Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

Enabling Erasmus+ for all: The impact of additional financial support

Results of the follow-up survey of Erasmus+ students on the impact of top-up amount for participants with fewer opportunities

EUROPEAN UNION

NA | DAAD
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Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
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1 Background to the survey

The aim of the survey was to examine the added value of additional financial support through the top-up amount and applications for real cost funding for students, and thus the effectiveness of measures to promote social participation in the Erasmus+ programme.

The survey provided a closer insight into the academic and personal backgrounds of students who received a top-up amount for participants with fewer opportunities, as well as into their mobility behaviour. Furthermore, the survey focused on the way these participants received information and support in connection with their stay abroad.

The survey was successfully conducted thanks to the support of uzbonn – Gesellschaft für empirische Sozialforschung und Evaluation. A total of 26,428 students with fewer opportunities from the 2023, 2024 and 2025 Erasmus calls were contacted by email and invited to take part in an anonymous survey. The students completed their stays abroad between June 2022 and September 2025. A total of 6,986 students took part in the survey, resulting in an excellent response rate of 26%.

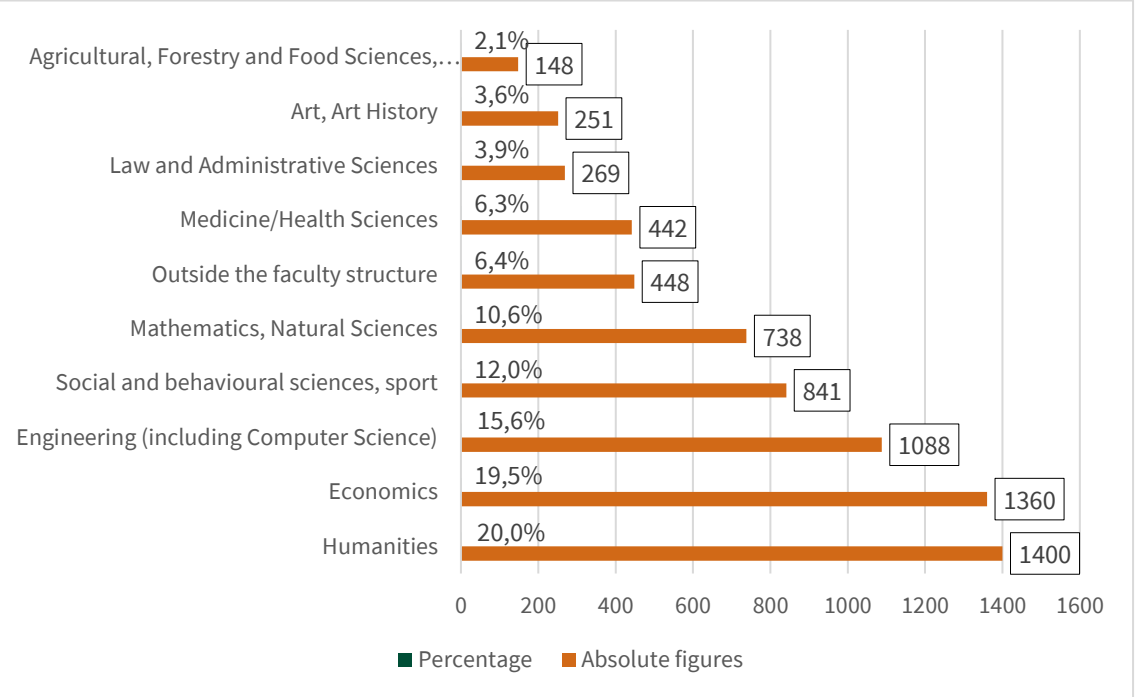
2 General details of the respondents

2.1 Gender identity and study cycle

Of the respondents, 4,428 were female (63.4%), 2,426 were male (34.7%) and 50 were non-binary (0.7%), which roughly reflects the overall participation in the Erasmus programme: In the completed 2023 call (June 2023 to July 2025), 60.6% identified as female, 38.7% as male and 0.6% as non-binary.

Of the total of 6,986 students who responded, 3,909 were in the first cycle (bachelor's), representing 55.9%. 2,990 students were in the second cycle (master's or equivalent degree); they accounted for 42.8%. 86 people were enrolled in a PhD programme, accounting for 1.2% of respondents.

