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Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



# **Access4all**

**Laboratory for Policies and Practices  
of Social Development in Higher Education**

**Higher Education in Finland,  
Italy, Portugal, Romania,  
Spain, and UK.**

*A brief overview*

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This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union (Erasmus + Programme), through the project “ACCESS4ALL – Laboratory for Policies and Practices of Social Development in Higher Education” (Ref. 2015-1-ES01-KA203-015970). The contents of this document are under the sole responsibility of the authors and under no circumstances can be considered as reflecting the position of the European Union.

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Dipartimento di Scienze Umane e Sociali, Università di Bergamo  
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Volume no. 4

2016

ISBN 978-88-974132-3-3

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## 1. Introduction

Since the launch of the Bologna Process in 1999, higher education has been seen as an essential element in promoting economic competitiveness in an increasingly global context. Accordingly, educational credentials have been defined at the European level as one of the most salient factors in the development of the contemporary labour market (Archer et al., 2003; Orr, Mishra, 2015). As policies today strive to promote knowledge-based economies, the aim of the Bologna Process was to expand the access to educational opportunities across all national contexts, fostering participation in post-compulsory education by creating a European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The EHEA would help students enrol in a wider range of high-quality courses, improving both the appeal and transparency of European higher education institutions by facilitating recognition procedures and enhancing international exchanges (EHEA, 1999).

Nevertheless, the emphasis put by the Bologna Declaration on the promotion of international competitiveness and the up-

skilling of the European workforce contributed as well to create a tension with the concurrent aspiration of promoting social cohesion through widening the access to higher education. The next communiqué issued in Prague in 2001 stressed the principle that higher education should be a concern not only as a public good but also in terms of public responsibility (EHEA, 2001). This way, the Prague document introduced the concept of social dimension as a core component of higher education development in terms of equity and justice. The following meeting held in 2003 in Berlin, linked the growing attention to the social dimension to the expansion of lifelong learning, so suggesting that access to university could be broadened with the active inclusion of mature students into the academic courses (EHEA, 2003). However, it has been only with the 2007 London communiqué that students' diversity has been clearly acknowledged as a key element for the achievement of a more equitable higher education in the European area, emphasising the large impact of socioeconomic differences on the access to and success in tertiary education (EHEA, 2007).

The following meeting organised in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve in 2009 further expanded the dimension of diversity applied to students raising the concern that “access into higher education should be widened by fostering the potential of students from underrepresented groups and by providing adequate conditions for the completion of their studies (EHEA, 2009). This involves improving the learning environment, removing all barriers to study, and creating the appropriate economic conditions for students to be able to benefit

from the study opportunities at all levels”. This idea resonated also in the Budapest/Vienna (2010) and Bucharest (2012) meetings, in which was acknowledged that the student body entering and graduating from higher education institutions should reflect the diversity of Europe’s populations (EHEA, 2010, 2012). Furthermore, the Bucharest communiqué specified that this goal should be sustained by reducing inequalities and provide adequate student support through the delivery of services, counselling and guidance, flexible learning paths and alternative access routes, including recognition of prior learning. Peer learning was also mentioned as a useful approach to expand the universities ability to deal with the social dimension, as well as the promotion of innovative methods of teaching addressed to involve students as active participants in their own learning.

Finally, the Yerevan meeting (EHEA, 2015) restating the Universities’ commitment to enhance the social dimension by improving gender balance and widening opportunities for access and completion, stressed out the importance of providing mobility opportunities for students and staff from conflict areas (“while working to make it possible for them to return home once conditions allow”), as well as for teacher education students (“in view of the important role they will play in educating future generations of Europeans”).

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## 2. Data collection and under-represented groups

Even though the importance of promoting the social dimension of tertiary education has been widely recognised and highlighted by the communiqués regularly issued after the European meetings, the objective of increasing participation of under-represented groups in higher education has eventually remained only a postulate, of no practical application. Up to date, less than 20% of the European countries involved into the Bologna process have defined quantitative indicators and procedures enabling to steadily track this phenomenon (Lybacka, 2015). This is especially relevant, as almost all EU countries have now implemented a monitoring system to analyse a range of features of the student body. However, the kind of features monitored and the level at which they occur within the higher education path are considerably different from one country to another. Out of 36 education systems analysed by the Eurydice report (2014), 27 are collecting data about qualifications prior to higher education, while socio economic status and disability are monitored respectively in 19 and 17 systems.

Nevertheless, other important questions crucial to the inclusion of under-represented students in higher education are less taken into account. For example, migrant status of students is tracked in 13 countries, whereas only 8 offer data about the ethnic origins of students. Moreover, despite the emphasis the Bologna process put over the years on the importance of strengthening the connection of higher education with the labour market, only 13 educational systems collect information about the students' status in terms of labour market prior to entry in higher education.

If social dimension has to be assumed as a core element of tertiary education, data on students' access to the academic path should not only account for the number of freshmen enrolled, but also delve into the way students' population is influenced by social composition. From this perspective, interventions promoted by European countries to ease the access to higher education can be regrouped into three types of positive actions (Eurydice, 2014):

- General policies and targets referred to students' participation and attainment;
- Special targets aimed to facilitate the access of specific groups;
- Concrete measures implemented to enforce the process of widening participation.

Beyond developing general policies and targets, countries that have been able to identify specific groups targets and/or to carry out concrete measure to improve students' participation,

are generally better positioned in developing effective practices addressed to tackle exclusion and promote inclusive higher education environments.

In the last few years, by developing special policies aimed to specific groups nine countries provided several remarkable examples of policy agendas devoted to favour inclusion in higher education of under-represented groups. Interestingly, this represents a common thread among the nine countries, although the structure and composition of targeted groups considered for these actions widely differs from backing children whose parents do not hold a higher education qualification (Belgium), to addressing gender participation (male in Finland, female in Lithuania) and supporting mature and disabled students (Ireland). Other countries, like France and Estonia, are focusing on disadvantaged socio-economic groups by improving their study loan and grants system in order to facilitate the access to higher education for disadvantaged and part time students, as well as for adult learners (Eurydice, 2015).

However, it has to be noted that efforts concentrated on specific groups or minorities present a risk of valuing only the diversity side of the social dimension, further stressing the “specialty” of those groups. This way, it would undermine the complementary process of becoming part of the learning community acquired through the build of social links, which is a core part of the inclusive process in higher education too.

Furthermore, even though a relevant body of data is available today about students career on higher education, information is rarely directly accounting for the issues related to the social dimension or, when such a connection is established, data is

not adequately utilised. Asked about the changing profile of higher education students over a timeframe of ten years, 19 out of 36 countries proved to be unable to offer an overall picture of changes to the diversity of the student body. Such information gap is remarkable in countries that invest large amount of time and resources on supporting data collection about higher education trends. It is true that some countries have put only lately in place such a reporting system. Consequently, they could not have been able to develop a comparison covering ten years. Nevertheless, as the Eurydice report notes, “it is also appears likely that, in some national contexts, issues related to diversity are of marginal national and public interest, and that the data collected is not being analysed or not being publicised” (Eurydice, 2014: 19).

The Access 4All project focuses on the diversity topic by promoting the educational and social inclusion of underrepresented groups as well as of non-traditional learners, thereby aiming to satisfy one of the main priorities being called for, i.e. the improvement of the capacities of organisations active in the fields of education, training and youth, notably in the areas of strategic development, quality of learning provision, equity and inclusion, qualitative and targeted activities for specific groups. This way, Access 4All clearly addresses one of the important features of the Erasmus+ programme: “Promoting equity and inclusion by facilitating the access to learners with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities compared to their peers” (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, 2014: 13). This main aim is concentrating on 4 specific objectives: (1) to establish a map with the institutional policies for attending to

vulnerable groups in relation to academic access and success; (2) to establish guidelines to be implemented by higher education organisations to promote initiatives aimed to encourage the access and successful development of students who are under-represented in universities; (3) to co-create strategies and measures promoting the access, permanence (and success) of vulnerable students and non-traditional learners at university; (4) to create a laboratory for the creation of innovative and flexible strategies in order to promote social commitment of Higher Education institutions in relation with the most vulnerable student groups.

Face to the lack of comparable data on diversity and under-represented groups in higher education reported by research, we think it is important to take advantage from the Access4All project to offer an overview of the current situation of higher education in the six countries participating to the project (Finland, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and UK), with a special concern on the issues related to the social dimension which is at the core of the proposal. Even though, for the above mentioned reasons, not all data are fully available and comparable, we believe that such an overview can contribute to improve our knowledge about the state of art of access and participation of non-traditional students in higher institutions of the countries, so enabling us to develop analytical comprehension that would help the development of good practices to be implemented in the following stages of the project.

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### 3. Higher Education in Finland, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and Uk: an overview

Higher education institutions of Finland, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and UK show many similarities in their organisation, but also some special features connected to the demographic, historical, economical, social, political, and educational characteristics of each country. Below we present an overall picture of the six countries that summarise the main features of Higher Education referred to the following aspects:

- Educational System;
- Student Demographics;
- Enrolment, Permanence, Completion Rates;
- Fees, Loans and Grants;
- Students' Residence And Commuting
- Student Workers And Employment
- Time Balance
- Students' Satisfaction
- International Mobility

#### 3.1 THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

##### *Finland*

In Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture sector numbers fourteen universities today. Two of them are foundation universities, while the rest are public corporations. The National Defence University, a military institution of higher education that is part of the Defence Forces, also provides university-level education. From the beginning of 2010, universities have had the status of independent legal entities and been separated from the state. However, the state continues to be the primary financier of the universities. Direct government funding covers about 64% of university budgets. In addition, universities are encouraged to acquire private donations. Moreover, there are twenty-four polytechnics (University of Applied Sciences, UAS) in the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture sector. From the beginning of the year 2015 they have the status of independent legal entities and operate as limited companies. The State is the primary financier of the polytechnics. Furthermore, two other higher education institutions, the Åland University of Applied Sciences in the self-governing Province of Åland and the Police College of Finland, are subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior. The steering of polytechnics based on financing and statutes, as well as operating licenses, has been renewed through the polytechnics re-

form. The final part of the reform took effect from the beginning of 2015.

University education in Finland is divided into twenty fields of study: Agriculture and Forestry, Art and Design, Dentistry, Economics, Educational Sciences, Engineering and Architecture, Fine Arts, Health Sciences, Humanities, Law, Medicine, Music, Natural Sciences, Pharmacy, Psychology, Social Sciences, Sport Sciences, Theatre and Dance, Theology, and Veterinary Medicine.

Polytechnic education is provided in the following fields: Business and Administration, Culture, Humanities and Education, Natural Resources and the Environment, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Social Services, Health and Sport, Technology, Communication and Transport, and Tourism, Catering and Domestic Services.

First cycle programs are offered both by universities and polytechnics. The extent of a university Bachelor's level degree is 180 ECTS credits and takes three years. The extent of a Polytechnic Bachelor's degree is generally 210–240 ECTS credits, which means 3.5 - 4 years of full-time study. The extra 30-60 ECTS in the Polytechnic degree come from a job placement period which is a mandatory part of the degree.

### *Italy*

With the exception of a limited number of institutions, originally set up by private entities and later recognised by the Ministry of Education, most of the existing university institutions

in Italy were established directly by the State and rely on the Ministry of Education. Nowadays, in Italy 56 there are state universities, 3 state polytechnics, 17 private universities, 3 universities for foreigners, 6 “special system high schools” offering qualifications only at the two more advanced levels of education, and 11 on-line universities.

Until the Bologna agreement was signed (1999), only one kind of degree lasting four years for all faculties was available in Italy, with the exception of Architecture, Engineering, Chemistry (five) and Medicine (six years). Afterwards, as most of European universities, also the Italian higher education sector experienced a major reform process to align itself with the European model outlined through the Bologna reform. As a result, according to the European prospect the current Italian higher education system is subdivided into three separate sectors (Fig. 1): university tertiary education, non-university tertiary education offered by the Higher level Arts and Music Education system, and higher technical education and training (or post-secondary non tertiary education). Higher education is currently defined by a three-tier structure, consisting of a first-level bachelor degree (“laurea triennale”, 3 years), a second-level master degree (“laurea magistrale”, 2 years) and doctoral studies (3 years).

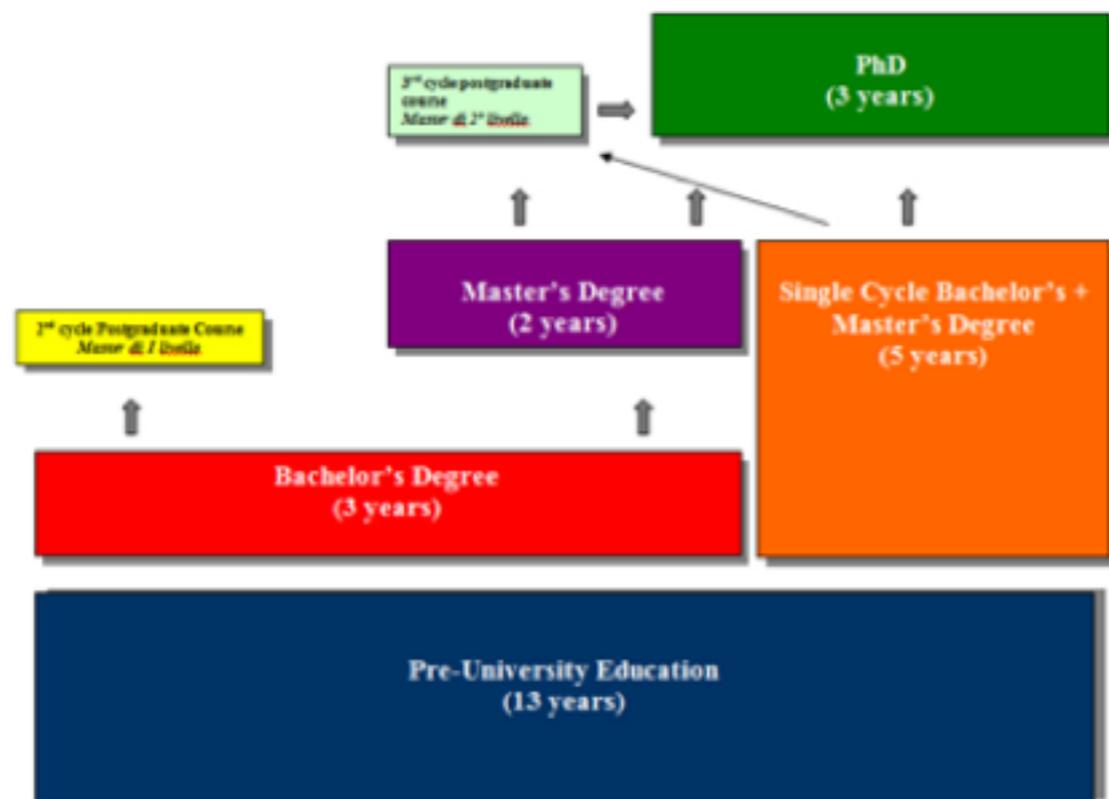


Figure 1: Italian Higher Education System

Requirement for being admitted is an upper secondary school certificate. Equivalent foreign qualifications may also be accepted. University credits (ECTS) usually consist of a minimum of 25 working/studying hours, including contact hours and student workload. An average annual workload for full-time students is usually quantified in 60 credits.

Tuition and fees in Italian state universities are moderate (around 1400 euros per year maximum). Therefore we can assume that the cost of enrolment is not the main financial barrier for the majority of prospective students entering higher education. The expansion in enrolment, especially triggered by the Bologna process, has brought into higher education a

growing group of students who are the first in the history of their family to enter the higher education system. As we will see, most of students traditionally live with their families as they cannot afford the cost of living away from home. Thus, they choose to attend the universities nearby and to commute to attend classes. Part-time courses are available for working students or adult learners, and graduates are considered to have the same level of knowledge and competence (“legal validity”) in their field, regardless of the university where they got their degrees.

Higher education in Italy is chiefly concentrated in the areas classified as ISCED 5a, that is courses which mostly focus on theoretical contents, as well as ISCED 6 (post-graduate courses). Conversely, educational provision of ISCED 5b courses, i.e. shorter and more practical and occupationally specific programmes leading to professional qualifications, is almost non-existent.

Moreover, despite the growth observed in recent years, compared to the performance of the other European countries the share of people who complete tertiary education in Italy remains one of lowest, even among the younger population.

The delay of Italy is not related to a lower rate of graduation from secondary school or the transition from secondary school to university. Rather, most of the problems are related to the barriers encountered by learners during their studies, which account for the high rate of early university leaving. Finally, compared to the international standards the Italian higher education system is not able to attract mature students

who own professional experience or opt for getting a degree some years after having completed secondary education.

## Portugal

The higher education system in Portugal, regarding the Bologna process was introduced in the Basic Law on Education, by Law No. 49/2005 of 30 August and regulated by Decree-Law 74/2006 of 24 March. This system is fully implemented by public and private universities and polytechnics, since 2009/2010, and since then structured into three cycles (Fig. 2).

The degrees of bachelor and master are conferred by universities and polytechnics. The degrees have a duration of between six to eight semesters corresponding respectively to 180 or 240 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System), and master's degrees include 90 to 120 credits and a duration of between three and four semesters.

After the 1st cycle of studies, the access to the course of study leading to a Master's degree depends on a student's separate application that meets the regulations set by the legal and statutorily competent body of the higher education institution to which the student intends to apply which include, inter alia "Rules on admission to the course of study, in particular the academic and curricular conditions; the rules of application; the criteria for selection and ranking; and the securing process and promotion" (Article 26 – Decree-Law No. 74/2006 of 24 March).

