Eötvös Loránd University

Understanding and Addressing the Mobility Gap in Higher Education

Insights from the EGAP Survey 2024

Content

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Introduction

The objectives of the survey can be summarized in the following points:

- Firstly, in order **to develop an inclusivity self-assessment toolkit**, it is essential to gain a deeper understanding of how staff members working on international mobility programs and partnerships at higher education institutions perceive the topic of the mobility gap. This will enable the identification of potential hindering factors, incentives related to the mobility gap that may be encountered in practice.
- Secondly, the survey supports **identifying the main pillars for the toolkit**, and these will support the Erasmus GAP team members in the refinement and consolidation of the first version of the toolkit.
- Thirdly, the survey will aim to address topics relevant to the practice and scientific community.

Research method

Based on the scoping literature review conducted in the earlier phase of the research project, **the following research questions** were identified to explore the topic and support the development of the inclusivity toolkit:

- What barriers and incentives at the institutional and student level can university staff members identify influencing participation in mobility programs?
- What information and data are available and applied to formulate strategies and policies on exploring mobility gap and promoting mobility participation?
- What differences can be explored between universities dealing with the mobility gap? What factors are significant in these differences?

Under the framework of the research questions, an online questionnaire was developed comprising four main sections:

- The first section pertains to the institutional and work-related background of the respondents.
- The second block concerns the main characteristics of universities, including for instance, the number of staff, the number of students, and the number of institutional agreements pertaining to mobility. The data helps to explore the differences between the various types of higher education institutions.
- The third section addresses the topic of the institutional level. Respondents are invited to evaluate the various factors pertaining to their universities and to assess these factors in terms of their impact on student mobility. This section is a unique and complex part of the survey supporting to define the main pillars of the inclusivity self-assessment toolkit.
- The fourth block contains questions related to data management practices that universities have applied in their decision-making processes concerning student mobility.

The questionnaire was developed in the Qualtrics system and was finalized based on a pilot study. In this piloting phase, the questionnaire was sent to the colleagues of the consortium for feedback on the content and the format of the questions.

The target groups were the university staff members who work on student mobility programs. The reasons for the **purposive, selective sampling** were the following:

- The university staff members who work on student mobility programs have specialized, practical knowledge on student mobility. Gathering data from experts or individuals with specialized knowledge ensures that the data collected is rich and relevant to the research objectives.
- The results of scoping literature review show that the students and graduates are the most commonly targeted groups in relevant pieces of research. It is also important to receive an in-depth insight from specific groups of university staff members who are not actively involved in the research.
- Purposive sampling does not aim to create a representative sample of the entire population. Instead, it focuses on obtaining deep understanding from a specific subset of the population.

The final questionnaire was distributed between 23 June and 15 July 2024, through various communication channels, including the EUF newsletter, the partner universities' mailing lists, and social media platforms (LinkedIn, Facebook). The partner organizations were actively involved in the distribution of the survey.

Until the deadline, in total 325 responses were recorded in the Qualtrics system. For data cleaning, the primary inclusion criteria of the responses were the following factors:

- Submitting the consent form related to the survey.
- Responding to at least 70% of questions.
- Providing reliable and relevant answers for the questions on the respondents' job position and affiliated unit.

The majority of respondents were excluded due to not answering at least 10% of the questions (114). Furthermore, 104 respondents answered 41% of the questions on average, and four responses were excluded due to irrelevant or unreliable answers for questions related to their work. After cleaning the database, **103 respondents were included in the sample for data analysis**.

Research results

The section presents the findings from the questionnaire, organized according to the main sections and topics. These include the respondents' work-related background and affiliation, the characteristics of universities, the factors influencing student participation at the national, institutional and student levels, and aspects of data management practices at universities. The final section identifies the discrepancies between universities with regard to specific variables, notably the presence of a strategy pertaining to student mobility.

In this section, a descriptive and explanatory approach has been employed as a data analysis tool to provide a comprehensive description of the results.

Description of the respondents' background

The sample illustrates a diverse range of countries represented by respondents. Upon examination of the distribution of countries within the sample, it becomes evident that **some larger, more prominent higher education systems are included**, such as Germany, France, and Poland. Conversely, other systems, such as Romania, are noticeably absent. As a result of the active involvement of partner organizations of the Erasmus GAP project in the distribution of the survey, most respondents, nearly half of them, are representing three countries, **France (19%), Germany (16%)** and **Hungary (14%).** Besides, 13 other EU countries are represented in the sample. In addition to Austria, where 7% work, 5-5% of respondents come from Poland, Slovenia and Spain. Among "other" countries, Türkiye, Switzerland and Norway can be found.

The sample provides a valuable opportunity to gain insight into the multifaceted landscape of higher education in Europe, while also **highlighting potential limitations**.

1. Figure. Share of respondents by country where their HEIs location (EGAP 2024, n=103, %)

Share of respondents by country where HEI is located (EGAP 2024, n=103, %)
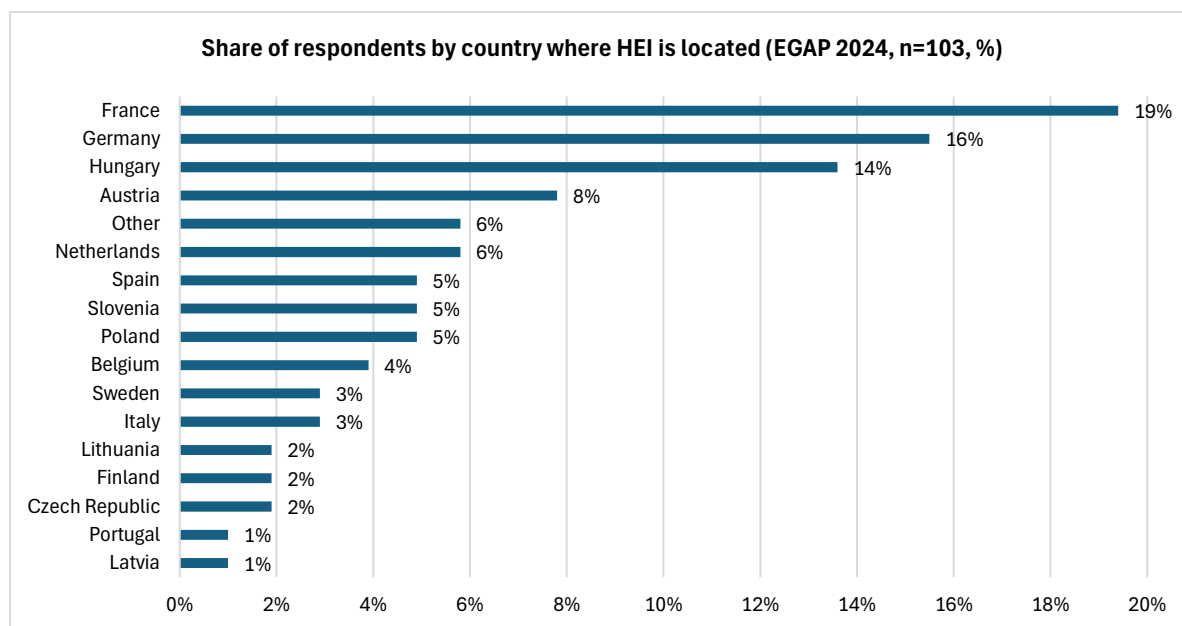
The data presented in *1. Table* reveals that **20% of respondents work in a senior position**, namely that of head or director of an office with responsibilities related to international relations or mobility. A

further 6% are academics, while 6% work as a manager (project manager, research manager etc.) with duties related to student mobility. The **majority** of respondents, however, are **employed in an administrative capacity** and are therefore involved in the everyday operational aspects of international relations or student mobility (mobility coordinator, Erasmus coordinator, institutional officer etc.).

The majority of respondents (70%) indicated that they are employed in **an international relations office** (IRO) or **an international office** (IO). Additionally, 7% of respondents specified that they are engaged in an international office with a pronounced emphasis on student mobility.

1. Table. Number and share of respondents by their positions (EGAP 2024, n=103)

	Frequency	Percent
Advisor	3	3%
Coordinator – other	3	3%
Institutional coordinator	3	3%
Other	5	5%
Academics	6	6%
Manager (project manager, research manager etc.)	6	6%
Mobility coordinator/officer	15	15%
International coordinator/officer	19	18%
Head/director of office	21	20%
Erasmus coordinator	22	21%
Total	103	100%

Main characteristics of Higher Education Institutions

The questionnaire examines the primary attributes of higher education institutions (HEIs) in relation to the factors of their geographical location and ownership, as well as the size of their academic staff and student populations. Among other indicators, the number of existing institutional bi- and multilateral agreements is also used to try to capture the extent of HEIs' internationalizing activities.

The data indicates that the majority of respondents are employed at HEIs situated in urban areas, with **26% working at institutions in the capital city**. Additionally, nearly 20% of respondents are based at universities in suburban locations. Among universities, public universities are represented in the sample with 87%.