2.2 Distribution by faculty

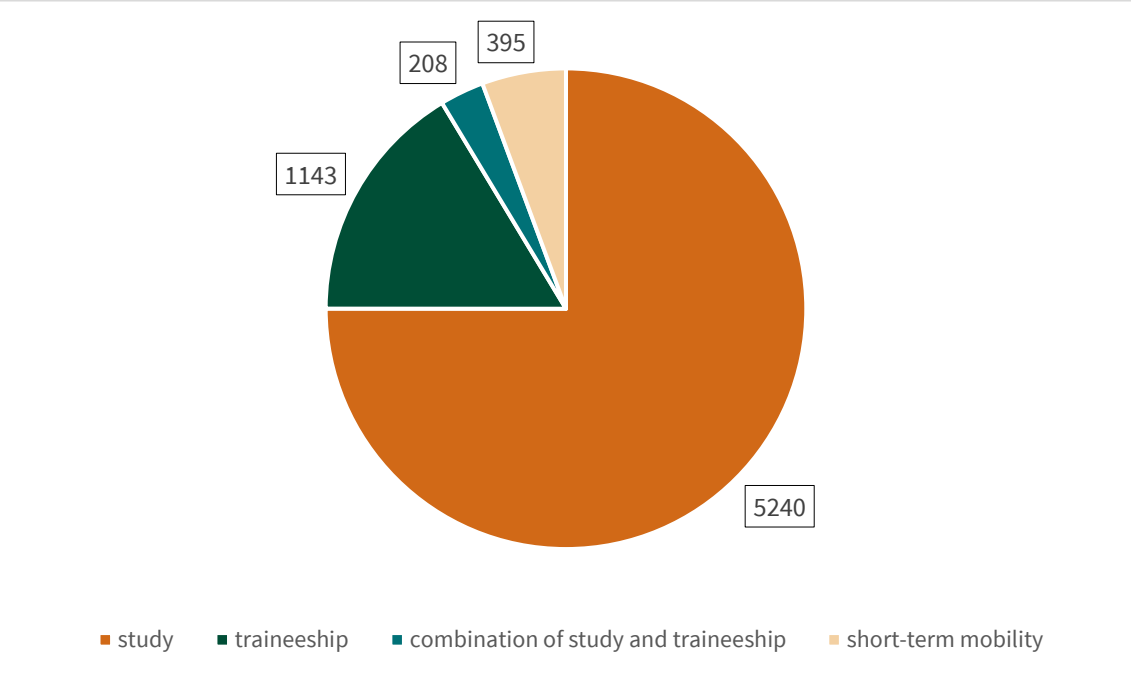


The distribution by faculty shows that students of the humanities, at 20.0% (1,400 people), represent the largest group among the respondents. This is followed by economics at 19.5% (1,360 people) and engineering, including computer science, at 15.6% (1,088 people).

The social and behavioural sciences and sports are also strongly represented, accounting for 12.0% (841 people), as are mathematics and the natural sciences, accounting for 10.6% (738 people). Moderate proportions are accounted for by students outside the subject area classification 6.4% (448 people) and by medicine and health sciences 6.3% (442 people).

Lower proportions are found in law and administrative sciences at 3.9% (269 people), art and art history at 3.6% (251 people), and agricultural, forestry and food sciences at 2.1% (148 people).