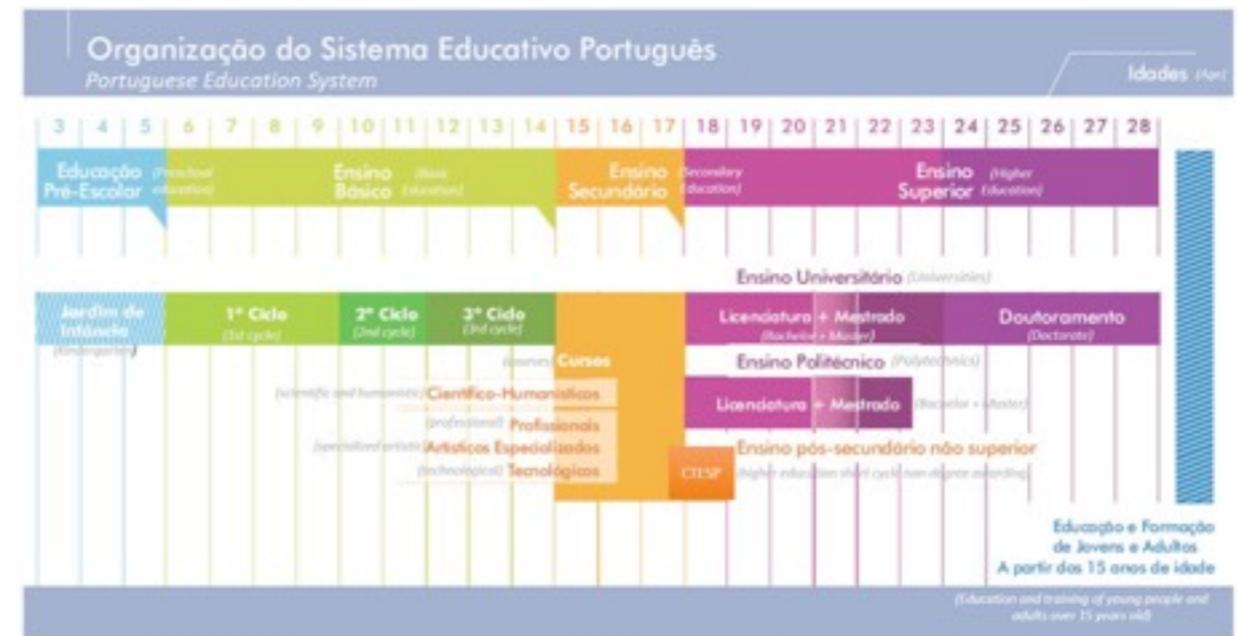


Figure 2: Portuguese Higher Education System

Some universities also provide integrated master's degrees, with 300 to 360 credits and a duration of between ten to twelve semesters. In these cases, a degree corresponds to the first six semesters – 180 credits, after which the student receives a mobility diploma, although it does not allow practicing the profession, it can facilitate the transfer to other institution of higher education in order to complete the integrated degree master (Veiga, 2015).

Exceptionally, in the case of integrated courses of study leading to a Master's degree, access and entry is ruled by the applicable to the cycle of studies leading to the degree.

The completion of the 3rd cycle of studies, PhD, is confined to universities.

In the 2nd and 3rd cycles is necessary the public defense of a dissertation, project work or internship report.

Alongside these three study cycles have been recently created (2014) the Courses for Superior Professional Technicians (CTESP) that correspond to a higher education short cycle, non-degree awarding. These courses, correspond to 120 ETCS-two years duration, are only offered by the polytechnic higher education institutions (Decree-Law no 43/2014 of 18 March).

### Romania

In Romania, after 1990, the universities were the first kind of institution to start the reforms for democratization of education. Therefore, higher education in Romania is less centralized than in many countries in the West, with every university having its own internal policies regarding admission, exams and conditions for graduation.

The academic year starts in the first week of October. As Romanian higher education (HE) institutions are autonomous, they may decide on the academic schedule. Each year is divided into two semesters. Each semester lasts 18 weeks.

Romania has slightly over 100 public and private HE institutions, among which 56 are accredited state high education institutions, whereas 37 are accredited private high education institutions. For a full list, please see:

<http://administrasite.edu.ro/index.php?Module=uploads&unc=download&fileid=16479>

The legal framework for the implementation of the Bologna Process in Romania was introduced between 2004 and 2006

and the structure of the Higher Education system follows the below presented structure (fig. 2):

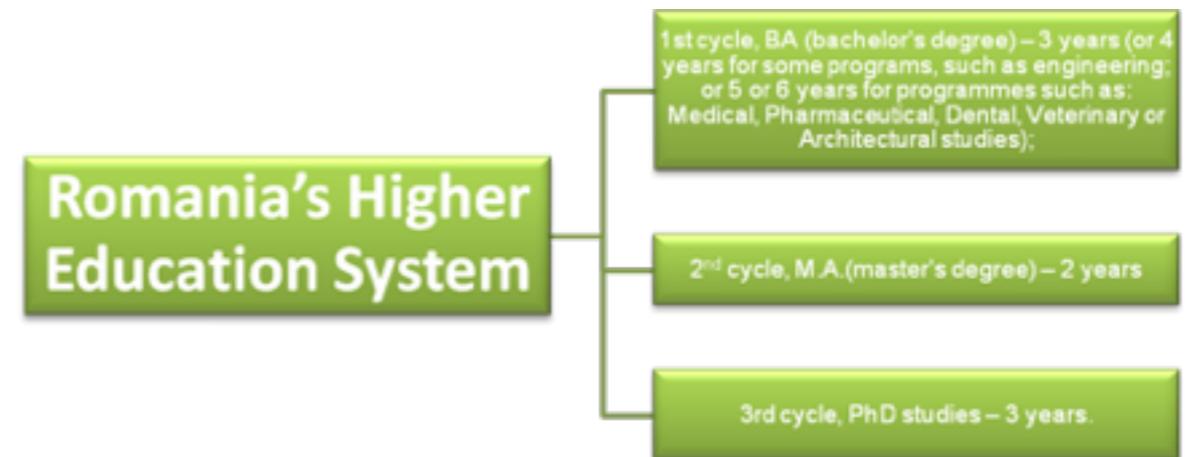


Figure 3: Rumanian Higher Education System

Regarding the number of European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in Romania, the 1st cycle (Bachelor) includes a minimum of 180 and a maximum of 240 ECTS and is finalized with the level 6 of European Qualifications Framework; more specifically, one year of Bachelor day studies corresponds to 60 ECTS, while a BA programme typically takes 3-4 years to complete, depending on the field and area of specialization. The length of Engineering, Law and Theology studies is 4 years. The Pharmacy faculty lasts 5-years and is the equivalent of 300 transferable study credits (ECTS equivalent), whereas the Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine programmes, which last 6 years, are equivalent to 360 ECTS.

The 2nd cycle (Master's) includes a minimum of 90 and a maximum of 120 transferable study credits and takes 1 - 2

years to complete. In order to access the 3rd cycle (PhD level), 300 ECTS are needed.

During the 3rd cycle (PhD), some Doctoral Schools use ECTS only for the first year of advanced studies, to demonstrate accumulated credits for taught part of the PhD (involving class attendance). Some Doctoral Schools use, on the other hand, ECTS for the full programme of doctoral candidates (workload referring to taught courses and preliminary research papers).

Doctoral studies in theory include 240 ECTS, whereas advanced studies in Doctoral Schools include 60 ECTS.

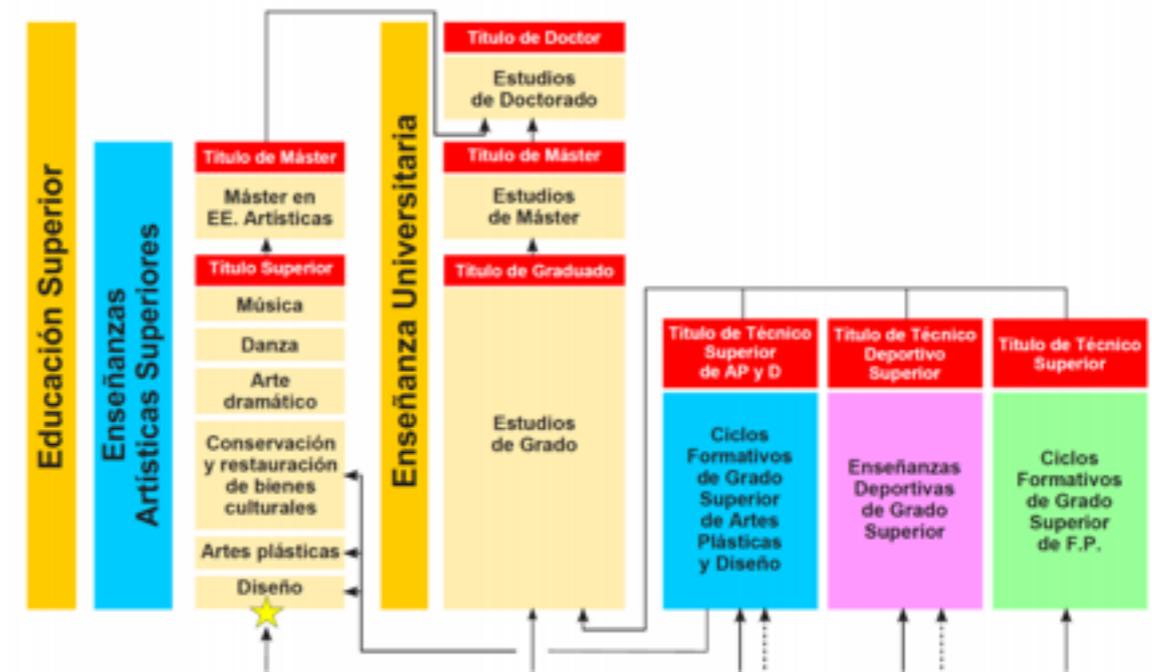


Figure 4: Higher Education in Spain

### Spain

Higher education in Spain considers: university education, higher arts education, advanced vocational education, advance vocational plastic arts and design education and advance vocational sports education (see figure 3).

Currently, as a result of the convergence in the European Higher Education System (EHES), university studies in Spain are composed of 3 stages: Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degree (see figure 4). However, while in most European countries Bachelor's degrees have a duration of 3 years (180 ECTS) and a Masters' programs duration of 2 years (120 ECTS), in the Spanish University System (SUS) it is implemented 4 year Bachelor degrees (240 ECTS) and 1 or 2 year Master's degrees (60 or 120 ECTS, respectively).

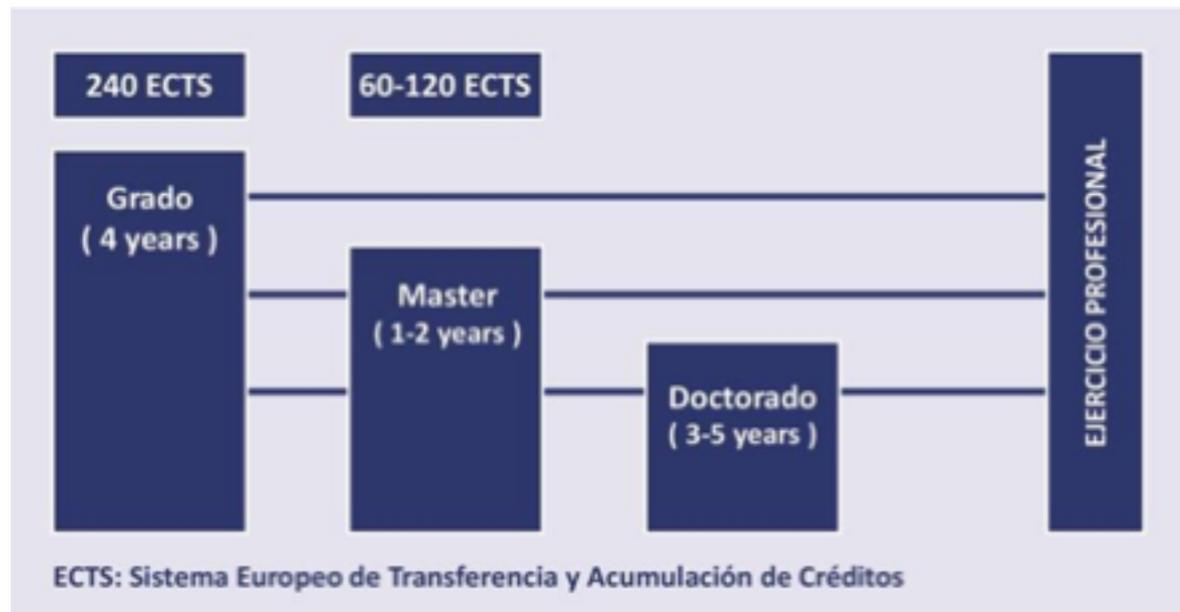


Figure 5. University studies. Source: <http://universidad.es/estudiar-en-espana/el-sistema-universitario-espanol/titulos-oficiales-y-espacio-europeo-de-educacion-superior>

Spanish University System is formed by 83 universities; 50 public (47 on-site 1 off-site and 2 specialized in postgraduate studies) and 33 private (28 on-site and 5 off-site), representing 1.78 universities per million inhabitants. However, if we only focus on the theoretical college-age population (aged 18 to 24 years) the number of universities per million inhabitants stands at 26.67.

Access to university studies is possible from many different ways. Under current legislation (Royal Decree 412/2014), the main ways of access to an official university degree in Spanish Universities involve comply with any of the following requirements:

- a) Hold a Bachillerato (ISCED 3) certificate from the Spanish Educational System or other approved or recognized equivalent;
- b) Hold an official title of Vocational Training cycle or an equivalent title declared or approved;
- c) People over twenty five years old who passed a specific access test;
- d) People over forty years old who have professional or work experience related to teaching;
- e) People older than forty five years old who passed a specific access test;
- f) Students that hold an official Bachelor's degree or equivalent qualification.

Royal Decree 1892/2008 stipulates that Spanish universities need to reserve, at least, 2% of places for students over 25 years old, a percentage of at least 1% but not more than 3% for people over 45 years old and a percentage of 5% of places available for students who have a certified disability equal to or more than 33%, as well as for students with permanent special educational needs associated to personal circumstances of disability that during their previous schooling required resources and support towards full normalisation of their education. In addition, a minimum of 3% of the places offered by universities will be reserved for those who can prove their status as top-level athlete or high performance athlete and meet the relevant academic requirements.

## United Kingdom

There are four countries that make up the United Kingdom; England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The education systems in each country are separate to varying degrees and the higher education systems are very different as a result. England has the largest higher education sector with 130 HEIs, with the other systems being much smaller as shown in Figure 5 below produced by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). The Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish systems of higher education are much smaller with 18 HEIs, 10 HEIs and 4 HEIs respectively. There is currently only one private university in England and all other institutions are publicly funded. However, this picture may be changing in the future as the current government has released a Green Paper (BIS, 2015), which has set out plans to diversify the sector, which is widely perceived as intending to increase the number of private higher education providers.

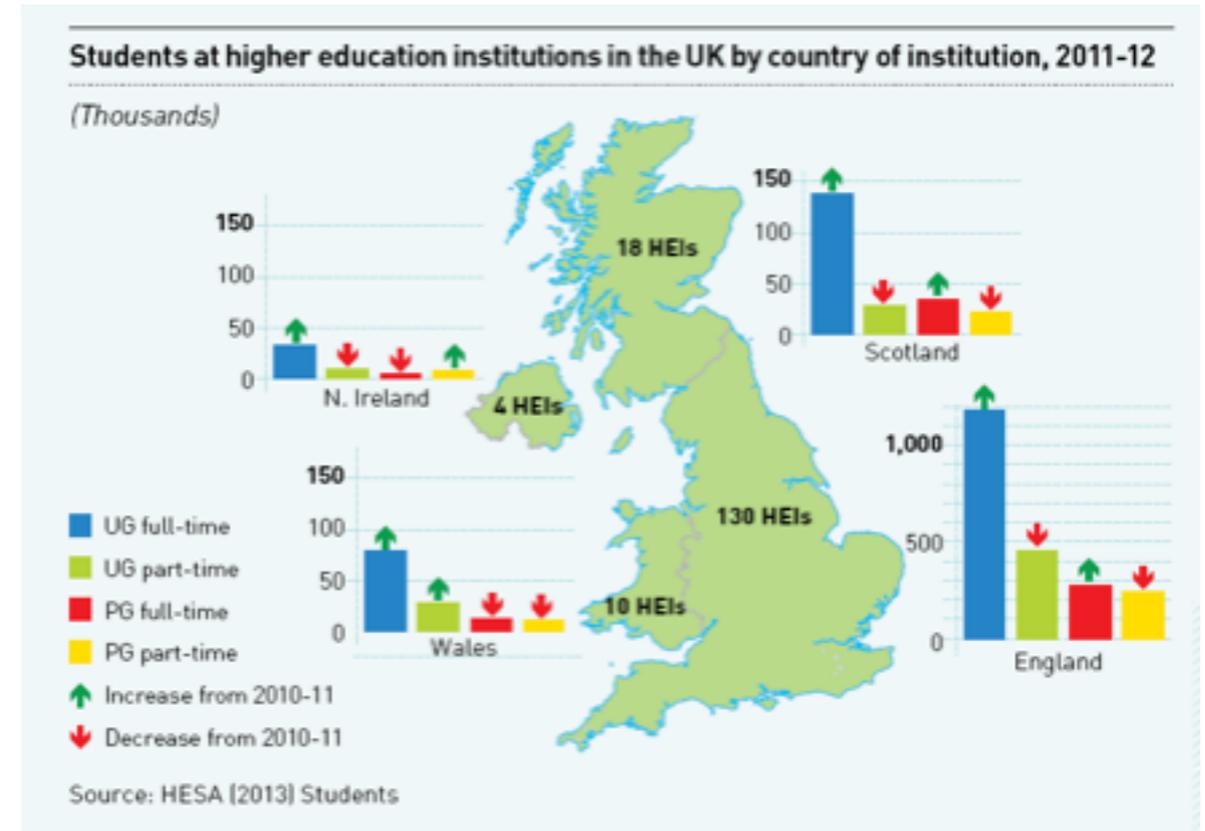


Figure 6: Students at Higher Education Institutions in the UK (2011-2012). Source: Universities UK (2013)

The degree structure in the UK is a 3 year full-time Bachelor Degree (4 year full-time in Scotland), Masters Degree and Doctoral Degree.

