University services, Facilities.

The thousands of reviews gathered varied in length between a few words and several paragraphs of text. In order to analyse the content of the reviews, each individual 'comments' within the text was assigned a category, with each review being assigned up to four categories. The categories were defined by creating affinity diagrams (Beyer, 1998) of the different comments. The categories ranged, among other things, from academics, social life, and costs to personal growth and university services. Within each category, the comments were then grouped into various subcategories. Any duplicate categories in the same review (for instance more than one comment about the subcategory *teachers*) were then disregarded. As reviews could be split into up to four categories each, this accounts for the fact that there are 16,427 comments made by 6,923 students in total.

In order to use these reviews for the analysis of what is important in international student satisfaction, each comment was then classified as positive or negative. It is important to remember that not all students who give a low rating will be entirely negative about their experience, and not all those who give a high rating will

be entirely positive. A student who rates their study experience as 9 out of 10 may have absolutely no negative comments about their time abroad, but it is also possible that they will see areas for improvement. Of the four possible areas that they comment on, one or more may be classified as "negative". This gives a highly accurate view of student satisfaction.

Of course, this report does not present every single piece of information mentioned in the thousands of reviews analysed. It was decided that only four comments per review could be counted for the analysis, although there were sometimes many more comments that could have been used. This maximum of four comments per review ensures that all reviews have a somewhat equal impact on the final result, making sure that it is not possible for a single respondent to have a disproportionate impact by providing a very high number of comments in one review. The general upper limit of number of comments per review is around 7, although occasionally there were up to thirteen different comments in one review. Having said this, the vast majority of reviews fit within four categories. The table below visualizes all the main and subcategories used to classify comments within reviews. The colour assigned to each category can be found in the results section as well.

Table 3: Overview of review categories and subcategories

Academics
Language of instruction
Level (high & low)
Recognition
Reputation
Research
Subject
Teachers
Teaching

City & culture
City atmosphere, looks & size
Culture
Infrastructure
People
Security

Cost
Financial aid
Living costs
Tuition fees

Personal & professional development
Career prospects
Discovering new cultures
Language
Personal growth

University services
Accommodation
Bureaucracy
Campus atmosphere
Equipment
Facilities
International services

Social life
Activities
International atmosphere
Making new friends
Nightlife

Surroundings
Location
Nature
Travel
Weather

Overall impression
Overall impression

2011 & 2013 REPORT

In 2011 we also published a report investigating the reasons that drive international students to study abroad in Europe. In this report we had 2,982 comments for studying abroad, given by 1,482 international students. This allowed us to draw some initial conclusions about the study abroad experience. In the 2013 report, which addressed the same question, we had access to over 40,000 comments for studying abroad, given by almost 17,000 international students. This led to a much more accurate analysis of all that is positive about studying abroad, what can be improved, and the impact it has on students' lives. This allowed us to present a much more in-depth report detailing how using international students' experiences can help internationalise further education in the future.

Regarding the categorisation of the comments, in this report we used the same categories as in the 2013 report. In 2013 there was a new category: Surroundings, (which was classified as part of City & culture in 2011, but has now been divided up into subcategories). In addition, there were more sub-categories, including Level (high) and Level (low), Teacher language, University language and Bureaucracy, amongst others. This allowed for a more in-depth analysis of exactly what students comment upon in the 2013 report. While there was no comparison possible between the figures, methodology, and results in the 2011 and 2013 report, a comparison will be made between the 2013 and 2014 report. This is possible due to the small differences in collection of reviews and methodology between the two reports. Moreover, while this report takes into consideration the previous reports, through comparison, it only uses reviews from the 2013/2014 academic year.

RESULTS

OVERVIEW

The results of this research are based on a total of 6,923 reviews containing 16,427 comments. Out of these reviews 6,511 are written by international students and 421 reviews are written by domestic students. The international students' rating of the overall experience shows that they are very satisfied with their study experience. With 4,750 ratings of 9 and 10 out of 10, more than 69 percent of international students fall into the category of "promoters". They are extremely satisfied with their experience and actively promote it. About 23 percent of international students fall into the "passives" category. In this category 1,607 students rated their experience with an 8 or 7 out of 10. They generally had a good experience, but neither actively promote nor discourage the experience. Just over 8 percent of international students, 566 respondents, fall into the "detractors" category, rating their experience between a 0 and 6 out of 10. They actively discourage other students from studying abroad. As a result, the Net Promoter Score of international students is +60. This is an outstanding result and a big compliment for everyone involved in international higher education in Europe

Figure 6: Number and percentage of respondents by satisfaction rating
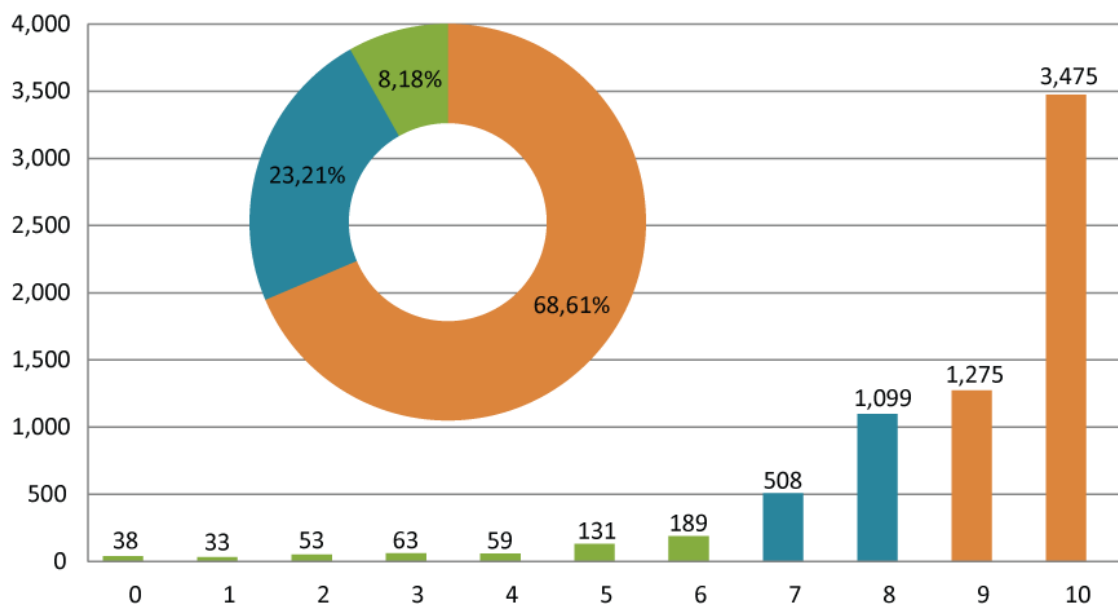
The reviews are mainly written by students from Europe, but there are also 455 reviews written by students from outside of Europe. Reviews are shared by both students who have gone abroad for their whole degree as well as those who have only done a semester or an exchange abroad. Equally, every level of university study, bachelors, masters and PhD, is represented. This variety allows for a wide spectrum of comparisons to be

made, according to different study conditions. It reveals insights from what aspects are more important for full-degree students, for exchange students, for European students, and for non-European students.

Differences occur when the results are broken down to country level. Italian students, for example are much more concerned with the city atmosphere, looks, and size than their Polish counterparts, while German students are less concerned with the services provided by their university. The comparison of results by country is done purely within the biggest European countries, according to the number of international students they host per year. Due to the large number of different countries, and relative lack of information about them, we are not able to discuss other countries in this study.

International students' high level of satisfaction regarding their study experience is largely due to the impact of City & Culture and Academics – which together make up almost half of all comments. This shows that both aspects are vitally important to students studying abroad. And together with University services and Social life, they account for almost three quarters of all comments.

The more specific aspects of international student satisfaction can be seen when we look in more detail at the breakdown of comments. Within the main categories, the biggest individual influencers are the city atmosphere, looks, and size, high quality of teachers and friendly locals, as well as an international atmosphere. The biggest single cause for complaint is a high cost of living, followed by a low level of education and excessive university bureaucracy.

Together, these reasons have the most influence on why students would or wouldn't recommend studying abroad. This report gives a unique insight into exactly what students want from their study abroad experience, and can be used to encourage students to consider studying abroad.

Figure 8: Proportion of comments per category

Cost 4%

Surroundings 6%

Overall 7%

Personal & Professional development 8%

Uni services 11%

Social life 14%

City & Culture 25%

Academics 25%
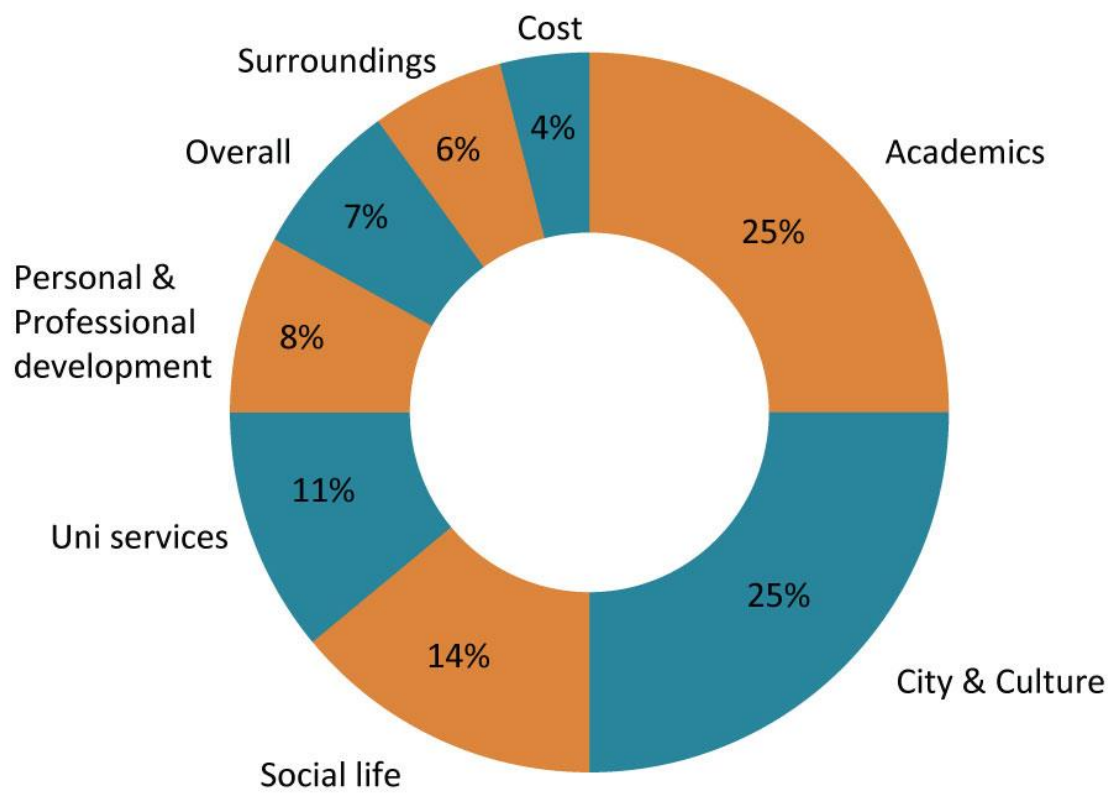
INFLUENCERS OF STUDENT SATISFACTION

The key influencers of international student satisfaction in Europe surface when we take a closer look at the results in Table 3. It shows the number of reasons mentioned by the respondents, divided by topic (category and subcategory) and classification (negative or positive). In the analysis of these results, and in calculating the percentages of reasons per category, all international student reviews have been taken into account excluding the ones that were unusable due to offensive remarks or incomprehensibility, for example. After all, the question is about what aspects influence the likeliness of recommending the study experience most. Therefore, whether someone is a promoter, a passive or a detractor, and whether a review is positive or negative, the reason mentioned is still the most important influencer of their experience, even though the respondents with more extreme opinions (promoters and detractors) are more likely to actually spread their opinion. The next chapters will focus on these categories one by one, discussing the influencers individually.

Table 4: Influencers of international student satisfaction in Europe

Category	Classification			
Subcategory	Negative	Positive	Total	%
Academics	**787**	**3,124**	**3,911**	**25%**
Language of instruction	111	93	204	1%
Level (high)	57	554	611	4%
Level (low)	171	8	179	1%
Recognition	41	10	51	0%
Reputation	23	632	655	4%
Research	0	45	45	0%
Subject	150	667	817	5%
Teachers	113	686	799	5%
Teaching	121	429	550	4%
City & Culture	**270**	**3,546**	**3,816**	**25%**
City atmosphere, looks & size	146	2,379	2,525	16%
Culture	14	353	367	2%
Infrastructure	16	93	109	1%
People	72	682	754	5%
Security	22	39	61	0%
Cost	**284**	**424**	**708**	**5%**
Financial aid	11	22	33	0%
Living costs	268	383	651	4%
Tuition fees	5	19	24	0%
Personal & Professional development	**155**	**1,086**	**1,241**	**8%**
Career prospects	6	77	155	1%
Discovering new cultures	69	433	502	3%
Language	80	382	462	3%
Personal growth	0	194	194	1%
Social life	**150**	**1,973**	**2,123**	**14%**
Activities	78	651	729	5%
International atmosphere	28	718	746	5%
Making new friends	18	347	365	2%
Nightlife	26	257	283	2%
Surroundings	**121**	**763**	**884**	**6%**
Location	17	204	221	1%
Nature	2	178	180	1%
Travel	12	285	297	2%
Weather	90	96	186	1%
University services	**468**	**1,261**	**1,729**	**11%**
Accommodation	165	225	390	3%
Bureaucracy	160	231	391	3%
Campus atmosphere	13	207	220	1%
Equipment	5	70	75	0%
Facilities	20	305	325	2%
International services	105	223	328	2%
Overall	**15**	**1,008**	**1,023**	**7%**
Overall	15	1,008	1,023	7%
Grand Total	**2,250**	**13,185**	**15,435**	**100%**

Academics (25%)

At 25.3% *Academics* is the largest category commented upon by students. They commented on all aspects of their education: whether or not the language of instruction was up to standard, if the level was right, how good the reputation of the university is, if there was a wide range of subjects and research areas, the level of recognition they received from their home university for the work they did at their host university (in case of exchange students), the quality of the teachers, as well as the quality of teaching.

Figure 9: Results in the category *Academics*
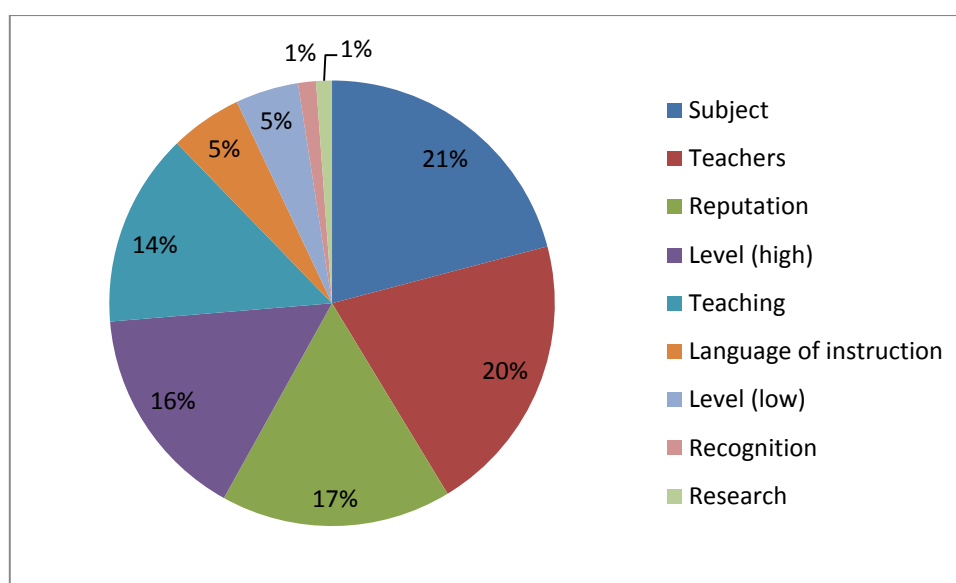
Language of instruction (1% of all comments)

> **"** *The level of teaching was fantastic and the English of both the lecturers and the students was very good.* **"**
>
> *British student about studying in the Netherlands*
> *Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10*

The L*anguage of instruction* is important to international students and many comments address the foreign language proficiency of teachers (usually in English) and of fellow students. When the foreign language proficiency is low, the level of teaching is also negatively commented upon. Another frequent complaint is the small number of courses offered in English, or the miscommunication of the host university with students regarding the language of instruction. However, there are also many universities and countries that students praise for the English proficiency.

