EUROSTUDENT

Social and Economic
Conditions of Student Life
in Europe 2000

Synopsis of Indicators and
National Reports for Austria,
Flemish Community of Belgium,
French Community of Belgium,
Finland, France, Germany,
Ireland, Italy and The Netherlands

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EURO STUDENT

Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe 2000

Synopsis of Indicators and National Profiles for

Austria, Belgium (Flemish Community), Belgium (Wallonia-Brussels Community), Finland,

France, Germany, Ireland, Italy and The Netherlands

HIS Hochschul-Informations-System, Hannover 2002, Germany

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Links to National Surveys:

- Austria: <www.bmbwk.gv.at/start.asp?bereich=7&OID=4680; www.ihs.ac.at>
- Belgium (w/b): <www.ciuf.be>
- Finland: <www.otus.fi>
- France: <www.ove-national.education.fr>
- Germany: <www.his.de / www.studentenwerke.de>
- Ireland: <www.hea.ie/new>
- Italy: <www.fondazionerui.it /eurostudent.html>
- Netherlands: <www.minocw.nl>

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- Ireland
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The importance of the indicators on the social dimension

The European process is increasingly taking shape, and higher education is playing a central role in this process, especially with regard to the formation of the European knowledge society.

The introduction of common study structures is being pursued within the Bologna process with sweeping success. In its capacity as a community action programme in the field of higher education, ERASMUS is contributing actively to the realisation of a "European dimension" in higher education.

However, the prerequisites for these reforms not only include changes to the study system which are already being tackled, but also the task of overcoming barriers which arise from the varying socio-economic framework conditions of studying in the individual member countries.

This is why it is just as urgent that the socio-economic dimensions are made visible to facilitate their incorporation into the deliberations on the structuring of the European area of higher education on a complementary basis.

Euro Student 2000 is committed to this task. The project aims to deliver fundamental information on the social and economic conditions of student life in Europe and to condense this information into the form of comparable indicators.

The indicators which Euro Student 2000 presents are intended to speak for themselves and to allow users to interpret them from their own perspective. The Synopsis of Indicators presented here allows a comparative view and thus an assessment for each country of the extent to which each indicator differs from other countries. In addition to the Synopsis of Indicators, so-called National Profiles with a relevant topic-based structure are provided for each of the participating countries on a CD to aid further interpretation. Users of the CD can examine the respective country specific indicator in the overall context of the national study system and analyse it as regards its statistical bases (mean variations).

Highlights

The relevance of findings depends on how well the indicators may be exploited for the implementation of policies seeking to create equal educational opportunity in Europe. Discrepancies in equal opportunity reveal the scope of necessary action.

Of major importance are the social and income-related discrepancies in **educational participation** within and between member states. The magnitude of these discrepancies clearly indicates a great need for action. Only very few of the reporting countries have succeeded in narrowing the equity-gap between social groups. Finland seems to be the great exception, joined by The Netherlands.

Depending on the make-up of the student population, the proportions of those student groups who face particular difficulties in their studies, e.g. students with children of their own or with health impairments or disabilities, and who on account of the double burden need special support in their studies also vary.

Introduction

The **student financing** models encountered superbly reflect structural differences between the countries. Even when comparing only the nine countries participating in the survey, considerable qualitative differences emerge: At the one end of the spectrum we find subsistence-like financing (students living with parents), and at the other end nearly complete self-financing (over 60% of students having jobs).

In deliberating these issues, **indirect transfers** (tax subsidies) need to be given even more consideration than before. However, such transfers cannot be brought to light by empirical polling of students. This calls for a collateral analysis of state budgets. The effects of indirect transfers are highly income-dependent in some countries.

Others have abolished indirect transfers and then converted to direct transfers, which students can have at their direct disposal. The model of direct transfers seems to promote **non-traditional pathways** of access to higher education and mobilise non-traditional students.
The overview of **forms of student housing** provides more than a descriptive outline. For the purpose of comparative analysis, the forms of student housing can be drawn upon to arrive at characteristic types of households which are suitable for comparison. In the context of international mobility, this analysis reveals housing-related barriers which deserve closer attention. Extremely high percentages of students live with their parents. This **subsistence form of student living keeps students immobile** and thus represents serious obstacles to studying abroad.