### 3.2 STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

#### *Finland*

There were altogether 182 000 applicants to higher education in the academic year 2013 - 2014. 90 000 applied to universities, 122 000 to polytechnics and 30 000 to both sectors. Around 35 per cent of the applicants were selected, but there is great variation in the admission rates between different higher education institutions and fields of study.

Altogether there were nearly 170 000 university students and the number of polytechnic degree students was approximately 140 000 (in 2012). Students in higher education are 53 % women and 47 % men (2015) but majority of foreign students are men (57 %). Particularly female dominated fields are social services, health and sport in the polytechnic education (85 % women) and in the University Sport and Health Sciences (73 %) and Educational Sciences (83 %). Male dominated fields are Technology, Transport, Natural sciences in the polytechnic (83 %) and technical sciences (78 %) in the University. The median age for all higher education students is 25 years but for the University and foreign students the median is 26 years. The average age to start studies is 20 years. 14% of all students were entitled to study in more than one degree program.

83 % of students view themselves as full-time students. However, only 59 % of students feel that they are progressing in their studies as planned (2014). Over one third of all students see that they are progressing slower than they would like to

and the most common reason is the need to secure their livelihood.

#### *Italy*

In 2014/15, students enrolled in higher education in Italy were around 1.600.000 (700.000 males, 900.000 females), on a population of around 60.000.000 of inhabitants. Students coming from technical or vocational school are less prone to enrol in university. Respectively only 30% and 11% decide to apply, as more than 70% of students from other upper secondary schools usually opt for getting a degree.

More than 70% of students have parents without higher education background. Furthermore, more than 80% of Italian students receive considerable contributions from family or partner, in other words they are financially dependent on their parents. From a socioeconomic point of view, after the initial boost of enrolments prompted by the reform implemented in 2001, the number of students from a disadvantaged background has recently lowered, especially starting from 2009, presumably as a consequence of the economic crisis Italy has suffered from in last few years. Consequently, the profile of higher education population is recently reverting to the trend characterizing the pre-reform scenario, favouring students coming from family with a well-established economic and cultural capital.

## *Portugal*

In the academic year of 2015/2016, are enrolled in the Portuguese higher education system, a total of 350.000 students (160.000 males and 190.000 females). The total population in Portugal represents 10.400.000 persons. Therefore, the percentage of students in higher education is a 3,4% of the total population of the country.

As mentioned before, higher education in Portugal (public and private) comprehends two subsystems: universities and polytechnics. In the public universities are attending 192.000 students and in private universities 43.000. In the public polytechnics there are 100.000 students and 14.600 are at private polytechnics.

## *Romania*

In Romania the student's population has dropped dramatically over the past seven years, reaching in 2015 a total of about 540.560 students, from which 411.229 are enrolled in bachelor studies, 111.109 enrolled in master studies, whereas 19.315 of them are currently involved in doctoral or postdoctoral studies.

Regarding the gender of the students, in 2012 53.1 % of them were men and 46.9% were women.

As for the environmental origin, a statistical overview presented in 2011 – 2012 showed that 75% of students come from urban areas, whereas 24% of them come from rural areas.

When talking about students with special needs, the number of student enrolled in the university is equivalent to a percentage 1,5% of all the students.

The evolution of students with special needs that are enrolled in university has slightly increased. If in 2006 a number of 378 of students were enrolled in university, in 2010 the number reached 691 of students.

## *Spain*

In the 2014/15 academic year, the total number of new students enrolled was 356,447, while the total number of enrolled students was 1,361,340 (see Table 1). According to the latest existing comparable data (OECD, 2015) the rate of access to higher education studies in Spain is 52%, which is lower than the average for the EU-21 (56%) and the OECD (58%).

Inter-annual variation of students enrolled has been uneven in the recent years, reaching highs of 4.3% in 2010 and back down to 0.8% in 2012 (CYD, 2014) . According to the report of the Knowledge and Development Foundation (2014), this variation can be explained, firstly, by the poor labour market situation during the economic crisis, which increased the number of university enrolment in 2010, and secondly, the enrolment fees increase in 2012, which caused a drastic reduction in the number of students who accessed to Spanish university system.

Area of Knowledge	All universities			Public Universities			Private Universities		
	All	Female	Male	All	Female	Male	All	Female	Male
Area of Knowledge	1361340	739343	621997	1196564	648151	548413	164776	91192	73584
Social Sciences and Law	632931	380020	252911	543018	327765	215253	89913	52255	37658
Engineering	274976	70808	204168	255653	66017	189636	19323	4791	14532
Arts	135240	82623	52617	128621	78803	49818	6619	3820	2799
Health Sciences	236861	164288	72573	189959	135123	54836	46902	29165	17737
Experimental sciences	81332	41604	39728	79313	40443	38870	2019	1161	858

Table 1: Total number of students' enrolled. Source: S.G Coordination and Monitoring University. Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports in Spain.

Of the students enrolled in the Spanish university system, just over 4% (54,530 students) are coming from abroad, which demonstrates a low attraction of undergraduate international students.

In the 2014/15 scholar year, a 45.84% of undergraduate students were between 18 and 21 years of age, a 27.36 % between 22 and 25 years of age, a 10.8% between 26 and 30 years, and finally, a 15.99% were over 30 years of age.

### United Kingdom

In 2013-14 there were approximately 2.3 million students across the UK university sector, of whom 1.5 million were studying for a first degree and around 427,945 were studying for a postgraduate (taught) qualification and 111,490 were

studying for a postgraduate research degree (PhD). There were a further 226,065 students studying for an 'other' undergraduate degree (Universities UK, 2015).

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### 3.3 ENROLMENT, PERMANENCE, COMPLETION RATES

#### Finland

Even though the total amount of young adults (25-34 years) in Finland is slowly declining, the amount of higher education degrees is still growing (see figure 6). This development can be seen as positive since the requirement for more educated work force is only going to be increased in the future.

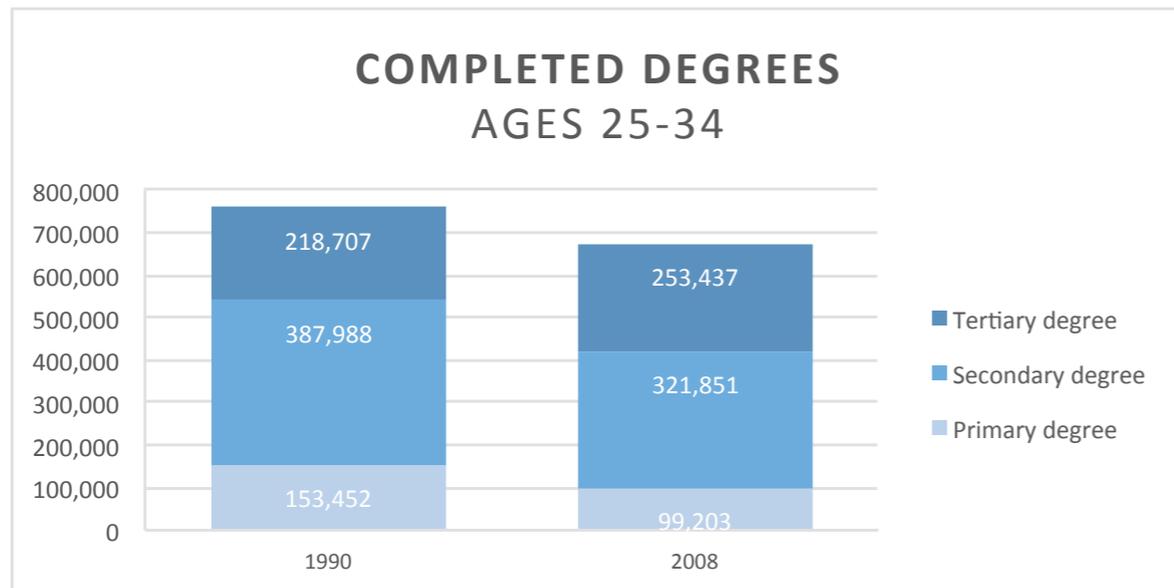


Figure 7: Young adults by education (Statistics Finland/Lehto, 2011)

Equal access to higher education is ensured by the wide institutional network, the free education, student financial aid as well as the flexible pathways to higher education. Efforts have also been made to lower the threshold to apply to higher education by developing an on-line joint application system.

The Finnish non-discrimination act dictates that a higher education institute must initiate actions for adjustments to ensure the admission and succeeding of students with disabilities (including learning difficulties). 5 % of students have been diagnosed a learning disability or other disease or disability that affects their learning - literacy problems being the most common (73 %) disability. Some institutions have designated personnel for matters relating to disabled students. Most commonly special arrangements are used during admission exams and other tests. These arrangements can include longer time

to complete or possibility to use computer, interpreter or assistant.

Social exclusion is considered a major problem especially amongst the young. Different indicators suggest that 5 - 7 % of students are lonely which one of the reasons leading to exclusion. Furthermore 31 % of all students don't feel they are part of any education related group. One reason for loneliness may be the fact that 40 % of students live alone.

Forty-four per cent of students attending polytechnic education aimed at young people completed education in 4.5 years. It is notable that only a fifth of students complete the education in the 3.5 years suggested for most fields. A lower or higher university degree in university education was completed by 51 per cent of students in five-and-a-half years (see figures 7-8).

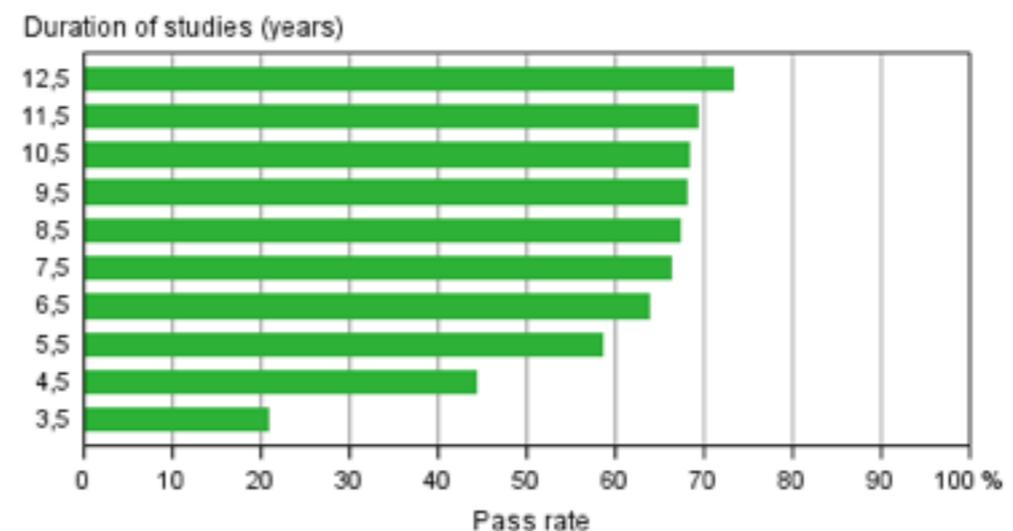


Figure 7: Pass rate of polytechnic students, Statistics Finland 2015

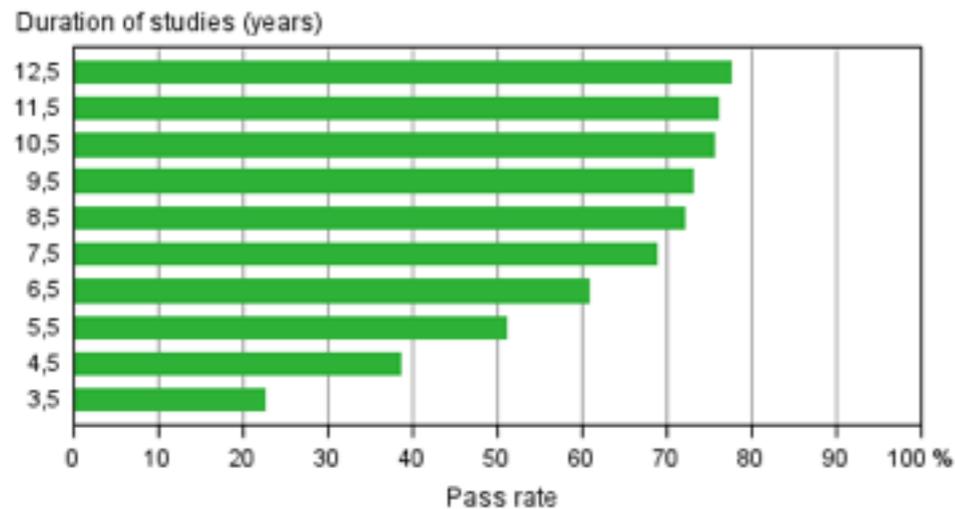


Figure 8: Pass rate of university students, Statistics Finland 2015

A person is eligible to apply for bachelor's degree programs if they have completed the Finnish matriculation examination (taken at the end of the general upper secondary school), vocational qualifications of three years or more in duration, the International Baccalaureate (IB), European Baccalaureate (EB), Reifeprüfung examinations or similar secondary school certificate. In addition, those with a Finnish polytechnic degree, post-secondary level vocational qualification or at least a three-year vocational qualification have general eligibility for university education.

As the last degree before entering higher education, 74 % of university students and 52 % of polytechnic students have completed matriculation examination. 5 % of university students and 26 % of polytechnic students had a vocational degree (minimum 3 years).

The general requirement for admission to polytechnics is general or vocational upper secondary education and training. In other words, applicants eligible for polytechnic studies include those who have completed the matriculation examination, general upper secondary school (Finnish: lukio, Swedish: gymnasium) or an upper secondary vocational qualification, or those with a corresponding international or foreign qualification.

People who received their schooling in another country may be admitted if their qualification gives eligibility for corresponding university studies in that country. Finland has ratified the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education of the European Council and UNESCO-CEPES (so called Lisbon Convention) and signed the Nordic Convention on Admission to Universities.

Universities and polytechnics select their students independently and they decide on the field-specific student intake taking into account the agreed target number of degrees. The numbers are determined in performance negotiations between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the higher education institutions. Number of places is also regulated by the estimated need for professionals in different fields. There is restricted entry, "numerus clausus", to all fields of study, as there are many more applicants than there are places available.

Student admission may be based on:

- the grades attained in the matriculation examination and in the general upper secondary school leaving certifi-

cate together with the results of an entrance examination, which is the most common procedure;

- the results of an entrance examination only; or
- the grades attained in the matriculation examination and in the upper secondary school leaving certificate only.

In addition, some fields may place additional emphasis on work experience, studies, practical training, etc. Entrance examinations are designed by the polytechnic, university, faculty or department in question to assess the applicants' motivation, suitability and aptitude in the field concerned. The tests are often based on required reading. There may also be interviews or material-based examinations, and students may be required to demonstrate their skills or aptitude. Students without the matriculation examination certificate are usually selected on the basis of the entrance examination. As only about 35 % of all applicants are selected, the good performance in matriculation examination and entrance examination plays an important role. One in six students take part in crash courses for entry exams before applying for a place in higher education (2015).

The present legislation allows for flexible pathways leading to higher education. Thus a student is eligible for higher education studies if the institution acknowledges that he/she has sufficient knowledge and competences irrespective of his/her previous education.

An applicant may only accept one study place leading to a higher education degree in each academic year. A study place leading to a higher education degree means a study place in a program leading to a lower or higher academic degree at universities or a study place in a program leading to a polytechnic degree. About 14 % of students have the right to study in more than one degree program.

Finnish universities and polytechnics have autonomy regarding student admission. However, the cooperation between higher education institutions in this respect has increased in the 2000s. The cooperation concerns joint entrance tests and application systems. A national on-line joint application system developed for the student selection of universities, where the main selections of all universities are included, was organized for the first time in spring 2009. The aim is that the on-line system will become the prevalent means of application. A similar on-line application system has been in use in the polytechnic student selections since 2003. These two higher education on-line application systems are being merged. The new merged system was used for the first time in autumn 2014 when selecting students for education beginning at spring 2015.

At universities students first complete the Bachelor's degree (Finnish: kandidaatin tutkinto, Swedish: kandidatexamen), after which they may go for the Master's degree. As a general rule, students are admitted to study for the higher degree. In Finland a University Bachelor's degree is considered mainly to be a stage in the studies for a Master's degree.

This is due, for example, to the fact that the minimum degree for many regulated professions is a master's level degree. The two-cycle degree system doesn't apply to medical fields where students study directly to a Master's level degree. The extent of university master's program is 120 ECTS or two years (more on medical fields).

Since 2005 students have had the possibility to complete a polytechnic Master's degree. The polytechnic master's programs are primarily targeted for those already in the working life, and thus polytechnic Master's applicants are required to have at least three years of relevant work experience after their Bachelor's studies. As the number of students in the Master's programs are relatively small, the degree programs are decided on in the three-year agreements between the polytechnics and the Ministry of Education and Culture. Polytechnic Master's degrees should amount to a minimum of one year and maximum of a year and a half of full-time study (60-90 ECTS). The degree can be concluded flexibly while working at the same time, and without having to leave the labour market.