Level (high) and Level (low) (4% and 1% respectively)

> *" The university has a high quality for those who want to follow*
> *Economic courses so I really recommend this one! "*
>
> Portuguese student about studying in the Czech Republic
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience an 8 out of 10

The *Level of education* is mentioned often and emphasized upon by international students. *A high level of education* is seen as a positive aspect and a reason to recommend a university, especially in a certain field or specialization. Exchange students often compared the level of education their host university with their home university. They also comprised the largest part of the group who found a high level of education a disadvantage (and that case, the most commonly cited reason is that they have no time left for exploring the city and country and enjoy their free time in a new place). A *low level of education* is mostly cited as a negative aspect and is a reason not to recommend a university. Often the comparison to the higher level at the students' home or previous university is given as the reasoning behind the comment. Occasionally students find a low level of education enjoyable, as they have a lot of time to have fun, although they do realize that they are not increasing their knowledge.

Recognition (53 comments, <1%)

> *" The program is not compatible with mine at my home university,*
> *so almost none of my courses got recognized at my home*
> *university. "*
>
> *Slovenian student about studying in Sweden*
> *Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 6 out of 10*

When students spend a semester or a year abroad, it is important for them that the coursework they do at the host university can be transferred and will be recognized by their home university. This subcategory is almost always mentioned when students have encountered issues such as courses that do not fit into to their degree requirements, or a lack of credits they can take at the host university or that are recognized at their home university. However, issues with recognition are not important enough for exchange students to discourage other student to study abroad.

Reputation (4%)

> *One of the top universities in England, great for anthropology/archaeology, very good place to become fluent in English.*
>
> Icelandic student about studying in the United Kingdom
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10

Reputation is responsible for more than 20% of the positive comments in Academics and almost 4% of all positive comments. Most students mention a nationally and/or internationally appraised university as their reason to study there; however, a good reputation also coincides with excellence in other academic areas. Therefore, a good reputation on a national and/or international level is an important reason for international students to both recommend and attend a university.

Research (45 reviews, <1%)

> *I enjoyed this university due to the high level of research possibilities and the various projects I was able to try out.*
>
> German student about studying in Switzerland
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10

Some students mention research opportunities and availabilities at the institution they study at. They also comments on the research skills and reputation of instructors and the university as a whole. When mentioned, students are impressed with the possibilities and most comments are made by Masters and PhD students.

Subject (5%)

> **"** *The university offers such nice programmes for your academic career. It is good place to stay.* **"**
>
> Turkish student about studying in Germany
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10

Subject is the most commented on aspect of this category and accounts for more than 21% of all positive comments within academics. It includes comments about programmes, curricula and courses. Students often comment on the quality and variety of the course offerings and the structure of their programme. High quality courses within a faculty and the possibility of taking courses outside of their faculty are important reasons for students to recommend their experience. Low quality courses and disorganized programmes account for the majority of negative comments in this category.

Teachers (5%)

> **"** *They have good teachers who are really helpful and involved in what they do. Teachers are really tolerant and understanding when it comes to their students.* **"**
>
> Polish student about studying in Spain
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience an 8 out of 10

Teachers is the second- most often commented on aspect of this category. International students find good teachers, who are knowledgeable in their field, and care about their students extremely important. Lack of preparation for classes, being seen as numbers and not as individuals, and a scarcity of personal interaction with teachers are reasons not to recommend an experience. Another challenge that international students encounter in both positive and negative ways is integration. While some students, especially exchange students, feel that they are not valued as much by teachers as domestic students. However, other students positively comment on the willingness of teachers to help out international students with the challenges that studying in another language or different teaching system brings up.

Teaching (4%)

> *Classes are rigorous and taught in a variety of ways with a nice mix of individual and group work.*
>
> American student about studying in Finland
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 9 out of 10

International students often comment on the teaching methods, the structure of the courses, and the balance between theory and practice. They often appreciate the experience of a new teaching method, as long as teachers are not too demanding, especially if the course is taught in a foreign language. Students who were not used to group work at their home university did not appreciate the shift of focus from individual to group projects. Students did highly appreciate structured classes with clear grading policies and relevant exams. More practical courses, especially with visits outside of class were also highly valued.

City & culture (25%)

City & Culture is, at 24.7% of all comments, the second-largest category commented upon by international students when describing their experience. In this category they comment on the city they live in, the cultural offer, the friendliness of the locals, the safety of the city, and the quality of the infrastructure.

Figure 10: Results in the Category *City & Culture*
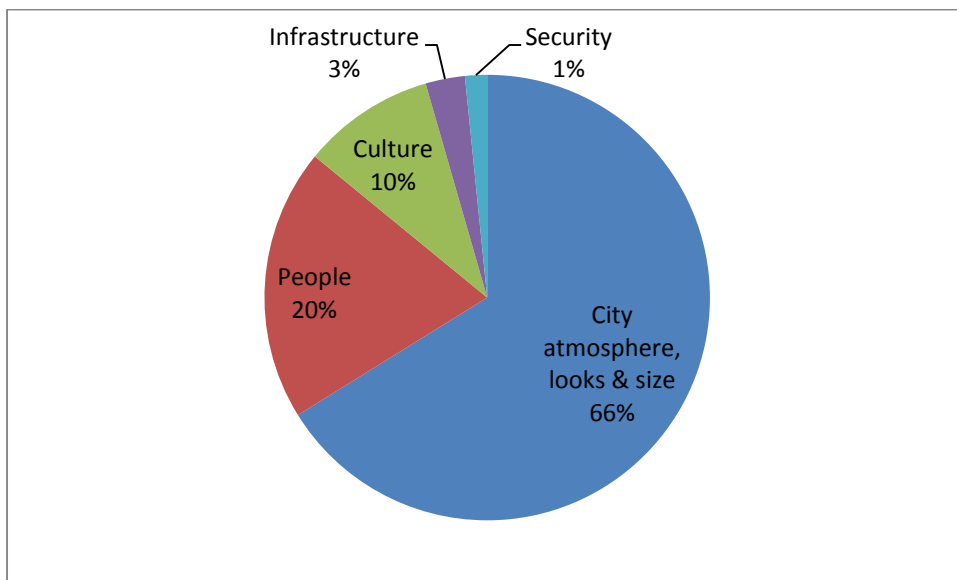
City atmosphere, looks & size (16% of all comments)

> *I would recommend Graz because it is a medium-sized city where the new and old blend really well together, a city which has a lot of experiences to offer to youngsters.*
>
> Romanian student about studying in Austria
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10

This subcategory is by far the most commented upon. Many students comment on the beauty of the city, especially in terms of architecture, historic buildings, and parks and rivers. The size of the city is often commented on in conjunction with leisure possibilities and amenities. A smaller city offers less in this regard than a larger city, but in terms of integration and ease of adaptation a smaller city is favourable. Students from small cities prefer exploring the excitement of a large city, while those from a large city often choose small cities. The latter does not always turn out well, as students who are used to large cities often find small cities rather dull. Students often recommend a city if it has a vibrant, student-friendly atmosphere with many things to see and to do.

Culture (2%)

> **❝** *Iceland is a unique country with special lifestyle and culture, and a multicultural environment.* **❞**
>
> Spanish student about studying in Iceland
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 9 out of 10

Culture includes the cultural offer of a city, including museums, sights, concerts, and theatres, as well as the local lifestyle, food, and language. This category is different from *Discovering new cultures* and *Language* within *Personal & professional growth* in that this is purely observation of the culture in the destination, and whether or not a student would recommend visiting a place based on if they had enjoyed it. A large cultural offer in the city or nearby places leads to positive reactions. Food can be a factor on which some students depend to recommend or not recommend a place, and it generates both positive and negative comments.

Infrastructure (1%)

> **❝** *Transport by bus and by train is also very good, because you can get from one place to another very easily and it is not so expensive.* **❞**
>
> Slovak student about studying in the Netherlands
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10

Infrastructure is very important for international students. Some students commute to their university by tram, bus or metro, while other find train connection to the rest of their host country more important. A nearby airport with good connections to the rest of the continent is also important, both for exploring neighbouring countries and for an easy connection to the students' home country.

People (5%)

> **❝** *People here are really nice, respectful and open-minded, which is really important if you are a foreigner in their country.* **❞**
>
> Hungarian student about studying in the Czech Republic
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 9 out of 10

International students appreciate friendly and helpful locals. They are interested in getting to know the locals and thereby integrating in the local culture. While students enjoy it when local have good English knowledge, they also enjoy learning and practicing the local language. Regional differences become apparent when students comment on openness and approachability of local, where in the south of Europe people are more open, and in the north people are more closed.

Security (61 comments, <1%)

> **❝** *Tours is a great city: it is perfect for students' life and it is also very safe for young people.* **❞**
>
> Italian student about studying in France
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10

Security of the city, especially the areas where the university and the accommodation are located and where the social life takes place are important to international students. Since they are already by themselves in an unknown place, it is essential that they feel safe. For some students a dangerous area of town is a reason not to recommend their experience.

Cost (5%)

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

Figure 11: Results in the category *Cost*
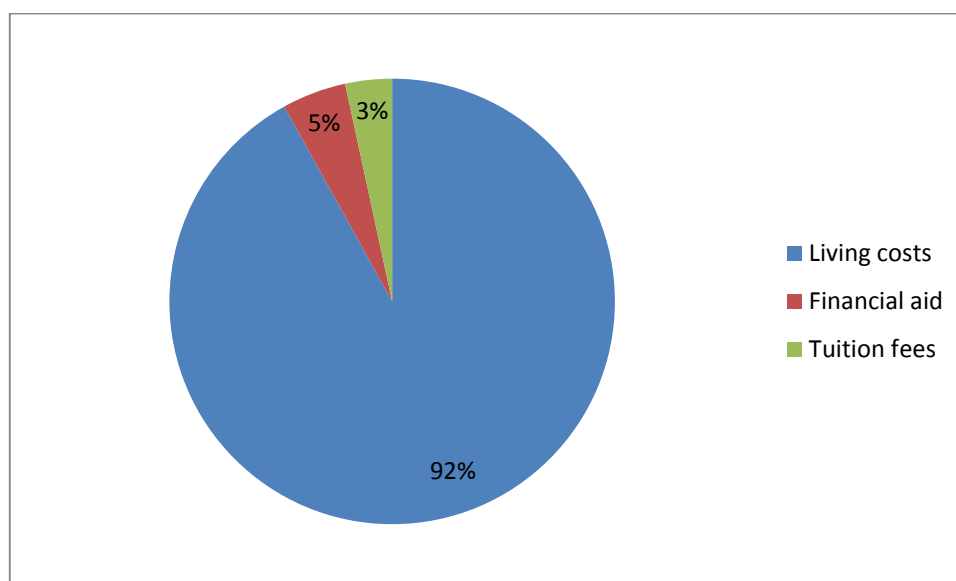
Financial aid (33 comments, <1% of all comments)

> *The main disadvantage is the high cost of living, but Erasmus scholarship and wise spending of money make living here not so expensive*
>
> Polish student about studying in the Netherlands
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience an 8 out of 10

Financial aid is important to international students, especially for those who travel to countries with higher tuition and living costs. While not mentioned often, financial aid comes up when there is a lack of availability. Almost all exchange students who mentioned financial aid got an Erasmus scholarship; however, they also noted that in some countries the scholarship was not enough to cover their costs or have any money left to travel.

Living costs (4%)

> " *Because it is a great city, it is easy to travel around Europe, cost of living is relatively low and it is in expansion.* "
>
> Canada student about studying in Poland
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10

Living costs encompass costs for accommodation, food, travel, leisure and all other expenses except for tuition. At almost 12% of all negative comments it is the single largest negative subcategory. Regional differences become very clear as Scandinavia and large cities in Western Europe have high living expenses, while Eastern European countries and smaller cities are classified as cheap. An important factor to consider, however, is the cost of living in the students' home country.

Tuition fees (24 comments, <1%)

> " *Great environment to learn, with dedicated teaching staff and good academic resources with very affordable tuition fees and cost of living.* "
>
> Nigerian student about studying in the United Kingdom
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience an 8 out of 10

There is quite some variety in tuition fees across Europe. *Tuition fee* is commented upon by international students in one of two cases: either they are happy that tuition is free or they find it too expensive. When tuition is free, or very cheap, living costs tend to be high and vice versa.

Personal & professional development (8%)

Figure 12: Results within Personal and Professional Development
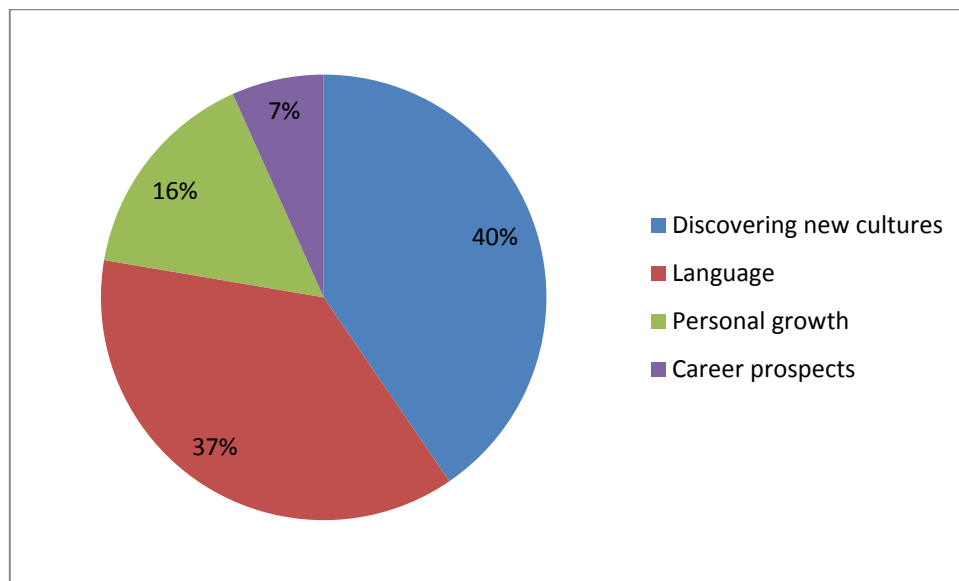
Career prospects (1% of all comments)

> *Studying/living in another country is always a good thing for the experience and for a good view on the world. I study "social and cultural work" and it helps also to find a good job in this sector.*
>
> Belgian student about studying in the Netherlands
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 7 out of 10

While not many students comment on *career prospects*, when they do, they all agree that studying abroad will improve their career prospects. This is due to experience with other cultures, living abroad, and paramount: their newly acquired language skills.

Discovering new cultures (3%)

> *" Portuguese culture is simply 180 degrees different than polish and my idea of any international exchange is to set you beyond your comfort zone... "*
>
> Polish student about studying in Portugal
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10

One of the main reasons for students to study abroad is to see a new country and explore a culture and people different from their home. They enjoy not only the local cultures and traditions, but also the culture and traditions of fellow international students. They try out new food and drinks, listen to different music, spend their free time differently and communicate in a different language which broadens their horizon. While this leads most international students to be more tolerant of people who do things different than they themselves do, other are quite shocked at the vast differences that still exist on the European continent.

Language (3%)

> *" By studying in another country and language you are able to increase your language level... "*
>
> German student about studying in Spain
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 8 out of 10

Many international students study abroad to enhance their foreign language skills. Depending on their skill level they participate in language courses or follow their other courses in the local language. By interacting with locals and immerging themselves in the local lifestyle, they quickly and quite easily improve their language skills. Areas in which a dialect was spoken, however, did not aid student in learning a language or improving their skills.

Personal growth (1%)

> **"** *It's an enrichment and people become open-minded, more independent and self-confident.*
>
> Italian student about studying in Belgium
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10 **"**

Students frequently comment on the *personal growth* they gained from their experience. This is not surprising since for many students, it is the first time they are abroad by themselves for an extended period of time. They gain maturity by taking care of themselves, especially in an unknown country. Moreover, they enhance social skills as they are in a new environment and make new friends and they experience a different educational system, thereby learning to adapt to new situations.