2. Figure. Share of respondents by the location characteristics of their university (EGAP 2024, %, n=103)

Share of respondents by the location characteristics of their university (EGAP 2024, %, n=103)
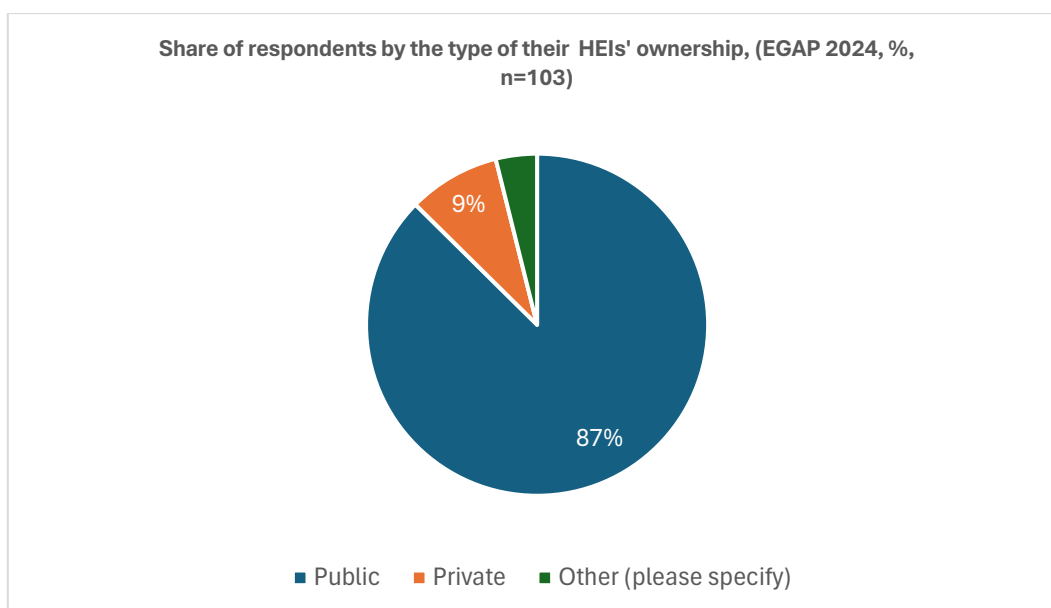
19%

26%

54%

- Suburban (located in a small town or residential areas near cities)
- Urban (located in the capital)
- Urban (located in a city, a large town, but not in the capital)

3. Figure. Share of respondents by the type of their HEIs' ownership, (EGAP 2024, %, n=103)

Share of respondents by the type of their HEIs' ownership, (EGAP 2024, %, n=103)

9%

87%

- Public
- Private
- Other (please specify)
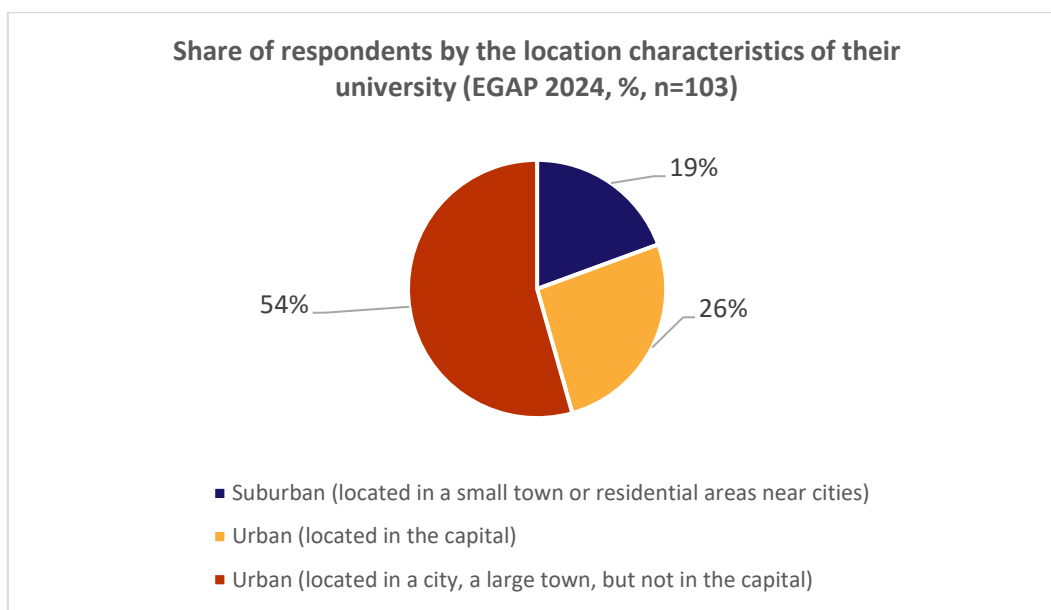
Despite the diversification of the higher education landscape, small universities remain underrepresented. Based on the number of students, over **60%** of the higher education institutions (HEIs) included in the sample can be classified as **medium-sized**. The proportion of **large universities (20,000-50,000 students) is 34%,** while **5% are classified as very large universities** with over 50,000 students. The size of higher education institutions (HEIs) is also associated with a number of institutional dimensions. As other data indicates, larger universities tend to be publicly funded, offering a diverse range of academic programs aligned with scientific disciplines and degree levels, and are frequently situated in urban locations. However, the average size of HEIs may also be influenced by country-specific factors as well.
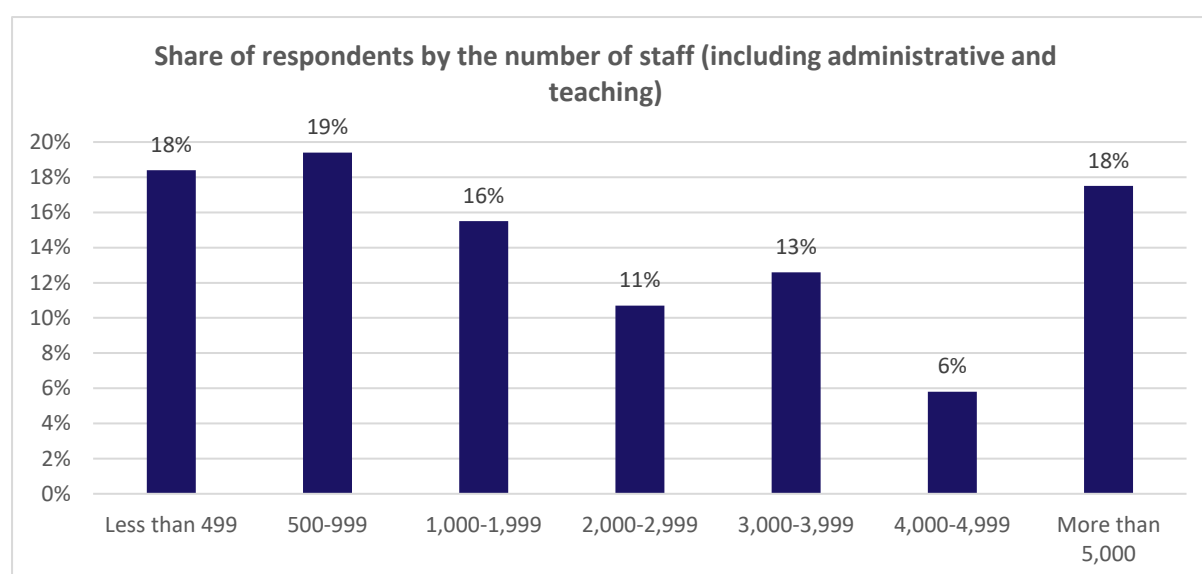
4. Figure. Share of respondents by the number of students studying at their HEI (EGAP 2024, n=103, %)

Share of respondents by the number of students studying at their HEI
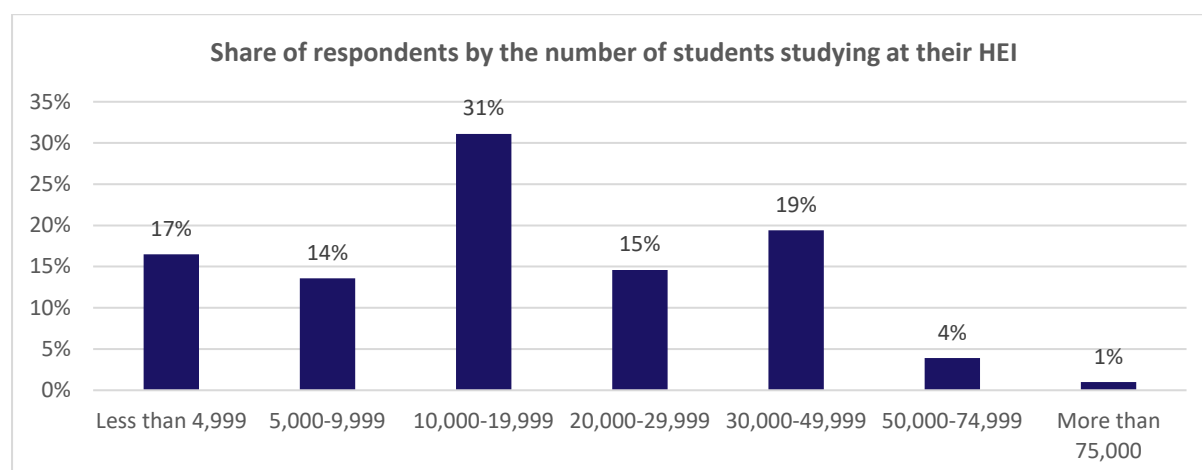
5. Figure. Share of respondents by the number of staff (including administrative and teaching) (EGAP 2024, n=103, %)

Share of respondents by the number of staff (including administrative and teaching)

The number of Erasmus+ bilateral and multilateral agreements does not provide an accurate indication of the level or extent of internationalization at a HEI. However, it may serve as a useful indicator of HEIs' activity in the field of international cooperation and partnership. As the content of this agreement was not the primary focus of this survey, the report does not attempt to ascertain the extent of internationalization based on this number.

The data show that nearly half of the respondents indicated that their respective universities had fewer than 300 bi- and multilateral agreements, while 41% have 300-1,000 agreements. Additionally, 10% of respondents reported that their universities had signed at least 1,000 agreements. 88 % of respondents reported less than a thousand agreements their universities had in July 2024.