### *Italy*

The typical student attending university in Italy is 23 years old. It is worth to note that 23% of students enrol two or more years after they got their secondary school leaving qualification. Students enrolled in 2014 were 265.000. In terms of gender, males still outnumber females' students in the area of

technical degrees, whereas women are prevalent in the human and social sciences courses.

In Italy students who do not pass all the exams within the prescribed period of time ("fuori corso") are not automatically dismissed from university. These students in 2014 represent a large share of the university population (55%, with 12.5% who take 4 or more years to get a degree), even though the Bologna reform contributed to reduce the even more large amount of "fuori corso" students who historically have afflicted the Italian higher education system.

16% of students leave university after the first year, 15% after the second. In the long run, the total of students not being able to complete the university path is 37-38% of the entire population. Early leaving is especially spread in the regions of Southern Italy.

The average students' age at graduation in 2014 was 26.5 years. More precisely, 25.3 years at the bachelor level, 27.7 at the master level, and 26.9 for single-cycle graduates. 33% get a bachelor before they turn 23 years old, 35% before 24. On average, the final grade in 2014 is 102 (where the highest honours are 110), more precisely 99 at the bachelor level, 107 at the master level, and 104 for single-cycle graduates.

After graduation, nearly 54% of students plan to continue to study at the master level. On the one hand, this decision is again an indirect consequence of the economic recession. As employment rates are decreasing and the degree acquired proves to be less marketable in comparison with the jobs offered, many students opt to continue their studies, hoping that this will increase their chances to find a better position.

However, the choice to take on a master course after the bachelor emerges as especially difficult for families with low incomes. The cost of financing five years (instead of three), also in view of the uncertain added value that a master degree guarantees in the Italian job market, turns out to be overwhelming for many families. Moreover, many students seem anxious to test the abilities acquired during the bachelor course through the work experience. Many others confess that they are just “fed of studying” and want to start a life in the “grown-ups’ world”, as well as become economically independent from their family.

It is interesting to note that a relevant share of students enrol in a master degree some years later, after realizing that a bachelor is not enough to guarantee the desired advance in their professional career.

### *Portugal*

In Portugal, higher education is regulated and supervised by the government. In what concerns to public education, access to higher education assumes three main forms, namely, the general regime, special regime and special contests.

According to the latest available official data, in the academic year of 2014/2015, were enrolled 349,658 students in higher education in Portugal, of which 84% in public education and the remaining 16% in private higher education institutions. As a rule, women are the majority of the student population, with

the ratio of 54% women to 46% men in the academic year of 2014/2015. In the 1st cycle there are 61% of the total, followed by the Integrated Master, with 17% and the Master degree – 2nd cycle with 15%. Most of these students belong to the age group of 20-24 years (Source: Pordata and DGEEC).

The total number of enrolled students has been decreasing in recent years, after a maximum of 396,000 students in the academic year of 2010/2011. Despite this, the number of existing students today symbolizes a remarkable change in the landscape of education in Portugal: in 1980 there were just 80,000 students in higher education (Source: Pordata).

Regarding the number of graduates in higher education, in 2013/2014 it reached 75,906 individuals, of which, 81% in public education and the remaining 19% in the private sector of HE. In 2000/2001, this number was close to 61,500, 24% in the period considered (Source: Pordata). Comparing by gender, women are most successful in concluding their studies in higher education. As for the levels of training, in 2013/2014, most graduates (63%) come from degree courses organized according to the Bologna process (1st cycle).

The year 2007/2008 was the year of transition to the new courses organized according to the Bologna Process. One of the consequences of this change was the increase in the number of graduates that year, either because they have completed their degrees in only three years or because they obtained an equivalence to a Master degree.

The reality shows that there has been a gradual increase in the qualification of the Portuguese population, with the percentage of resident population aged 15 and over with an increased

full higher grade of 6.5% in 2000 (556.7 thousand individuals) to 16.5 % in 2014 (1462.1 thousand people) (Source: Por-data).

An analysis of various European countries, for the age group of 30-34 years, it turns out that over the past decade Portugal had a significant increase of graduates, with 11.3% in 2000 to 27.2% in 2012, while the average the EU27 was 22.4% in 2000 and 35.8% in 2012 (Source: INE). But, despite this progress in Portugal, still remains difficult to meet the European target of 40% set for 2020.

As for the drop-out rates in higher education in Portugal in 2015, the portal “Infocursos” informs about the status of all students enrolled in the 1st year for the 1st time in 2012/2013, one year after starting their course. Comparing this data with that of the previous year, it is found that among graduates, fewer students drop out from higher education – in the public sector the dropout rate was from 12.2% to 10.3% and in private sector of higher education, went from 16.3% to 12.6%. As for the 2nd cycle, there was an increase in students who have dropped out from the public higher education and a slight decrease of those of the private sector.

### *Romania*

According to the data released by the National Institute of Statistics in Romania, in 2015 a number of 184.600 students enrolled in 9th grade and of these only 143.949 students sign up to enter the baccalaureate exam. Only 47,25% of students man-

age to pass the baccalaureate exam (approximately 100.058 students).

Related to the number of students that reach Higher Education in 2008 a number of 1.029.955 students enrolled, whereas in 2014 only 540.560 students enrolled (of which 461.314 enrolled in public universities and 79.246 enrolled in private education). There is a significant drop rate.

As for the number of students that manage to get a university degree, in 2013 there were a total of 433. 234 students in universities, but only a number of 95.022 of them manage to finish and get a university degree. As seen, a percentage of 21% of them complete their university studies.

### *Spain*

According to the latest report about statistics on Spanish university system (2015), the evolution of students enrolled in a Bachelor's degree or equivalent remains relatively stable since 2010/11 (see figure 9).

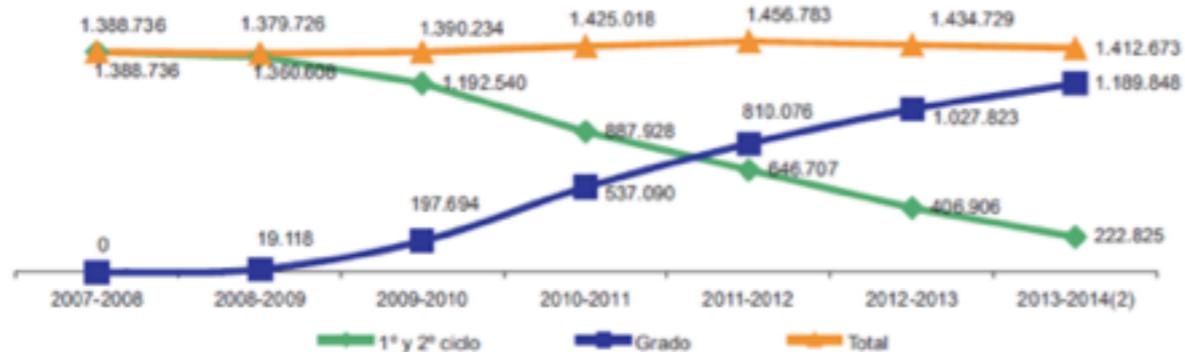


Figure 9: Evolution of undergraduate students enrolled in the 1st and 2nd cycle. From 2007-2008 to 2013-2014. Source: Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport in Spain (2015).

According to the same report (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports in Spain, 2015), in recent years (1993 to 2014) there have been slight variations in the distribution of students between different areas of knowledge (see Table 2). For example, while students of Health Sciences have increased (currently, account for 15.01% of the total of students), Experimental Science students are the ones who have decreased the most, currently representing a 5.82% of the total university students (26.3% less than 10 years ago).

	Curso Académico			Tasa de variación					
	1993-94	2003-04	2012-13	2013-14 <sup>(2)</sup>					
				Total	Univ. Públicas	Univ. Privadas			
<b>Total</b>	1.364.951	1.487.279	1.434.729	1.412.673	1.239.361	173.312	-1,5%	-5,0%	3,5%
<b>Rama de enseñanza<sup>(1)</sup></b>									
Ciencias Sociales y Jurídicas	716.365	727.297	680.759	666.562	569.176	97.386	-2,1%	-8,4%	-7,0%
Ingeniería y Arquitectura	285.674	394.705	316.670	297.596	274.582	23.014	-6,0%	-24,6%	4,2%
Artes y Humanidades	146.722	140.997	138.437	134.912	128.418	6.494	-2,5%	-4,3%	-8,0%
Ciencias de la Salud	105.245	115.502	215.318	231.865	187.414	44.451	7,7%	100,7%	120,3%
Ciencias	110.945	108.778	83.545	81.738	79.771	1.967	-2,2%	-24,9%	-26,3%

Table. 2. Evolution of university students enrolled in undergraduate and 1st and 2nd cycle teaching branch. Source: Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport in Spain (2015).

As regards performance, undergraduate students have a performance of 76.3% (in every 100 credits enrolled, they pass 66.6) during the 2012/13 academic year. The success rate (% of credits passed over the total submitted) is 86.7%. The branch of Health Sciences is not only the fastest growing branch of enrolment, but also it presents the highest rate of performance (83.1%).

In Spain, the university dropout includes students who enrolled for one course and have not been formally enrolled for the next two years, without considering enrolment cancellations in this recount (meaning, students who never appeared as university students). Dropout rate corresponds to the percentage of a cohort of undergraduate students newly admitted that are not enrolled in the following two years. Instead, the rate of moving out to a different career corresponds to the per-

centage of a cohort of newly undergraduate students enrolling in another study in the following two courses (MECD, 2015). As we can see in the Table 3, during the 2009-2010 academic year, a 26.9% of students decided to dropout (19% in the first year and 7.9% in the second year). The area of knowledge that accumulates a higher dropout rate is Arts with a 39.5% of university dropout. However, areas with lower dropout rates are Social Sciences and Law (24.9%) and Health Sciences (24.7%).

Rama de enseñanza <sup>(1)</sup>	Curso Académico					Tasa de variación			
	1993-94	2003-04	2012-13	2013-14 <sup>(2)</sup>		Anual	2013-14 / 2003-04	2013-14 / 1993-94	
				Total	Univ. Públicas Privadas				
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.364.951</b>	<b>1.487.279</b>	<b>1.434.729</b>	<b>1.412.673</b>	<b>1.239.361</b>	<b>173.312</b>	<b>-1,5%</b>	<b>-5,0%</b>	<b>3,5%</b>
Ciencias Sociales y Jurídicas	716.365	727.297	680.759	666.562	569.176	97.386	-2,1%	-8,4%	-7,0%
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Ciencias	110.945	108.778	83.545	81.738	79.771	1.967	-2,2%	-24,9%	-26,3%

Table 3. Dropout rate and shift to a different bachelor's degree, in educational branches. Cohort of first enrolment in the 2009-2010 academic year. Source: Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport in Spain (2015)

Finally, in relation to the graduation rate, according to the annual report of the OECD (2015), Spanish graduation rate of Bachelor's degree or equivalent (ISCED 6) stood at 18% in 2013, well under the average of OECD (36%) and EU-21 (34%).

In the comparative chart developed by the Fundación Conocimiento y Desarrollo (2014) we can notice that graduation rate of the Spanish university system has always been placed below the rate of the OECD and EU-21 (see Figure 10). In this regard, it is noteworthy that from the graduate students during the 2011-2012 academic year, a percentage of 12.1% enrolled in a Master's degree within the next year, and a 7.3% decided to take a Master's degree in the same university where they studied.

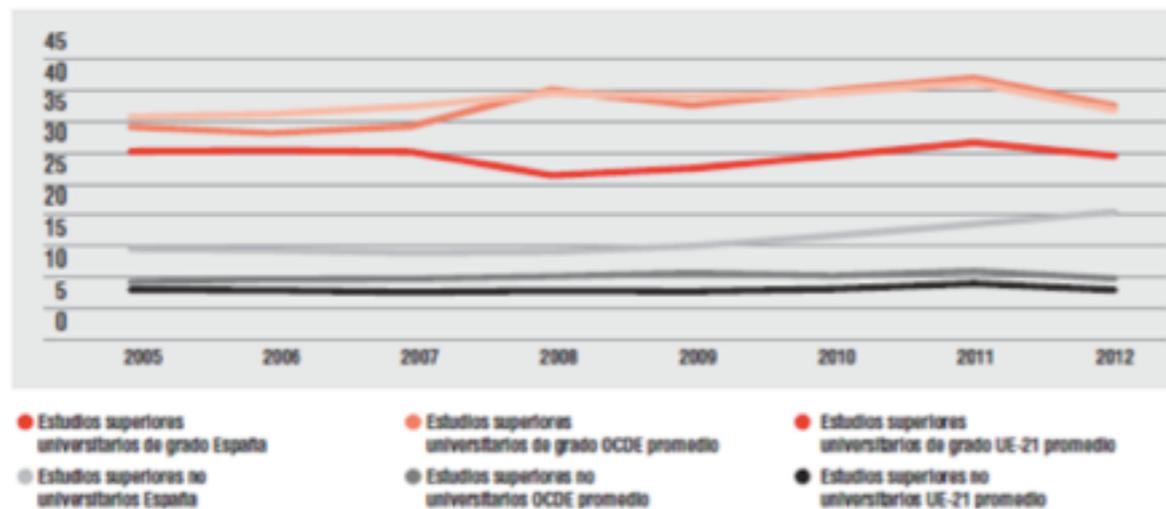


Figure 10: Evolution of graduate rates (2005-2012). Source: Knowledge and Development Foundation (2014)

## United Kingdom

Since the late 1990s, the rate of participation in higher education among young people has increased from 30 per cent to 38 per cent in England. This represents a proportional increase of 26%. Although there are large differences in student enrolment in terms of gender and also region. There were approximately 42% of young women enrolled in higher education in 2011/12 compared to 34% of young men. A high of 48% of young people in London were enrolled in higher education compared to 33% in the North East of England in the same period (HEFCE, 2013). There was, however, a drop in full-time student enrolments in England in 2012/13 predominantly due to the fees increase to £9,000 per year. There has also been a well-documented decline in part-time student numbers. There have been a number of reasons given to account for the dramatic decline in part-time study, including cuts to teaching grants and eligibility for tuition fee loans. Concurrently, the economic crisis has made it less likely for students to be able to fund their own part-time study (Figure 11).

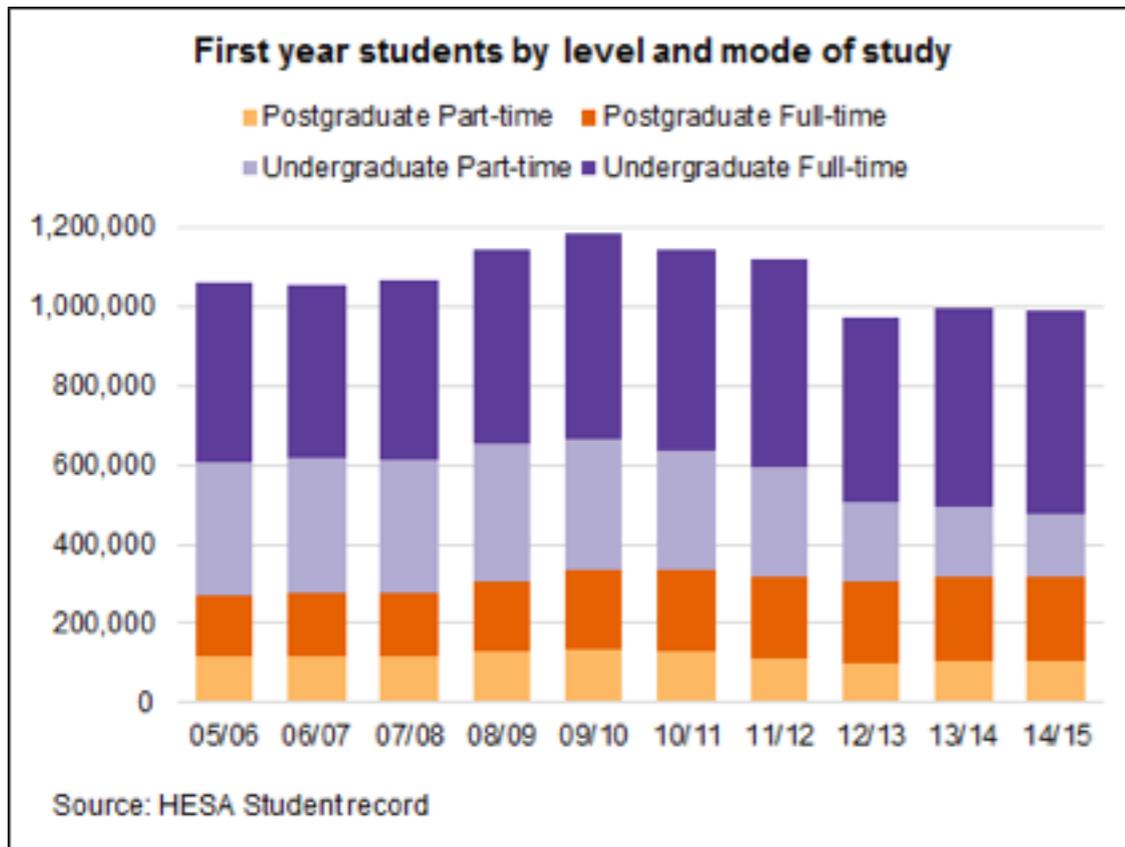


Figure 11

The number of female students is higher with 57.3% female and 42.7% male students who are UK domicile in 2013-14. However, there is still a general disparity in terms of gender and subject studied as the figure below shows. Computing, Engineering and Maths subjects tend to attract more male than female students (Figure 12).