Alongside findings on social mobility, an insight into **international regional mobility** is of major significance to the European objective of creating a European Space. The current findings succeed in giving an overall picture of international student mobility in terms of groups, programmes and free movers. When it comes to efforts to promote educational mobility in Europe, **foreign language proficiency** plays a major role as do the effects of social standing on mobility. Here, too, the findings demonstrate the need for explicit action on a Europe-wide level.

PART A

Technical Notes

1. Objective and Execution of the Survey

The EURO STUDENT 2000 project aimed to generate and present internationally-comparable indicators on the social and economic conditions of student life (students engaged in higher education). Such a comparison provides the participating EU countries with information of a high education policy relevance. Together with the country specific surveys and analyses - the national profiles - the indicators serve to support governments in their efforts to reform their education policy. Additionally, the profiles offer each country an opportunity to review its own education system in the light of the performance of systems operating in other countries. However, in order to be able to make responsible use of the information gained, users must always give ample consideration to the limitations in terms of the significance and comparability of these highly-condensed indicators.

The EURO STUDENT 2000 "Synopsis of Indicators" offers a comprehensive and up-to-date spectrum of comparable indicators, presenting information on the following student living areas:

- Demographic Characteristics
- Access to Higher Education
- Study Performance
- Social Make-up of the Student Body
- Accommodation
- Funding and State Assistance
- Living Expenses – Student Spending
- Student Employment and Time Budget
- Internationalisation

Neither the national offices of statistics nor Eurostat at European level are currently able to provide data on these aspects in the way this survey does. This is why it was necessary to generate the indicators decentrally by carrying out dedicated national surveys. The following eight European countries participated in the project: Austria, Belgium (Flemish and Wallonia-Brussels communities), Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy and The Netherlands.

1.1 From independent national surveys to European comparison

Comparable empirical surveys considering several countries are, by their very nature, highly involved and complex undertakings, even when - as in this case - the surveys collected data uniformly right from the start. In order to meet the data acquisition and compilation standards, the organisation and execution of the project incorporated a coordinated division of responsibilities made up of decentral and central activities: The national surveys were undertaken decentrally in the participating countries, which, in the year 2000, were responsible for carrying out their own empirical surveys among students enrolled at their higher education institutions. The country profiles which these produced were then sent to the project coordinator (HIS) for editorial processing. Compilation of and comments on the comparative indicators were then done centrally by a HIS working group, which used the individual country monographs to develop an international "Synopsis of Indicators".

Project conventions

Statistical indicators are becoming increasingly important as a tool for comparing spatial and temporal aspects of the social and economic (financial) situation of students in higher education.

Indeed, only such standardised quantities enable comparative analyses to be made which extend beyond the monographic representations of individual countries. In order to guarantee the validity, representativeness and comparability of the findings of the EURO STUDENT 2000 project, the participating partner organisations reached agreement in the run-up to the empirical surveys on common survey, data and representation conventions. These were then defined as a set of minimum standards for the individual national surveys. Bilateral agreements between the project coordination group and the participating countries as well as two decision-making meetings of experts were held in this respect.

Essentially, the conventions related to:

- definitions
  e.g. defining the surveyed group, the various student households, the various social indicators,
- the execution of the survey
  postal/online, random sample, plausibility,
- the defined data set
  the "Manual EURO STUDENT 2000 Questionnaire", which prescribed a minimum set of questions with variables, and the prescribed results/charts together served to define the data set which was to be surveyed.
- the form of data provision
  namely on the basis of given tables and charts, the so-called templates.

Most of the participating countries embedded the survey into a more extensive national survey. So, the individually-designed national surveys supplied the Euro Student Report with agreed core data as a by-product.

Despite the respective national orientation, the conventions on comparable core data were largely observed, meaning that it was possible to produce nine comparable "National Profiles" and a synopsis of condensed indicators.