2.3 Type of stay abroad



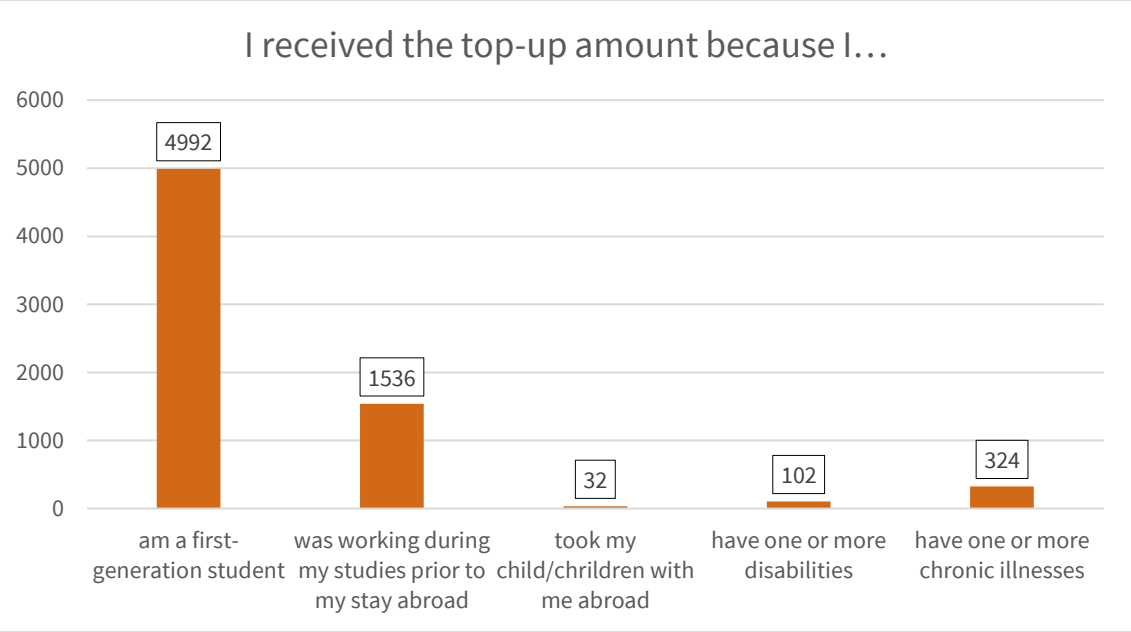
Most respondents stated that they had studied during their time abroad (75.0% or5,240 people), whilst 16.4% (1,143 people) undertook a traineeship abroad. A combination of studying abroad and a traineeship abroad was chosen by 3.0% of participants (208 people). In addition, 5.7% (395 people) undertook a short-term mobility, for example as part of a Blended Intensive Programme (BIP).

Looking at the 2023 call for applications regarding the mobility of individuals, the following distribution emerges: a total of 40,258 students from German higher education institutions went abroad for study purposes (long- and short-term), of whom 41.9% were awarded a top-up amount. Just under 5,300 of these undertook short-term mobility, the majority of which took place as part of BIPs. Among short-term mobility participants, around 39% received a top-up amount. Among long-term mobility participants, around 42% received a top-up amount. A total of 8,759 funded students undertook a traineeship abroad, of whom 43.9% received a top-up amount.

It is evident that studying abroad is the most important form of mobility. However, traineeships and flexible short-term formats are also gaining in importance. Targeted financial support reaches many of the participants – particularly in the case of traineeships – which contributes to equal opportunities and facilitates access to mobility abroad.

3 Target group distribution and Intersectionality

3.1 Reason for receiving the top-up amount



4,992 (71.5%) of respondents received the top-up amount because they are first-generation students, and 1,536 (22%) because they were in employment prior to their stay abroad. 324 (4.6%) people because they have one or more chronic illnesses, 103 (1.5%) people due to the presence of one or more disabilities, and 32 (0.5%) people because they took their children abroad with them.

This distribution roughly corresponds to the distribution of beneficiaries in the completed 2023 call for applications under Key Action 131 – learning mobility of individuals. The proportion of participants with fewer opportunities in the 2023 call for applications under Key Action 131 was distributed as follows: 72% first-generation students, 21.7% working students, 3.6% students with a chronic illness, 2.1% students with a disability, and 0.3% students with children.

The data illustrates that the programme primarily supports first-generation students as well as working students. The top-up amount is of particular importance for these groups and facilitates access to mobility abroad. Students with chronic illnesses, disabilities or children make up a smaller proportion. These target groups can also receive targeted support through an application for real costs, in order to further strengthen equality of opportunity.

3.2 Intersectionality

The students were also asked how many of the criteria entitling them to the top-up amount applied to them. **29% of respondents stated that more than one of the above criteria applied to them.** The overlap between these characteristics is particularly evident when comparing the question "For what reason did you receive a top-up amount?" (rows) with the question "Which of the following characteristics or life circumstances, which may make it more difficult to plan and/or undertake a stay abroad, apply to you?" (columns), where multiple selections were possible.