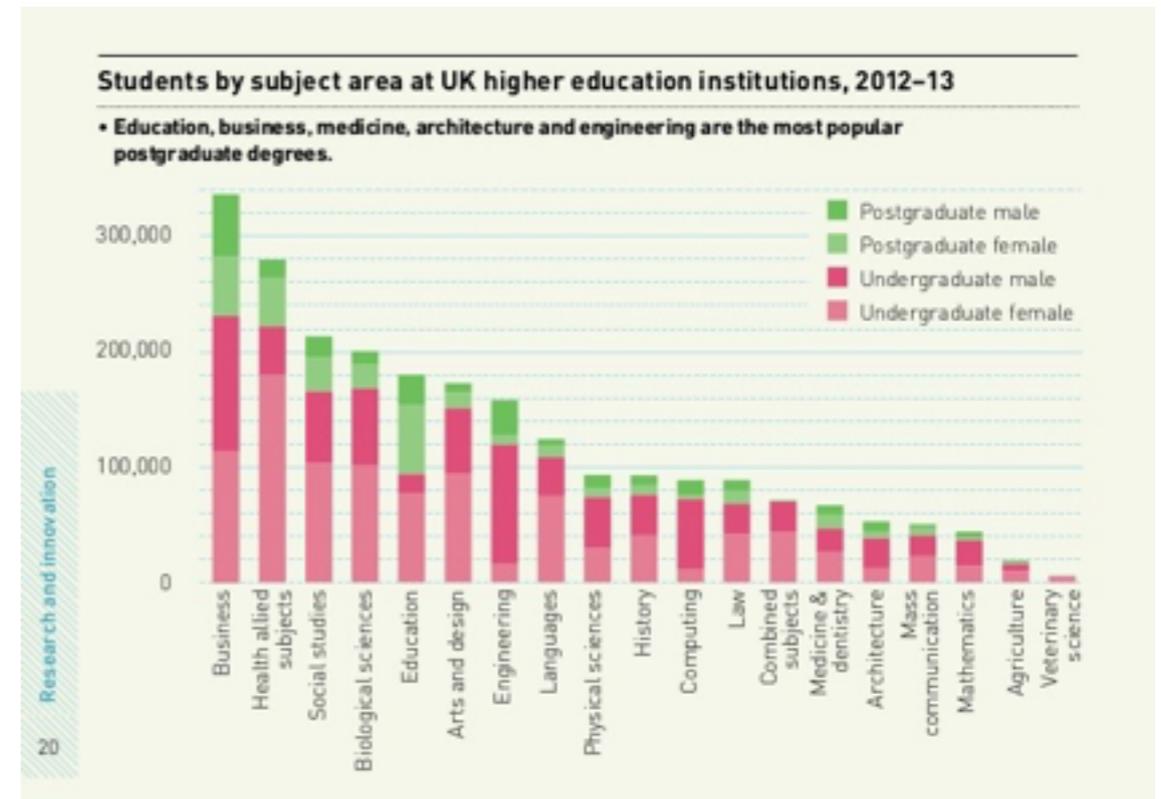


Figure 12

As for completion, UK universities have a relatively high rate with a fairly small percentage of non-continuation students across the whole sector. Figure 13 shows that in 2012/13 there were 5.7% of first year students at UK universities who did not continue in higher education and this represents a smaller percentage than in many of the previous years, indicating some improvement in general. However, there are some differences across higher education institutions with some recording a non-continuation rate of less than 2% such as the University of Bristol and the University of Cambridge and others such as London Metropolitan University and London South Bank University with a 13% or 14% non-continuation rate in 2012/13.

In general, the newer (post-1992) universities may have a much more diverse intake of students and show a relatively higher rate of non-continuation rate.

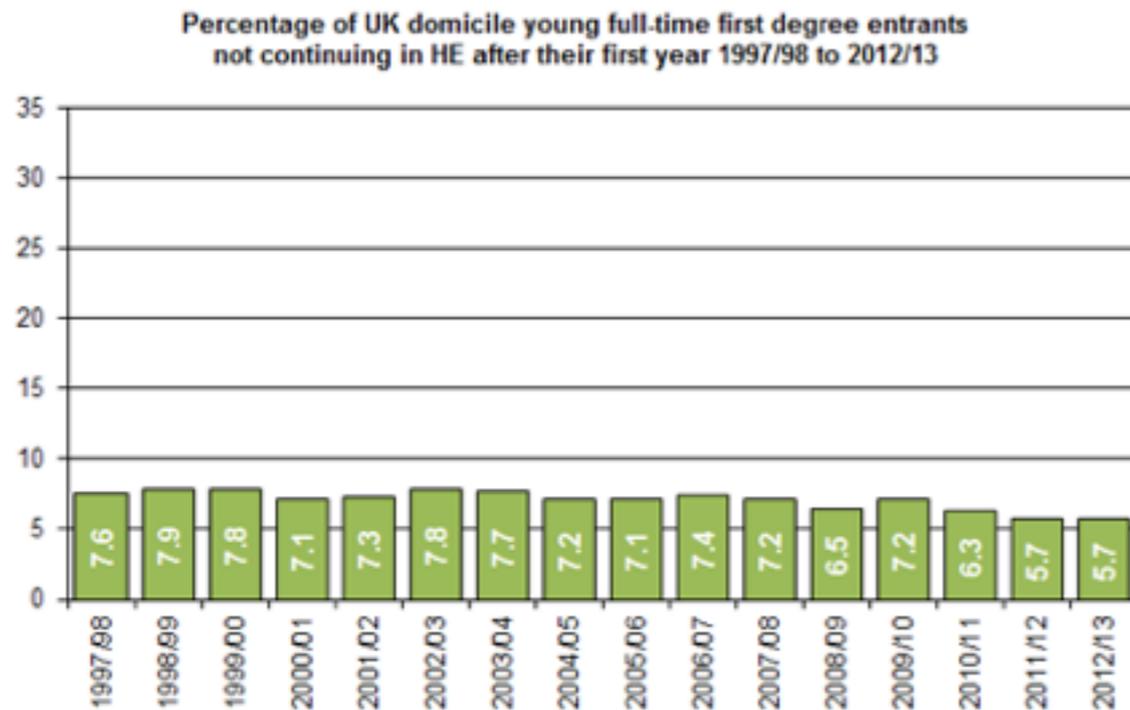


Figure 13

The graduation rates for students in the UK, therefore is high (Figure 14). Moreover, the % of students gaining a ‘good’ i.e. upper second class honours or first class honours degree has been increasing leading to some concern about grade inflation (Bachan, 2015).

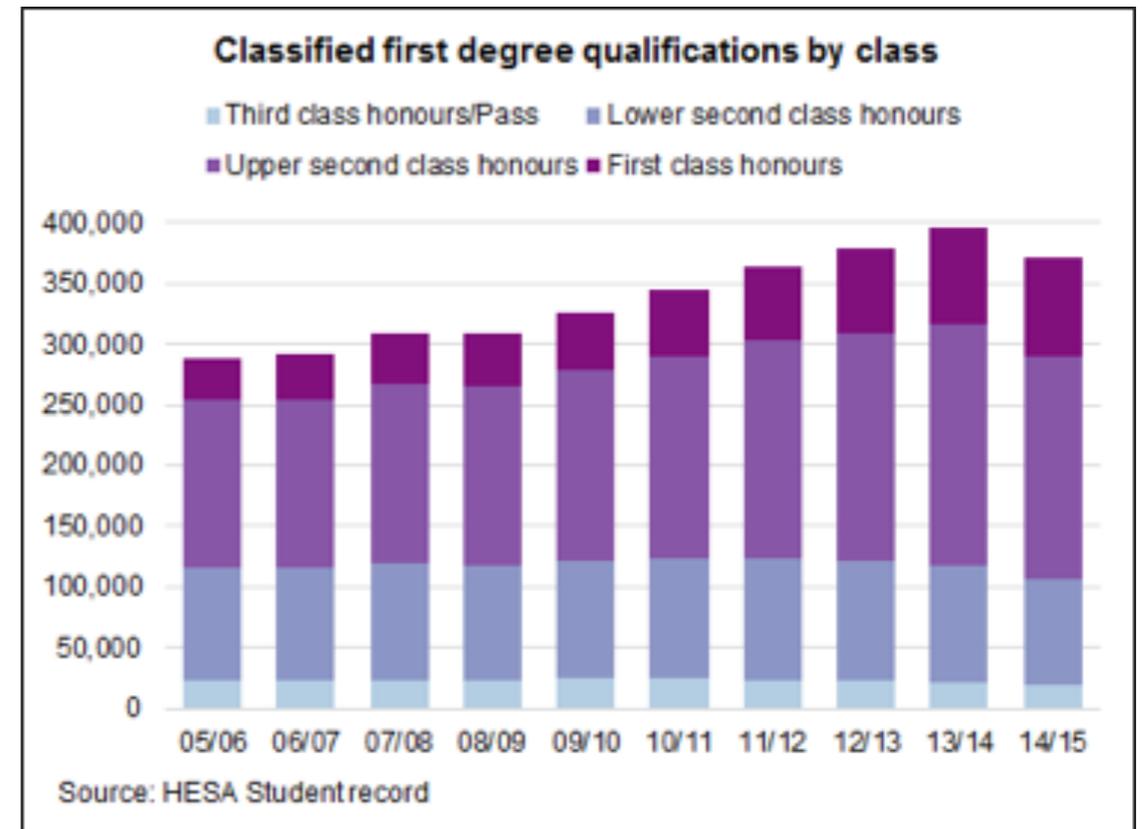


Figure 14

### 3.4 FEES, LOANS AND GRANTS

#### *Finland*

In comparison to many other countries, Finnish state provides lots of economical support for students in the high education. There are, however, challenges such as balancing work life and studies and feelings of loneliness and social exclusion to be tackled.

Study Grant is a government financed benefit, which is paid at the student's bank account monthly. Students are eligible for the Study Grant only for the months when they study (when they gain about 5 ECTS per month). The amount is approximate 340 € per month for most students. In addition a student may be entitled to the Housing Supplement which is maximum 200 €. Government also guarantees student loans up to 400 € per month if conditions are met.

The government supports students not only by Study grant but also by lowering prices. The cafeterias at educational institutions offer lunches for students at low cost (around 2-3 euros) and the difference is reimbursed by the government. Furthermore, the cost of student housing is lowered by government's financial backing for the student housing foundations. There are also significant reductions in the price of using public transport.

In general, all education is free in Finland including secondary and tertiary degrees. However, students in university must pay a mandatory fee to enroll for the academic year. This mandatory fee is a little over 100 € and covers membership fee for the students' union and health services.

Currently a change is planned to the legislation allowing tuitions to be charged from students coming outside EU/EEA-area. The current sum is planned to be minimum 1500 € per academic year.

Since the competition to get a place in a popular field of study may be fierce, many opt for open university or polytechnic courses. These cost money but may lead to acceptance without regular application process. It is not possible to earn a degree

or study all mandatory courses for a degree in the open university. These courses cost about 10 - 40 € per ECT.

As a whole, nearly half of all students feel that they are doing well financially. University students are more confident in their situation than polytechnic students. Slightly over half of all students estimate that living expenses take over half of their disposable income. 62 % of students feel they need to work to ensure their livelihood and 62 % have reported to have received financial aid from their family. However 61 % of students experience difficulties in making ends meet and 15 % of students (2012) evaluate their financial situation to be unstable and means of support to be very limited. The average income of a student living independently was 800 € in spring 2013, with half the income derived from earned income, just under a third from student aid (government student grant), 8% was financial support from parents and 13% other sources of income.

### *Italy*

After a decade of continuous growth, in the last three years the percentage of students having received an economic help to attend higher education is blocked at 35%. More important, if the amount of support offered is stable, the features of that facilitation are changed over time. The share of students who got the scholarship decreased, while the proportion of students who qualified for a total or partial exemption from national and regional taxes increased. This way, the reduction of

economic provisions from the national and regional authority to the university administration implied that direct allocation of grants has been substituted by the catering of indirect benefits to students. As a result, the current amount of public support provided by Italian universities has a recipient quota below the international average.

Nevertheless, the increase of total or partial exemption is not able to fully replace the reduction of grants provided. Many students are now officially suitable for obtaining a grant, but the list is too long to allow them to actually get it. This has an immediate impact on the real equity of the entire system. Inequity is even more worsened when we consider the economic divide between Northern and Southern Italy: the latter has less resources available compared to the larger amount of disadvantaged students who apply for loans or grants.

Each university defines the fees at the beginning of the academic year. Tuition and fees are differentiated according to the students' socio-economic background. Field and level of studies, full-time or part-time status, and year of registration are also considered. The overall amount of fees paid by students at the end of year should not be higher than 20% of public funding received by the university. The average amount of tuition and fees for students is euro 1,431 per year. Students who are able to provide documentary evidence that they come from a disadvantaged socio-economic background pay euro 919 per year on average. Universities can also exempt some students on the basis of higher marks they are able to get during their university attendance. If the child has a proven student status, parents can receive tax benefits based on real edu-

cational expenditure, as long as the child is tax dependent on his/her parents.

Tuition and fees increased about 8% in the last three years (13% if we consider the last six years).

### *Portugal*

Economic downturn has severely hit Portugal. Although that well known fact, Portugal goes on investing on the higher education sector – in 2012, 9196 USD per student (15028 USD OECD average). Tuition fees for 1st cycle of tertiary education have increased in the last years reaching now about 1,000 €/year.

As for needs-based grants, only 15% of the HE students receive that support. The system is run by the Direção Geral do Ensino Superior (DGES) for the private sector and in each public higher education institution, by the Student Support Services in articulation with DGES. The value of each grant for each student is assessed measuring the family income, according to the information given by the national taxes system, the social fund system and other relevant information. Also interviews and home visits are elements to try to give the system enough fairness.

The minimum grant received by the students is equivalent to the amount he/she has to pay as a fee in the public higher education institutions. The maximum grants rise to 5,677€/year.

To help families to support expenses with the education of its members, some of that expenses can be deducted when paying the annual taxes.

But obtaining a grant is not easy: the annual family income cannot overpass the 9,000€/ year/member, and family assets must be less than 100,000 €

As for loans, are available from private lenders, usually banks and the government guarantees 10% of the loan. But, crisis is crisis and the families don't want to assume more financing responsibilities. That's why less than 4% of Portuguese students in higher education have a student loan.

In Portugal, all students enrolled in higher education are required to pay tuition fees.

In the case of public higher education, the tuition fee for undergraduate courses, integrated masters and continuing master is fixed by law, in terms of minimum and maximum allowable values. It is then to each university to decide annually which the amount to be collected between these two limits.

Since 2003, the maximum tuition fee is defined by law and updated according to the average inflation rate of the previous calendar year. The minimum tuition fee is equivalent to 1.3 times the national minimum wage. In 2015/2016, the maximum is 1063.47 euros (the lowest value of the last two years) and the minimum value of 656.5 euros per year.

These values are charged only for Portuguese students, the Portuguese-speaking countries – with the exception of Brazil – and the EU countries. As for other students, through the international student status, higher tuition fees may be charged, corresponding to the real cost of each course.

The amount of the fee due for enrollment in other training offered by the higher education system is determined by its competent bodies without legal constraints.

### *Romania*

In Romania, there is no operating loan system or any system of indirect benefits, such as allowances or tax reductions to the families.

The Law of national education (1/4.01.2011) does regulate the loan system in article 204 for students coming from low income families, as well as a payment exempt of 75% for graduates that will practice their profession for a minimum of 5 years in rural environment. Nevertheless, the only mention of loans on the page of the competent institution - the Agency for Loans and Scholarship Grants – is that “the legislation is in progress. No loans are available for the moment.”

The Law of national education stipulates that grants for students in public universities, in every stage of the education cycle (undergraduate, master, PhD) are decided upon and financed from the state budget. Universities may supplement the scholarship fund from own extra-budgetary funds.

The Romanian support system is based on grants and combines need-based and merit-based grants.

Need-based grants are awarded on the basis of an assessment of the financial situation of the student and/or of her/his family. The annual amount is roughly 650 EUR.

Merit-based grants take up several forms. The number of grants is smaller and the amount is higher, in the following order: study bursaries, merit-based scholarships, high achievement scholarships (one per faculty), grants for performance in research. The most common merit-based grants are 550 EUR per year and 900 EUR, only one grant per faculty exceeding 1000 EUR (1340 EUR per year for high achievement).

Students also benefit from other forms of financial support, mentioned in the Law of education:

- subsidies for accommodation and boarding;
- free health care and psychological assistance at the university medical centers and psychologists', or state medical centers and hospitals;
- 50% reduction for local public transport, domestic transport by road, railway and ship. Students from foster care have free transportation;
- free access to museums, concerts, theatre performances, opera, movies and other cultural and sports events organized by public institutions, within the limit of the budgets of the respective institutions;
- free camps for candidates coming from environments with high socioeconomic risk or socially marginalized.

According to the Law of national education, higher education in public universities is free for a number of students with daily attendance, allocated yearly by the Government, and tuition is financed from the state budget, for public universities. A person may benefit from financing from the budget for a single graduation, respectively, master's degree and PhD programme.

Tuition fees exemptions are established by the Law of national education (Art. 205) for candidates coming from foster care (at least one place per university) and those coming from environments with high socioeconomic risk or socially marginalized – Roma people, high school graduates in the rural environment or cities with less than 10,000 inhabitants (number to be decided by each university senate).

To sum up, the conditions for benefiting from free higher education are: to be admitted on the subsidized positions on a merit base, to be a full time student, to be a first-time student (a student can benefit of gratuity for only one cycle), to be at socioeconomic risk (limited places). The gratuity is maintained over the entire course of the studies, and does not change on a yearly basis (on a merit base or other criteria).

The remaining positions in public universities are available by paying the tuition fee decided upon by the university Senate. The payment of tuition fees applies a percentage of full-time students, and all the half-time and distance students. All students enrolled in private universities have to pay a fee.

In Romania, a minority of full time students (less than half) are paying tuition fees in publicly funded higher education in-

stitutions. The fees amount between 100 and 1000 euro/year, with social studies having the lowest rates and art students (film) having the highest.