Report formats and structure

Two report formats resulted from the project:

- In their capacity as monographic reports, the "National Profiles" provide a systematic and comprehensive overview of the individual socio-economic situation of students enrolled at higher education institutions in the individual countries. They portray a wide range of education-relevant topics.
- The "Synopsis of Indicators", which is based on the National Profiles, provides an internationally-comparable, topic-based structure of condensed key aspects.

The present print version focuses on the comparative presentation of the statistical indicators, the "Synopsis of Indicators" (PART B), which enables comparison of aspects of student life in the eight participating European countries.

The findings presented in the charts are accompanied by short supplementary comments which aim to support the reader in drawing permissible conclusions from the indicators and interpreting country-specific differences. Further-reaching background information and special features in the respective countries, which cannot be illustrated by means of comparative indicators, are to be found in PART C, which can be accessed on the attached CD-ROM. The full country profiles contained on the CD-ROM enable users to identify and understand national singularities, typical distributions and further-reaching information. Users of the CD can either navigate systematically through all the topic areas of one country or can compare the findings of a specific topic area from one country to the next.

The following abbreviations have been used for the participating countries: Austria = AUT, Flemish community in Belgium = BEL (f), Wallonia-Brussels community in Belgium BEL(w/b), Finland = FIN, France = FRA, Germany = GER, Ireland = IRE, Italy = ITA, The Netherlands = NET. They are listed in alphabetical order.

1.2 Project implementation

EURO STUDENT 2000 was initiated as a joint European project at the Conference of Directors General for Higher Education in the EU Member States held in Weimar, Germany, in 1999. The conference recommended that a European social survey be carried out among students enrolled in tertiary education. A feasibility study carried out in response to a suggestion made by the European Council for Student Affairs (ECStA) formed a basis for this recommendation.

Implementation of the project then began. As a first step, the project was organised as a self-steering network. Each of the participating countries was itself responsible for carrying out and funding its own national survey. HIS Hochschul-Informations-System, Hannover, was commissioned with managing the project and producing the final report. The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) provided the funding for these tasks.

The data basis required for the production of a transnational report of comparative indicators was provided by the national surveys on the social and economic (financial) situation of students in higher education carried out in the individual countries. The core data were incorporated into the EURO STUDENT report. The decentral acquisition and processing of the respective data was carried out by experts in the participating countries. The following countries and institutions took part in the project:

Austria

Project sponsor:	Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (BMBWK)
Implementation:	Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS)
National report:	Materialien zur sozialen Lage der Studierenden, by: BMWV, Vienna 1999

Belgium (f)

Project sponsor:	Flemish Administration of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Implementation:	Flemish Hogeschoolen Council in cooperation with Flemish Interuniversity council
National report:	The National Profile is used as national report

Belgium (w/b)

Project sponsor:	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the Community of Wallonia-Brussels
Implementation:	Centre Liègeois d'Etude d' Opinion de l'Université de Liège (C.L.E.O.)
National report:	Les conditions de vie des étudiants de l'enseignement supérieur en Communauté française de Belgique, 1999

Finland

Project sponsor:	Ministry of Education
Implementation:	Student Research Foundation OTUS
National report:	Opiskelijatutkimus 2000 (Student Research 2000), by: Student Research Foundation OTUS, Helsinki 2001

France

Project sponsor:	Ministry of National Education
Implementation:	Observatoire National de la Vie Etudiante (OVE)
National report:	La vie étudiante, Paris 2002

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Germany

Project sponsor: Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and Deutsches Studentenwerk (DSW)
Implementation: HIS Hochschul-Informations-System
National report: Die wirtschaftliche und soziale Lage der Studierenden in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 2000, by BMBF, Bonn 2001

Ireland

Project sponsor: Higher Education Authorities and Department of Education and Science
Implementation: Liam Ryan and Caroline O'Kelly, National University of Ireland
National report: Euro Student Survey 2000: Irish Report, Social and Living Conditions of Higher Education Students, by: Liam Ryan and MsCaroline O'Kelly, Dublin 2001

Italy

Project sponsor: Ministry of Education, Universities and Research - National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System
Implementation: Fondazione Rui and Università degli studi di Camerino
National report: EURO STUDENT 2000. Terza indagine sulle condizioni di vita e di studio degli studenti universitari italiani

The Netherlands

Project sponsor: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
Implementation: SCO Kohnstamm Institute and SEO Amsterdam Economics (both Universiteit van Amsterdam) and RISBO Contractresearch (Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam)
National report: Studentenmonitor 2000

Schedule

The first meeting of the national coordinators was held in Bonn in mid-1999 which discussed the further organisation of the project and agreed the first common survey conventions. Another meeting of coordinators was held in November 1999 to further develop the jointly-devised survey instruments and to fine-tune the definitions and delineations of the aspects to be depicted in the survey.