Social life (14%)

Social aspects are very important to international students, as they have to build up a new social network when they go abroad. The comments in this category vary from the variety of activities offered for (international) students to the ease of making new friends, and from the vibrancy of the nightlife to the presence of other international students.

Figure 13: Results within *Social Life*
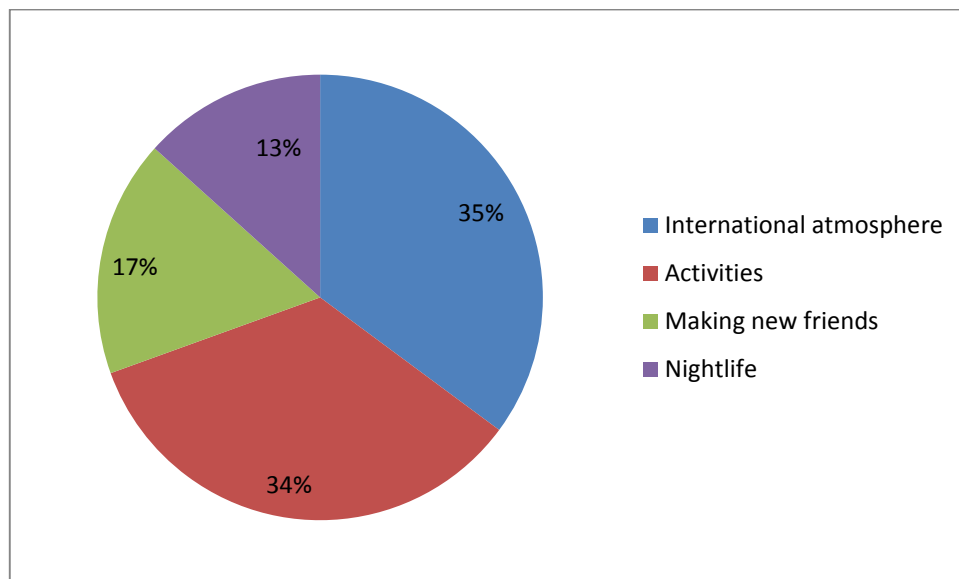
Activities (5% of all reasons)

> *Very well organized student life. Besides studies you can participate in a lot of activities such as charity/organizing conference etc.*
>
> Polish student about studying in the Netherlands
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10

Students value extracurricular activities highly and this is especially true for international students. Activities organised by the university or international student organizations help them expand their social circle and integrate into their new home. Activities organized are diverse: cultural visits, trips to nearby cities, sports, social events etc. A vast offer of *activities* is especially important to exchange students, since they have less time and wish to make the most of their time abroad.

International atmosphere (5%)

> " *Because you can enjoy there a really fantastic experience with other students from different countries.*
>
> Spanish student about studying in Poland
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience an 8 out of 10 "

A diverse, multicultural, and *international atmosphere* is highly appreciated by international students across Europe. They do not only wish to get to know their host country in terms of language and culture, but also enjoy meeting other students from all over Europe and the world. While an *international atmosphere* helps students to feel comfortable, as everyone is new to the university, city, and country; however, it also hampers international students' integration with local students. Some students report that they were the only or one of a few international students, and while they did integrate well with the local students, they found that due to the lack of international students, the university wasn't adapted to them yet.

Making new friends (2%)

> " *I would recommend this university because it is very comfy and small and it is easier to get to know people.*
>
> Italian student about studying in Malta
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10 "

When studying abroad it is important to international students to *make new friends*, both with local students and other international students. They make friends from all over the world, enjoy the cultural exchange, and often stay in touch with them after they return home. In smaller cities and universities, or those with well organized activities, students find it easier to connect to others, while in large cities and universities they find it harder. Many students find that the friends they meet make the experience unforgettable!

Nightlife (2%)

> ❝ *There isn't much night life. But if you get invited go to uni's parties. Those are good.*
>
> German student about studying in Spain
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 9 out of 10 ❞

Bars, pubs, nightclubs, and parties are a pastime that students enjoy, however, it is interestingly enough the smallest subcategory within social life. Exchange students most often comments on the *nightlife* of their host city, while full degree students more often comment on other aspects of social life. Small cities have a less exciting nightlife than larger cities but in that case students often organize their own parties.

Surroundings (6%)

Students very much enjoy *the surroundings* of the city where they study. They like to explore the country so location and possibilities to travel are very important. Moreover, the weather can have a large impact on students' experience, as well as the possibility of enjoying their free time outside in nature.

Figure 14: Results within *Surroundings*
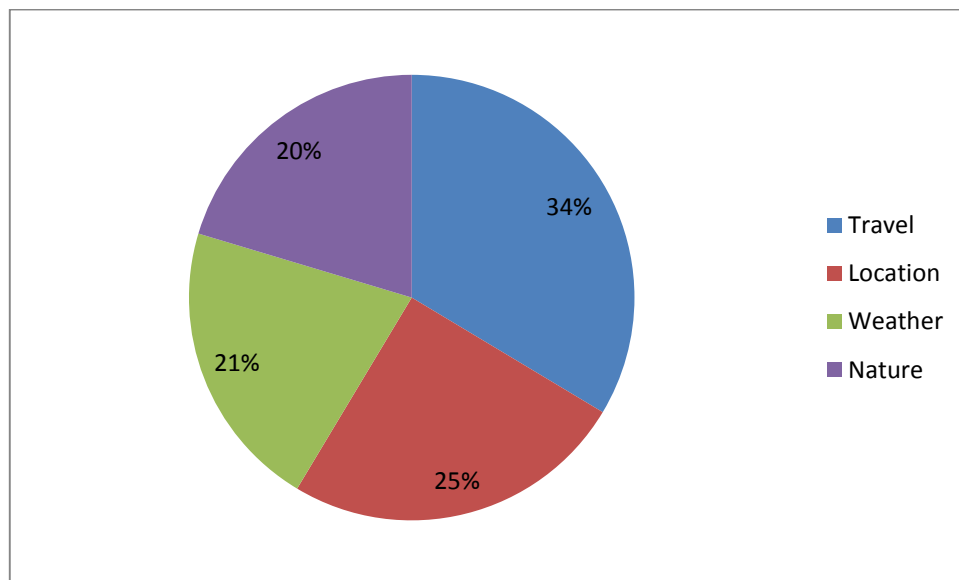
Location (1% of all reasons)

> " Limerick is a lovely city to study in: great location to visit the
> entire country and many cultural activities and sharing! "
>
> French student about studying in Ireland
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10

The location of the host city can be a decisive factor for international students in recommending their experience. Students do not only want to explore their host city, but also the host country or other countries in their proximity.

Nature (1%)

> **❝** The city is small, but the nature around is so beautiful, that we spent most of the time outside, having barbecues at the lake, watching northern lights etc. **❞**
>
> German student about studying in Sweden
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10

Having access to mountains, woods, rivers, lakes, the beach, and the ocean is an advantage for students. Especially when they live in a smaller city or in a region with good weather, they like to spend their free time outside. A beautiful landscape is most often commented upon by students studying in Scandinavia, while those who study in the Mediterranean often comment of their proximity to the beach.

Travel (2%)

> **❝** Guimaraes is a beautiful, charming city with a great atmosphere and always something going on. It is also in a great spot to visit other cities nearby in Portugal, like Braga or Porto, or to go to the beach. **❞**
>
> German student about studying in Portugal
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience an 8 out of 10

Studying abroad, while it is an educational experience, is also a journey to explore new and unfamiliar territory. Many students use their weekends and vacations to explore the region, country and neighbouring countries, or even all of Europe! A city is more attractive if it offers the possibility of daytrips to other places, and an international airport to travel during vacations. Another benefit is the ease of travelling from and to the students' home country.

Weather (1%)

> **"** I didn't find problems! The only 'bad' thing is the weather: snow, snow, and snow. **"**
>
> Italian student about studying in Poland
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 9 out of 10

The climate in the host country is a source of many negative as well as positive comments. *Weather* is much more commented upon when the student dislikes the climate than when they enjoy it. True to clichés, those students in the south of Europe hardly ever complain about the weather, while those in the UK, Ireland, and the Benelux complain of grey skies and rain. Students in Scandinavia are divided: some enjoy the snow, while others do not. This is hugely dependent on where they come from, and what their home climate is like.

University services (11%)

University services encompass everything about the university except for the academic aspect. Comments are made on the organization of the university, the campus and buildings, the facilities and equipment, but also the services offered to (international) students.

Figure 15: Results within *University Services*
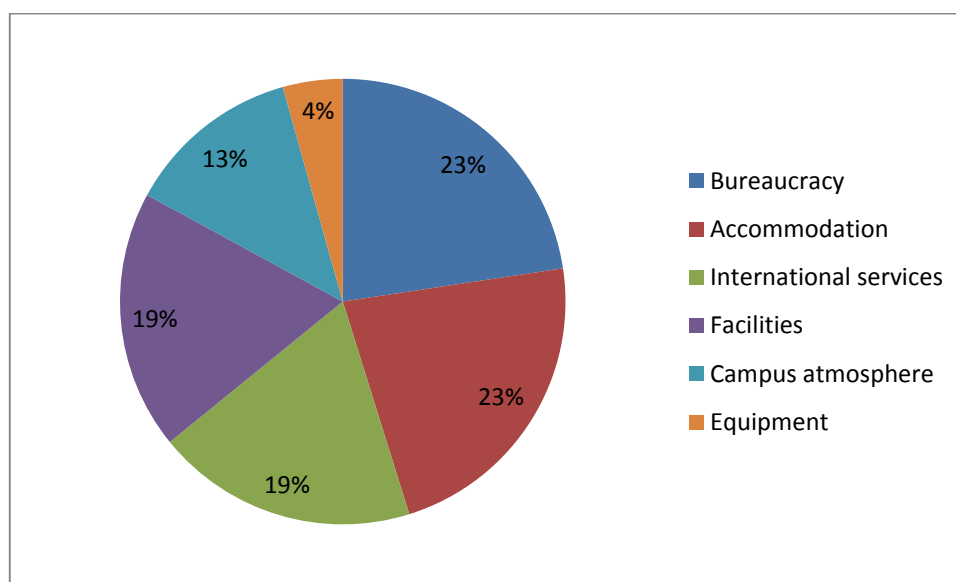
Accommodation (3% of all reasons)

> *There are not enough rooms for all the incomings students and the dormitories are very expensive. The university/exchange office is not much of a help finding accommodation.*
>
> Austrian student about studying in Denmark
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 9 out of 10

While *accommodation* makes up only 2% of all reasons, it does make up 6% of negative comments. Students complain that housing is too far away from the university, is in bad shape, or is too expensive. Often they have a hard time finding accommodation by themselves due to language barriers of time restraints. The university or international office does offer help in finding accommodation, however, many students do not enjoy the dormitories they are offered. Especially in Western Europe and in larger cities, accommodation is an issue, and some students recommend other to start looking 6 months in advance! However, students studying abroad in Eastern Europe and in smaller cities are content with their housing in terms of price and location.

Bureaucracy (3%)

> " Sometimes it is hard to find your way, enormously bureaucratic. "
>
> Belgian student about studying in Portugal
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 9 out of 10

University administration accounts for a small number of comments overall, but a large proportion of negative comments due to badly organised or excessive administration. At almost 8% of negative comments, this is a big reason for dissatisfaction amongst international students. Students find that the bureaucratic process takes too long, that they have to submit too much paperwork, that they are badly informed, or that the staff is neither helpful nor friendly. Especially those universities that host a small amount of international students have trouble achieving an effective bureaucratic process when it comes to admitting, registering, and informing students.

Campus atmosphere (1%)

> " Well organized university with a lively campus. There are for instance restaurants, a post office, and a club at the campus itself. Would certainly recommend it! "
>
> Dutch student about studying in the United Kingdom
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 9 out of 10

Students enjoy a beautiful campus, with many amenities and well-kept buildings. They also comment on the *atmosphere* of the campus: lively, a good study environment, small, big, vibrant, etc. A nice campus is especially important to those students who do not like the city.

Equipment (27 reviews, <1%)

> " At the university they have a lot of tools for analysing materials and we benefit from high-tech laboratories as the atom probe tomography. "
>
> Argentinian student about studying in Germany
> *Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10*

While *the equipment* of the university is not mentioned often, it is important to natural sciences students and those who conduct independent research. Modern, well-equipped, and clean laboratories are essential for them to successfully complete their coursework and conduct their research.

Facilities (2%)

> " Both Tartu city and the university are comfortable places to live and study - the library is wide open for customers, classes are airy and with very good acoustics. "
>
> Polish student about studying in Estonia
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10

Facilities of the university, such as the library, cafeteria, computer labs, and sports grounds are essential to create a productive study environment. While most students are satisfied with the facilities provided, improvements can be made in modernizing IT facilities or increasing the selection of English books in the library.

International services (3%)

> " I would like to note the friendly and student-oriented coordinators and all stuff of the International Office. Everything is made for the most convenient arrangement for coming and current students. Any coming student of the University will get as much help as it possible from the University side. "
>
> Russian student about studying in Finland
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10

While only covering 3% of all comments*, international services* are essential for international students to have the best experience possible. The international office and the study-abroad coordinators are an import resource of information before, during, and after the experience. While the university staff can aid students in the academic and housing department, a buddy can help international students integrate better and can introduce them to the local social and student life.

Overall impression (8%)

This covers any other aspects, or the *overall impression* – some students are content to just write that they had a great time and would recommend it to anyone.

> " It's a very valuable experience. "
>
> Polish student about studying in Greece
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience an 8 out of 10

> " It's great! "
>
> Portuguese student about studying in Italy
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 7 out of 10

> " That was one of the most important and interesting part of my life. "
>
> Hungarian student about studying in Poland
> Explained why s/he rated the study experience a 10 out of 10

COMPARISONS BY SEGMENTS

International vs. Domestic students

As well as the 6,511 international students who completed the survey, there are also responses from 412 domestic students. This allows a comparison between international and domestic students. There are quite some differences in their satisfaction levels: while international students would give their experience 8.8 on average, while domestic students give an 8.7. The difference in Net Promoter Score, however, shows that international students are far more likely to recommend their experience than domestic students.

Table 5: Student satisfaction in Europe by mobility

Mobility	Average	NPS	N
International students	8.8	+61	6,511
Domestic students	8.7	+57	412
Grand total			**6,923**

This result can be explained due to a distinct difference between a domestic and an international experience. For international students, studying at a university in a foreign city and country is a much more exciting experience than for a domestic student who goes to college in his/her hometown. Another factor is the sample used for this report: the majority of international students are exchange students, while the majority of domestic students are full-degree students.

Academic aspects are far more important for domestic students than international students; there are 4 percentage points more comments in this category for domestic students, at 29%, to international students' 25%. The most important aspects for domestic students are Subject, Teachers and Teaching, Reputation, and the Level (high) of education with a quarter of all their comments falling into these categories. For domestic students, Academics is not only the largest category commented on overall and at 84% positive comments they are more positive than their international counterparts.

International students emphasize the benefits of the city they live in and at 25% of all comments they comment much more often on this aspect of their experience than domestic students. The city is important to international students as they wish to explore a new place and culture, they want to get to know locals and learn the language. Their personal and professional development is very dependent on the subcategories represented in *City & Culture*.

Table 6: Influencers of student satisfaction in Europe by mobility.