All students pay admission and registration taxes and exemptions can be decided upon by the university Senate.

Other taxes are required for situations which interfere with or go beyond the regular program and organization of the university: the overdue of the period of schooling provided by the law, re-registrations, re-examinations, other forms of evaluation or activities which overdue the provisions of the education plans. (Art. 222, Law of national education 1/4.01.2011)

### *Spain*

There are different types of scholarships at a national, regional and local level. However, in this report we only show data from the national system of scholarships (tuition, mobility, residence, materials). In all cases, the amount of the grant depends on the student's family income and in a particular type of student performance. All students that receive some type of scholarship are also exempt from paying the cost of tuition. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport in Spain (2015), the average amount of grants awarded in the 2012-2013 academic year for undergraduate and equivalents was € 3,117. During the same year, 38.2 % of freshmen from the Spanish university system received a general scholarship. A 22.1% of all university students have received some type of scholarship.

The cost of official degrees is calculated based on the number of credits enrolled by the student, the type of Bachelor degree and the academic performance, as surcharges occur when a student enrolls two or more times in the same subject.

The enrolment cost, in the case of public universities, is established by the Decree of each Autonomous Community, always within the limits established at a state level. During 2014-2015, the cost of enrolment of a Bachelor degree ranged between € 750 and € 2600 per course. In the case of Master's degrees, ECTS credit price was between € 17 and € 65.

The annual report of the Spanish Rectors' Conference (2015) highlighted that in the 2013/14 academic course, public university prices in Spain were one of the highest in the EU, behind only the United Kingdom, Ireland and Italy. According to recent data from the European Union (2015), a 72% of college students pay the cost of their studies.

### *United Kingdom*

All publicly funded universities in the UK were free to access until the introduction of tuition fees following the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998, which set an annual tuition fee of £1,000 in England. This was increased to £3,000 in 2006, though provision was made for these fees to be repaid once the graduate was earning £15,000. There also continued to be a means tested package of support for students coming from poorer backgrounds. Following the Browne Review in 2010, fees were raised to £9,000 a year starting from 2012.

Further adjustments were put forth in the 2015 budget, with a proposed fee increase in line with inflation from the 2017-18 academic year onwards, and the planned scrapping of maintenance grants from September 2016 (Figure 15).

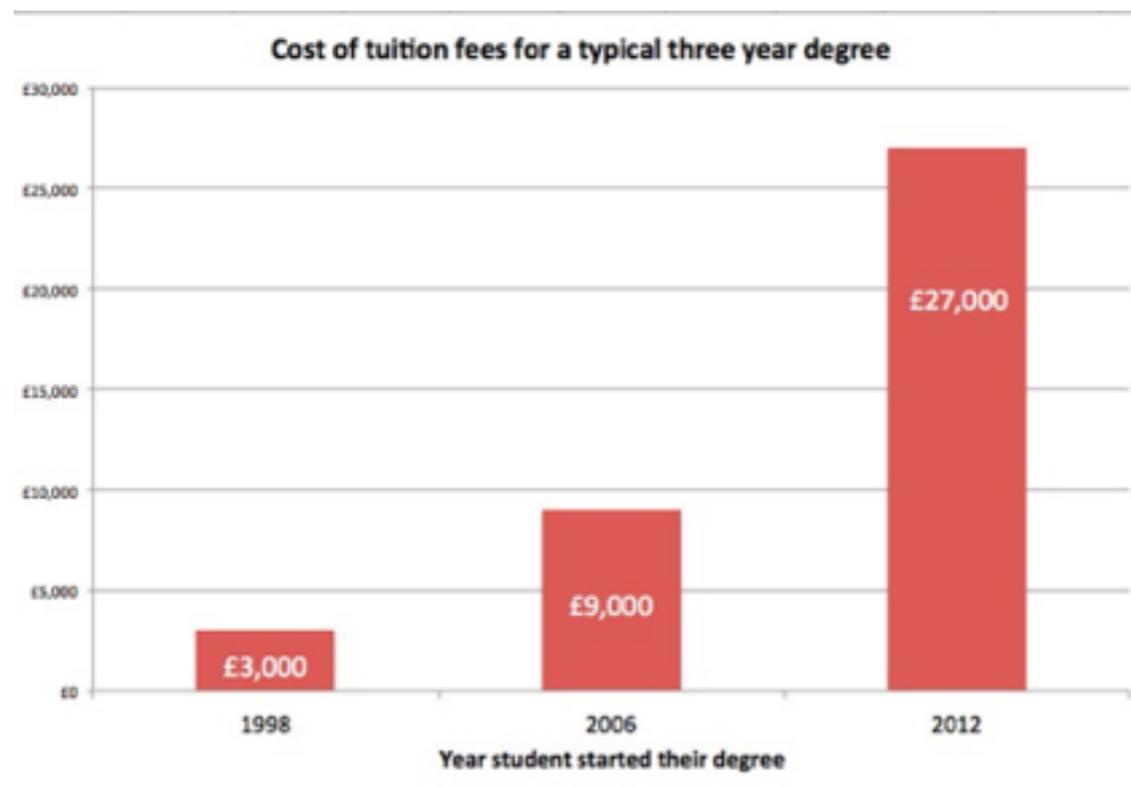


Figure 15

The other countries in the United Kingdom have different approaches with a no fees policy in Scotland and lower fees in both Wales and Northern Ireland.

### 3.5 STUDENTS' RESIDENCE AND COMMUTING

#### *Finland*

Most Finnish students leave home before starting higher education. Only 4 % of all students live with their parents or relatives. Most students live alone in their own or shared apartment (35%). 31 % of students live with their spouse (girl- /boy-friend, wife/husband) and 15 % in some other kind of shared household. As a distinction, in a shared apartment students pay individual rent (they share kitchen and/or bathroom) but in shared household the rent and other expenses are shared. 14% of students live with their children. Student housing foundations operate in larger Finnish cities and they offer affordable apartments for students often very close to the campus.

#### *Italy*

As we outlined, university students in Italy generally live with their families, as students' residences are not widespread. Only 1 student out of 10 can access a university residence. Moreover, private accommodation is generally costly and often offers only low-quality flats.

The tendency to stay at home during university studies is increased by the dissemination of higher education institution throughout the country: almost every middle size town has its own University or, at least, a Departmental branch. With the

exception of some very specialized courses, the most common degrees are available to students within 100 km from home. Consequently, commuting is really frequent. Two out of three students usually travel to get the University, and 50% are travelling every day to attend classes. Commuting to the nearest Department is also a viable solution in economic terms, especially for students from families with low incomes and limited budget allocated to attend the university pathway.

### *Portugal*

In Portugal, most of the higher education students live with their families. That is one way to decrease costs with education, since one room in the most common cities where higher education institutions are situated, costs from about 150€ to 350€/month.

Although most of universities and polytechnics offer accommodation in student residences, under the law, that accommodation is preferentially used by economically-needed students who perceive the public grants. Usually, less than 10% of the students at an HE institution have a place in student's residence.

For those reasons, commuting is the most often option since most of the students have to travel less than 50km daily. The higher education network is more than enough to offer the proximity needed by most of the students.

### *Romania*

Students' place of residence, according to Romanian National Institute of Statistics (INS), at the beginning of academic year 2011-2012 the distribution of students by residence is:

	Public Universities (%)
Urban	75.26
Rural	2.74

Table 4: Students' place of residence

Taking in consideration the fact that in the year 2011 INS reported that 44% of the population of Romania resides in rural areas, the reports from the World Bank on higher education draw attention to some of these issues, concluding: "The difference observed in the rate of rural-urban differences in education denotes the lack of access to higher education residing in rural areas." (World Bank report on the state of higher education in Romania, 2007).

There is no statistical data about students' level of commuting, but the only aspect that is regulated by the law (National Education Law 1/2011, Art. 205) is that every student benefits from subsidised expenses with a minimum 50% on the local transport, inland transport, rail and/or sea.

In what students' dormitories are concerned, most universities in Romania have dormitories in order to provide to own students a less expensive accommodation alternative. Accommodation for students in dormitories is regulated at the institutional level, there are no legislative regulations. Analysing the evolution of the number of units, which can be found in the chart below, we can observe a phenomenon of lowering them. Thus, this development did not follow the trend of growth trend of students enrolled of higher education.

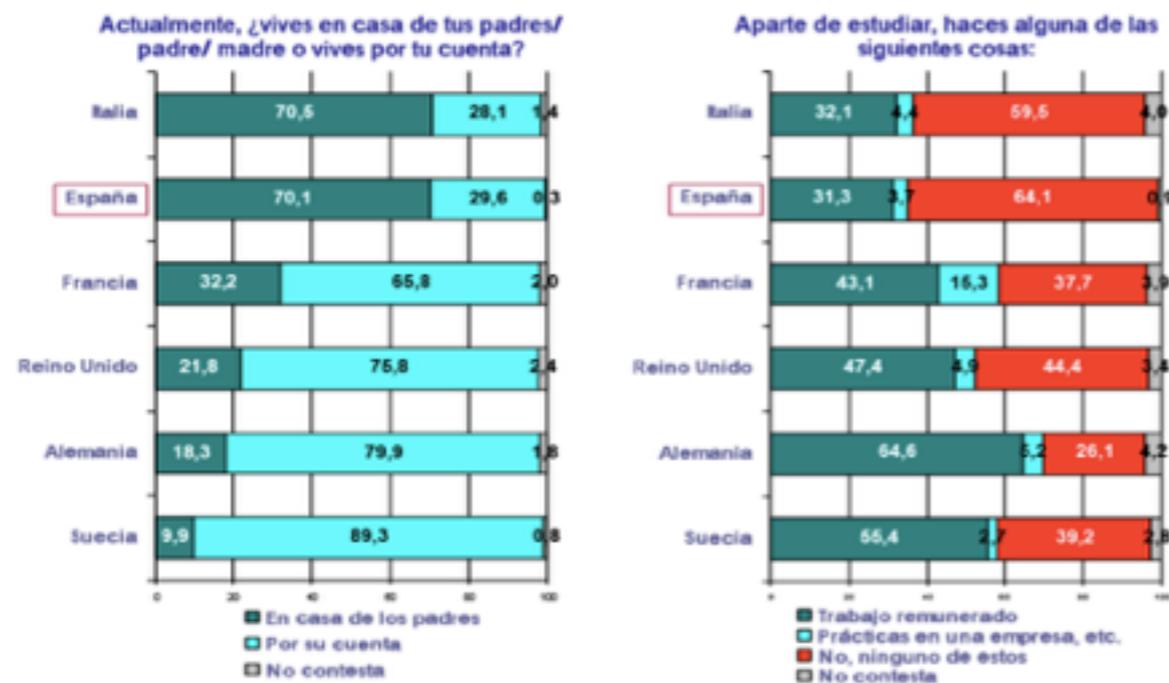


Figure 16: Number of dormitories in public universities

## Spain

According to BBVA Foundation report (2010), seven out of ten students in Spain live at home with their parents, while only one in ten does in Sweden, two in ten in Germany and UK and three in ten in France.

Family independence is correlated with economic independence. Thus, the majority of Germans (65%), Swedish (55%), British (47%) and the relative majority of French (43%), besides their studies they have a paid job, meanwhile in Spain, this percentage decreases almost a third.

Consequently, with the highest level of family dependency, Spaniards are the ones who most primarily rely on the help of family to cover their expenses (73% and 70% respectively). For most in France (50%) and relative majority in Germany (43%), the main source of its income also comes from the family, although in Germany a significant (31%) percentage of students finance its expenses with income from work.

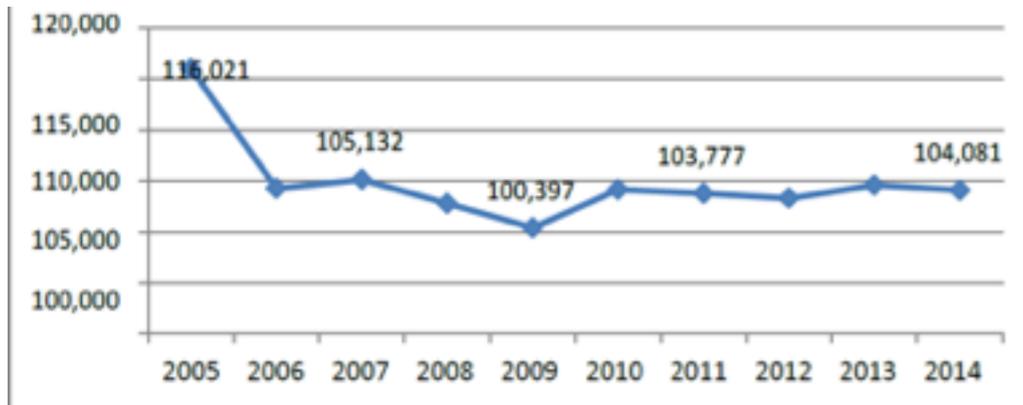


Figure 17: Students' living conditions. Source: BBVA (2010).[http://www.fbbva.es/TLFU/dat/resultados\\_universitarios\\_2010.pdf](http://www.fbbva.es/TLFU/dat/resultados_universitarios_2010.pdf)

### 3.6 STUDENT WORKERS AND EMPLOYMENT

#### *Finland*

Slightly more than half of students are gainfully employed in addition to studying. In 2012 about a third of students had summer jobs (1-3 months) and 71 % of students had worked full time over the last year. Older and part time students work full time much more than others. 55% of students work part-time regularly and short (less than a month) employment periods are also common. The amount of student workers has declined over the last years. After the economic downfall in

2008, a vast share of all lost jobs were actually students losing their employment.

Working students used about 27 hours studying each week in 2014 (see also section Time balance). This is 9 hours less than students who don't work at all. It can be claimed that working delays graduation but gaining work experience can also be linked to better chances of being employed on the field of study after graduation.

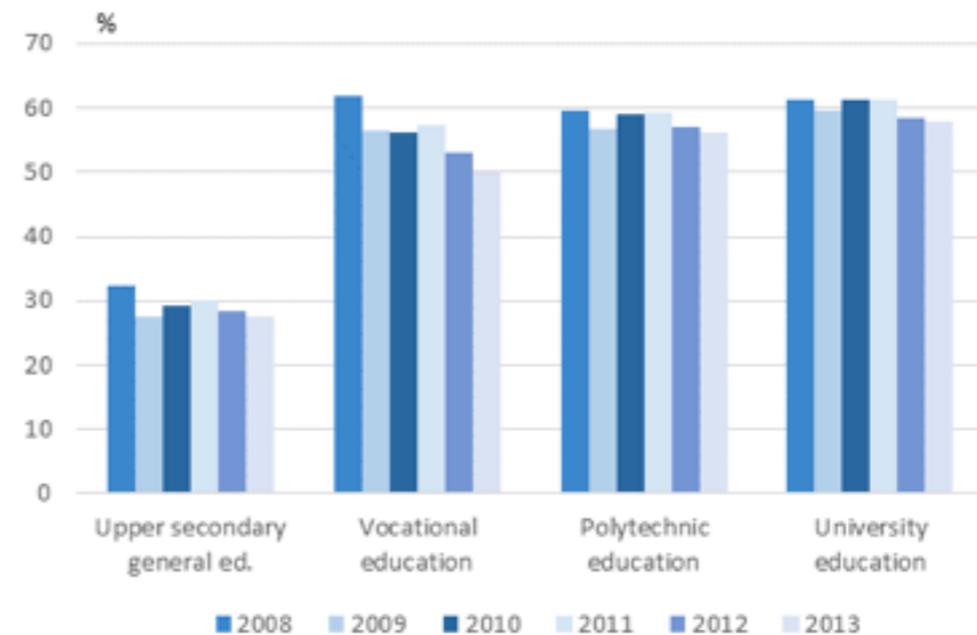


Figure 18: Percentages of student workers. Statistics Finland, 2015

## *Italy*

Compared to the pre-crisis era, the number of students working is decreased by one third, from 39% to 26%, especially in the most depressed areas (South and North-East of Italy). Work is a stable feature of students' life: younger students are occupied in temporary jobs, whereas older ones tend to be increasingly involved in semi-permanent contracts.

It is worth to note that students whose family doesn't have a higher education background show a higher share of self-earned income than their fellow students with higher education background. However, working is not exclusively aimed to contribute to the family budget, but also on the one hand to build a kind of partial autonomy from the family economic support, on the other to assess the ability to deal with the labour market acquiring additional competences through the work experience.

As a consequence, the large majority of young people attending higher education can be defined as "de facto part-time students". Nevertheless, the academic structures still struggle to acknowledge this phenomenon and transform organisation in order to facilitate student workers through flexible schedules and programs. This mismatch accounts for the recurring delay in getting the degree which affects a large portion of students, especially at the bachelor level.

## *Portugal*

Here again, the crisis, had a relevant impact on the contingent of student workers in Portugal.

The number of student workers in the higher education decreased about 27% in the last five years. The reasons appointed for that are of different types: a) Families had to reduce expenses and most of them had to choose to maintain their houses instead of paying the HE fees and other expenses with education; b) Despite specific legislation protecting student workers is evident the pressure over them by their enterprises to spend more time working and investing less on studies; c) Unemployment increased severely with consequences on the material life of individuals and families.

On the other side, there is, in the last years, an increasing contingent of elder people, mainly to assist at master degrees according to what can be considered the need for a long life learning in order to update, mainly in the technological areas, the knowledge needed by some sectors of our enterprises.

## *Romania*

There are no national reports or statistical data in what student workers are concerned, but some remarks can be made. Student workers encounter a series of obstacles during their studies: they may face inflexible curricula, lack of evening lectures and the absence of part-time program; in some cases can face higher tuition fees; they may lose grant funding if

	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Total	110370	137986	184229	186074	144612
% from total	12.78%	14.27%	17.02%	17.22%	14.75%

they win too much; may not have enough time and energy for studies because of work.