Project field phases were carried out decentrally in the individual countries. With the exception of Austria and Belgium (w/b) , national surveys were carried out in all participating countries in the year 2000. The subsequent phase of data processing and analysis lasted until 2001. Generally, this produced independent national reports and, parallel to this, generated the previously-agreed results tables and national profiles for the EURO STUDENT report. In the course of the year, these were forwarded to the project coordinator's working group. The Synopsis of Indicators, the comparative representation of condensed indicators, was produced centrally. Finally, a joint workshop was held in Berlin in April 2002, where the results were subjected to a critical project review process.

[1] In these two cases, data were taken from surveys carried out in 1997/98 and 1999, respectively.

2. Methodological Remarks

2.1 Execution of the national surveys

The methods used in conjunction with the national surveys differed in several respects (cf. Table 1).

Table 1: Execution of national surveys

	Size of sample	Sampling method	Return rate	Reference period	Survey method	ISCED Level	Weighting Scheme
Austria	10000	random sample proportional	33 % 3164	1998	postal questionnaire, reminder letter	5A, 6	Yes
Belgium (f)	4500	stratified per field of study and study year	33%	2000	online	5A	
Belgium (w/b)	2783	random sample	1007	1998 / 99	postal questionnaire, follow up by telephone-interview	5A, 5B	
Finland	4526	1 in every 50 (undergrd)	48% 2157	2000	postal questionnaire	5A, 5B	
France	87900	1 in every 20	30% 26374	2000	postal questionnaire, reminder letter	5A, 5B	Yes
Germany	46000	1 in every 30 random sample	27,1% 12573	2000	postal questionnaire, reminder letter	5A, 5B	Yes
Ireland	9000	1 in every 15 random sample	30,2% 2720	2000	postal questionnaire	5A, 5B, 6	
Italy	41000	stratified random sampling per geographical area, field of study, course year	18,3% 7501	2000	postal questionnaire; post stratification weighting	5A	Yes
Netherlands	10410	random sample stratified per sectorgroup	37% 3890	2000	postal questionnaire, reminder by telephone or letter	5A, 5B	

As a rule, students received the survey papers by post. However, the survey as such was carried out in the form of follow-up telephone interviews in the Netherlands and in the French-speaking Wallonia-Brussels Community in Belgium. Flanders chose to use an online questionnaire.

The scope of the random sample varied substantially from one participating country to the next. The smallest sample size was to be found in the French-speaking Wallonia-Brussels community in Belgium, with just under 2,800 cases, while the largest were found in France and Germany. Various, in some cases stratified random samples were used as sampling methods. Differentiated by individual countries, the return rates ranged from 18.3% in Italy to 48% in Finland. In some countries, slight differences in terms of certain structural features were found between the actual random sample and the basic population. It was possible to use weighting in individual cases to correct these differences. Satisfactory examination of the data validity was done in most of the countries, but clear improvements are needed in this respect in the future. This includes, for example, a plausibility test for the acquired data.

Around 85% of the core topics of the survey - educational participation, income-expenditure, job activity, nation housing, international mobility, time budget and personal data - were covered using the data acquired in the participating countries. The survey showed that questions regarding data on student and study funding continue to be very sensitive.

2.2 Comparability

One of the first steps required for a comparative representation of the economic and social aspects of student life in several countries involves reaching agreement on which higher education institutions are to be included in the survey. Based on the ISCED 97 classification, all those programmes were recognised and incorporated into the survey which were placed in the Level 5A, 5B and 6 category.