	Total	in per cent	First-generation students	Working student	Students with children	Students with a disability	Students with chronic illnesses
First-generation students	4992	**71.5%**	4992	**1504**	8	33	201
Working student	1536	**22.0%**	173	1536	2	6	52
Students with children	32	**0.5%**	6	8	32	0	3
Students with disabilities	102	**1.5%**	17	17	0	102	37
Students with chronic illnesses	324	**4.6%**	40	54	0	31	324

For example, it shows that around 30% of students who received the top-up amount because they were first-generation students were also in employment. Consequently, an overlap of various diversity characteristics was identified among the recipients with fewer opportunities. This analysis had not previously been possible as Higher Education Institutions can only select one of the characteristics for each participant in the reporting database.

4 Personal added value

On a scale of 1 (I completely agree) to 5 (I completely disagree), the mean score for the following statements was:

- **1.89 –** The top-up amount helped me to concentrate better on my studies.
- **1.44 –** The period abroad has strengthened my personal development.
- **1.84 –** The period abroad has strengthened my professional development.

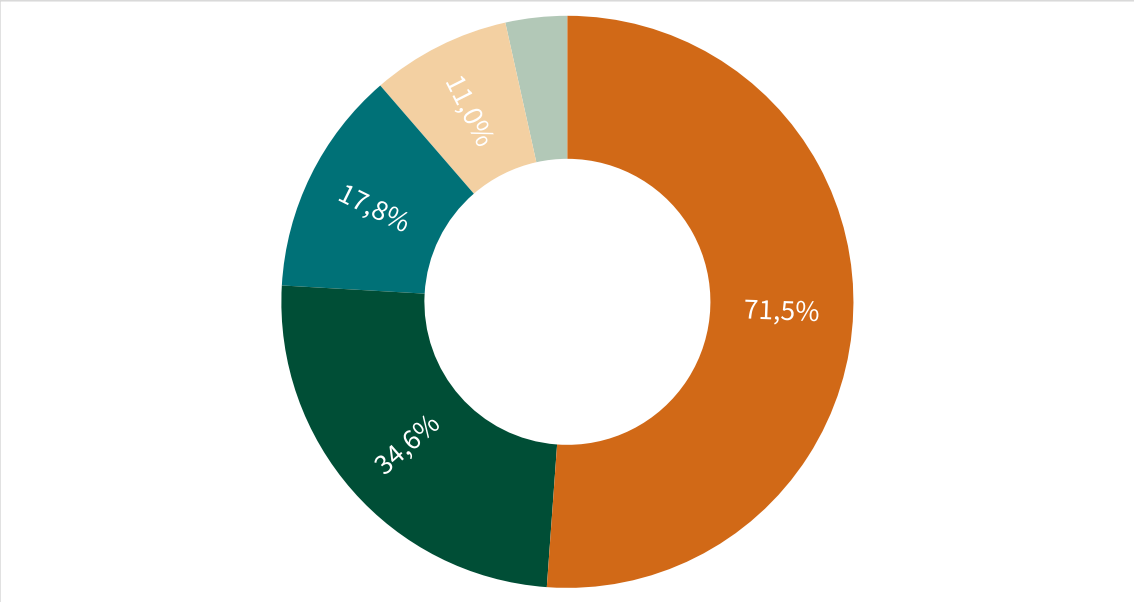
The results show that the period abroad has significant personal and professional benefits for students. Personal development, in particular, was rated very positively. The additional funding also enabled students to focus on their studies.

5 Information and advice

5.1 Sources of information on the top-up amount

In response to the question "How did you find out about the possibility of the Erasmus+ top-up amount?" (multiple answers were permitted), 71.5% indicated that Erasmus+ coordinators are the most important source of information for students, followed by 34.6% who found out about the top-up amount via their home university's website.

17.8% obtained their information from friends and fellow students, and 11% from service and advisory centres. The NA DAAD website was cited by 4.7%, university social media channels by 1.4%, student organisations by 1.1% and the NA DAAD's social media channels by 0.4%. 4.7% stated that they had also used other sources of information.