Categories / Subcategories	Domestic students				International students			
	Negative	Positive	Total	%	Negative	Positive	Total	%
Academics	**42**	**221**	**263**	**29%**	**787**	**3,124**	**3911**	**25%**
Language of instruction	5	8	13	1%	111	93	204	1%
Level (high)	3	36	39	4%	57	554	611	4%
Level (low)	7	0	7	1%	171	8	179	1%
Recognition	1	1	2	0%	41	10	51	0%
Reputation	1	36	37	4%	23	632	655	4%
Research	0	9	9	1%	0	45	45	0%
Subject	7	59	66	7%	150	667	817	5%
Teachers	8	44	52	6%	113	686	799	5%
Teaching	10	28	38	4%	121	429	550	4%
City & Culture	**11**	**149**	**160**	**18%**	**270**	**3,546**	**3,816**	**25%**
City atmosphere, looks & size	8	95	103	11%	146	2,379	2,525	16%
Culture	0	12	12	1%	14	353	367	2%
Infrastructure	1	8	9	1%	16	93	109	1%
People	1	33	34	4%	72	682	754	5%
Security	1	1	2	0%	22	39	61	0%
Cost	**23**	**23**	**46**	**5%**	**284**	**424**	**708**	**5%**
Financial aid	2	1	3	0%	11	22	33	0%
Living costs	21	20	41	5%	268	383	651	4%
Tuition fees	0	2	2	0%	5	19	24	0%
Personal & Professional development	**7**	**65**	**72**	**8%**	**155**	**1,086**	**1,241**	**8%**
Career prospects	1	11	12	2%	6	77	83	1%
Discovering new cultures	3	22	25	3%	69	433	502	3%
Language	3	21	24	3%	80	382	462	3%
Personal growth	0	11	11	1%	0	194	194	1%
Social life	**8**	**112**	**120**	**13%**	**150**	**1,973**	**2,123**	**14%**
Activities	4	33	37	4%	78	651	729	5%
International atmosphere	1	45	46	5%	28	718	746	5%
Making new friends	0	21	21	2%	18	347	365	2%
Nightlife	3	13	16	2%	26	257	283	2%
Surroundings	**7**	**35**	**42**	**5%**	**121**	**763**	**884**	**6%**
Location	2	11	13	1%	17	204	221	1%
Nature	0	10	10	1%	2	178	180	1%
Travel	0	10	10	1%	12	285	297	2%
Weather	5	4	9	1%	90	96	186	1%
University services	**46**	**72**	**118**	**13%**	**468**	**1,261**	**1,729**	**11%**
Accommodation	20	7	27	3%	165	225	390	3%
Bureaucracy	10	12	22	2%	160	231	391	3%
Campus atmosphere	3	16	19	2%	13	207	220	1%
Equipment	3	6	9	1%	5	70	75	0%
Facilities	3	16	19	2%	20	305	325	2%
International services	7	15	22	2%	105	223	328	2%
Overall	**3**	**81**	**84**	**9%**	**15**	**1,008**	**1,023**	**7%**
Overall	3	81	84	7%	15	1,008	10,023	7%
Grand Total	**147**	**758**	**905**	**100%**	**2,250**	**13,185**	**15,435**	**100%**
%	**16%**	**84%**	**100%**		**17%**	**85%**	**100%**	

Short-term vs. Full degree mobility

The majority of the respondents studied abroad for a period of 12 months or less. In total, 6,118 of the respondents are exchange students, opposed to 381 international students who studied more than one academic years abroad in Europe as degree mobility students.

Table 7: International student satisfaction in Europe by duration

Study duration	N	Average	NPS
Exchange student (<1 year)	6,118	8.8	+61
Degree student (>1 year)	381	8.6	+56
Unknown duration	12	8.7	+58
Total	**6,511**		

Exchange students rate their study abroad experience with an average of 8.8 out of 10, whereas degree students rate their experience 0.2 points lower on average at 8.6 out of 10. Degree students are a little less satisfied with their experience, although at an NPS of +56, their satisfaction level is still very high. Degree students comment 10 percent point more on academics aspects and 10 percent point less on the city they live in than exchange students, indicating that they find academics more important, and the city less important than their exchange counterparts.

Table 8: Influencers of international student satisfaction in Europe by duration

Category / Subcategory	Exchange students				Degree students			
	Negative	Positive	Total	%	Negative	Positive	Total	%
Academics	**731**	**2,856**	**3,587**	**25%**	**55**	**261**	**316**	**35%**
Language of instruction	104	88	192	1%	7	5	12	1%
Level (high)	53	515	568	4%	4	38	42	5%
Level (low)	162	7	169	1%	9	1	10	1%
Recognition	40	7	47	0%	1	3	4	0%
Reputation	22	591	613	4%	1	38	39	4%
Research	0	32	32	0%	0	12	12	1%
Subject	142	579	721	5%	8	87	95	10%
Teachers	99	641	740	5%	13	45	58	6%
Teaching	109	396	505	3%	12	32	44	5%
City & Culture	**261**	**3,414**	**3,675**	**25%**	**9**	**128**	**137**	**15%**
City atmosphere, looks & size	141	2,287	2,428	17%	5	89	94	10%
Culture	14	337	351	2%	0	15	15	2%
Infrastructure	16	92	108	1%	0	1	1	0%
People	69	659	728	5%	3	23	26	3%
Security	21	39	60	0%	1	0	1	0%
Cost	**266**	**401**	**667**	**5%**	**18**	**19**	**37**	**4%**
Financial aid	9	17	26	0%	2	2	4	0%
Living costs	254	371	625	4%	14	12	26	3%
Tuition fees	3	13	16	0%	2	5	2	0%
Personal & Professional development	**143**	**998**	**1,141**	**8%**	**12**	**87**	**99**	**11%**
Career prospects	3	49	52	0%	3	28	31	3%
Discovering new cultures	64	406	470	3%	5	26	31	3%
Language	76	360	436	3%	4	22	26	2%
Personal growth	0	183	183	1%	0	11	11	1%
Social life	**139**	**1,869**	**2,008**	**14%**	**11**	**101**	**112**	**12%**
Activities	72	622	694	5%	6	28	34	4%
International atmosphere	27	665	692	5%	1	52	53	6%
Making new friends	14	334	348	2%	4	12	16	2%
Nightlife	26	248	274	2%	0	9	9	1%
Surroundings	**117**	**730**	**847**	**6%**	**4**	**31**	**35**	**4%**
Location	16	194	210	1%	1	10	11	1%
Nature	2	168	170	1%	0	8	8	1%
Travel	12	275	287	2%	0	10	10	1%
Weather	87	93	180	1%	3	3	6	1%
University services	**447**	**1,168**	**1,615**	**11%**	**21**	**88**	**109**	**12%**
Accommodation	158	215	373	3%	7	10	17	2%
Bureaucracy	151	224	375	3%	9	7	16	2%
Campus atmosphere	12	188	200	1%	1	19	20	2%
Equipment	5	59	64	0%	0	10	19	2%
Facilities	18	272	290	2%	2	29	10	1%
International services	103	210	313	2%	2	13	29	3%
Overall	**13**	**943**	**956**	**7%**	**2**	**63**	**65**	**7%**
Overall	13	943	956	7%	2	63	65	7%
Grand Total	**2,117**	**12,379**	**14,496**	**100%**	**132**	**778**	**910**	**100%**
%	**15%**	**85%**	**100%**		**15%**	**85%**	**100%**	

European vs. Non-European students

The majority of the respondents in this study come from a European country (6,056 respondents). With 455 students from other continents however, it is possible to draw some conclusions on whether European students are more or less satisfied with their international study experience than non-European students. The results are presented in Table 8. Since only European students can take part in the Erasmus programme and it is likely that this has a significant influence on the duration of the mobility period, the duration is presented in this table as well.

Table 9: International student satisfaction in Europe by origin

Origin	Exchange students (<1 year)	Degree students (1+ year)	Unknown duration	Total	Average	NPS
Europe	5,769	282	5	6,056	8.8	+71
Outside of Europe	349	99	7	455	8.7	+73
Total	**6,118**	**381**	**12**	**6,511**		

A little more than 95% of students from Europe fall into the category of exchange students, while only 77% of students from outside Europe do. Part of the explanation is the Erasmus programme; the other would be that the travel costs for non-European students may not be worth a short stay. On average though, non-European students rate their experience 0.1 points lower than European students at 8.7 out of ten. Since the non-European group consists of more students seeking a full degree, this lower rating confirms the conclusion from the previous section.

Table 10: Influencers of international student satisfaction in Europe by origin

Categories	European				Non-European			
Subcategories	**Negative**	**Positive**	**Total**	**%**	**Negative**	**Positive**	**Total**	**%**
Academics	**726**	**2,862**	**3,588**	**25%**	**61**	**262**	**323**	**30%**
Language of instruction	103	89	192	**1%**	8	4	12	**1%**
Level (high)	56	517	573	**4%**	1	37	38	**4%**
Level (low)	162	7	169	**1%**	9	1	10	**1%**
Recognition	38	9	47	**0%**	3	1	4	**0%**
Reputation	21	594	615	**4%**	2	38	40	**4%**
Research	0	32	32	**0%**	0	13	13	**1%**
Subject	134	608	742	**5%**	16	59	75	**7%**
Teachers	101	623	724	**5%**	12	63	75	**7%**
Teaching	111	383	494	**3%**	10	46	56	**5%**
City & Culture	**252**	**3,358**	**3,610**	**25%**	**18**	**188**	**206**	**19%**
City atmosphere, looks & size	137	2,258	2,395	**17%**	9	121	130	**12%**
Culture	14	338	352	**2%**	0	15	15	**1%**
Infrastructure	15	89	104	**1%**	1	4	5	**0%**
People	64	642	706	**5%**	8	40	48	**5%**
Security	22	31	53	**0%**	0	8	8	**1%**
Cost	**260**	**389**	**649**	**5%**	**24**	**35**	**59**	**6%**
Financial aid	8	17	25	**0%**	3	5	8	**1%**
Living costs	248	360	608	**4%**	20	23	43	**4%**
Tuition fees	4	12	16	**0%**	1	7	8	**1%**
Personal & Professional dev.	**145**	**1,006**	**1,151**	**8%**	**10**	**80**	**80**	**8%**
Career prospects	4	64	68	**0%**	2	13	80	**8%**
Discovering new cultures	63	397	460	**3%**	6	36	42	**4%**
Language	78	360	438	**3%**	2	22	24	**2%**
Personal growth	0	185	185	**1%**	0	9	9	**1%**
Social life	**144**	**1,851**	**1,995**	**14%**	**6**	**122**	**128**	**12%**
Activities	76	620	696	**5%**	2	31	33	**3%**
International atmosphere	24	661	685	**5%**	4	57	61	**6%**
Making new friends	18	324	342	**2%**	0	23	23	**2%**
Nightlife	26	246	272	**2%**	0	11	11	**1%**
Surroundings	**109**	**701**	**810**	**6%**	**12**	**62**	**74**	**7%**
Location	17	189	206	**1%**	0	15	15	**1%**
Nature	2	162	164	**1%**	0	16	16	**2%**
Travel	9	266	275	**2%**	3	19	22	**2%**
Weather	81	84	165	**1%**	9	12	21	**2%**
University services	**448**	**1,175**	**1,623**	**11%**	**20**	**86**	**106**	**10%**
Accommodation	160	208	368	**3%**	5	17	22	**2%**
Bureaucracy	153	225	378	**3%**	7	6	13	**1%**
Campus atmosphere	10	192	202	**1%**	3	15	18	**2%**
Equipment	4	64	68	**0%**	1	6	7	**1%**
Facilities	19	275	294	**2%**	1	30	31	**3%**
International services	102	211	313	**2%**	3	12	15	**1%**
Overall	**13**	**932**	**945**	**7%**	**0**	**76**	**76**	**7%**
Overall	13	932	945	**7%**	0	76	**76**	**7%**
Grand Total	**2,097**	**12,274**	**14,371**	**100%**	**153**	**911**	**1,064**	**100%**
%	**15%**	**85%**	**100%**		**14%**	**86%**	**100%**	

Destination country

In order to provide a comprehensive analysis of satisfaction in Europe, it is possible to break down the results per country, considering only those countries with more than 100 student reviews.

Table 11: International student satisfaction in Europe by destination country

	Destination country	N	Average	NPS
1	Finland	270	9.2	+77
2	Sweden	424	9.1	+72
3	Denmark	243	9.1	+72
4	Austria	222	9.0	+66
5	Poland	325	9.0	+67
6	Czech Republic	180	9.0	+67
7	Norway	134	9.0	+66
8	United Kingdom	444	9.0	+67
9	Portugal	231	8.9	+61
10	Switzerland	227	8.9	+63
11	Germany	559	8.8	+63
12	Netherlands	422	8.7	+56
13	Belgium	256	8.6	+52
14	Spain	1,148	8.6	+52
15	Italy	352	8.4	+45
16	France	329	8.3	+43
	Other*	745	8.9	+65
	Total	**6,511**		

* All countries of origin that have fewer than 100 student reviews.

The table above is sorted by average score given to the experience. The top three countries are Finland in first place with an average of 9.2 and Sweden and Denmark in a shared second place at an average of 9.1. At the bottom of the list are Italy with an average of 8.4 out of 10 and France with an average of 8.3 out of ten, however, these are still very positive results. The most popular destination is Spain with 1148 reviews at an average score of 8.6. It is followed by Germany with 559 reviews at an average score of 8.8, which is closely followed by the United Kingdom with 444 reviews and an average score of 9.0 out of 10.

Top 30 universities for international student satisfaction

In order to provide a comprehensive analysis of satisfaction in Europe, it is possible to break down the results per university, considering only those with sufficient student reviews. While student satisfaction is very high across Europe, these universities have achieved an outstanding performance with an average score between 9.5 and 10 out of 10. Due to relatively low review rates per institution, we are not able to analyse specifically what each institution has done well to achieve this score, however, by up keeping a high level of academics, giving individual attention to each students, and having modern and well maintained facilities.

Please note that this is by no means a ranking, and merely serves as an informative list of which universities have received the highest scores. In order to be counted, each university must have sufficient student reviews on STeXX – there are many universities which do not appear on this list due to low numbers of student reviews, but that nonetheless have inspiring scores. The universities are arranged in alphabetical order.

Table 12: 30 European universities with outstanding international student satisfaction (with at least 20 reviews and an average score >9.5 out of 10)

University	Country
Aarhus University	Denmark
Adam Mickiewicz University Poznan	Poland
Alba Graduate Business School	Greece
Athens University of Economics and Business	Greece
Bogazici University	Turkey
Cardiff University	United Kingdom
Corvinus University of Budapest	Hungary
Friedrich Schiller University Jena	Germany
Georg-August-Universität Göttingen	Germany
HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences	Finland
Istanbul Sehir University	Turkey
Karlstad University	Sweden
KU Leuven Campus Brussels	Belgium
Leiden University	Netherlands
Manchester Metropolitan University	United Kingdom
Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick	Ireland
Tallinn University	Estonia
Tampere University of Applied Sciences	Finland
Technical University of Denmark	Denmark
Trinity College Dublin	Ireland
Universidade de Aveiro	Portugal
University of Anatolia	Turkey
University of Coimbra	Portugal
University of Economics in Katowice	Poland
University of Edinburgh	United Kingdom
University of Exeter	United Kingdom
University of Malta	Malta
University of Maribor	Slovenia
University of Nottingham	United Kingdom
University of Oulu	Finland
University of Szeged	Hungary
Vienna University of Technology	Austria

Origin countries

The country of origin can make a significant difference in the score given by students. The educational standards, technology standard, and living standards in the country of origin have a remarkable influence on the students' perception of their experience abroad. In addition, there are some cultural differences in scoring from 0 to 10. In some countries a 10 is quite easily attainable as it is seen as a standard high score, whereas in other countries a 10 is a level of perfection that is hardly ever attained.

Table 13: International student satisfaction in Europe by country of origin

Country	N	Average	NPS
Italy	684	9.1	+71
Spain	716	9.1	+70
Hungary	179	9.1	+68
Slovakia	101	9.1	+67
Greece	102	9.0	+70
Poland	430	9.0	+63
France	294	9.0	+67
Slovenia	108	8.9	+67
Belgium	188	8.9	+62
Portugal	153	8.8	+58
Austria	381	8.8	+61
Turkey	187	8.7	+56
Germany	679	8.7	+57
Switzerland	124	8.5	+53
Netherlands	245	8.5	+49
Finland	242	8.3	+44
United Kingdom	239	8.3	+44
Sweden	133	8.2	+39
Other*	1,326	8.7	+58
Total	**6,511**		

* All countries of origin that have fewer than 100 student reviews.

Italian, Spanish, Hungarian and Slovak students are most satisfied with their study abroad experiences at an average score of 9.1 out of 10. At the same time, Finnish, British, and Swedish are most dissatisfied with their experience at 8.3 and 8.2 out of 10 respectively. These averages, however are still very positive, and show that, on average, international students in Europe are very satisfied with their experience. The country with the most students studying abroad is Spain with 716 reviews from Spanish students; it is closely followed by Italy and Germany at 684 and 679 reviews respectively. Interestingly enough, the United Kingdom receives many international students; however, British students do not study abroad as much.