Most of working students come from low income families and need to work in order to financially support themselves during studies or are mature students who started working before going to university. In what mature students are concerned, according to the data received from the process of national university classification, during 2009-2010 academic year, 14.75% of the students were over 30 years old. The evolution of mature students from 2005-2006 is:

Table 5: The evolution of the number of mature students enrolled in higher education

### *Spain*

The number of university students who study and work have decreased by a 16% in one year because of the crisis, as it can be deduced from the report "Facts and Figures of the University System" with data published by the Ministry of Education in Spain. Students enrolled who combined both activities in

the 2008-2009 were a 27.4 per cent on average, compared to the previous 32.6 per cent. Thus, those who only study increased from 67.4 to 72.6 per cent in 2008- 2009, when there were 1,504,276 students enrolled in the set of all university cycles.

Three out of four of those who combine study and a job are employed for more than 15 hours a week and the rest of workers are employed for fewer hours. In the case of the National University of Distance Education (UNED), the largest of Spain, declared that a 58% of 142,551 undergraduate students and students over 25 years have a job. According to provisional enrolment data of the current course formalized so far, data provided by this institution, 82,942 of those students have reported that have a job; 25,868 have ensured that do not work and 33,741 have not responded to the survey.

### *United Kingdom*

Employment prospects in terms of those represented in official statistics are good. As the chart below demonstrates, there are only 7% of people holding a first degree who are unemployed with the remainder either in work (at home or overseas) or in further study. There is, however, a continuing concern with underemployment of graduates. Research has shown that "for those who have graduated since the 2008 financial crash, job hunting has often been a tale of woe – almost half of employed recent graduates in 2013 were working

in what the Office for National Statistics classes as a “non-graduate role” (Mathews, 2014).

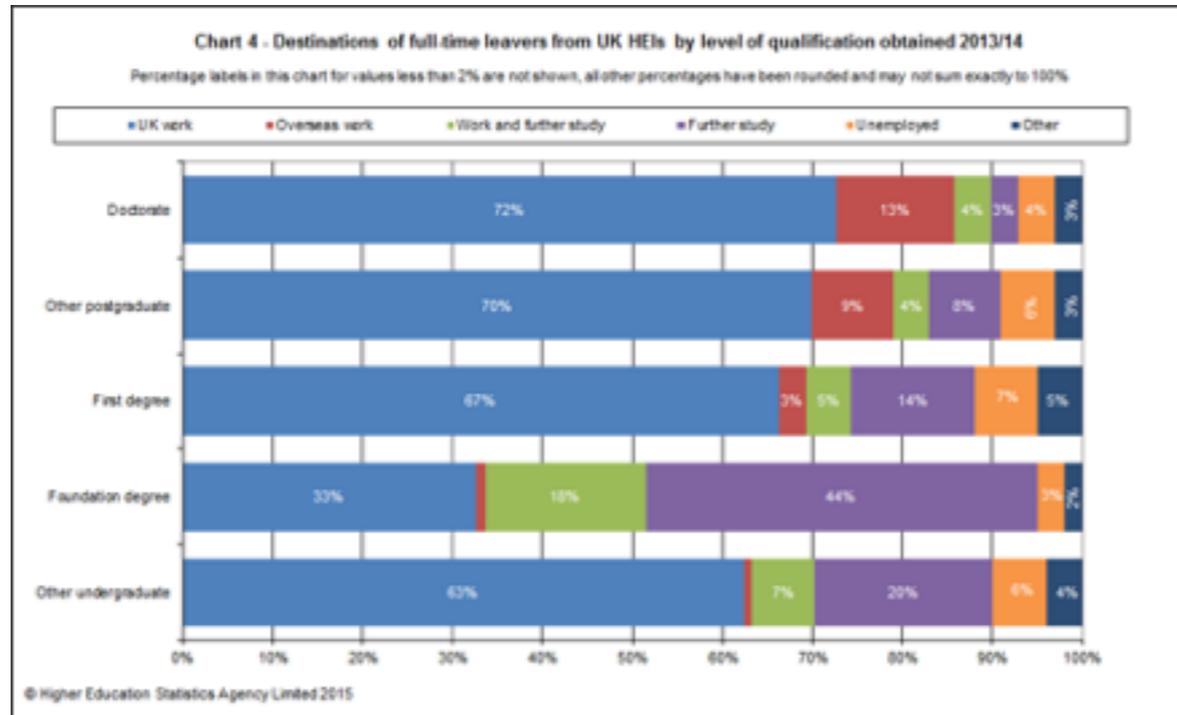


Figure 19

Longitudinal data also seems to show a positive picture in terms of employment for graduates. As the graph below shows, unemployment drops from 8% 6 months after graduation to 2.6% after three and a half year post-graduation.

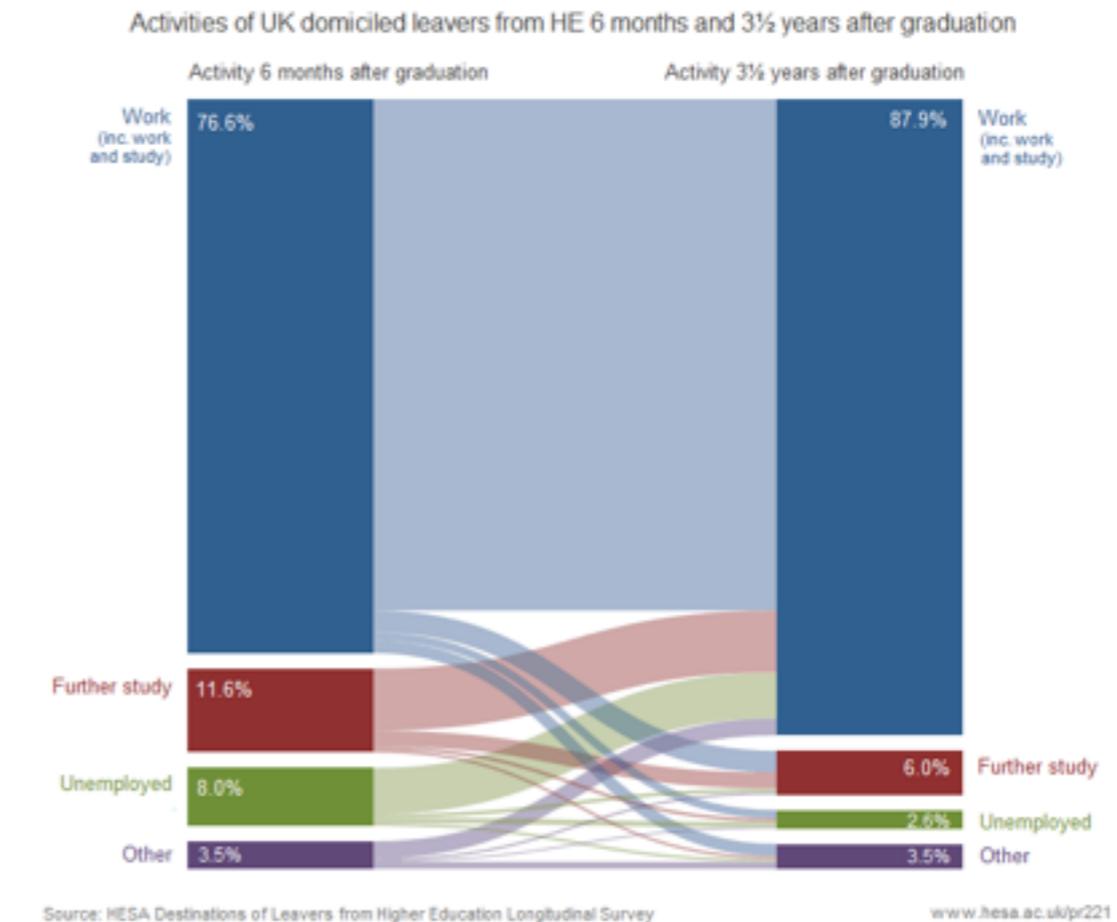


Figure 20

### 3.7 TIME BALANCE

#### *Finland*

83 % of higher education students view themselves as full-time students and half of these are gainfully employed. Majority (83 %) of full-time students spend over 20 hours a week

for in studying while majority (77 %) of part-time students spend over 20 hours working. The average time used for studying is 32 hours per week and the amount is higher for students who don't work (36 h) and much lower for working students (27 h). University students spend more time for independent studying (58 % of total time spent studying) than students in polytechnic (39 %) while polytechnic students spent more time attending lessons (61 %) than university students (42 %).

A little over third of students view that they are progressing slower in their studied than they want. The main reasons for this are working, attitude towards studies and degree of difficulty of the studies. 43 % of students (especially working students) would like to spend more time studying.

### *Italy*

Currently, the total of classes, exercises, individual studying is covering 44 hours/ week per student. Worker students need to add another four more hours. In the last twenty years, the amount of time devoted to learning is significantly increased (+38%).

However, compared to the sudden growth of lectures to the detriment of individual studying which characterised the first years after the Bologna agreement, today the time devoted to the different tasks proves to be more balanced. One of unintended, but positive, effect of the economic crisis which have affect Italy in the last few years is that many students decided to reinvest the time they "save" from forced un-

employment in studying more and consequently, graduating faster than before.

### *Portugal*

Since the implementation of the Bologna process in Portugal, the ECTS credit system expresses the total workload of students in higher education, considering 40 weeks of annual work and 42 hours maximum for the working week. These include contact time (CT) of more collective nature, including through theoretical sessions (T), theoretical and practical training (PT), practical and laboratory teaching (PL), field-work (TC) Seminar (S), Internship (E) and Tutorial Orientation (OT) and also autonomous work time (TA).

One ECTS credit corresponds to about 30 hours of work (contact and autonomous study), and it is expected that a student at full time reaches 60 credits per year (30 credits per semester).

Each institution shall define in the course syllabus, the number of credits per course unit, which will be awarded to students having successfully completed the required assessment.

### *Romania*

Currently, the total of classes, individual study, development of projects and essays, practical work, preparation of current assessments etc. is covering approximately 45 hours/ week

per student, calculated at a rate of 30 hours/ECTS. The time spent for individual and group (classes) study is almost equally balanced.

### Spain

In Spain, students that dedicate more time to study per week are students from Technical bachelor degrees (approximate an average of 17 hours per week) and Health Sciences bachelor degrees (16 hours). Students from Legal Sciences bachelor degrees (14 hours) Experimental (13 hours) and Humanities (13 hours) are placed on this dimension in an intermediate position, while students of Economic Sciences (11 hours) and other Social Sciences (10 hours) are at the lower end of study time per week.

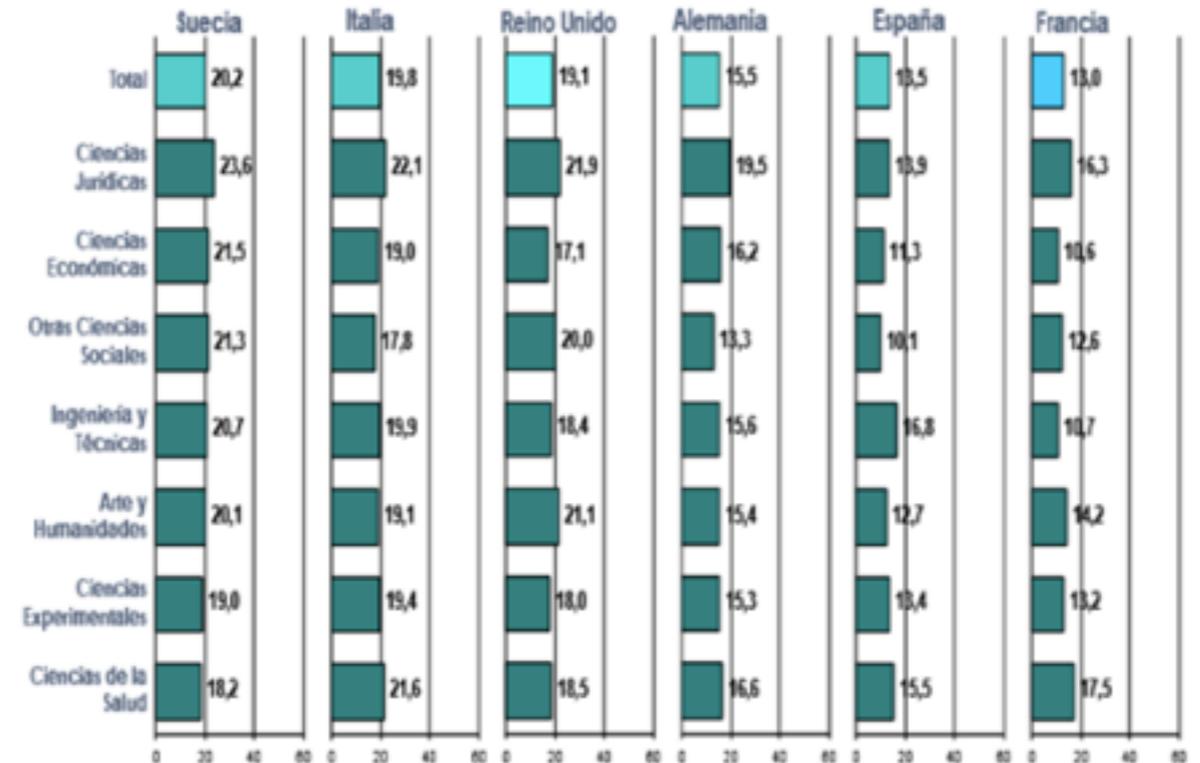


Figure 21. Time dedicated to study. Source: BBVA (2010) [http://www.fbbva.es/TLFU/dat/resultados\\_universitarios\\_2010.pdf](http://www.fbbva.es/TLFU/dat/resultados_universitarios_2010.pdf)

Following this section with the report of the BBVA Foundation (2010), the time devoted to classes and study in Spain it is not compensated between areas of knowledge, and the average distribution of the hours spent on different academic activities evidence differences in profile and requirements of each branch. Students of Health Science and Technical careers are the ones who spend more hours in academic activities, and at the opposite extreme, students of Humanities, Eco-

nomics and other Social Sciences are who dedication of hours is lower.

	Media de horas de clase a la semana		Media de horas de estudio a la semana	Media de horas dedicadas a todas las actividades académicas a la semana
	Clases teóricas	Clases prácticas		
Total	16,1	6,9	13,5	36,5
Ciencias de la Salud	14,7	11,4	15,5	41,6
Ingenierías y carreras Técnicas	16,8	7,3	16,8	40,9
Ciencias Experimentales	16,1	9,2	13,4	38,6
Carreras Jurídicas	15,7	4,9	13,9	34,5
Arte y Humanidades	14,8	5,6	12,7	33,1
Ciencias Económicas	16,6	4,9	11,3	32,8
Otras Ciencias Sociales	16,4	6,2	10,1	32,7

Table 6: Hours of class and study. Source: BBVA (2010). [http://www.fbbva.es/TLFU/dat/resultados\\_universitarios\\_2010.pdf](http://www.fbbva.es/TLFU/dat/resultados_universitarios_2010.pdf)

### 3.9 STUDENTS' SATISFACTION

#### *Finland*

Students are generally pleased with the attitude of personnel towards students. Satisfaction rate has been reported to be 80 % on teaching personnel and 70 % the administrative personnel. Two thirds of students are report to be satisfied with the

pedagogic quality of teaching. Nearly 80 of the students were also satisfied with the study environments such as libraries, computers, buildings and teaching spaces. Student counseling caused most dissatisfaction (22%) and neutral attitudes (28%).

#### *Italy*

After the Bologna reform went into effect, the students' opinion about the value and effectiveness of their academic experience worsened for several years. Only recently, two out of three elements show a considerable improvement. The theoretical skills provided by the courses are generally appreciated by 70% of students. The most important improvement is related to the balance between study requirements and time available: 60% of students think that the overall workload is now more manageable, even though, as we saw, the time allotted to study has increased in the last twenty years.

Nevertheless, students' evaluation remains negative as for the ability of academic courses to provide learners with professional and practical skills. 64% of graduates (especially students having a degree in law and foreign languages) is not satisfied of the level of competences acquired and believes that there is a large gap to be filled if they want to deal effectively with the world of work.

## Romania

After the implementation of the Bologna process, students' views on higher education changed. Romanian students, through students' unions, state that curricular reform, frequently disconnected from the introduction of ECTS, had the effect of increasing student workload and also claim that ECTS had quite different effects in terms of student workload, depending on the scientific area and institution. Nevertheless, some other arguments don't really refer to ECTS credits but to other factors such as the introduction of semesters and of new learning methods. In what qualifications frameworks are concerned, Romanian students report slow progress in their development due, in their opinion, to the mentality of teachers. Results from a national research project on first year students on their satisfaction regarding academic life shows that 66,50% of them are satisfied with the theoretical knowledge they acquire and only 53,83% with the practical activities in which they are involved. The main reasons for dissatisfaction are the amount of tuition fees (32,87%) and low chances of employment after graduation (25,62%).

## Spain

According to the BBVA Foundation report (2010), in Spain it is observed a high level of satisfaction with the chosen career, and in the hypothetical case that the student could go back in

time if possible, the intention of choosing the same career is confirmed.



Figure 22: Chosen career satisfaction from students. Source: B B V A ( 2 0 1 0 ) .

[http://www.fbbva.es/TLFU/dat/resultados\\_universitarios\\_2010.pdf](http://www.fbbva.es/TLFU/dat/resultados_universitarios_2010.pdf)

The high level of career satisfaction is maintained over the years, while the intention to opt out in the hypothetical case of going back in time is reaffirmed. The overall satisfaction of university students to their career is reflected in the favourable assessment of different aspects related to both the content and the level of demand for it.