Erasmus+ coordinators at my home university	My home university's website	Friends and fellow students	Service and advisory centres at my home university	NA DAAD Website	Others	Social media channels of my home university	Organisations such as Arbeiterkind, ESN, LEI	NA DAAD social media channels
71.5%	34.6%	17.8%	11.0%	4.9%	4.7%	1.4%	1.1%	0.4%

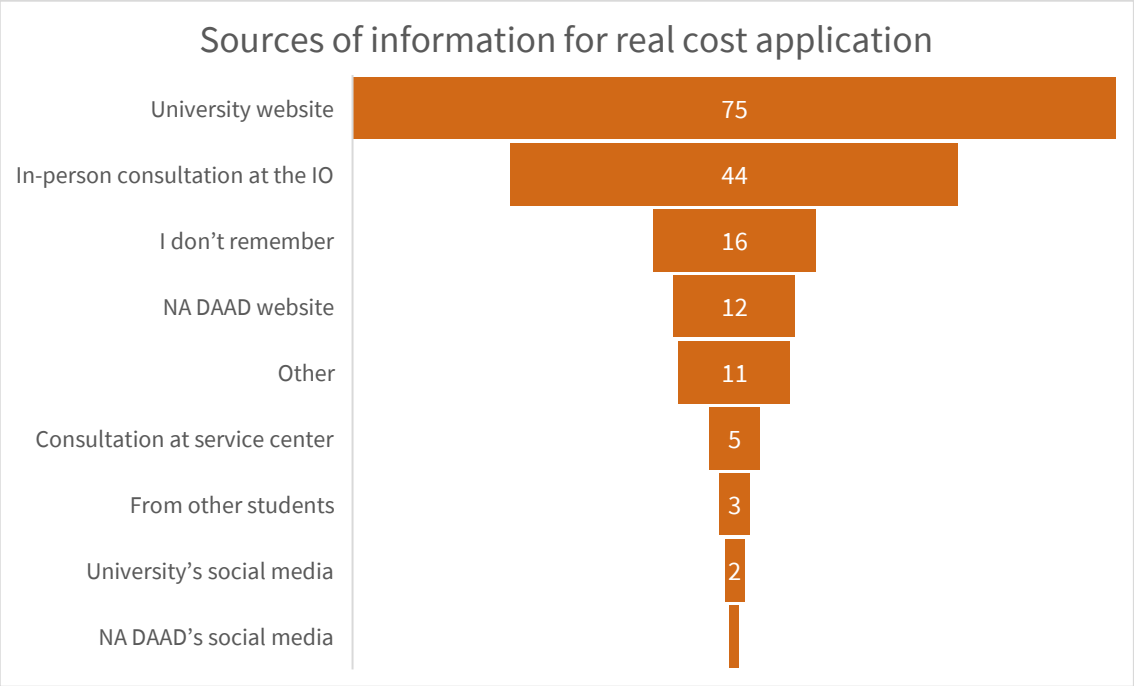
The Erasmus+ coordinators and the direct communication between students and these coordinators are the keystone for communicating financial opportunities and thus for the successful completion of a period abroad during studies. This reinforces the view that certain target groups are more likely to be persuaded to undertake a period abroad through direct contact – albeit resource-intensive – than via other channels, such as social media.

5.2 Information on additional financial support via a real-costs application

In response to the question of whether participants with a disability, chronic illness or children were aware of the possibility of receiving funding via an application for real costs support, a total of 740 responses were analysed. The overwhelming majority of respondents (80.7%; 597 people) stated that they were unaware of this funding option.

15.5% (115 people) were aware of the option but did not apply. Only a very small proportion actually applied for funding: 3.2% (24 people) submitted the real costs application and received the funding, whilst 0.5% (4 people) stated that they had submitted an application but that it had not been approved.

143 participants with a disability or chronic illness, as well as participants with children who were aware of the funding opportunity, also answered the question of how they had found out about it.