INDIVIDUAL COUNTRY REPORTS

Due to the number of countries involved, this section will focus on the ten biggest countries for international tertiary education according to market share.

Table 14: International student satisfaction rating in 10 European countries with the highest rate of international students

Country	Average satisfaction rate	NPS
Sweden	9.1	+72
United Kingdom	9.0	+67
Austria	9.0	+66
Switzerland	8.9	+63
Germany	8.8	+63
Netherlands	8.7	+56
Spain	8.6	+52
Belgium	8.6	+52
Italy	8.4	+45
France	8.3	+43
European Average	**8.8**	**+60**

The individual country reports on Europe's top 10 destinations are arranged according to decreasing market share according to OECD 2010 data. They include a factsheet, a country-specific result of review categories and a list of the top universities in the country.

Sweden

A total of 425 students reviewed and rated their study experience in Sweden. These reviews form the total of 1004 comments, with an average of 2.4 comments per review. Most students who have reviewed their experience in Sweden are international students, who study in Sweden for less than one year, and of whom most are from Europe. In comparison to the overall results, Sweden has 3% fewer reviews from full degree students and has more reviews from European students than the European average.

Figure 23: Aspects that influence international student satisfaction in Sweden and Europe
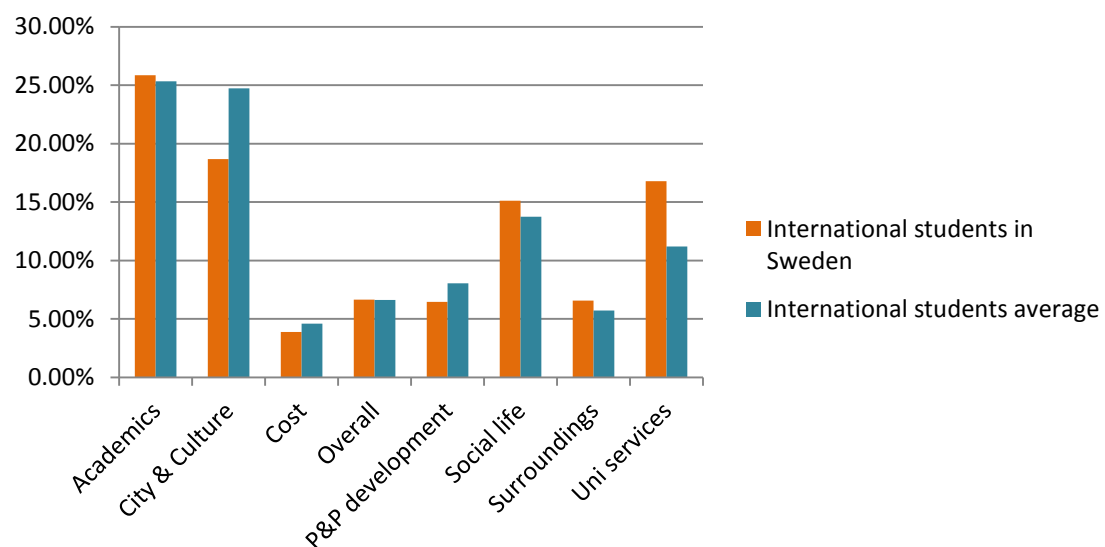
International students recommend Sweden because of great city life and social life. They are very impressed with academic standards, and Sweden does considerably better in this regard than the European average. Students are very happy with their personal and professional development, although they find it less important that the average international student in Europe. The biggest complaint is the high living costs, while students comment less on it than the European average, but when they do it is almost always negative. Many students complain about university services, but overall students in Sweden are happier with the services provided than the European average.

Figure 24: Positive and negative comments of international students in Sweden
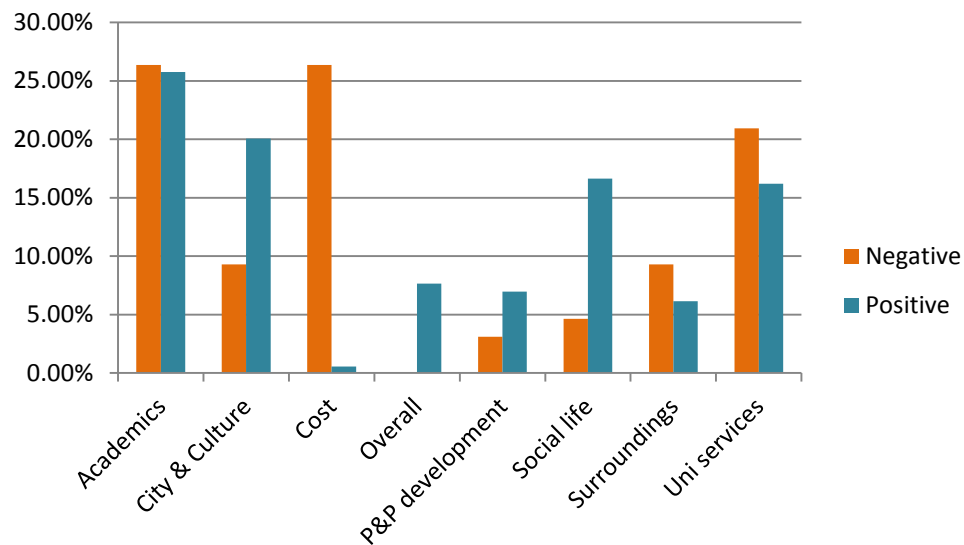
Below, the top universities in Sweden whom have achieved an average at or above 9.0 out of 10 are listed. This is by no means a ranking; it is merely a representation of excellence achieved by universities according to the international students studying there. The universities are arranged in alphabetical order.

Table 18: "Top international student satisfaction" universities in Sweden

University	City
Karlstad University	Karlstad
Linköping University	Linköping
Linnaeus University	Kalmar, Växjö
Luleå University of Technology	Luleå
Lund University	Lund
Örebro University	Örebro
Umea University	Umea

United Kingdom

A total of 444 students reviewed and rated their study experience in the United Kingdom. These reviews form the total of 1052 comments, with an average of 2.4 comments per review. Most students who have reviewed their experience in the United Kingdom are international students, who study in the United Kingdom for less than one year, and of whom most are from Europe.

Figure 21: Aspects that influence international student satisfaction in the United Kingdom and Europe
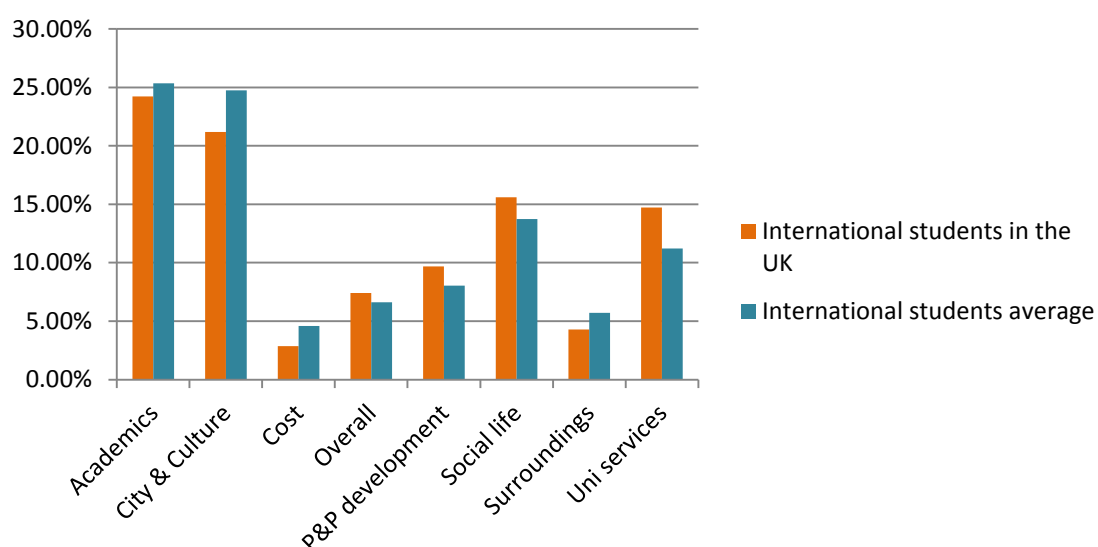
International students recommend the UK because of the great social life. They enjoy British cities, but not as much as international students in other European countries. Students are very satisfied with their personal and professional development, especially with improvements on their English language skills. International students find Britain expensive, but cheaper than other destinations in Europe. They find academics less important than other international students in Europe and often complain about university services, mostly about accommodation that is in bad shape, not central, or expensive

Figure 22: Positive and negative comments of international students in the United Kingdom
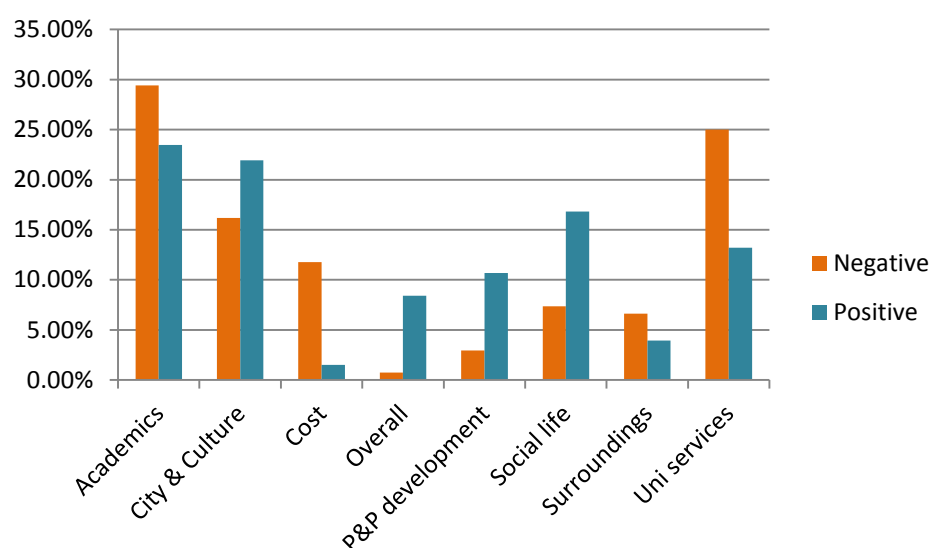
Below, the top universities in the United Kingdom whom have achieved an average at or above 9.0 out of 10 are listed. This is by no means a ranking; it is merely a representation of excellence achieved by universities according to the international students studying there. The universities are arranged in alphabetical order.

Table 17: "Top international student satisfaction" universities in the United Kingdom

University	City
Cardiff University	Cardiff
Manchester Metropolitan University	Manchester
University College London	London
University of Aberdeen	Aberdeen
University of East Anglia	East Anglia
University of Edinburgh	Edinburgh
University of Exeter	Exeter
University of Glasgow	Glasgow
University of Leeds	Leeds
University of Nottingham	Nottingham
University of Portsmouth	Portsmouth
University of Sheffield	Sheffield
University of Warwick	Warwick

Austria

A total of 222 students reviewed and rated their study experience in Austria. These reviews form the total of 495 comments, with an average of 2.2 comments per review. Most students who have reviewed their experience in Austria are international students, who study in Austria for less than one year, and of whom most are from Europe. In comparison to the overall results, Austria has almost 2% more reviews from domestic students and has less full degree students than the European average.

Figure 33: Aspects that influence international student satisfaction in Austria and Europe
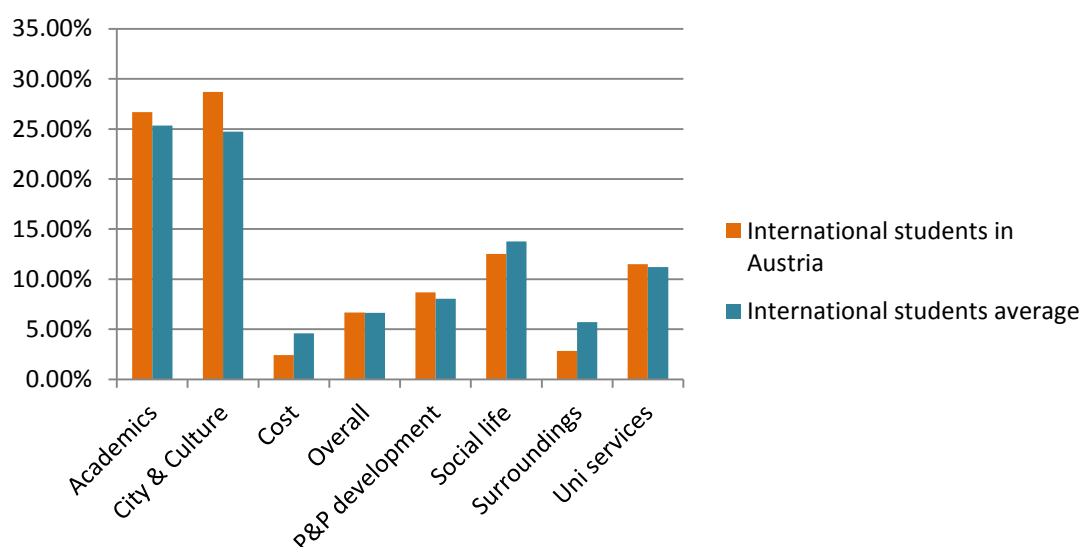
International students recommend Austria because of the great cities and a vibrant social life. They find the city and culture more important and they enjoy these aspects much more than the average international student in Europe. They also find their personal and professional development very important; however, they are not impressed with their improvements especially with discovering new cultures and learning a new language. International students find cost less important, and while they complain about expenses they find Austria less expensive than other European destinations.

Figure 34: Positive and negative comments of international students in Austria
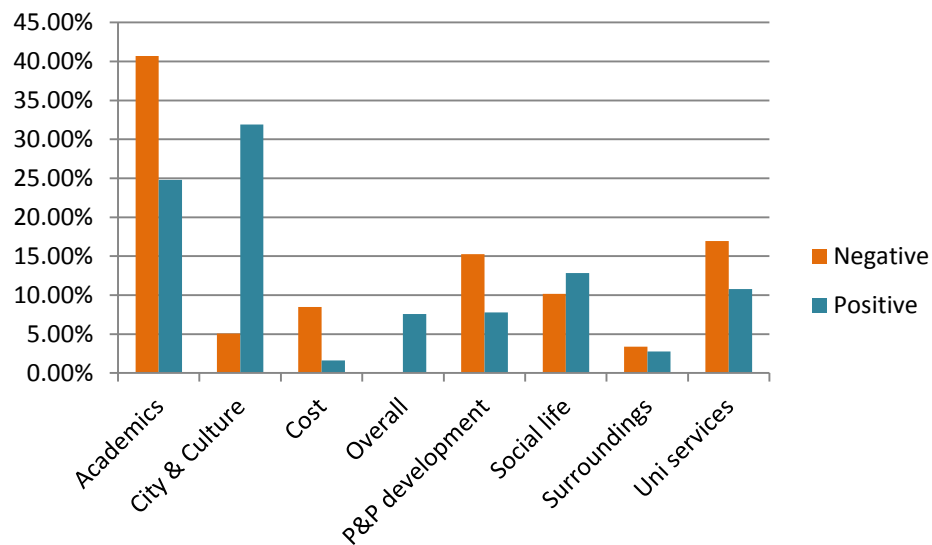
Below, the top universities in Austria whom have achieved an average at or above 9.0 out of 10 are listed. This is by no means a ranking; it is merely a representation of excellence achieved by universities according to the international students studying there. The universities are arranged in alphabetical order.

Table 23: "Top international student satisfaction" universities in Austria.

University	City
University of Graz	Graz
University of Salzburg	Salzburg
University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna	Vienna
University of Vienna	Vienna
Vienna University of Technology	Vienna

Switzerland

A total of 228 students reviewed and rated their study experience in Switzerland. These reviews form the total of 530 comments, with an average of 2.3 comments per review. Most students who have reviewed their experience in Switzerland are international students, who study in Switzerland for less than one year, and of whom most are from Europe. In comparison to the overall results, Switzerland has more than 3% fewer reviews from full degree students and has double as many reviews from non-European students.