6. Figure. Share of respondents by bilateral and multilateral agreements in place at their HEIs

Share of respondents by the number of bi- and multilateral agreements in place at their HEIs
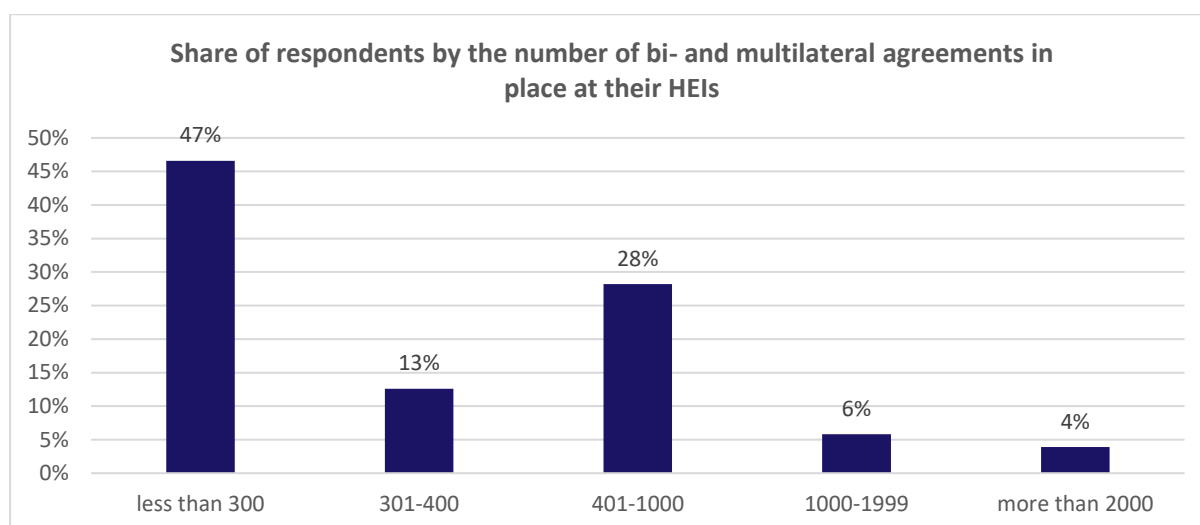
International and national policies

As the systematic literature review demonstrates, global trends, including international and national policies, as well as global and regional crises, exert a significant influence on student mobility participation. This section tries to illustrate how universities, as organizational entities, respond to these trends and may undergo changes as a consequence of these policies in a number of ways.

The **diversification of mobility formats and types** has been identified by 73% of respondents as a prevalent trend that has influenced institutional mobility strategies over the last five years. Nearly half of them also considered **global or regional crises to be a trend** that has had an impact on mobility strategies. However, **changes to the student body**, such as diversification and an increasing number of international students, have been found to have a marginal impact on these strategies. It is notable that only 17% of respondents identified national policymaking and legislation as a decisive influencing factor, whereas 40% indicated that **European-level policymaking** is of greater importance in terms of adopting student mobility strategies.

A detailed examination of the responses to the multiple-choice question reveals that the most frequently identified combined trends by a respondent are the **diversification of mobility patterns, policymaking and legislation at the European level, as well as global and regional crises**.

2. Table. Over the last 5 years, what do you think have been the main trends and factors influencing institutional mobility strategies?

	Responses	Percent of responses	Percent of Cases
National policymaking and legislation	17	6,4%	16,5%
Diversification of the student population	36	13,6%	35,0%
European-level policymaking and legislation	44	16,7%	42,7%
Growing number of international students	44	16,7%	42,7%
Global or regional crises (COVID-19 pandemic, economic crisis, political or military crisis)	48	18,2%	46,6%

Diversification of mobility formats and types (including virtual exchanges)	75	28,4%	72,8%

Institutional factors as supporting or hindering organizational elements

Examining the institutional factors, the first question addressed the extent to which the various elements/factors displayed in Table 3 describe the respective higher education institutions (HEIs) of respondents. The data indicates that the most common element is that the university provides easy access to information regarding ISM opportunities. Furthermore, in the majority of HEIs, ISM is available to students across all academic disciplines and degree levels. Additionally, it is crucial for universities to establish a comprehensive network of inter-institutional agreements pertaining to student mobility.

The less adopted elements pertain to the university's high ranking in international university rankings and the lesser integration of ISM into academic programmes. The respondents indicated that the selection process is not competitive at the university. With regard to funding mechanisms, universities do not possess more resources than are necessary based on the mobility intentions of students.

3. Table. To what extent do the following institutional factors describe your own higher education institution? (1: not at all …5: completely)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
The university provides easy access to information about ISM opportunities.	98	4,43	,703	,071
ISM is available to students at every field of study at the university.	100	4,33	,853	,085
The university has a wide range of inter-institutional agreements and a live network with those institutions providing a solid foundation for ISM.	101	4,29	,817	,081
The university supports the application process to ISM by providing proper preparation on practical, administrative, and organisational matters (e.g., application procedure, funding).	99	4,27	,767	,077
ISM is available to students at every study level at the university.	100	4,03	1,159	,116
The university takes steps to ensure that all students, regardless of socio-economic background, lived experiences and individual access needs, can participate in ISM.	100	4,03	1,068	,107
The university employs easily understandable, straightforward administrative procedures related to ISM.	98	3,90	,831	,084
The university promotes ISM during the entire study programme, putting special emphasis on promoting it at an early stage.	98	3,89	1,044	,105
The university promotes ISM through both academic and administrative staff.	100	3,85	,957	,096

The university is widely acknowledged and/or prestigious in our home country.	101	3,81	1,084	,108
The credit recognition procedures in place ensure seamless participation in ISM programs, without the risk of prolonging studies or dropping out.	100	3,75	1,201	,120
The selection into the mobility programme is predominantly merit-based at the university.	101	3,62	1,121	,112
The university has a broad mobility portfolio, including various mobility opportunities in terms of length (from a couple of days to a semester) and modalities (physical and blended mobilities) as well.	101	3,59	1,176	,117
The university has a long history.	100	3,57	1,273	,127
The university has a clear institutional strategy on outgoing ISM.	102	3,54	1,069	,106
The university has a diverse student body in terms of national and cultural representation.	101	3,51	1,188	,118
The university supports adequate administrative preparation before embarking on ISM by providing practical and organisational support (e.g., accommodation, travel).	99	3,47	1,146	,115
The university has a diverse student body in terms of socio-economic composition.	102	3,44	1,040	,103
The university aims for a balanced ISM participation between different study fields.	100	3,43	1,208	,121
The university has an internationally oriented academic environment which attributes a high value to ISM.	102	3,37	1,134	,112
The university provides detailed academic preparation (e.g., intercultural preparation, study-related academic guidance) before embarking on ISM.	100	3,37	1,098	,110
The university has a high position in international university rankings.	101	2,98	1,319	,131
ISM is integrated into the educational programs (e.g., mobility window).	101	2,96	1,224	,122
The selection for the mobility programme is highly competitive at the university.	101	2,94	1,199	,119
The university has more resources to fund ISM than necessary based on the mobility intentions of the students.	99	2,54	1,327	,133
At the university, more students want to participate in ISM than the funding allows.	100	2,46	1,438	,144

Regarding these institutional factors/elements, the second question also addressed the extent to which these support or hinder widening student participation in international student mobility. As a **supporting factor**, respondents evaluated the existence of **a wide range of inter-institutional agreements** as the most significant factor contributing to the expansion of participation in ISM. In

addition, respondents identified **the provision of accessible information and support systems for the application process to ISM** as a crucial aspect at the university level. They also emphasised the importance of ensuring **the availability of ISM to students in every study field,** with a view to enhancing the participation of students in mobility programmes. Furthermore, they highlighted the necessity of promoting ISM **throughout the entire study programme, with a particular focus on the initial stages of students' studies**. **Taking steps to ensure the participation of all students in ISM** should be a fundamental requirement at the university level for the promotion of mobility as well.

The respondents identified two main aspects as potential **hindering factors** of widening participation at the university level. The first factor is the **diverse student body in terms of socio-economic composition**, which could present a barrier to participation. The second is **the funding system**, which could also act as a barrier to widening participation, either due to a lack of funds or an excess of funds, which could hinder the participation of students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

According to the data, the **selection method** to participate in mobility could also act as a barrier. A highly competitive and merit-based system can hinder the widening of student participation in international student mobility.