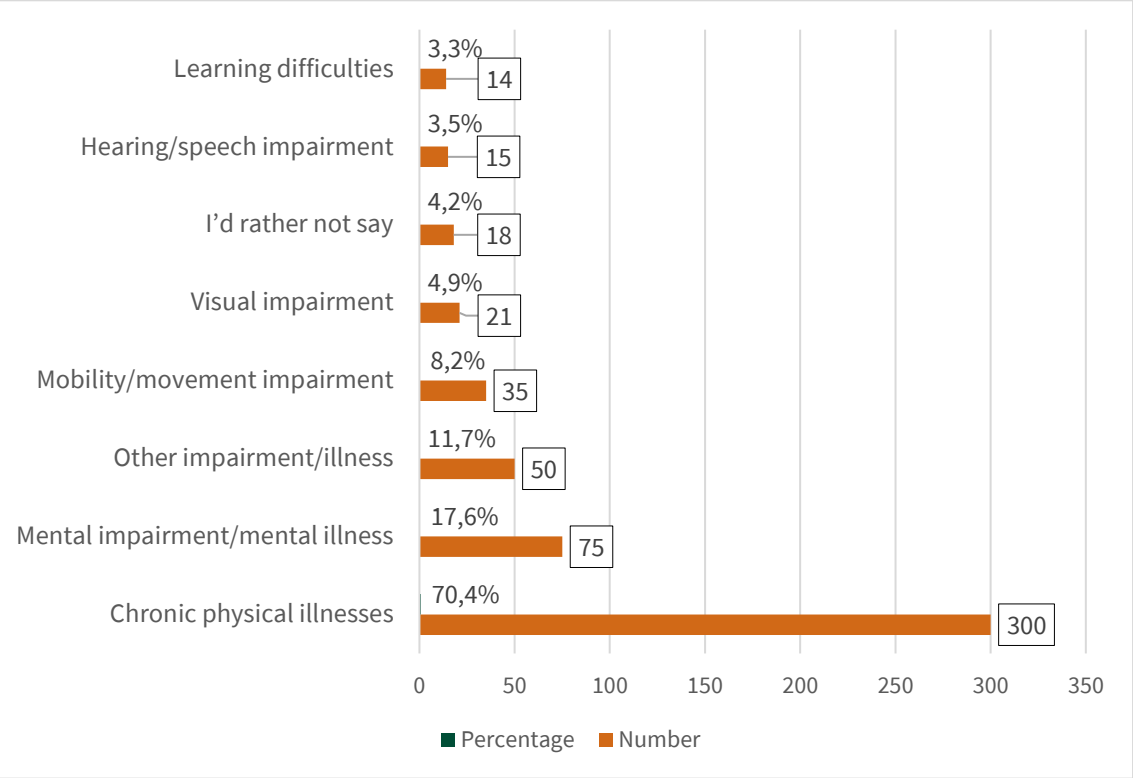
Overall, the results show that awareness of the real costs application remains low among students. The NA DAAD supports Erasmus+ coordinators at German universities with questions regarding the application process and provides useful information on its website and the INA portal, these information serves to inform both coordinators and participants.

5.3 Support services tailored to specific target groups

Respondents were asked about the types of disability or chronic illness they had in order to gain an understanding of the various impairments.

What type of disability or chronic illness do you have?

The nature of the disabilities or chronic illnesses among the 426 participants who answered the question is broken down as follows:



The majority of respondents (70.4%) have a chronic physical condition. This is followed by mental or psychological conditions (17.6%). 11.7% reported other impairments or conditions, 8.2% cited mobility and movement impairments, and 4.9% cited visual impairments. 4.2% did not wish to comment on this. 3.5% had hearing and/or visual impairments, and 3.3% stated that they had a learning disability.

5.3.1 Support services due to disability or chronic illness

The question regarding support services due to an **impairment (disability or chronic illness)** during the planning and implementation of the stay was answered as follows:

Did you receive specific support from your home university in Germany for your stay abroad due to your disability or chronic illness?

- Of a total of 425 respondents, 361 (84.9%) stated that they had not received any specific support from their **home university**. The remaining 19.3% received support, for example, in the form of counselling services at the university (9.4%), help in finding medical or psychological support (2.8%) and support from other students, for example, as part of assistance programmes (2.1%).

Did you receive specific support from your host university due to your disability or chronic illness when planning and carrying out your stay abroad?

- 335 (79%) people also stated that they had not received any specific support from their **host university** either. Those who did receive support received it, for example, in the form of counselling services (10.1%), help in finding medical or psychological support (8.5%) and help in finding (accessible) accommodation (3.8%).

5.3.2 Support services for participants bringing children

Did you receive specific support from your home university in Germany regarding the planning and implementation of your stay because you were bringing your child/children with you?