Figure 31: Aspects that influence international student satisfaction in Switzerland and Europe
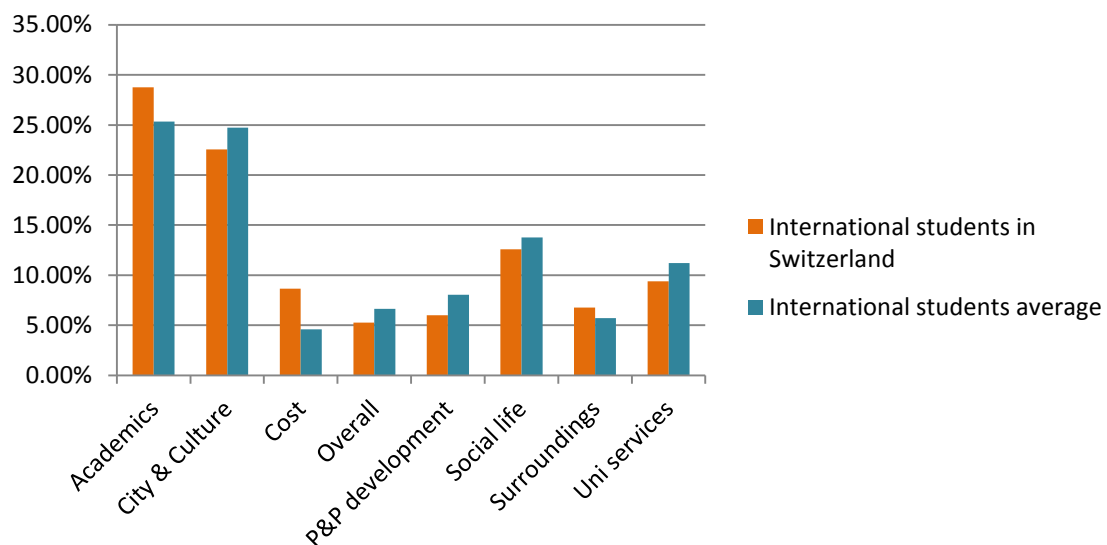
International students recommend Switzerland because of high-level academics, great cities and the vibrant social life. They enjoy Swiss cities, but not as much as international students in other European countries. Students are very satisfied with the academics where Switzerland does much better than the European average. However, they find Switzerland extremely expensive, one of the most expensive destinations in Europe. International students in Switzerland find personal and professional development less important than other international students in Europe, and are generally not very impressed with their improvements.

Figure 32: Positive and negative comments of international students in Switzerland
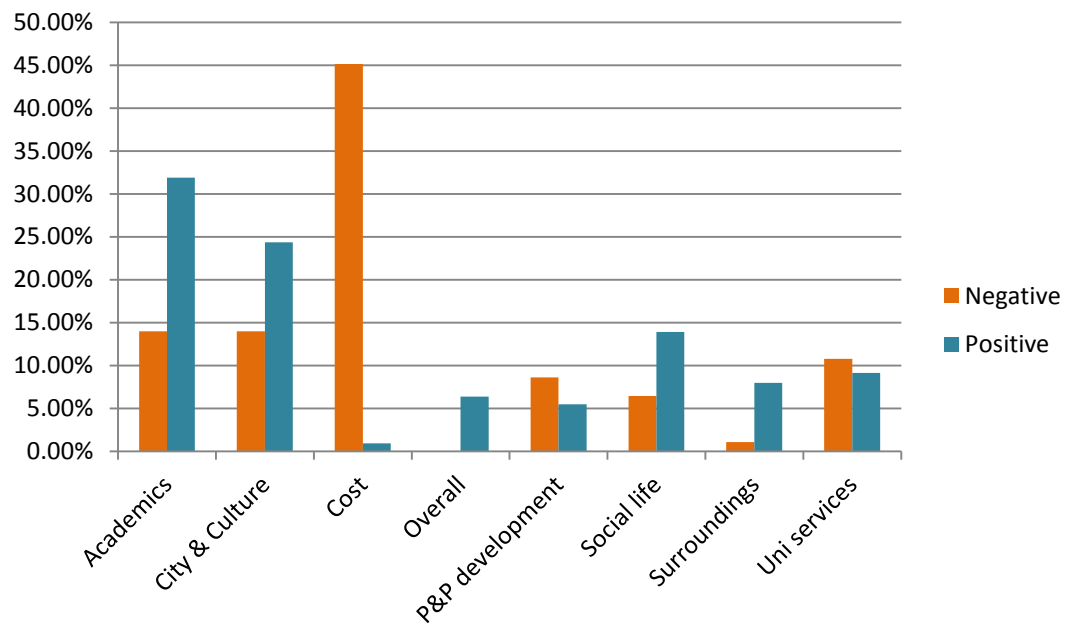
Below, the top universities in Switzerland whom have achieved an average at or above 9.0 out of 10 are listed. This is by no means a ranking; it is merely a representation of excellence achieved by universities according to the international students studying there. The universities are arranged in alphabetical order.

Table 22: "Top international student satisfaction" universities in Switzerland

University	City
Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne	Lausanne
University of Bern	Bern
ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences	Zürich

Germany

A total of 559 students reviewed and rated their study experience in Germany. These reviews form the total of 1325 comments, with an average of 2.4 comments per review. Most students who have reviewed their experience in Germany are international students, who study in Germany for less than one year, and of whom most are from Europe. In comparison to the overall results, Germany has 2% less reviews from non-European students and has fewer reviews from exchange students than the European average.

Figure 19: Aspects that influence international student satisfaction in Germany and Europe
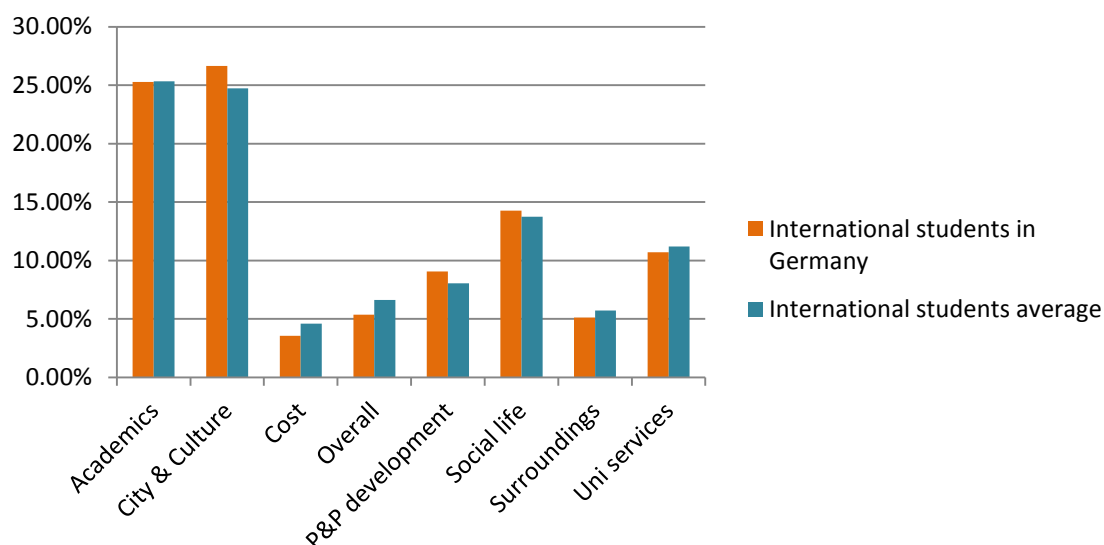
International students recommend Germany for its great cities and vibrant social life. They are happier with academics than the European average, although there is still room for improvement. In comparison to the European average, students find social life more important and are very content with the offer. They also find the city and culture much more important than the European average, however, they also comment more negatively on it.

Figure 20: Positive and negative comments of international students in Germany
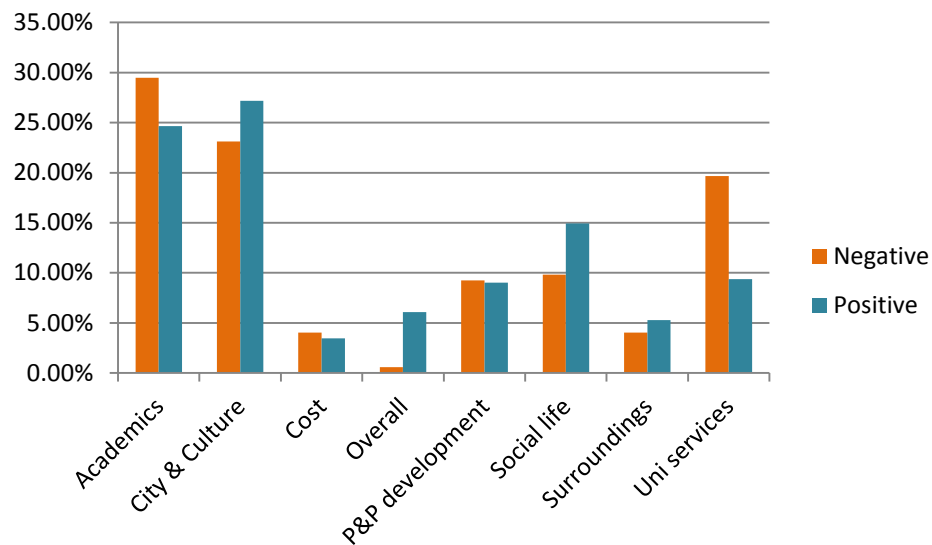
Below, the top universities in Germany whom have achieved an average at or above 9.0 out of 10 are listed. This is by no means a ranking; it is merely a representation of excellence achieved by universities according to the international students studying there. The universities are arranged in alphabetical order.

Table 16: "Top international student satisfaction" universities in Germany

| University	City
Dresden University of Technology	Dresden
Freie Universität Berlin	Berlin
Friedrich Schiller University Jena	Jena
Georg-August-Universität Göttingen	Göttingen
Heidelberg University	Heidelberg
Ludwig-Maximilians-University (LMU) Munich	Munich
Philipps-Universität Marburg	Marburg
Technische Universität Dortmund	Dormund
Technical University of Munich	Munich
University of Potsdam	Potsdam

Netherlands

A total of 422 students reviewed and rated their study experience in the Netherlands. These reviews form the total of 960 comments, with an average of 2.3 comments per review. Most students who have reviewed their experience in the Netherlands are international students, who study in the Netherlands for less than one year, and of whom most are from Europe. In comparison to the overall results, the Netherlands has vastly larger number of reviews from non-European students at 13.3% and has more reviews from full degree students than the European average.

Figure 25: Aspects that influence international student satisfaction in the Netherlands and Europe
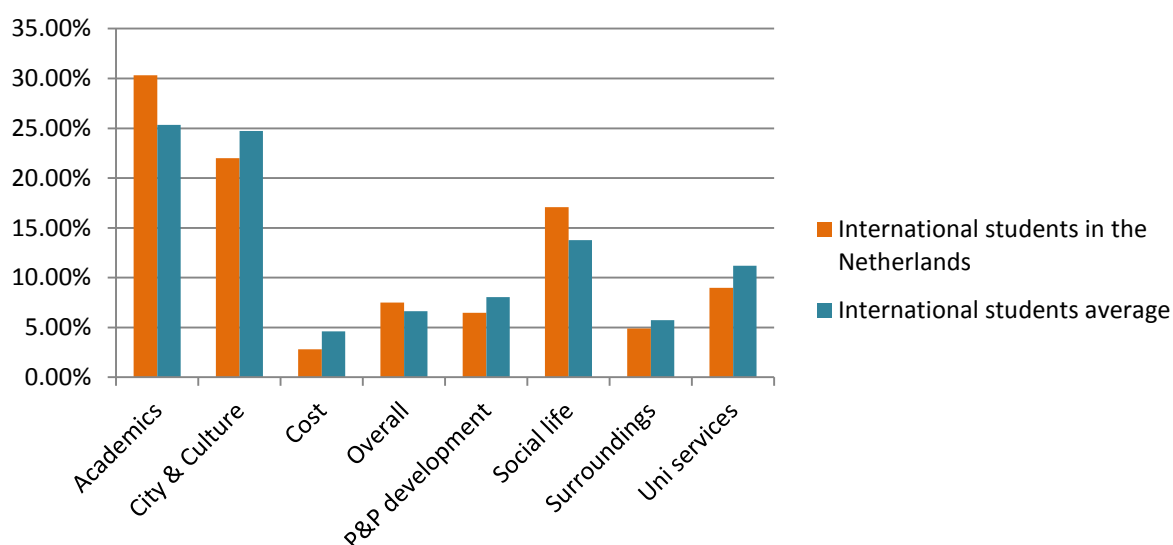
International students recommend the Netherlands for its great city and social life and for personal and professional growth. They comment less on Personal and professional development, however, they are very positive about it, especially about discovering a new culture and learning a new language. International students find social life more important than the average international student in Europe, and mention it more in both a positive and negative context. They also mention the services provided by the university less than other international students in Europe, but they do mention that this category has much room for improvement.

Figure 26: Positive and negative comments of international students in the Netherlands
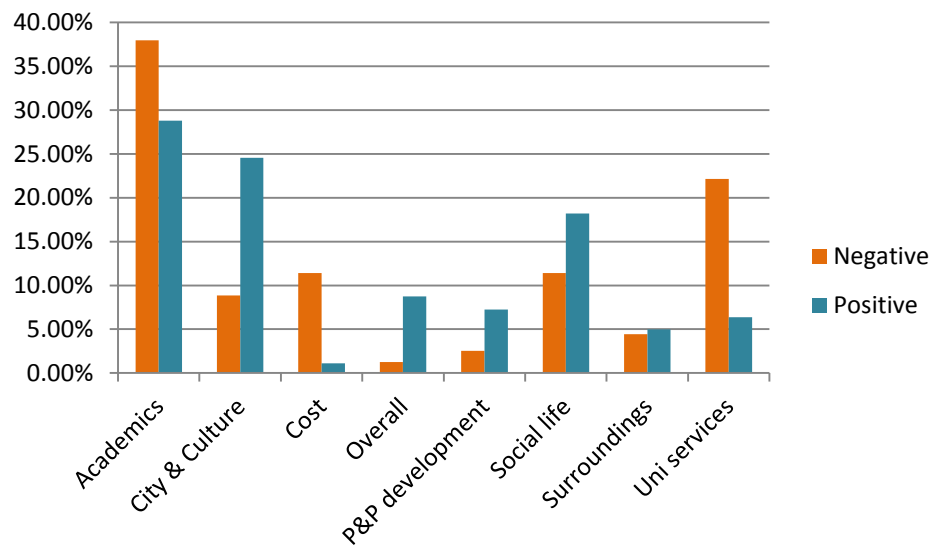
Below, the top universities in the Netherlands whom have achieved an average at or above 9.0 out of 10 are listed. This is by no means a ranking; it is merely a representation of excellence achieved by universities according to the international students studying there. The universities are arranged in alphabetical order.

Table 19: "Top international student satisfaction" universities in the Netherlands

| University	City
Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen	Groningen
Leiden University	Leiden
Radboud University Nijmegen	Nijmegen
Tilburg University	Tilburg
University of Groningen	Groningen
Wageningen University	Wageningen

Spain

A total of 1149 students reviewed and rated their study experience in Spain. These reviews form the total of 2742 comments, with an average of 2.4 comments per review. Most students who have reviewed their experience in Spain are international students, who study in Spain for less than one year, and of whom most are from Europe. In comparison to the overall results, Spain has 2% fewer reviews from domestic students, has far more reviews from exchange students than degree students, and welcomes more students from outside Europe.