4. Table To what extent do the following institutional factors support or hinder the widening of student participation in international student mobility (ISM)? (1: strongly hindering…3: does not affect…5: strongly supportive)
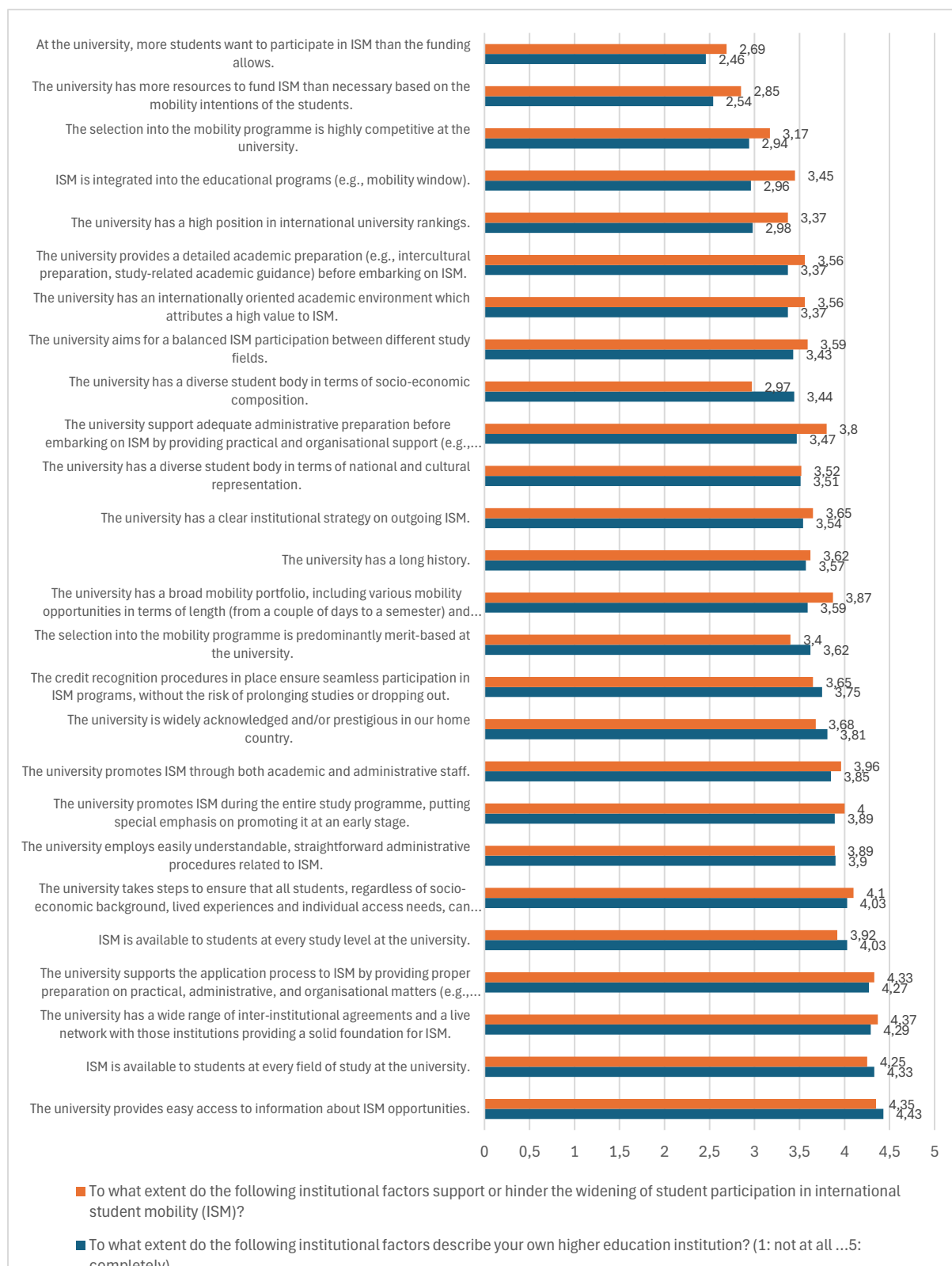
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
The university has a wide range of inter-institutional agreements and a live network with those institutions providing a solid foundation for ISM.	101	4,37	,869	,086
The university provides easy access to information about ISM opportunities.	97	4,35	,817	,083
The university supports the application process to ISM by providing proper preparation on practical, administrative, and organisational matters (e.g., application procedure, funding).	96	4,33	,777	,079
ISM is available to students at every field of study at the university.	102	4,25	,917	,091
The university takes steps to ensure that all students, regardless of socio-economic background, lived experiences and individual access needs, can participate in ISM.	100	4,10	1,068	,107
The university promotes ISM during the entire study programme, putting special emphasis on promoting it at an early stage.	99	4,00	1,030	,104
The university promotes ISM through both academic and administrative staff.	99	3,96	1,059	,106
ISM is available to students at every study level at the university.	101	3,92	1,055	,105
The university employs easily understandable, straightforward administrative procedures related to ISM.	97	3,89	1,135	,115
The university has a broad mobility portfolio, including various mobility opportunities in terms of length (from a couple of days to a semester) and modalities (physical and blended mobilities) as well.	101	3,87	1,137	,113
The university supports adequate administrative preparation before embarking on ISM by providing practical and organisational support (e.g., accommodation, travel).	98	3,80	1,103	,111
The university is widely acknowledged and/or prestigious in our home country.	101	3,68	1,113	,111
The university has a clear institutional strategy on outgoing ISM.	100	3,65	1,218	,122

The credit recognition procedures in place ensure seamless participation in ISM programs, without the risk of prolonging studies or dropping out.	101	3,65	1,337	,133
The university has a long history.	101	3,62	,915	,091
The university aims for a balanced ISM participation between different study fields.	99	3,59	1,020	,103
The university has an internationally oriented academic environment which attributes a high value to ISM.	100	3,56	1,242	,124
The university provides detailed academic preparation (e.g., intercultural preparation, study-related academic guidance) before embarking on ISM.	98	3,56	1,075	,109
The university has a diverse student body in terms of national and cultural representation.	99	3,52	,983	,099
ISM is integrated into the educational programs (e.g., mobility window).	98	3,45	1,363	,138
The selection into the mobility programme is predominantly merit-based at the university.	98	3,40	1,033	,104
The university has a high position in international university rankings.	101	3,37	1,138	,113
The selection for the mobility programme is highly competitive at the university.	100	3,17	1,045	,104
The university has a diverse student body in terms of socio-economic composition.	99	2,97	,974	,098
The university has more resources to fund ISM than necessary based on the mobility intentions of the students.	98	2,85	1,380	,139
At the university, more students want to participate in ISM than the funding allows.	97	2,69	1,185	,120

7. Figure. Means according to various institutional factors included in the following questions: *To what extent do the following institutional factors support or hinder the widening of student participation in international student mobility (ISM)? an*d To what extent do the following institutional factors describe your own higher education institution? (5-point Likert-scale)

Factor	Support/hinder widening (ISM)	Describe own HEI
At the university, more students want to participate in ISM than the funding allows.	2,69	2,46
The university has more resources to fund ISM than necessary based on the mobility intentions of the students.	2,85	2,54
The selection into the mobility programme is highly competitive at the university.	3,17	2,94
ISM is integrated into the educational programs (e.g., mobility window).	3,45	2,96
The university has a high position in international university rankings.	3,37	2,98
The university provides a detailed academic preparation (e.g., intercultural preparation, study-related academic guidance) before embarking on ISM.	3,56	3,37
The university has an internationally oriented academic environment which attributes a high value to ISM.	3,56	3,37
The university aims for a balanced ISM participation between different study fields.	3,59	3,43
The university has a diverse student body in terms of socio-economic composition.	2,97	3,44
The university support adequate administrative preparation before embarking on ISM by providing practical and organisational support (e.g.,…	3,8	3,47
The university has a diverse student body in terms of national and cultural representation.	3,52	3,51
The university has a clear institutional strategy on outgoing ISM.	3,65	3,54
The university has a long history.	3,62	3,57
The university has a broad mobility portfolio, including various mobility opportunities in terms of length (from a couple of days to a semester) and…	3,87	3,59
The selection into the mobility programme is predominantly merit-based at the university.	3,4	3,62
The credit recognition procedures in place ensure seamless participation in ISM programs, without the risk of prolonging studies or dropping out.	3,65	3,75
The university is widely acknowledged and/or prestigious in our home country.	3,68	3,81
The university promotes ISM through both academic and administrative staff.	3,96	3,85
The university promotes ISM during the entire study programme, putting special emphasis on promoting it at an early stage.	4	3,89
The university employs easily understandable, straightforward administrative procedures related to ISM.	3,89	3,9
The university takes steps to ensure that all students, regardless of socio-economic background, lived experiences and individual access needs, can…	4,1	4,03
ISM is available to students at every study level at the university.	3,92	4,03
The university supports the application process to ISM by providing proper preparation on practical, administrative, and organisational matters (e.g.,…	4,33	4,27
The university has a wide range of inter-institutional agreements and a live network with those institutions providing a solid foundation for ISM.	4,37	4,29
ISM is available to students at every field of study at the university.	4,25	4,33
The university provides easy access to information about ISM opportunities.	4,35	4,43

■ To what extent do the following institutional factors support or hinder the widening of student participation in international student mobility (ISM)?

■ To what extent do the following institutional factors describe your own higher education institution? (1: not at all …5: completely)

Applying a factor analysis, 25 institutional factors were reduced to nine main factors. As *5. Table* presents, these nine factors are well described, and helps to deeper understand the possible institutional factors that hinder or support mobility participation. This data reduction method also helps us to identify possible pillars for the inclusivity toolkit.

5. Table. To what extent do the following institutional factors describe your own higher education institution? Factor analysis of institutional factors (KMO: 0.674; significance-level < 0.05, Total Variance Explained: 69.96%)

Items in the Scale	Factors
The university employs easily understandable, straightforward administrative procedures related to ISM.	**Transparent and tailor-made practices, procedures related to participation in student mobility**
The university provides easy access to information about ISM opportunities.	
ISM is available to students at every field of study at the university.	
The university supports the application process to ISM by providing proper preparation on practical, administrative, and organisational matters (e.g., application procedure, funding).	
ISM is available to students at every study level at the university.	
The university provides detailed academic preparation (e.g., intercultural preparation, study-related academic guidance) before embarking on ISM.	**Comprehensive academic and administrative preparation**
The university supports adequate administrative preparation before embarking on ISM by providing practical and organisational support (e.g., accommodation, travel).	
The university promotes ISM during the entire study programme, putting special emphasis on promoting it at an early stage.	
The university has a broad mobility portfolio, including various mobility opportunities in terms of length (from a couple of days to a semester) and modalities (physical and blended mobilities) as well.	
The university aims for a balanced ISM participation between different study fields.	**Clear and transparent strategic approach related to ISM**
The university has a clear institutional strategy on outgoing ISM.	
The university has an internationally oriented academic environment which attributes a high value to ISM.	
ISM is integrated into the educational programs (e.g., mobility window).	
The university is widely acknowledged and/or prestigious in our home country.	**Reputation and visibility of HEI**
The university has a high position in international university rankings.	
The university has a long history.	
The university has a diverse student body in terms of socio-economic composition.	**Diverse student body**
The university has a diverse student body in terms of national and cultural representation.	
The university has a wide range of inter-institutional agreements and a live network with those institutions providing a solid foundation for ISM.	**Wide access, choices and availability of student mobility programs/Strong ISM partnerships, promotion, and inclusivity.**
The university promotes ISM through both academic and administrative staff.	
The university takes steps to ensure that all students, regardless of socio-economic background, lived experiences and individual access needs, can participate in ISM.	
The selection into the mobility programme is predominantly merit-based at the university.	**Transparent selection process (competitive)**
The selection for the mobility programme is highly competitive at the university.	
At the university, more students want to participate in ISM than the funding allows.	**Access to funding schemes**
The university has more resources to fund ISM than necessary based on the mobility intentions of the students.	