- Of a total of 47 respondents, 27 (64.3%) stated that they had not received any specific support from their **home university**. 20 people stated that they had received specific support.

Did you receive specific support from your host university for your stay abroad because you were bringing your child/children with you?

- Of 42 people, 23 (54.8%) also stated that they had not received any specific support from their **host university**. 18 people received specific support from their host university.

5.3.3 Support services for first-generation students

Were there any support services at your home university in Germany specifically for first-generation students regarding stays abroad?

When asked whether there were any services specifically for **first-generation students** regarding stays abroad at their home university,

- 84.7% said no, or that they hadn't noticed anything. 9.2% said there had been specific information and promotion (for example, in the form of leaflets and events). 6% stated that there was advice available for first-generation students, 3.2% that there were networking opportunities for first-generation students at their home university, and 2.4% stated that there were other opportunities.

The analysis shows that many students with disabilities or chronic illnesses and students with children receive little specific support from their home or host universities when planning and undertaking a stay abroad. Special support services are also largely unknown or non-existent for first-generation students.

To improve social participation in stays abroad, targeted developments of support services at home and host universities are necessary. Furthermore, awareness of existing services should be significantly increased. The NA DAAD is happy to support universities in this regard with its training programmes and information materials.

6 Funding

Was the Erasmus+ grant, including the top-up amount, sufficient to cover the majority of your costs abroad?

4,680 respondents (67%) stated that the Erasmus+ grant, including the top-up amount, was sufficient to cover the majority of their costs abroad.

Responses by target group:

	Total	First-generation students	Working students	Students with children	Students with disabilities	Students with a chronic illness
Yes	**67.0%**	67.5%	64.8%	56.3%	63.7%	71.6%
No	**33.0%**	32.5%	35.2%	43.8%	36.3%	28.4%

Among first-generation students, 67.5% agreed, whilst 64.8% of working students agreed. 56.3% of students with children agreed, whilst 63.7% of students with a disability and 71.6% of students with a chronic illness agreed.

Would it have been financially possible for you to go abroad even without the top-up amount?

4,355 respondents (62.4%) stated that, without the top-up amount, it would not have been financially possible for them to go abroad.

Responses by target group:

	Total	First-generation students	Working students	Students with children	Students with disabilities	Students with chronic illnesses
Yes	**37.6%**	34.8%	43.8%	15.6%	49.0%	49.1%
No	**62.4%**	65.2%	56.2%	84.4%	51.0%	50.9%

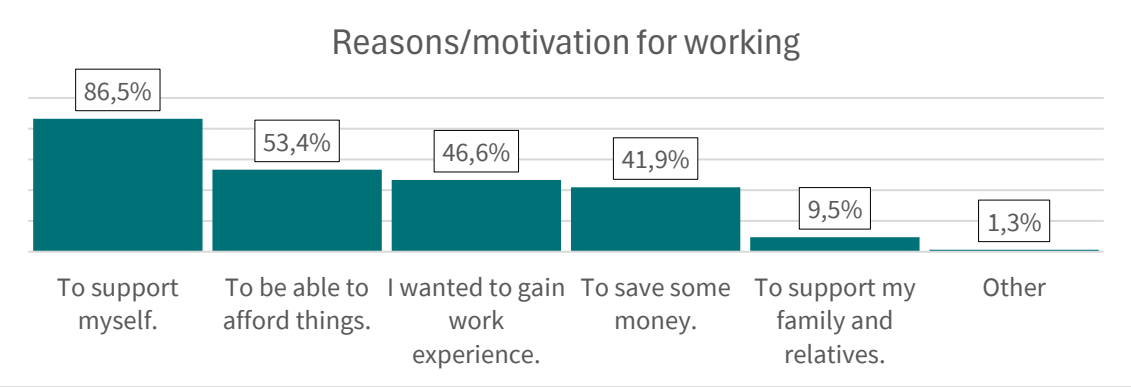
62.4% of first-generation students stated that they would not have been able to go abroad without the top-up amount; among working students, the proportion was 56.2%, whilst it was highest among students with children at 84.4%. In addition, 51% of students with a disability and 50.9% of students with a chronic illness stated that they would not have been able to go abroad without the top-up amount.

Did you receive BAföG for studying abroad?

1,343 respondents (19.2%) stated that they had received BAföG for studying abroad, whilst 5,639 respondents (80.8%) did not receive it.