Figure 17: Aspects that influence international student satisfaction in Spain and Europe
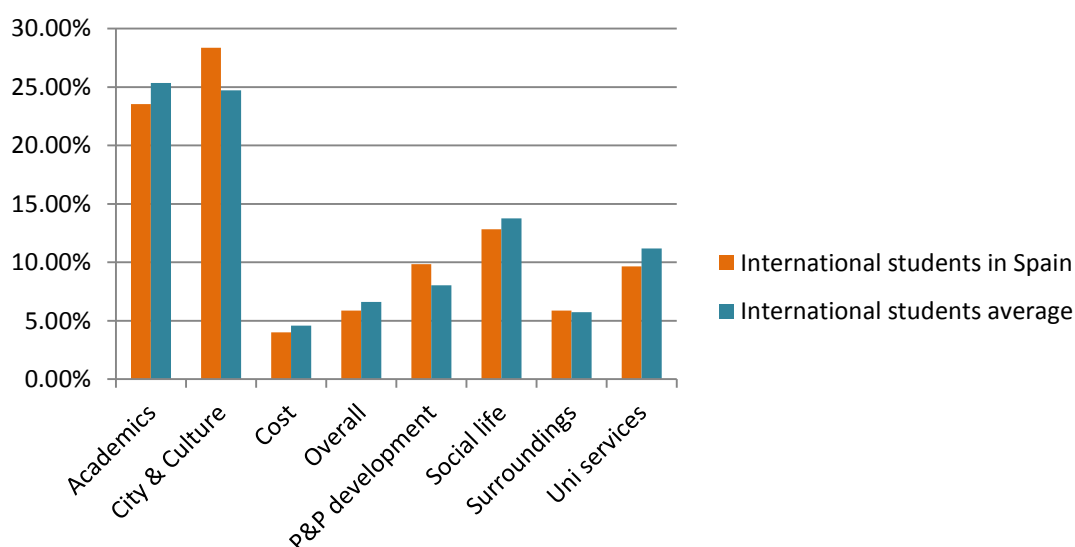
International students recommend Spain for its great cities, vibrant culture, and active social life. While students mention city and culture less than the European average, when they do they mostly praise Spain for its amazing cities and history. Half of all complaints from international students in Spain concern academics, specifically addressing the low level of education, the language of instruction, the teaching methods, and the teachers. In comparison to the European average, personal and professional development is more important to international students in Spain, especially emphasizing on the importance of learning a new language. Students find university services less important than the European average; however, when they do comment on it they mostly complain.

Figure 18: Positive and negative comments of international students in Spain
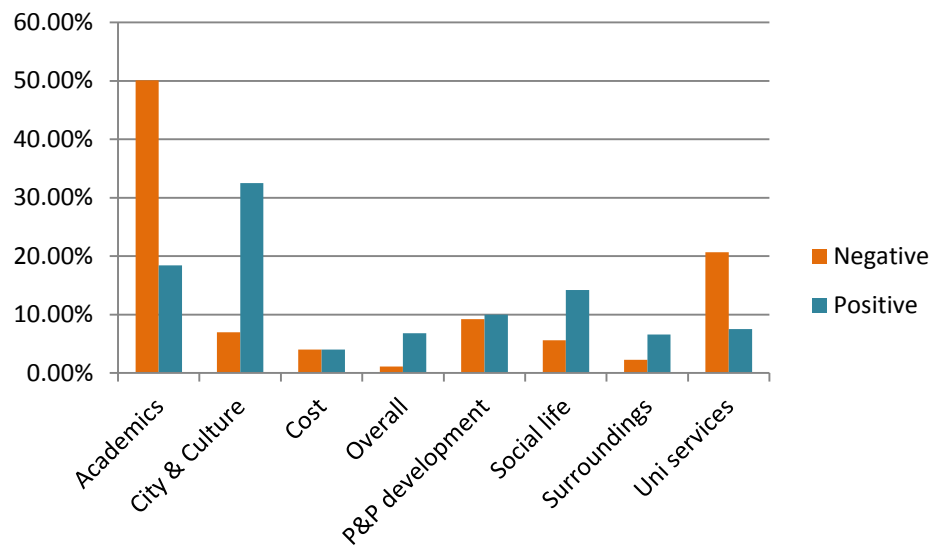
Below, the top universities in Spain whom have achieved an average at or above 9.0 out of 10 are listed. This is by no means a ranking; it is merely a representation of excellence achieved by universities according to the international students studying there. The universities are arranged in alphabetical order.

Table 15: "Top international student satisfaction" universities in Spain

| University	City
Polytechnic University of Valencia	Valencia
Universidad de Cordoba	Cordoba
Universidad de Sevilla	Sevilla
Universidade de Vigo	Vigo
University of Cádiz	Cadiz
University of Deusto	Deusto
University of Malaga	Malaga

Belgium

A total of 256 students reviewed and rated their study experience in Belgium. These reviews form the total of 623 comments, with an average of 2.4 comments per review. Most students who have reviewed their experience in Belgium are international students, who study in Belgium for less than one year, and of whom most are from Europe. In comparison to the overall results, Belgium has more than 3% more reviews from domestic students, has far less reviews from full degree students at 2%, and has less non- European students than the European average.

Figure 35: Aspects that influence international student satisfaction in Belgium and Europe
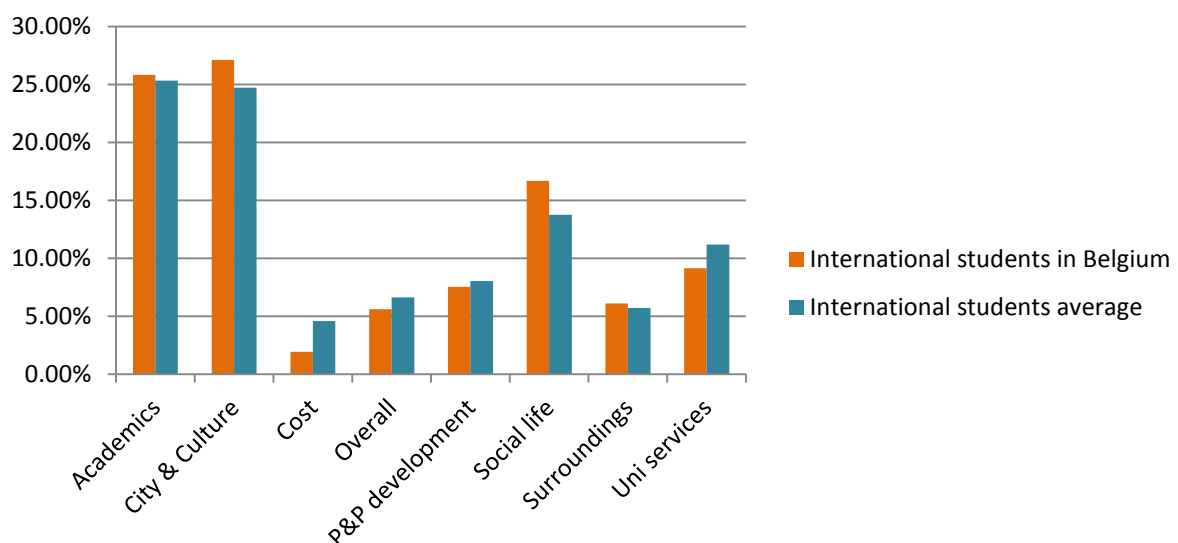
International students recommend Belgium for the great social life. Students comment much more and more positive on *City & Culture*, which implies that they find it more important than other international students in Europe. Students find university services extremely poor, especially in comparison to other international students in Europe. International students very much enjoy Belgian cities' atmosphere, looks, and size, even more so than international students in other countries.

Figure 36: Positive and negative comments of international students in Belgium
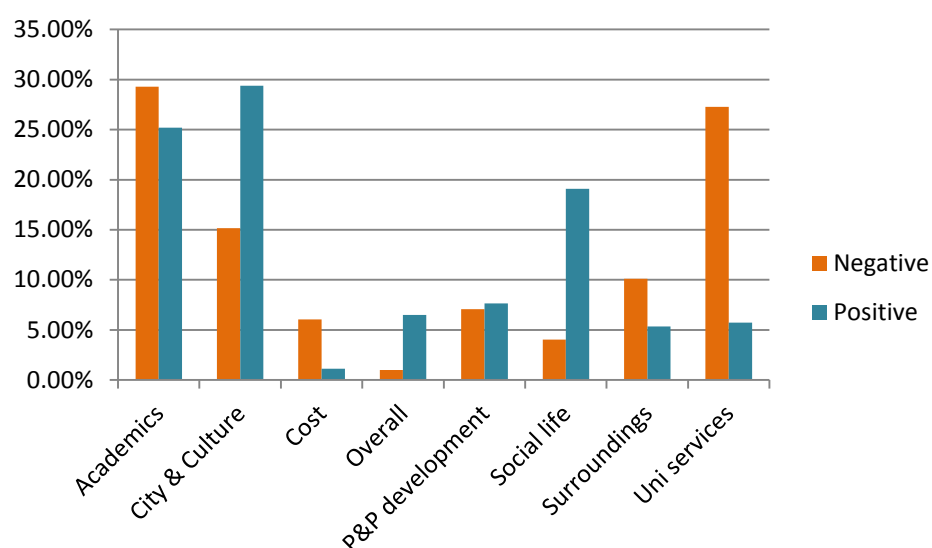
Below, the top universities in Belgium whom have achieved an average at or above 9.0 out of 10 are listed. This is by no means a ranking; it is merely a representation of excellence achieved by universities according to the international students studying there. The universities are arranged in alphabetical order.

Table 24: "Top international student satisfaction" universities in Belgium

| University	City
AP Hogeschool Antwerpen	Antwerp
Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp	Antwerp
Université Catholique de Louvain	Leuven
University College Ghent	Gent
University of Leuven – KU Leuven	Leuven

Italy

A total of 352 students reviewed and rated their study experience in Italy. These reviews form the total of 859 comments, with an average of 2.4 comments per review. Most students who have reviewed their experience in Italy are international students, who study in Italy for less than one year, and of whom most are from Europe.

Figure 27: Aspects that influence international student satisfaction in Italy and Europe
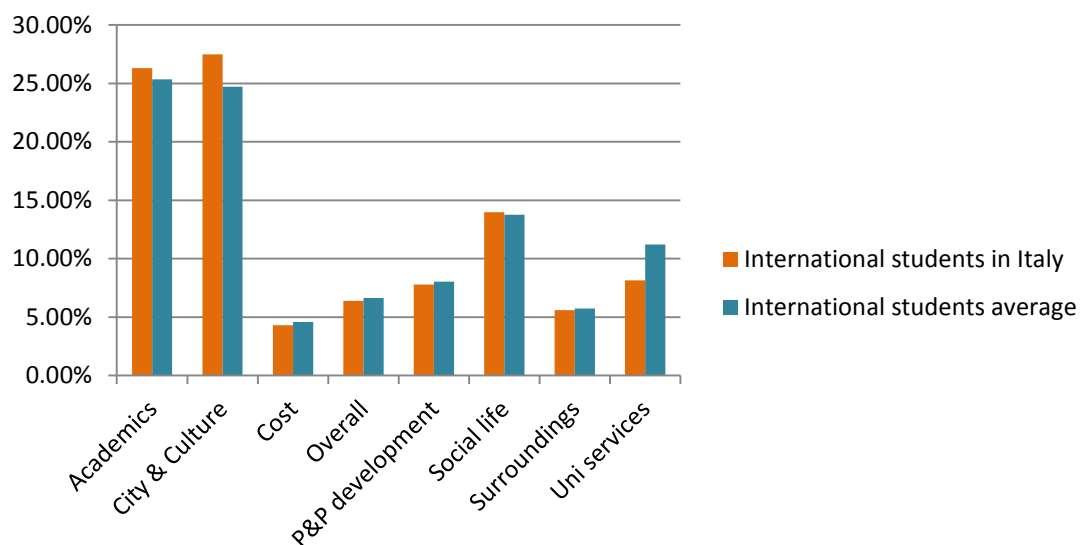
International students recommend Italy for its beautiful cities and great social life. They find city and culture more important and are more positive about it than other international students in Europe. In comparison to the European average, students find university services less important, but they do complain about lengthy bureaucratic processes and bad accommodation. Students are more negative about academics than the average international student in Europe, complaining especially about the language of instruction. Interestingly enough, students often complain about the climate in their host city.

Figure 28: Positive and negative comments of international students in Italy
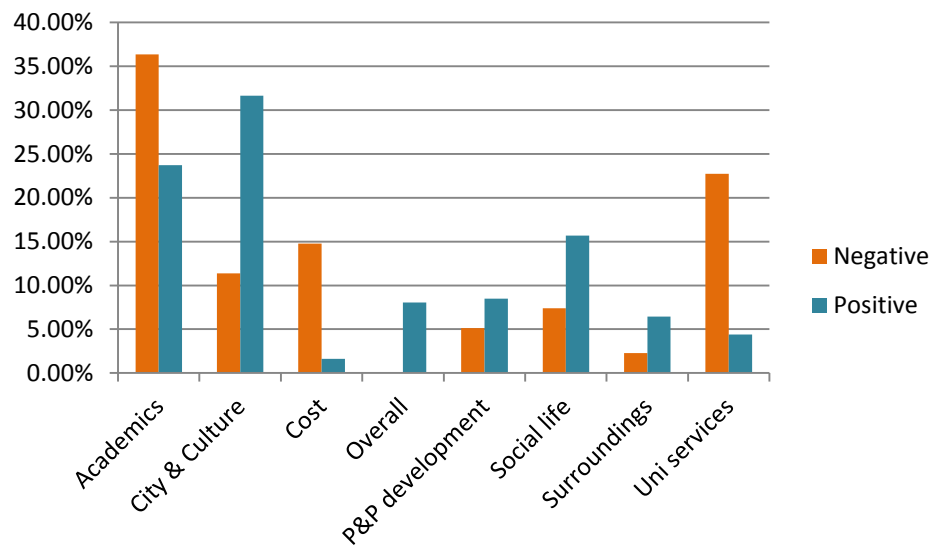
Below, the top universities in Italy whom have achieved an average at or above 9.0 out of 10 are listed. This is by no means a ranking; it is merely a representation of excellence achieved by universities according to the international students studying there. The universities are arranged in alphabetical order.

Table 20: "Top international student satisfaction" universities in Italy

University	City
University of Bologna	Bologna
University of Padua	Padua
University of Siena	Siena

France

A total of 329 students reviewed and rated their study experience in France. These reviews form the total of 787 comments, with an average of 2.4 comments per review. Most students who have reviewed their experience in France are international students, who study in France for less than one year, and of whom most are from Europe. In comparison to the overall results, France has 3% more reviews from full degree students, has 2% fewer reviews from international students, and has fewer reviews from European students than the European average.

Figure 29: Aspects that influence international student satisfaction in France and Europe
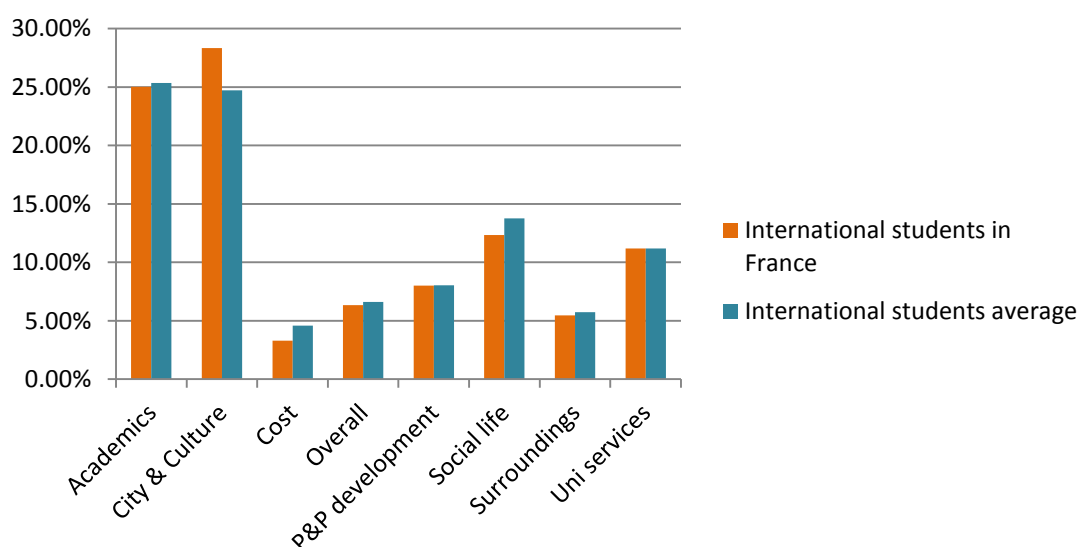
International students recommend France for its beautiful cities and great social life. They find *City & culture* more important and are more positive about it than the average international student in Europe. Students in France find living costs high, but also find it less important than the European average. They do complain more about the services provided by the university than the European average. Students find academics less important than the European average, but they do complain a lot about the teaching style. However, they hardly ever complain about the climate, and like the weather more than international students in other parts of Europe.