The principle was applied that the national surveys should have room for national special features. In order to guarantee the comparability of the originally varied information for the core data, it was necessary to adopt some degree of standardisation and norms. For example, categories were established for the evaluation of the data which serve as standard classifications (male/female, children of blue-collar workers, age) or which form structural equivalents (e.g. subgroups of identical age). On the other hand, analytical distinguishing criteria were defined. And so, two household types were defined for the examination of the income and expenditure situation:

- Students who live with their parents
- Students who run their own household. This includes students living in a hall of residence, private rental accommodation, lodgings and students who own their own homes.

Both household types are found in varying proportions in all countries. In Italy, the student body was clearly dominated by students who live with their parents; this group accounted for more than two thirds of the overall student population. By contrast, this household type is not -typical among students in Finland, where students only live with their parents in exceptional cases (6%). This means that the financial situation of students living with their parents can only be approximately established and represented. This is because the non-cash payments made by parents - in the form of free-of-charge board and lodging - can only be converted into estimated cash values. Inquiries into the financial situation of students running their own household are easier by comparison.
Without such distinguishing criteria based on homogenous household types, students of both groups would not show any comparative economic conditions.

3. Summary and Prospects

The EURO STUDENT 2000 project achieved its overriding goal, namely of providing internationally-comparable indicators on the social and economic (financial) situation of students in the tertiary sector. At decentral level, the national surveys were designed in such a way that across all participating countries an average of around 85% of the agreed data reports were covered. Within this average, some countries, such as Germany, The Netherlands, Ireland and Finland, were able to provide more than 90% of the previously-defined information. Other countries failed to do this to that extent, since certain topic areas in these countries could not be inquired. In Austria, for example, questions on international mobility were not asked. In Italy, only certain sections of the details on study financing were requested. Yet, the overall concept nevertheless proved to be transferable, despite these gaps.

The decentral national data surveys were carried out in the participating countries at more or less the same time in the year 2000, with the exception of Austria and Belgium (w/b). However, the subsequent processing and analysis of the data varied greatly. This resulted in some countries only providing their data with some delay. The last set of results was received by the project coordinator in January 2002. Thus the survey could only be published at a relatively late date, which in turn meant that the data had lost some of their relevance and topicality.

Even though extensive efforts had already been undertaken within the course of the EURO STUDENT 2000 project to improve the acquisition and representation of comparative indicators in the field of higher education, the jointly-developed and applied survey tools need to be continually extended and developed in future projects. The definitions and delineations of the aspects to be portrayed need to be refined and the data acquisition targets need to be differentiated at national level. Consideration needs to be given to incorporating more time series into the examination so that developments can be shown. A further option would involve the incorporation of indicators into greater contexts in order to be able to offer some initial answers to explain international differences.

A "Technical Group" is needed to which every participating country can send a representative. This group would discuss questions of project design and project execution in detail. The continual exchange between group members needs to be intensified over the whole course of the project.

The timing of the execution of the national projects needs to be better coordinated. This should not only apply to the survey as such, but also to the evaluation and provision of the data, which need to be carried out quickly after the survey, so as to ensure that the data are as up-to-date and relevant as possible.

Besides aspects of content, method and organisation, efforts also need to be made to ensure that further EU member countries are included in the project in the future, since only such an approach will allow the social dimensions within the European Education Area to be depicted across the whole of Europe, with all its peaks and troughs.