	2003	2004	2006	2010
Media de satisfacción con la carrera (escala de 0 a 10)	6.8	6.8	6.9	7.3
Porcentaje que responde que "si pudiera volver atrás en el tiempo, volvería a matricularse en los mismos estudios"	72.0	75.0	74.0	78.0

Table 7: Evolution of students' satisfaction. Source: BBVA (2010).

[http://www.fbbva.es/TLFU/dat/resultados\\_universitarios\\_2010.pdf](http://www.fbbva.es/TLFU/dat/resultados_universitarios_2010.pdf)

### United Kingdom

In the UK there is a National Student Survey (<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/nss/>), which captures the student experience and perceptions of key aspects their university experience, including teaching, assessment and feedback, academic support, organisation and management, learning resources, personal development and overall satisfaction. The overall student satisfaction level for 2015 was 86%.

### STUDENT SATISFACTION, 2015

Student satisfaction remains high, with 86% of students satisfied with their course.

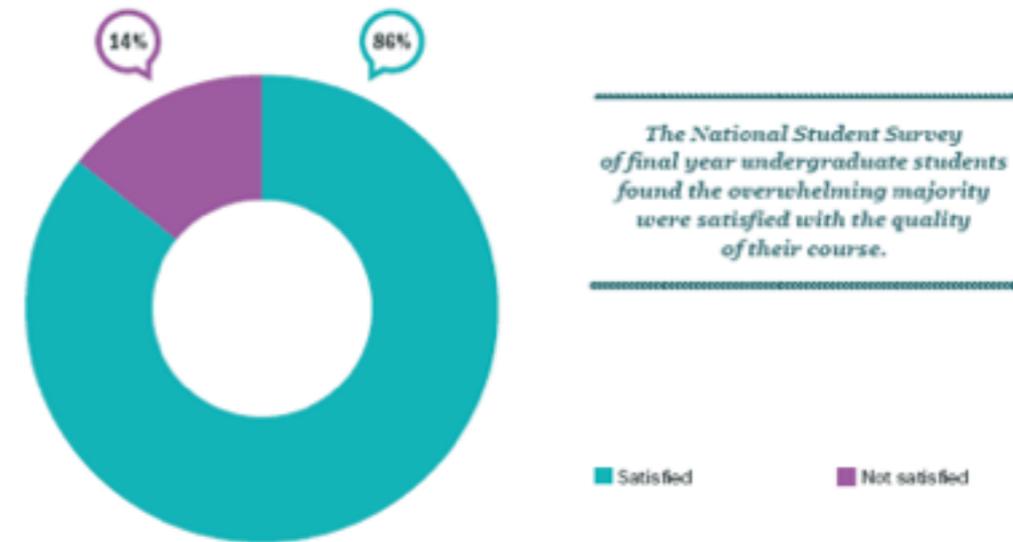


Figure 23

Overall, there are high levels of student satisfaction, though these are variable and as the table below shows, some of the lower scores relate to assessment and feedback and also the organisation and management of courses. It is possible to look at the NSS scores for individual institutions and these ratings now play a significant role in informing university strategies and policies.

Questions		2014 NSS	2015 NSS
		*Satisfied	Satisfied
1-4	The teaching on my course	87%	87%
5-8	Assessment and feedback	72%	73%
9-12	Academic support	81%	82%
13-15	Organisation and management	78%	79%
16-18	Learning resources	85%	86%
19-21	Personal development	82%	83%
22	Overall satisfaction	86%	86%

Table 8

### 3.10 INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY

#### *Finland*

16 % of the students (in 2014) have been abroad during their studies either as exchange students or interns. In addition 20 % of students (25 % of under 30-year-olds) are planning on participating in an exchange program. University students

have been abroad more (18%) than polytechnic students (13%) and they are also more inclined to go. In 38 % of the cases the main financing for the period abroad comes from the (government) student grant and student loan. A quarter of students finances the period abroad with income or savings from working.

#### *Italy*

Since the middle of last decade the number of outgoing students has increased steadily, as that of incoming students has remained stable. Italian students who completed a period of study in international mobility as part of their education in 2014 are around 10%. If we also consider different forms of mobility with a focus on internationalisation, such as language courses, internships, research visiting or summer school, the share reaches about 18% of the total. Outgoing students in 2014 were around 30.000, as 20.000 students were incoming. Observing mobility flows according to the area of study, we note that in the areas “Social sciences”, “Business”, “Law”, and “Humanities and Arts”, for every 100 outgoing students we had around 67 learners incoming. The areas of “Education” and “General Programmes” are the only ones where incoming students are more than those outgoing.

As for the origin and destination of, the vast majority of students prefer to travel to a European country. Spain is the most favoured destination. Among those who choose a non-

European country, the United States has a special prominent role.

### *Portugal*

Portugal has been involved in international projects for student mobility since 1987, the first year of Erasmus. Although the first years represented a small number of students incoming and outgoing, last years had an increased number of students involved in these programmes.

There are several reasons for this increment in what concerns mobility. Unemployment, due to the crisis, has called the attention to the necessity to acquire additional competencies as multicultural contacts, new languages, new experiences are clearly valued by employers.

The investment in student mobility is very considerable. For instance, in 2016 is expected that Portugal will have access to 31,5 million euro through the European Programme Erasmus +.

As for figures, in EU, Portugal is the 9th most preferable destination. In 2012/2013 there were 7041 outgoing students, (9% increase comparing with 2011/2012) and received a total of 9894 incoming students. Spain, Poland and Italy were the main origin of the students we received and were also the main destinations of our outgoing students.

### *Romania*

The mobility and the exchange of students in Romania are ensured through the following cooperation programmes and initiatives in the education and training field:

- European Union programmes;
- Cooperation programmes and bilateral initiatives;
- Cooperation programmes and multilateral initiatives (others than the European Union programmes);
- Unilateral initiatives for supporting students' mobility.

Romania doesn't have a clear evidence of students who had a mobility period. At national level there are different reports, studies and statistical series based on the different definitions of mobility in terms of categories of students enrolled and the different reference points.

Nevertheless, according to data supplied from the process of national university classification, in 2009-2010, 0,49% from the total of students have benefited from transferable credits from a foreign university.

	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Total outgoing mobilities	3494	3734	3613	4029	4768
% from all students	0,40%	0,39%	0,33%	0,37%	0,49%

Table 9: Outgoing mobilities

Regarding incoming mobility students, according to data provided by the universities, the number of students who came to Romania to study temporarily for the year 2009 - 2010 is 1359 students of which 1174 in bachelor, 153 master's and 32 doctoral.

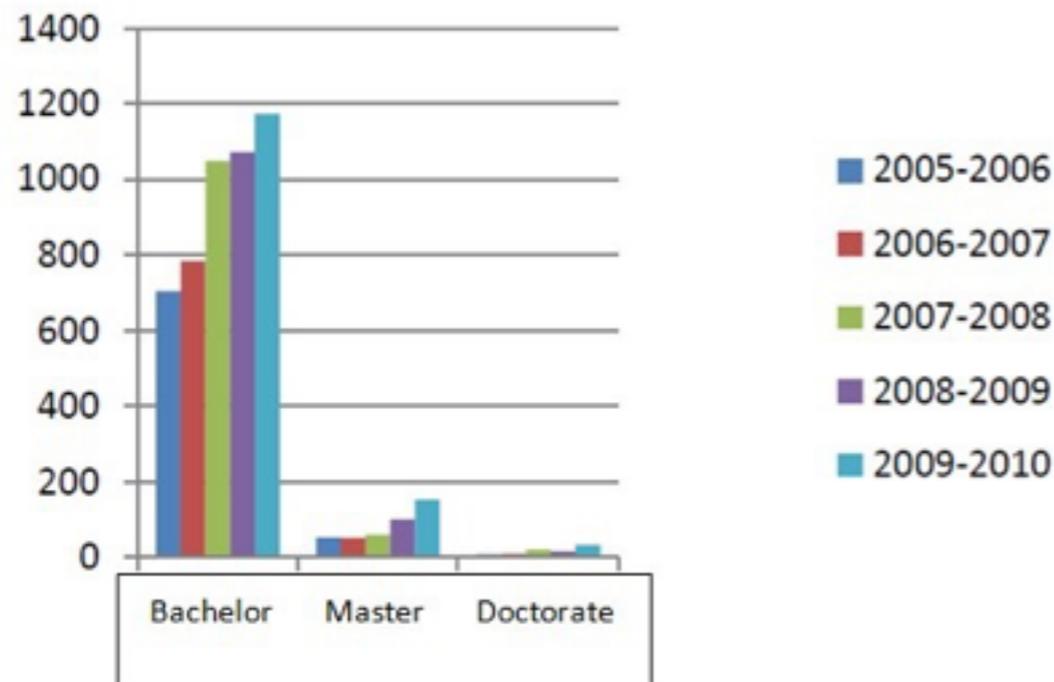


Figure 24: Incoming mobilities

## Spain

For some years, the number of students between 18 and 34 years of age that have a Higher Education level and studied abroad through an international mobility program has grown substantially. INE's survey (2014) on Student Mobility shows that in that year a number of 462,300 students travelled for studying purposes. Specifically, the most attractive countries for studying mobility were:

Encuesta sobre Movilidad Internacional de los Estudiantes 2014	
ITALIA	68,700
REINO UNIDO	62,800
ALEMANIA	49,900
FRANCIA	47,100

Table 10: International mobility. Personal compilation based on INE (2016)

From the point of view of the length of stay, the national statistics show that most of the students remain outside the country for more than 6 months (285,400); followed by the remaining of 6 months (143,600), and finally, those who stay less than 3 months (33,200).

Regarding the mobility program, the number of Spanish university students has been increasing to stand at 36,889 during

the 2012-2013 academic year. During 2011-2012, the total number of students, not only university students, who were going in and coming out of Spain with this program is very similar (39,300 and 39,545 respectively), i.e., the ability of Spain to produce Erasmus students is similar to its ability to attract Erasmus throughout Europe. A 36.2% of Erasmus students are in the field of Social Sciences, Business and Law (MEC, 2014).

### United Kingdom

The number of non-EU international undergraduate students in the UK has increased by 46% since 2007 (IU, 2015). International students are very important to the UK higher education sector. The higher education sector as a whole now sources around one-eighth of its income from international students' tuition fees. Stagnating or fluctuating demand from prospective students overseas can therefore leave institutions vulnerable or affect their ability to plan strategically in the long-term. They contribute more than £7 billion to the UK economy. Non- EU students made up around 13% of the UK student population in 2012–13, up from 10% five years earlier. However, there has been concern that recent reforms to the immigration system in the UK has affected the numbers of incoming international students (Universities UK, 2014).

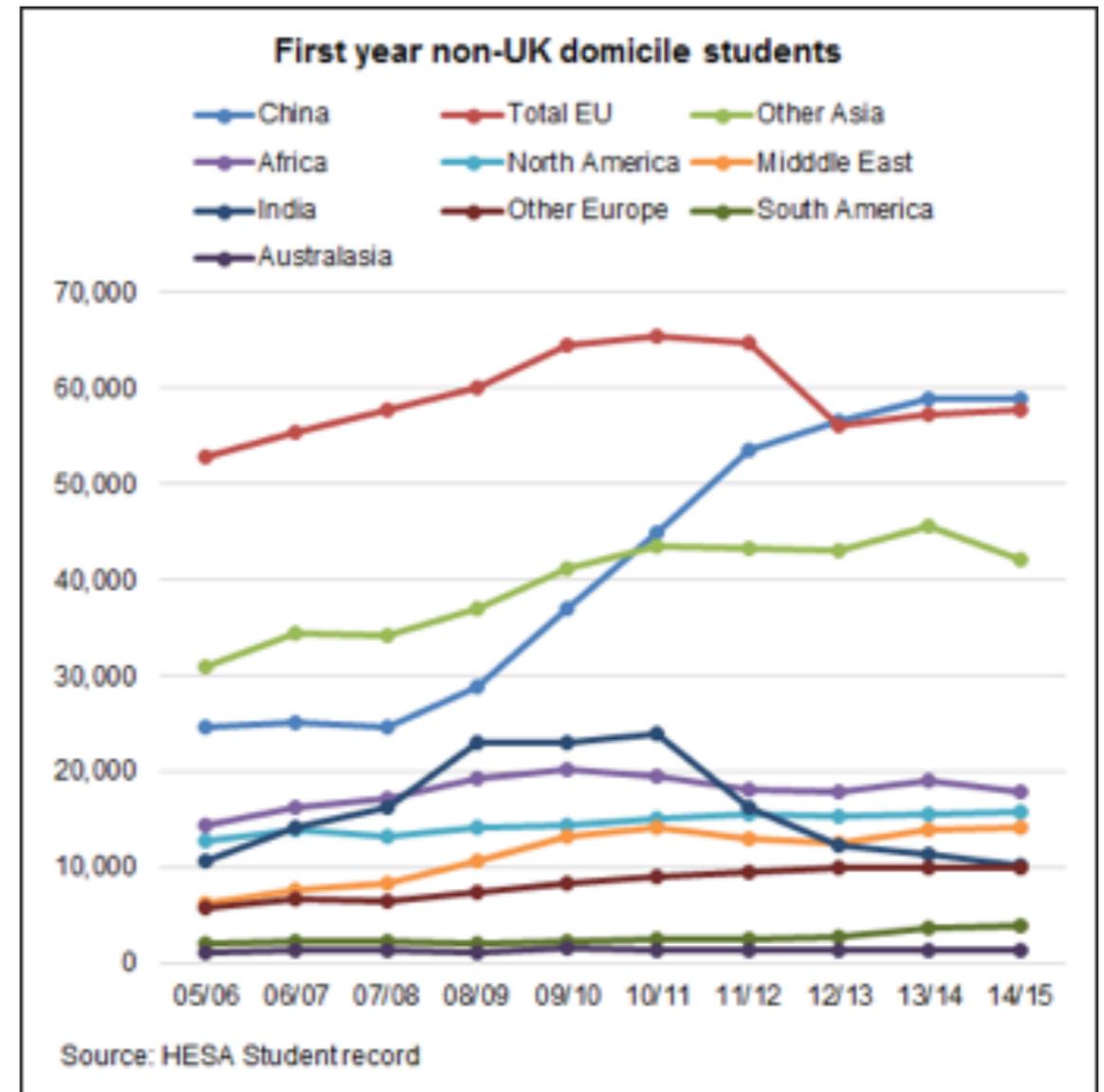


Figure 25

The UK also has a significant provision of transnational education around the globe, particularly in China and other parts of Asia.

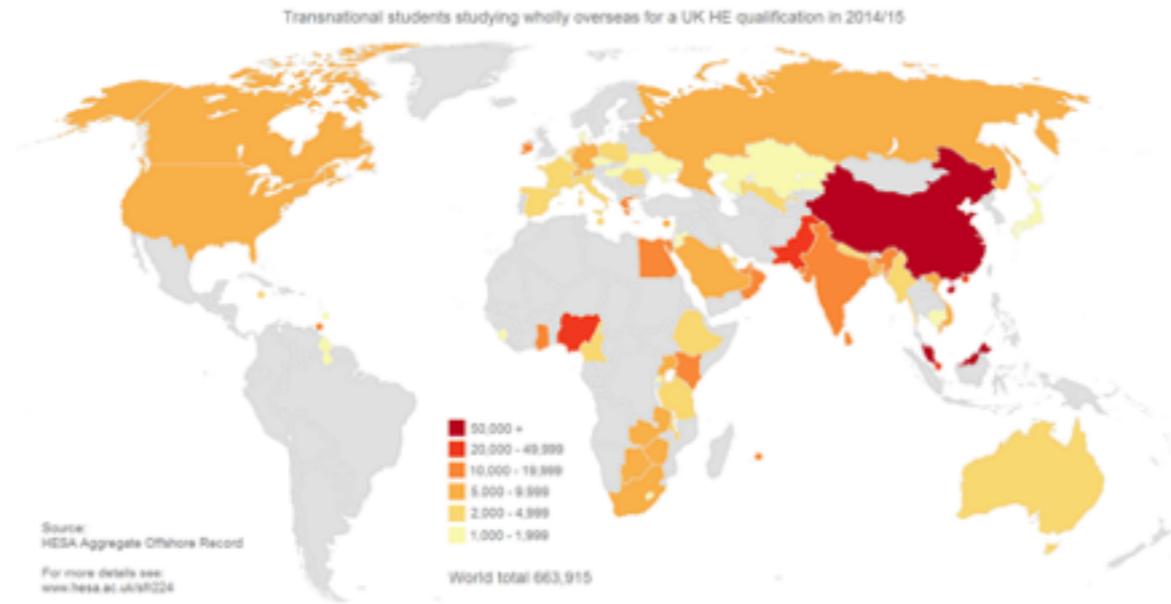


Figure 26

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## 4. Conclusion

As shown by the picture outlined by the above data, all six countries involved into the Access4All project are currently tackling difficult challenges in order to expand their ability to favour inclusion of under-represented students in Higher Education. Even though Finland, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and UK are presenting different approaches and level of engagement, students or graduates are essentially targeted as a whole, whereas specific policies addressed to non-traditional groups of students are still conceived as exceptional or one time measures, so increasing the risk of emphasising marginalisation and labelling of at risk students instead of minimising the effects related to the various kinds of disadvantage that affect such students.

Accordingly, this starting picture highlights how the success of policies aimed to implement the social dimension of Higher Education is essentially linked to the inclusion of under-represented students. Inclusion can happen only favouring an active engagement of all stakeholders in the process and devel-

opment of good practices. These should be both respectful of the peculiarities of local contexts and able to build common organisational and educational strategies through a shared effort based on the continuous interaction between experience and reflection.

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