Items in the Scale	Factors
The credit recognition procedures in place ensure seamless participation in ISM programs, without the risk of prolonging studies or dropping out.	**Credit recognition procedure**

6. Table. To what extent do the following institutional factors support or hinder the widening of student participation in international student mobility (ISM)? Factor analysis (KMO: 0.687; significance-level < 0.05, Total Variance Explained: 71.64%)

Items in the Scale	Factors
The university is widely acknowledged and/or prestigious in our home country.	**Reputation and visibility of HEI**
The university has a high position in international university rankings.	
The university has a long history.	
The university promotes ISM through both academic and administrative staff.	**Strategic approach to student mobility**
The university has a clear institutional strategy on outgoing ISM.	
The university has an internationally oriented academic environment which attributes a high value to ISM.	
The university has a broad mobility portfolio, including various mobility opportunities in terms of length (from a couple of days to a semester) and modalities (physical and blended mobilities) as well.	
The university supports the application process to ISM by providing proper preparation on practical, administrative, and organisational matters (e.g., application procedure, funding).	**Transparent administrative processes**
The university employs easily understandable, straightforward administrative procedures related to ISM.	
The university provides easy access to information about ISM opportunities.	
The selection into the mobility programme is highly competitive at the university.	**Comprehensive, transparent selection processes**
The selection into the mobility programme is predominantly merit-based at the university.	
The university aims for a balanced ISM participation between different study fields.	
ISM is available to students at every field of study at the university.	
The university promotes ISM during the entire study programme, putting special emphasis on promoting it at an early stage.	**Inclusivity of student mobility**
The university takes steps to ensure that all students, regardless of socio-economic background, lived experiences and individual access needs, can participate in ISM.	
ISM is available to students at every study level at the university.	
The university has a wide range of inter-institutional agreements and a live network with those institutions providing a solid foundation for ISM.	
The university provides detailed academic preparation (e.g., intercultural preparation, study-related academic guidance) before embarking on ISM.	**Adequate academic and administrative preparation**
The university supports adequate administrative preparation before embarking on ISM by providing practical and organisational support (e.g., accommodation, travel).	
At the university, more students want to participate in ISM than the funding allows.	**Access to funding schemes**

The university has more resources to fund ISM than necessary based on the mobility intentions of the students.	
ISM is integrated into the educational programs (e.g., mobility window).	**Recognition of mobility**
The credit recognition procedures in place ensure seamless participation in ISM programs, without the risk of prolonging studies or dropping out.	
The university has a diverse student body in terms of socio-economic composition.	**Diverse student body**
The university has a diverse student body in terms of national and cultural representation.	

Barriers of mobility participation at student-level

As the scoping review conducted in the earlier phase of the research project demonstrates, the topic of individual (student)-level factors influencing participation in ISM has been extensively researched and well-described in the scientific literature. Since most pieces of research explored the views of students, in relation to this topic, this survey investigates how university staff members approach it and the factors they identify as barriers to mobility participation.

The results show similarities to the studies included in the scoping review. The data indicated that **financial considerations, cost-related factors** including a lack of sufficient funding and concerns about losing current employment, was the most commonly reported factor discouraging students from participating in mobility programs according to staff members. This factor is not entirely independent of socio-economic factors, which is also a widely discussed topic. The **role of social networks**, such as separation from family and partner, is also important in planning and decision making. Psychological barriers, such as a **lack of motivation or self-confidence**, were also identified by about half of the respondents as potential impediments to participation. However, other demographic factors, including age, gender, and residential background, were less frequently selected by respondents as influencing factors.

7. Table. Which of the following student-level factors do you think discourage students from participating in mobility at your institution? (N=103, %, multiple-choice question)

	Responses	Percent of responses	Percent of Cases
Financial factors (e.g. lack of sufficient funds, fear of losing their paid job)	84	13,8%	82,4%
Separation from family, partner	67	11,0%	65,7%
Lack of personal motivation	66	10,8%	64,7%
Foreign language skills (e.g. insufficient language skills)	54	8,9%	52,9%
Lack or low-level of self-confidence	50	8,2%	49,0%
Separation from friends	49	8,0%	48,0%
Disability	46	7,5%	45,1%
Lack of prior/previous mobility experience	40	6,6%	39,2%
Lack of awareness about mobility opportunities	35	5,7%	34,3%
Lack of professional motivation	31	5,1%	30,4%
Rural residential background of students	25	4,1%	24,5%
Low self-esteem	22	3,6%	21,6%
Lack of sufficient intercultural competence	22	3,6%	21,6%
Age	18	3,0%	17,6%
Gender	1	,2%	1,0%
Total	610	100,0%	

Data management practices to explore mobility gap

Universities' data management practices have not yet been explored as a central topic in this research project. However, in line with the objectives of the Erasmus GAP project, it is crucial to identify the ways in which universities use data and evidence to explore the mobility gap. This issue was addressed in the final section of the survey.

One of the aspects of data management is whether university staff members consider various sources of information for forming their opinion related to student mobility. As the results indicate, with regard to student-level factors, respondents' opinions are primarily informed by personal experience or that of their colleagues, with less reliance on data from surveys or other forms of data collection. Of the respondents, 81% reported that their opinions were shaped by personal experience, while 29% indicated that they draw upon regular data collections.

8. Figure. What kind of information do you have to support your opinion? (n=101, %)
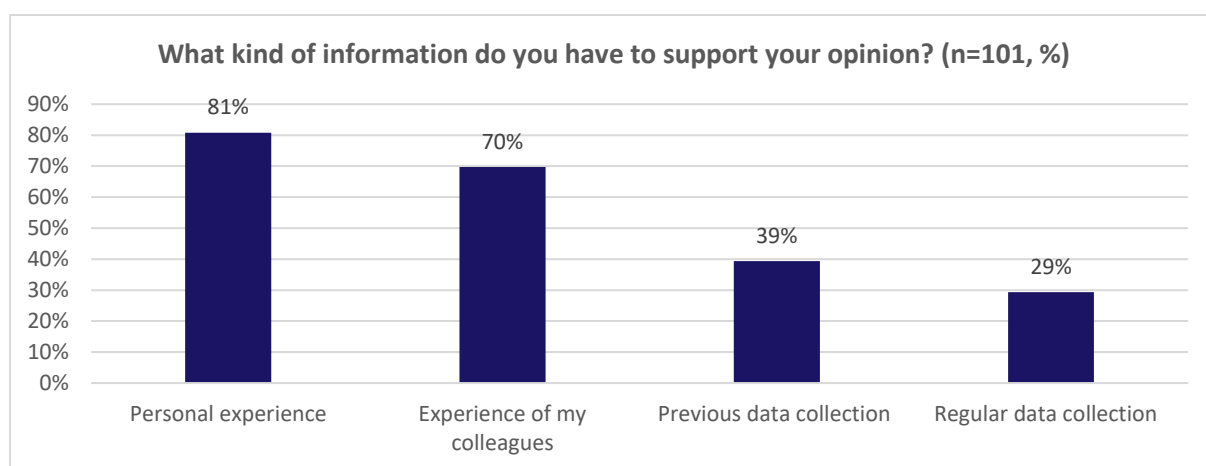
However, the data presented in Figure 9 indicate that more than half of the respondents reported that their HEIs regularly conduct surveys on student mobility, which somewhat alters the interpretation of results regarding information sources. This could mean that these regular surveys do not explore the issue of student-level factors, or that university staff are not able to apply and use these surveys in an efficient way in their daily practice.

9. Figure. Does your institution carry out regular student surveys related to mobility? (n=101, %)

Does your institution carry out regular student surveys related to mobility? (n=101, %)

- Other
- No
- Yes

6%
40%
54%
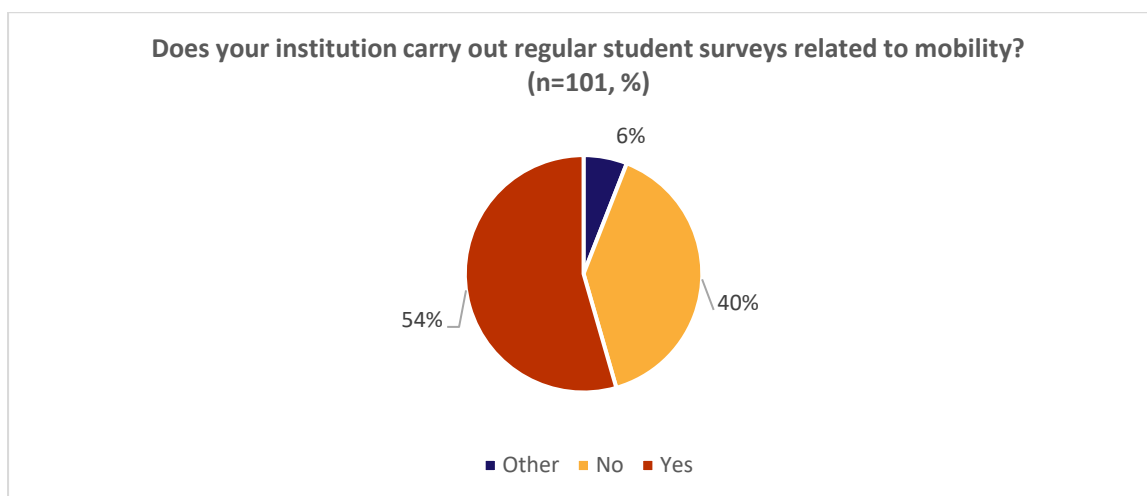
The next topic explored what student-related topics universities consider as relevant and if they collect data related to the pertinent factor. The results show that credit recognition, foreign language skills and prior mobility experiences are the three factors on which most universities collected data, whereas students' socio-economic background and their social network are less frequently assessed.