PART B Synopsis of Indicators

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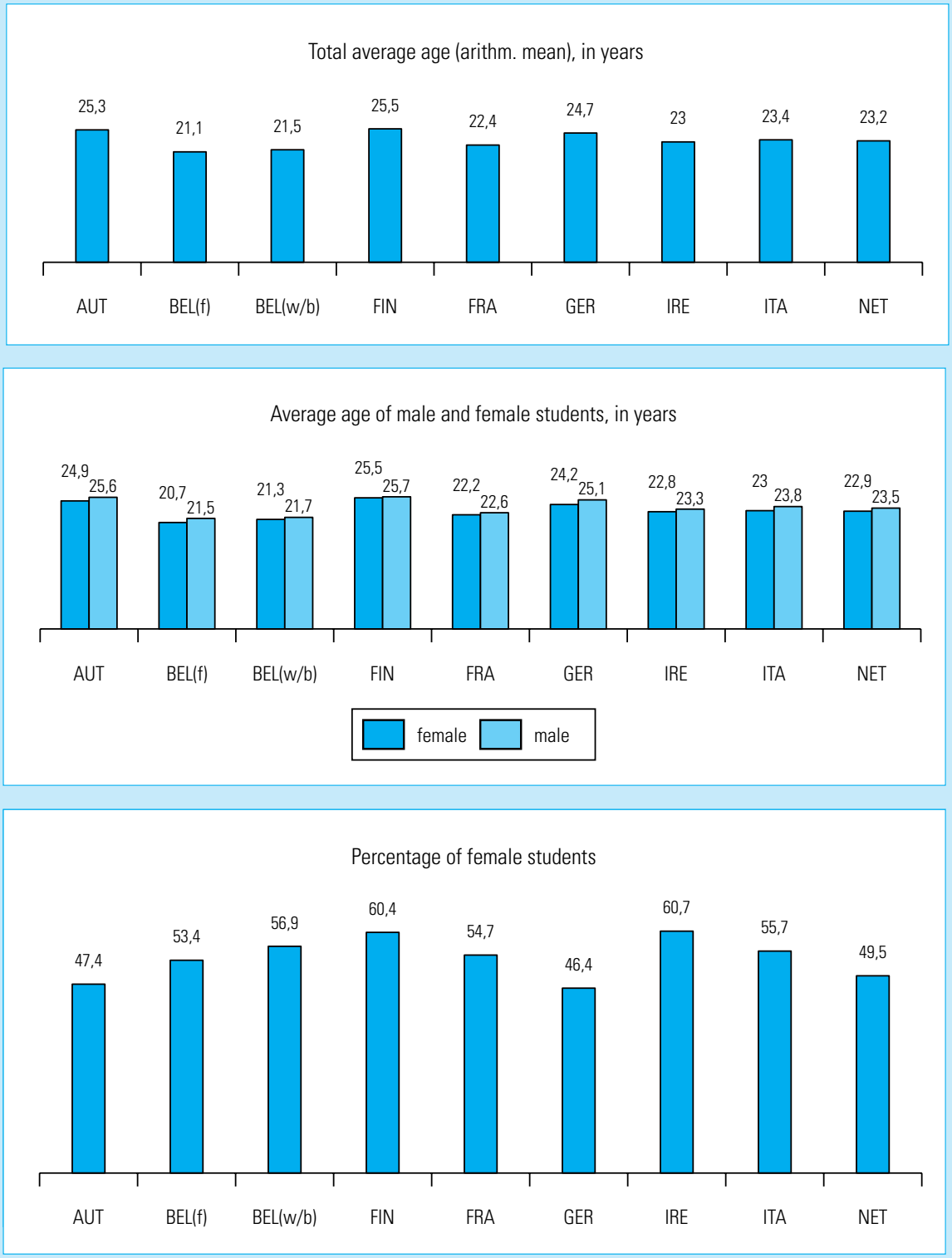
Demographic characteristics

Fig. 1: Age profile and percentage of female students



Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Age profile and percentage of female students

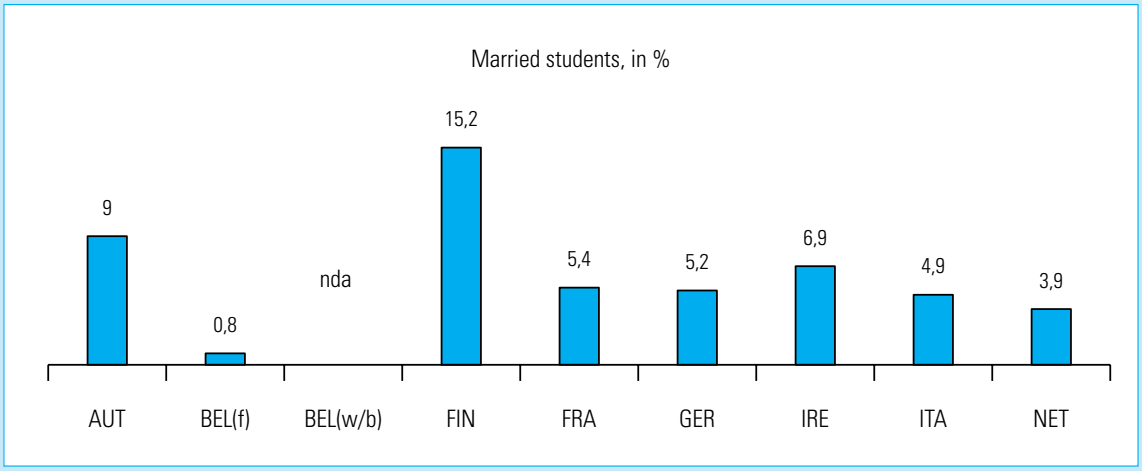
The average age of students varies substantially in the countries surveyed and is influenced by various factors, including the respective ways in which degree courses are organised, which differ from one country to the next.