Figure 30: Positive and negative comments of international students in France
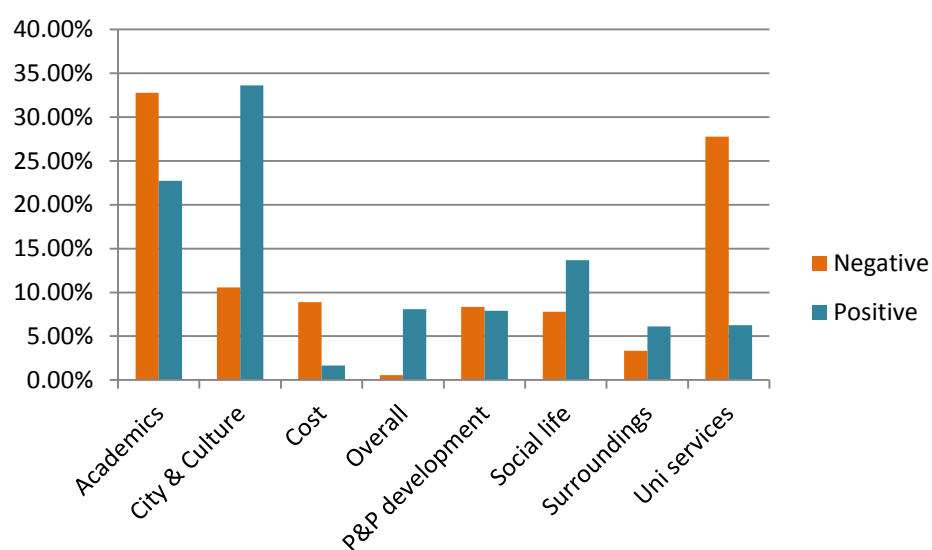
Below, the top universities in France whom have achieved an average at or above 9.0 out of 10 are listed. This is by no means a ranking; it is merely a representation of excellence achieved by universities according to the international students studying there. The universities are arranged in alphabetical order.

Table 21: "Top international student satisfaction" universities in France

University	City
Sorbonne Paris Cité - Université Sorbonne Nouvelle	Paris
Université François-Rabelais (Tours)	Tours
Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne	Paris
Université Pierre et Marie Curie (UPMC)	Paris

CONCLUSION

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

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

KEY INFLUENCERS

The key influencers of international student satisfaction in Europe are identified by this study, with *City atmosphere, looks, and size*, *Subject*, *Teachers*, and *International atmosphere* forming the four biggest areas of influence. The two largest categories are *Academics* and *City & Culture*, which at 25% each are by far the most important categories. The large amount of students' comments in these categories show that students who study abroad are serious about improving their academic skills, while at the same time exploring a new city, new country, and new culture.

Two important categories in recommending a university are *Academics* and *University Services*. In comparison to the results from the 2013 report, students have commented more on *Academics*. Within *Academics*, *Subject*, *Teachers*, and *Reputation* make the biggest impact. While *Reputation* is more influential when choosing the university, the structure and flexibility of the programme and the quality of teachers are the main influencers for students to recommend a university. Comments in *Academics* also account for the largest share of negative comments: a low level of education, a badly organised programme, and low quality teaching are the biggest areas of complaints. *University services* also define whether or not students recommend a university. A slow bureaucratic process and a lack of support for international students are the most frequent complaints in this category, while modern facilities and a beautiful campus lead students to recommend a university.

Two important categories in recommending a study abroad experience are *City & Culture* and *Social Life*. *City & Culture* is very important for a students' overall experience and increased in comparison to 2013, while making up the largest portion of reasons to recommend an experience. Comments on *City atmosphere, looks, and size*

significantly increased, while comments on the friendliness of local and the cultural offer stayed constant. Comments on *Social life* also increased slightly. *International atmosphere* makes up a third of all positive comments within this category and a lack of activities organized for international students makes up more than half of all negative comments in this category.

The NPS survey methodology is in particular useful to identify the key drivers of satisfaction and social promotion. As such, it is also useful in defining what aspects are *not* as important as one might initially imagine. This study has shown that finances (tuition fee, scholarships, and living costs), career prospects, and surroundings do not have a big impact on students' study experience. Though financial issues are one of the biggest negative influencers, it is important to remember that these only make up a small percentage of comments overall, as they are not mentioned by many students. One has to keep in mind that this study only surveyed those who actually studied abroad, thereby leaving out students who did not go due to issues with accommodation or funding, amongst other things. Although these aspects might indeed be basic needs, the results do indicate that more interesting surroundings, accommodation or a better financial situation are less likely to contribute to the student experience than for instance the resulting personal growth, the city atmosphere, or the academic subject and teacher quality.

COMPARISON OF SEGMENTS

The results show that international students are slightly happier with their study experience than domestic students. They are, however, far more likely to recommend their experience to their friends. Domestic students find academic aspects and the services provided by the university more important, while international students emphasize more on the opportunities that the city provides. International students leave more negative comments about academic aspects than domestic students do. They also leave more positive comments about the city and culture that their domestic counterparts do.

These findings are in line with the ESNSurvey 2013, "Exchange: Creating Ideas, Opportunities and Identity" (ESN, 2013), which finds that international students' satisfaction with their stay abroad is higher than international students' satisfaction with their studies abroad. The present study shows the importance of personal growth and the city atmosphere as well, but also highlights students' emphasis on academic topics. The ESNSurvey 2013 also reported that 75% of the exchange students are satisfied with their studies and852% of the exchange students satisfied with their stay abroad. The present study measured very high satisfaction levels as well.

The results also show differences between European and non-European students. Non-European students comment more on academics than their European counterparts, and place special emphasis on teachers and their teaching methods and the programme they follow. Non-European students also mention the options financial aid and tuition costs more often, generally stating that there are not enough scholarships available

and that tuition is high. This is not surprising as most universities set different tuition rates for EU and non-EU students.

Another segment that this study compared was the short term vs. long term students, in other words, the credit mobile students vs. the degree mobile students. Credit mobile students were defined as those who studied abroad for less than 12 months. Degree mobility students comment more on academic aspects, and are more positive about academics than credit mobility students. Degree mobility students also find career prospects more important than credit mobility students, and comment 7% less on *City atmosphere, looks, and size*.

STUDENT FEEDBACK HIGHLY VALUABLE

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

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES

Higher education institutes have the biggest overall influence on their students' satisfaction, and therefore have the biggest stake in increasing the student satisfaction level. Not only does the NPS measure student satisfaction, it also measures how likely it is that students will recommend a university to their friends. As such, the NPS has proven to be a predictor of future growth. The identified influencers might help to focus efforts, resources and budgets into improving international students' experience.

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

Teachers and Teaching

1. **Pitch classes at the right level** – The most frequent complaint regarding academics is that the level of classes is too low. While international students may have difficulties with the new language at first, their capacity for understanding a subject in context is unchanged. Lecturers should bear this in mind when teaching.

2. **Ensure a varied class offering** – International students, especially exchange students, often find that not enough classes are offered for their degree. This problem occurs due to the small size of a programme, the language of instruction, the separation of classes for exchange and full-degree students, or differences in credits offered for a class. A lack of offerings will lead to dissatisfied students and ultimately a delay in the students' graduation.

3. **Use student-centred, interactive teaching methods** – Students place high value on small class sizes and individual attention in the class setting. They enjoy lectures that actively engage students, group work and field visits. To many students this type of education is innovative and in fact a reason to study abroad.

4. **Encourage a close working relationship between academic staff and students** - Personal and academic guidance and the opportunity to ask questions are highly appreciated and contribute to quality of education.

5. **Provide (obligatory) language training to all student focused staff** - Training in the official language of instruction, as well as English, if this is not the main language of instruction is essential. The language proficiency of teaching staff has a high impact on the quality of education, as it affects how comfortable students feel in their learning environment, including how confident they feel in asking their lecturers for help when they have difficulties. Although offering courses in English as well as in

the national language(s) can help attract more international students, it can also be a reason for concern if the teachers' level of English is not sufficiently high.

Services and Facilities

6. **Streamline administration** – The most frequent complaint regarding the services provided by the university is that the administration is unorganised and unnecessarily long. Communication between administrations of different universities needs to be improved as well as the communication of the university towards its students. Excessive bureaucracy makes students' first few days in a new place more difficult and stressful. Moreover, many exchange students experience difficulties with recognition of credits taken abroad when they return to their home university. This ought to be avoided as far as possible.

7. **Ensure that the international office is well organised and welcoming** - It should provide assistance with settling into a new environment. It should also aid in finding accommodation if it is not provided by the university – such as a list of approved landlords in the area. Office opening times for international administration should be clearly stated and consistent, in order to help international students whenever possible.

8. **Provide a tutor or mentor as contact person** - This is the first point of communication and can help incoming students with taking care of administration and other practical matters. It makes them feel welcome.

9. **Implement a buddy system** - Match new international students with current students, to help them settle in and introduce them to a new community and culture.

10. **Provide language classes for international students** - Even if the classes do not take place in this language, it is important to help students settle in to their new environment. Students who do not receive help learning the language often feel that they miss out on learning more about their host country's culture, not to mention that it is more difficult to make local friends.

11. **Promote and support student associations** - Through their activities, network and services they positively contribute to student satisfaction. The level of support from the institution often determines how active student associations can be.

Personal Growth and Social Life

12. **Facilitate personal growth of students in any way possible** - Maturing, becoming independent and broadening horizons are often mentioned and highly valuable results of international mobility.

13. **Connect international students with each other and with local students** - Organise events for international as well as local students in collaboration with local student associations. Start by organising a welcome event at the start of every semester together with the local groups of international student organisations. This facilitates social interaction, makes students feel welcome and is an excellent opportunity to get administrative obligations taken care of.

Communication

14. **Emphasise the following in external communication** - These topics are generally highly appreciated by students:
    a. Any of the points above.
    b. Drivers of student satisfaction that are beyond the control of your institute, such as city atmosphere or local culture. Regional and cultural aspects are certainly a decisive factor when choosing where to study (almost one quarter of all influencers focuses on this topic).
    c. Reputation and ranking, even if your institute is not listed in the top 100 universities. Universities renowned in a specific study discipline or regionally strong universities are also much sought after.

15. **Poor university services are the main reason not to recommend a university** – This is often related to bureaucracy, which is an important negative influencer of student satisfaction, as well as poor accommodation. Therefore, focus on the quality of the services and information provision for current students, this can prevent student retention and increase satisfaction. The same conclusion is highlighted in the Trends 2010 study (EUA, 2010).

16. **Make important study choice information easily accessible for prospective students** – This includes enrolment dates and annual tuition fees. Many students indicate their choice of university depends on information availability, particularly emphasising website quality. Not only is this information critical for them to make the right choice, it is also a way for students to assess the general service level and quality of the institution as a whole.

All these aspects will help to increase quality of study mobility even more. Finally, there is a significant difference in student satisfaction between international and domestic students. Although this report focuses on international student mobility, and the needs and satisfaction drivers of domestic students are not identical, there is no doubt that domestic student satisfaction too can be lifted to another level through learning from these international student experiences.

STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS

Respondents expressed their appreciation for local student organisations. Students give high priority to a variety of activities, which includes social gatherings, trips and cultural events organised by student organisations, especially internationally focussed ones.

Student associations can be open to students from any discipline, like AEGEE and ESN, or specifically for students from the same academic background, such as the European Students of Industrial Engineering and Management (ESTIEM). These organisations typically organise social and cultural activities both for international and domestic students. Assistance with finding housing and administrative tasks is also much appreciated and sometimes provided by the local student union.

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

1. **Organise a welcome event at the start of every semester -** This has a positive impact on the satisfaction of international students, it helps them to feel welcome and make friends through introducing them to their new study environment and culture.

2. **Arrange regular social and cultural events** - This is highly appreciated by international students and will help them to have a great time.

3. **Promote active involvement of both local and international students** - This helps international students to connect with locals – otherwise students sometimes feel that they are stuck in an 'international bubble'. Moreover, participation in international events increases international mobility through encouraging students to discover each other's cultures.

4. **Focus on smooth cooperation with the university** - This will benefit both parties.

5. **Act as a matchmaker between universities** - Several new partnerships between universities have been created as a result of study mobility initiated by members of student organisations.

6. **Share your members' experiences and advice with (prospective) international students** - This will help to encourage studying abroad, to prepare for a mobility period, and to form realistic expectations so international students can make the most of their experience.

POLICY MAKERS

Increasing student mobility is currently an important goal in European policy, especially with regards to the Europe 2020 strategy. As well as being highly beneficial for those students who take part in any international study abroad, it also improves relations across the communities that international students come from and go to by increasing the awareness of different cultures within the Union. Because of this value to Europe as a whole, it is vital for policy makers to streamline and improve the processes for young people studying abroad as far as possible.

How policy is made at an international level (European Commission) has a profound effect on how policy is made at national level – if studying abroad is made easier by European policy makers, it will encourage national governments to promote an international education for their students. Progress is necessary at all levels in order to make international education even more attractive to prospective students, not only within Europe, but also throughout the world.

Although there is room for improvement within international education, it is important to remember that international students in Europe are overall very happy with the education and experiences they gain from studying abroad. It is possible to make studying abroad an even more successful experience with some considered support and improvements to the system.

Based on this study, we have the following recommendations to make students in Europe even happier with their experience:

1. **Raise awareness** – In order to encourage as many students as possible to engage in studying abroad, inform students of the international study options available across Europe, as well as the funding available. Many students are still unaware of the possibilities, or fear that they will not be able to afford studying abroad. If more were made aware of the fact that there are numerous study options and types of funding available, it would encourage them to apply in the first place.

2. **Continue to provide funding for international student mobility within Europe** – students often find the costs of moving abroad for study to be higher than they would like. As a result, a high cost of living is one of the main reasons for complaint among international students. Students appreciate any financial help that that they may receive, especially when moving to a country with a significantly different standard of living.

3. **Improve systems of international student mobility** – This will make it easier for students to study at foreign universities without having to work through lots of paperwork and bureaucratic problems. This involves encouraging universities to cooperate with each other with regards to systems of grading and transfer between universities.

4. **Encourage courses being taught in widely spoken languages** – Students appreciate being able to study in another country in a language they understand, especially when they do not speak the language of the country itself. Even if students do speak the language, their level may initially not be high enough for academic study. Because of this, universities should be supported in implementing

language classes for teachers, to ensure that their level of language is high enough to teach well and help students regardless of their level of language.

5. **Support international student organisations** – Encourage them to be present throughout all of Europe. Student organisations can give vital support to students moving to a new country, helping them settle in and make new friends. It is therefore important that they are active wherever there is an international student population.

STUDENT SATISFACTION AWARDS

2014 AWARDS

This report shows that international satisfaction in Europe is on average very high. Some universities have even gone beyond a very high average and received outstanding reviews from their international students. Because of their success in giving international students the best experience possible, we decided to award the universities that received an average score of over 8 (out of maximum 10 points) with an international student satisfaction certificate. The three universities with the highest score in their country were also awarded with gold, silver or bronze medal. The list of winners can be found on the website www.studyportals.eu/awards. The following certificates and medals have been awarded:

- **Award for Outstanding international student satisfaction**

  This prize goes to those universities who have scored more than an incredible 9.5/10 on average. There are only 30 universities across Europe that have achieved this.

- **Award for Excellent international student satisfaction**

  Any universities that received an average satisfaction score between 9 and 9.4 out of 10 from their students gets this award. There are 88 universities in Europe in this category - showing that students are very highly satisfied with their experience.

- **Award for Very good international student satisfaction**

  Any university that scores more than an 8 on average will receive this award – 92 universities in total!

- **Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards**

  The three best scored universities in each country which got more than 100 reviews were awarded with gold, silver and bronze awards.

Not a ranking

As we see this as an award for high satisfaction, rather than a league table of satisfaction, we will not be releasing a full list of all scores across Europe - instead we will only publish the highest scores.

Requirements

In order to qualify, universities must have received sufficient reviews from international students on the STeXX student exchange platform.

More Information

You can find more information by visiting our corporate website www.studyportals.eu/student-satisfaction, where you will find more detailed results of the awards and press releases for selected countries.

TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLES

FIGURES

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