Why were you working before your stay abroad?

Of a total of 3,119 people, the following reasons (multiple selections possible) were given for being in employment:



The data shows that covering living costs (86.5%) is the main motivation for students, followed by the desire to be able to afford things (53.4%) and the motivation to gain work experience (46.6%). Saving money (41.9%) and financial support for family and relatives (9.5%) are also possible reasons, as are other factors (1.3%).

Did you find a new job within a timely manner following your stay abroad?

Of those who were in employment and had to leave or take a break from their job due to the semester abroad, 71.7% found a new job within a reasonable timeframe following their stay abroad, 11% did not want a new job and 17.3% did not find a new job within a reasonable timeframe.

The Erasmus+ grant, including the top-up amount, was sufficient for the majority of students to cover most of their costs abroad. However, one third (33.0%) stated that the grant was not sufficient. Without the top-up amount a stay abroad would not have been financially feasible for many, particularly for students with children. Only a few received additional BAföG for studying abroad. Financing living expenses was the main motivation for working before the stay abroad. After their stay, most of those in employment found a new job in a timely manner.

Overall, it is clear that financial support is crucial for participating in a stay abroad and that the return to work is largely successful.

7 Summary of the results

Impact of Erasmus+ measures and ESF funding

The evaluation shows that the additional financial measures – particularly the top-up support – make a very important contribution; For many students with fewer opportunities, a stay abroad would not have been possible without this support. The majority were able to finance the bulk of their living expenses abroad with the Erasmus+ grant, including the top-up amount, while one third of respondents said the funding, was not sufficient to cover most of their costs abroad. The personal and professional benefits of an Erasmus stay are rated very highly by participants. Personal development, in particular, is perceived as extremely positive.

Targeted additional funding, such as top-up amount and applications for real cost support, is therefore having an impact and enabling more students to participate in the programme. However, differences between the target groups remain. First-generation students benefit most frequently, followed by working students (although there is significant overlap between these two target groups) and people with disabilities, chronic illnesses or with children.

The top-up amount plays a crucial role in enabling participation – over 60% of those receiving funding would not have gone abroad without this additional support. It is therefore essential to maintain this measure to ensure equal opportunities. The additional funding from the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) makes a significant contribution to this. To continue enabling as many students with fewer opportunities as possible to participate in the Erasmus+ programme, we hope that the use of ESF funds can be continued in future programme cycles.

Areas for action and next steps towards greater social participation

To ensure an even more inclusive, sustainable and successful Erasmus+ programme in the future, the following steps should be taken:

- **Reaching target groups through (direct) engagement:** According to the survey, direct contact between Erasmus+ coordinators and students is the most effective way to convey relevant information. Direct engagement and the use of diverse communication channels (including social media, apps and peer networks) to better inform and reach out to hard-to-reach student groups is therefore essential. Furthermore, greater integration of alumni can be helpful in authentically sharing experiences and information and lowering barriers for others.

- **Provide needs-based support:** Support services should be available for students with disabilities, chronic illnesses, children, as well as first-generation students or with other specific needs. Closer cooperation and networking between the advisory

services at sending universities and the contact points at host universities make an important contribution to the effective support of students.

- **Raising awareness** of **real cost support:** Awareness of real cost support needs to be further increased; here too, direct contact with and support from Erasmus+ coordinators is of central importance.

- **Utilise existing NA services for coordinators:** The existing information and training services offered by the NA DAAD for Erasmus+ coordinators have proven their worth and should be continued and expanded so that coordinators continue to receive optimal support in their important work.

- **Continue dialogue with Erasmus+ experts and organisations in the field of inclusion and diversity:** To further develop funding and support services, the NA DAAD involves Erasmus+ experts to ensure it can respond as effectively as possible to current needs and developments. Furthermore, collaboration with external associations, advisory centres and organisations in the field of equal opportunities and diversity is important in order to harness synergies and increase the reach and quality of our services.

In summary, the survey results show that the combination of financial support, targeted outreach and the continuous expansion of services is crucial for an inclusive and successful educational exchange. Therefore, the aim of the NA DAAD is to further develop existing measures in line with the needs of various target groups and thus provide the best possible support for students with fewer opportunities.

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