10. Figure. For which of the following student-related factors/characteristics relevant to student mobility does your institution collect data? (n=101, %)

For which of the following student-related factors/characteristics relevant to student mobility does your institution collect data? (n=101, %)

- We collect data on
- We do not collect data on, but it would be useful to have
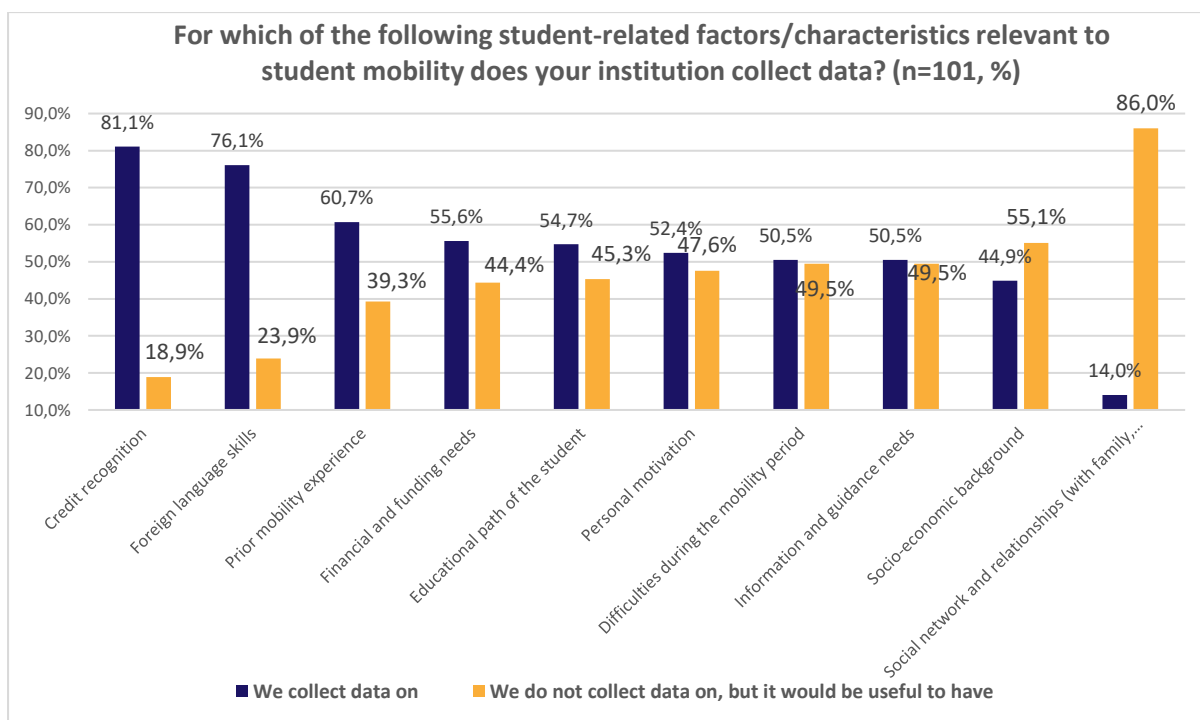
In recent decades, there has been a notable increase in the number of international and national surveys, statistical databases, and other related resources on student mobility. These have become a valuable source of information for those engaged in the design of policies in this field. However, despite this proliferation of data, it is concerning that 50% of respondents indicated that their

universities monitor these data collections, while 37% claimed that they do not follow these surveys. Among those who indicated that they monitor these tools, the following were mentioned:

- ESN Survey;
- Bologna process implementation report;
- EUF report;
- EU Survey;
- Eurostat;
- Reports and statistical databases by national agencies (DAAD, Campus France, SIS).

11. Figure. Does your institution monitor the results of international and national surveys, statistical databases related to mobility? (n=101, %)
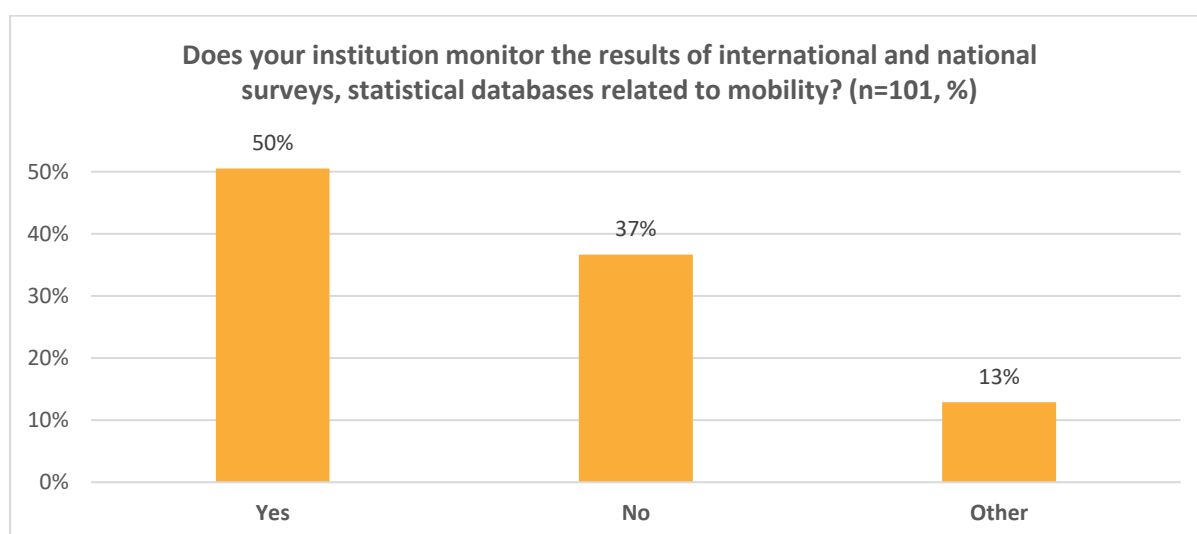
In response to **the open question** of which data and evidence would be useful in developing more targeted practices to address the disparity between mobile and non-mobile students, **the respondents provided valuable insights into their recommendations**.

According to the respondents, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing student mobility and to develop effective strategies to overcome them, it is vital to gather comprehensive data through a range of methods. A **targeted survey of non-mobile students** could yield insights into the obstacles they face, including financial barriers, foreign language proficiency, lack of self-confidence, academic performance, and socio-economic and socio-cultural issues. Furthermore, it would be advantageous to gather **qualitative data through focus groups** in order to gain insight into the perspectives of non-mobile students, who are often underrepresented in existing datasets. It is essential to conduct **regular surveys and gather feedback from both mobile and non-mobile students**. Furthermore, **detailed information on students' disabilities, family backgrounds, financial needs, and previous international experiences is crucial**.

Among the recommendations, the respondents mentioned that the **harmonisation of curricula and the coordination of processes among academic partners** can facilitate more effective support for inbound and outbound students. Furthermore, the **dissemination of best practices and the acquisition of funding** for the provision of enhanced services and the implementation of follow-up coordination are also essential steps.

It could be also useful to understand in-depth **the underlying factors that deter students from engaging in mobility programs**. This necessitates the addressing of institutional barriers, the **motivation of students**, and the perceived realities of socio-economic issues and living costs during the undertaking of study mobility. It is imperative to prioritize the removal of **financial obstacles**, the **allocation of additional funding sources**, and the provision of sufficient personnel to facilitate the effective management of mobility programs. Furthermore, the promotion of short-term mobility and the involvement of student organizations may facilitate an increase in participation.

According to the respondents, it is essential to conduct a comprehensive study on the impact of the Covid-19 **on student mental health and mobility** trends in order to inform institutional policies aimed at reducing the mobility gap. Additionally, the **organization of departmental meetings with former mobile students** and the utilization of their positive experiences may serve as a motivational tool for potential participants. An understanding of **subject-specific mobility cultures and the relevance of funding**, particularly for those in their first academic role, will further support efforts to enhance student mobility.

Differences and similarities between universities with and without specific goals to mitigate the mobility gap

In the sample, **40% of respondents claimed that their universities set specific goals** related to closing or mitigating the gap between mobile and non-mobile students, while **36% reported not having any specific aims**. Notably, nearly a quarter of the respondents were unaware of the existence of these policies.

12. Figure. Does your university/college/school have any specific goals related to closing or mitigating the gap between mobile and non-mobile students?
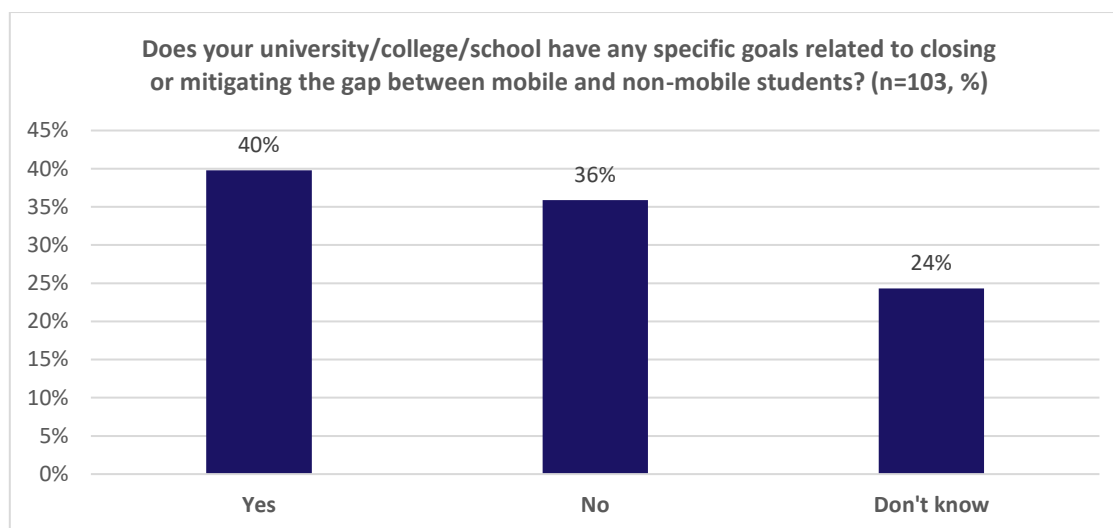
The survey respondents were invited to identify which factors they considered to be important for their HEI in the design of mobility policies and strategies. The results indicated that **the most commonly selected factors** were **credit recognition and students' funding needs**. Additionally, the students' proficiency in foreign languages, their educational path and their information and guidance requirements were identified as potential influencing factors in the design of mobility strategies. However, the **students' social networks and prior mobility experience** were **less frequently considered** in the context of institutional mobility strategies.

8. Table. When designing mobility policies and strategies, which of the following factors, topics relevant to student mobility does your institution consider?

	Responses	Percent	Percent of Cases
Credit recognition	79	16,7%	77,5%
Financial and funding needs	76	16,1%	74,5%
Students' foreign language skills	67	14,2%	65,7%
Students' educational path	59	12,5%	57,8%
Information and guidance needs	55	11,6%	53,9%
Students' personal motivation	40	8,5%	39,2%
Students' socio-economic background	39	8,2%	38,2%
Difficulties during the mobility period	33	7,0%	32,4%
Students' prior mobility experience	16	3,4%	15,7%
Students' social network and relationships (with family, partner, friends)	9	1,9%	8,8%

In terms of strategy development, an important issue is the way in which **higher education institutions segment their target groups when communicating about mobility opportunities**. 65% of respondents said that their institutions did not segment students, while 31% said that their institutions defined target groups. Looking at the responses to the open question about these target groups, we can describe these different targeted student groups. Firstly, it is common practice to define target groups **by level, study field, study programs (with mobility window) and mode of study.** Looking at socio-economic background, some respondents indicated that **their HEIs define first-generation students** as a target group. In terms of inclusion, students with any kind of disability were the most frequently mentioned segmented target group. Considering the examples mentioned by the respondents, it is not a widespread practice to segment the target groups by the student-level factors that are significant in mobility participation.

13. Figure. Does your institution segment student target groups when communicating about mobility opportunities? (n=102, %)
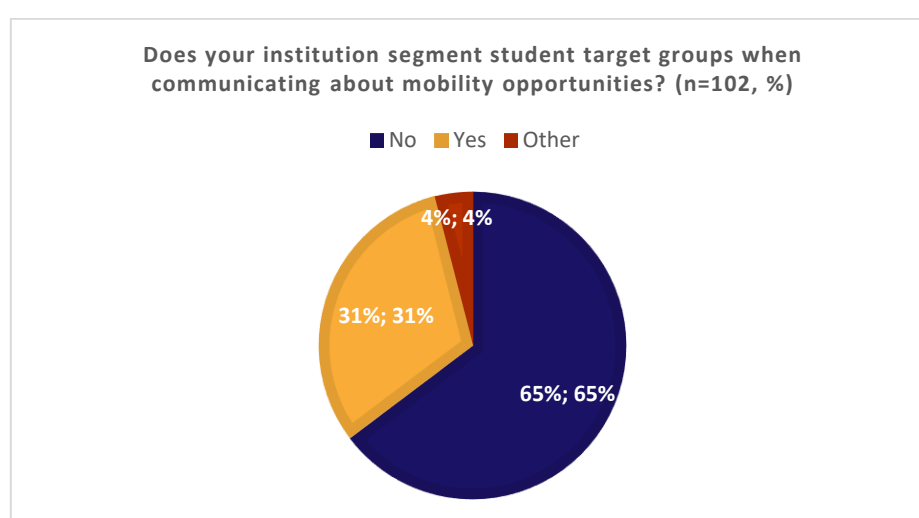
A comparative analysis of universities with specific goals and those without reveals notable differences in their responses to global and regional crises. As *9. Table* shows, respondents from universities without specific goals reported a lower level of impact from such crises on their practices, while they attributed a significant role to national policymaking and legislation.

9. Table. Over the last 5 years, what do you think have been the main trends and factors influencing institutional mobility strategies? – Share of respondents by university with and without specific goals

	No specific goals	University has specific goals
Global or regional crises (COVID-19 pandemic, economic crisis, political or military crisis)	39,5%	60,5%
Diversification of mobility formats and types	46,4%	53,6%
European-level policymaking and legislation	47,2%	52,8%
Growing number of international students	50,0%	50,0%
Diversification of the student population	51,7%	48,3%
National policymaking and legislation	71,4%	28,6%

Regarding the variables/factors displayed in*10. Table*, universities with specific goals related to mitigating the gap between mobile and non-mobile students reported significantly higher mean

scores. The difference is **most visible** in areas related to **balanced ISM participation across study fields and ensuring inclusivity in ISM participation.** Furthermore, the smaller standard deviations among **universities with specific goals** (especially in the latter two variables) suggest **more consistency in their responses**.

As might be expected, **universities with clearly defined goals reported that they had a well-developed institutional strategy on outgoing mobility and took steps to ensure mobility participation for all students regardless of their background**. It seems reasonable to suggest that universities with a solid strategic approach can apply this thinking to a greater number of areas within the university.

Universities with specific goals related to closing the gap between mobile and non-mobile students **report a statistically higher mean score in having a diverse student body**. The difference in means suggests that higher education institutions with specific goals perceive their student body as more socio-economically diverse which leads to a more strategic approach to outbound mobility and mitigating the mobility gap.

Data suggests that setting specific goals in this area is associated **with a more proactive and inclusive approach to student mobility and diversity**, leading to potentially better outcomes in achieving a balanced and equitable educational environment.

10. Table. Means of some institutional factors by universities with and without specific goals (Independent-samples T-test, p<0.05)

	Does your university/college/school have any specific goals related to closing or mitigating the gap between mobile and non-mobile students?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
The university has a diverse student body in terms of socio-economic composition.	No specific goals	36	3,08	1,052	,175
	University has specific goals	41	3,68	,986	,154
The university has a clear institutional strategy on outgoing ISM.	No specific goals	36	3,36	1,246	,208
	University has specific goals	41	3,76	,916	,143
The university aims for a balanced ISM participation between different study fields.	No specific goals	35	2,86	1,332	,225
	University has specific goals	40	3,95	,815	,129
The university takes steps to ensure that all students, regardless of socio-economic background, lived experiences and individual access needs, can participate in ISM.	No specific goals	36	3,69	1,348	,225
	University has specific goals	39	4,38	,711	,114

Differences and similarities between universities by their data management practices

The objective of this section is to examine the differences between universities with the explicit intention of reducing the mobility gap and those without such intentions with regard to their data management policies.

As Table 11. illustrates, according to the Chi-square test, there is **no significant correlation** between **having specific goals** related to mitigating the mobility gap and **segmenting student target groups** when communicating mobility opportunities. However, some notable differences emerge when we examine universities without specific goals related to the mobility gap. Among these universities, nearly three-quarters are less likely to segment their students when communicating mobility opportunities. Specifically, 77% of these universities reported not having targeted student groups,

while 23% indicated that they communicated mobility opportunities to targeted student groups. In contrast, universities with specific goals related to the mobility gap reported a less divided picture. Specifically, 56% indicated that they segmented student groups, whereas 44% reported not following this practice.

11. Table. Crosstabs on the adoption of specific goals related to mitigating the mobility gap and the segmentation of student groups (N=79)[1]

		Does your institution segment student target groups when communicating about mobility opportunities?		Total
		No	Yes	
Does your university/college/school have any specific goals related to closing or mitigating the gap between mobile and non-mobile students?	No	27 77%	8 23%	35
	Yes	22 56%	17 44%	39
Total		49	25	79

The results displayed in Table 12. show that there is **a significant relationship between having specific goals related to closing the mobility gap and conducting regular surveys**. Universities with specific goals are more likely to conduct regular surveys than those without such goals: 68% of these universities conduct regular student surveys related to mobility, while only 32% reported not collecting data regularly. The result could imply that these universities recognize the **importance of data-driven strategies in achieving their goals**, using surveys as a tool to monitor and assess student mobility.

12. Table Crosstabs on the adoption of specific goals related to mitigating the mobility gap and conducted regular surveys related to mobility (N=73)[2]

		Does your institution carry out regular student surveys related to mobility?		Total
Does your university/college/school have any specific goals related to closing or mitigating the gap between mobile and non-mobile students?		No	Yes	
	No	19 54%	16 46%	35
	Yes	12 32%	26 68%	38
Total		31	42	73

Although the results of the Chi-square test indicate that there is **no statistically significant relationship** between the **adoption of specific goals** aimed at mitigating the mobility gap and the **monitoring of the results of international and national surveys**, the table nevertheless reveals notable differences between the two university groups. The table indicates that **universities with specific goals** related to

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[1] A chi-square test of independence was performed to evaluate the relationship between **Does your university/college/school have any specific goals related to closing or mitigating the gap between mobile and non-mobile students?** [variable 1] and **Does your institution segment student target groups when communicating about mobility opportunities?** [variable 2]. The relationship between these variables was not significant, $\chi2 = 3.544$, df=1, N = 79, p = 0.06.

[2] A chi-square test of independence was performed to evaluate the relationship between **Does your university/college/school have any specific goals related to closing or mitigating the gap between mobile and non-mobile students?** [variable 1] and **Does your institution carry out regular student surveys related to mobility?** [variable 2]. The relationship between these variables was significant, $\chi2 = 3.845$, df=1, N = 79, p = 0.05.

closing or mitigating the gap between mobile and non-mobile students are **more likely to monitor** international and national surveys/statistical databases related to mobility. A total of 64% of universities with specific goals monitor the results of international and national surveys. In contrast, universities without specific goals do not **demonstrate a comprehensive monitoring practice.** Notably, 16 out of 36 universities (44%) without specific goals do not monitor relevant mobility data, indicating potential areas for improvement in aligning monitoring practices with goal setting.

13. Table. Crosstabs on the adoption of specific goals related to mitigating the mobility gap and the implementation of regular surveys on mobility (N=73)[3]

		Does your institution monitor the results of international and national surveys, statistical databases related to mobility?		Total
		No	Yes	
Does your university/college/school have any specific goals related to closing or mitigating the gap between mobile and non-mobile students?	No	16 44%	20 56%	36
	Yes	12 36%	21 64%	33
Total		28	41	69

A comparison of universities with and without specific goals reveals **notable differences in the data they collect**. It is notable that universities with the specific objective of mitigating the mobility gap are more likely to collect data on a number of factors, including **students' financial and funding needs, difficulties encountered during the mobility period, and students' personal motivation**. For example, 67% of universities with specific goals collect data on students' personal motivation, while 41% of universities without goals reported collecting data and 59% reported not collecting data but indicated that they believed it would be useful to do so.

While **there is no significant relationship in terms of collecting data on students' socio-economic status**, a distinctive pattern emerges between universities with and without specific goals. **Universities with specific goals** are more likely to collect data on this factor, with **55% collecting data** and 45% not collecting data but indicating that it would be useful. In contrast, **only 36% of universities without specific goals collect data on this factor**, while 65% do not collect data.

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[3] A chi-square test of independence was performed to evaluate the relationship between **Does your university/college/school have any specific goals related to closing or mitigating the gap between mobile and non-mobile students?** [variable 1] and **Does your institution monitor the results of international and national surveys, statistical databases related to mobility?** [variable 2]. The relationship between these variables was not significant, $\chi^2 = 0.466$, df=1, N = 69, p = 0.496.

Discussion

(a) What barriers and incentives at the institutional and student level can university staff members identify influencing participation in mobility programs?

- **Financial and funding-related factors:**

According to the respondents included in the sample, financial considerations, **cost-related factors** including a lack of sufficient funding and concerns about losing current employment are reported as **the most mitigating factors** discouraging students from participating in mobility programs. The results of EGAP 2024 survey reflect the studies included in the scoping literature review, the majority of which were conducted among students and graduates.

The topic of **financial factors plays a crucial role in shaping institutional strategies**. 75% of the respondents claimed that they consider students' financial needs when designing related institutional strategies. Both a lack or surplus of funds might present significant challenges for the universities, affecting their ability to implement programs and meet the needs of their students. This highlights the importance of understanding the financial needs of students to ensure that student mobility is accessible to all. Despite this, nearly half of the respondents indicated that they have only partially collected data on students' financial needs, while approximately **44% admitted that they have not conducted** any such research. The findings highlight the **need for a more proactive approach to understanding** the financial challenges faced by students in higher education.

To effectively **manage mobility programs and support student success**, **it is essential to remove financial barriers, secure additional funding sources**, and ensure that sufficient personnel are available for program management. Prioritizing these areas can help universities better serve their students and create a more equitable environment for participation in student mobility.

- **Widening access and availability of student mobility programs**:

The results highlight that the university's approach to student mobility is comprehensive and inclusive when an institution is committed to providing wide-ranging opportunities for all students. It is of utmost importance that student mobility is made accessible to students from all degree levels and academic disciplines. The practices, such as **a strong network of international partnerships**, **active promotion by academic and administrative staff, and active inclusive policies** suggest that the university is dedicated to mitigating the mobility gap.

- **Transparent and student-centered, tailor-made practices, procedures, student services**

ISM is available to students at every field of study at the university. This element highlights the inclusivity of student mobility, suggesting that **ISM is an important learning experience in all disciplines**. The availability of mobility opportunities across all fields of study indicates a **comprehensive commitment to internationalization**, ensuring that all students need to have the opportunity to engage in international experiences.

ISM is available to students at every study level at the university. This factor emphasizes the universal availability of student mobility opportunities across different academic levels, including undergraduate, graduate, and potentially doctoral students. It highlights the university's

comprehensive approach to student mobility, ensuring that students at any stage of their academic journey can benefit from international experiences.

The university employs easily understandable, straightforward administrative procedures related to ISM. University should prioritize transparency and clarity in its administrative processes for ISM. It indicates a student-centered approach where students can navigate ISM-related procedures throughout the whole process. This approach likely contributes to a more positive experience for all students and could encourage participation in the student mobility program.

The university provides easy access to information about ISM opportunities. By ensuring that information about ISM is openly accessible for all students, the university demonstrates its commitment to support all students to engage in international opportunities. It is crucial to ensure that students with an interest in mobility, as well as those who are underrepresented in mobility programs, have easy access to the information they require about ISM for their decision-making process. This could involve inclusive communication and outreach, comprehensive resources such as websites, brochures, and informational sessions, ensuring students are well-informed about their options.

The university supports the application process to ISM by providing proper preparation on practical, administrative, and organisational matters (e.g., application procedure, funding). The university's role in assisting with the application process is crucial. By offering preparation and guidance on practical aspects such as how to apply, funding options, and organizational details, the university can actively reduce barriers and help students to make decisions on participation. This guidance likely increases students' confidence and readiness to apply for student mobility program.

(b) What information and data are available and applied to formulate strategies and policies on exploring mobility gap and promoting mobility participation?

The Erasmus GAP project highlights the need to explore how universities manage and use data to address the mobility gap between students. The survey results reveal that university staff often base their opinions on student mobility **on personal experience rather than systematic data collection**. Although many universities conduct regular surveys on mobility, the **data might be underutilized, especially regarding student-level factors like socio-economic background and social networks**. This consequence draws attention to **the importance of connecting research and practice** in a more efficient way.

Universities do **collect efficient data on factors such as credit recognition, language skills, and prior mobility experiences**, but there is less focus on socio-economic factors. Despite the availability of numerous international and national data sources, only half of the respondents monitor these resources.

Respondents **emphasized the importance of gathering comprehensive data**, including qualitative insights from non-mobile students, to better understand and address the barriers to mobility. They also stressed the need for regular surveys, detailed information on students' backgrounds, and coordinated efforts among academic partners. Additionally, addressing financial barriers, promoting short-term mobility, and considering the impact of Covid-19 on student mental health were identified as crucial steps for closing the mobility gap.

The survey reveals the **importance of a strategic approach to student mobility and data management practices**. **Universities with specific goals** to reduce the mobility gap are **more proactive** in segmenting student groups when communicating mobility opportunities, conducting regular mobility-related surveys, and monitoring international and national mobility data. In contrast, **universities without such goals are less likely to adopt these practices**, indicating potential gaps in their data management and outreach strategies.

(c)   What differences can be explored between universities dealing with the mobility gap? What factors are significant in these differences?

The most revealing factor is **the strategic approach** related to student mobility. Universities that have developed a clear strategy to address the mobility gap are able to apply these approaches to a wide range of activities, practices and areas of management and administrative issues. In comparison, universities that have not set specific goals in this regard tend to display different patterns in many areas. The data indicates that universities which have established objectives to address the mobility gap perceive their student body as diverse, irrespective of socio-economic background. These institutions take measures to ensure that all students are able to engage in student mobility.

Universities with clearly defined objectives are **better positioned to respond to global or regional crises**, such as the Coronavirus pandemic. Such institutions frequently modify their mobility strategies in response to alterations in the external environment, whereas those lacking specific objectives may be less capable of adapting effectively.

Those universities that are actively engaged in efforts to reduce the mobility gap frequently report **higher levels of inclusivity in mobility participation**. Such institutions implement measures to ensure that mobility opportunities are available across different study fields and for all students, regardless of their socio-economic status.

Those universities with a robust strategic approach to mitigating the mobility gap are more likely to **apply data or evidence effectively in their decision-making processes**. When communicating mobility opportunities, it is crucial for these universities to segment student groups in order to effectively convey their key messages. Moreover, universities with specific goals are more likely to conduct regular surveys and monitor international and national surveys than those without such goals.

Recommendations for inclusivity self-assessment toolkit

The following pillars are recommended for inclusivity, self-assessment toolkit:

1. Information about the respondents
   a. Position
   b. Organizational unit/affiliation
2. Information about the university (benchmarking tool)
   a. The number of institutional agreements (categories)
   b. The number of study programs with mobility window
   c. The number of (all) students (categories)
   d. The number of outbound students in the last semester (categories)
3. International orientation (benchmarking tool)
   a. The disciplines with the highest number of mobile students (list of disciplines)
   b. Number of students participating in mobility (categories)
   c. Number of students participation in mobility with inclusion support (categories)
4. Strategic approach to mitigating the mobility gap: mobility strategies and procedures at institutional level
5. Widening access, choices and availability of student mobility programs
6. Transparent and student-centered, tailor-made practices, procedures related to participation in student mobility
7. Financial resources, funding, grants and applications
8. Knowledge management practices related to exploring the mobility gap

Horizontal elements:

- Inclusive approach: inclusive approach for all, taking consideration of mobile and non-mobile students when designing practices and procedures
- Student-centered approach: creating mobility opportunities that cater to the individual needs, interests, and circumstances of students, rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all program (student services, inclusivity, flexibility)
- Comprehensive approach: availability for all study programs and study levels
- Knowledge-based collaborative approach: Build and maintain partnerships with other universities, both locally and internationally, to share best practices and collaborate on initiatives that enhance inclusivity in mobility programs.

Recommended scales for self-assessment tool:

- Likert scale
- Descriptive scale
- Binary scale
- Rubric-Based Scale
- Numeric or percentage scale

List of Tables and Figures