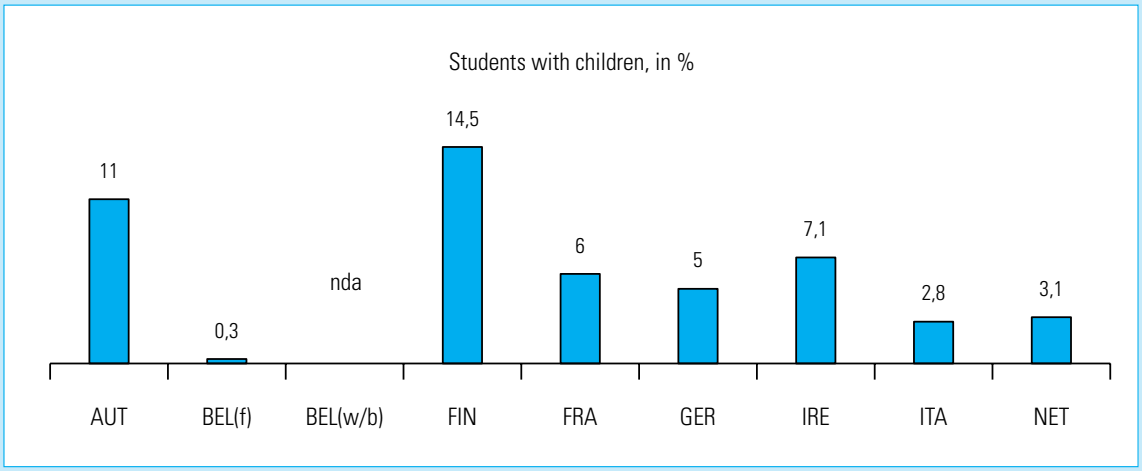
At almost 26, the highest average age is found among Finnish students. This high age is caused by various factors, including the large proportion of students enrolled at higher education institutions for a large number of years, because they pursue their studies alongside a full-time job. Admissions restrictions in Finland also mean that studies often only commence after completion of a waiting period. A further reason is that a noticeably high proportion of students in Finland only gain entry to higher education at an older age, namely via non-traditional access routes (cf. Fig. 4). The high age of students in Austria and Germany (around 25) can also be explained, among other reasons, by the fact that, essentially, the first degree is awarded after completion of long or very long degree courses. And studies also commence at a later stage, namely after a gap between leaving school and entering higher education. The situation in France is different (average age of 22.4), where the transition from school to higher education generally occurs without any gaps. At 23, the average age of students in Ireland is low. Ireland offers students the opportunity to complete their higher education in shorter education courses. The by far lowest average age of students is found among students in Flanders, namely 21. This is the result of the "year-system", which encourages students to complete their studies quickly. And students in Wallonia-Brussels Community are only marginally older (21.5 on average). Italy and the Netherlands have values which lie in-between the two extremes.

On average, male students are older than female students by up to one year in all the surveyed countries. Among other reasons, male students are older than their female counterparts because in some countries (Austria, Germany) they have to complete a period of military or civilian service before entering higher education.

Higher education has long ceased to be a male privilege in the surveyed countries. Study entrant figures have developed in favour of women, while women have meanwhile overtaken the men in the student body in most countries - such as in Ireland and Finland, where they make up about 60% of the students surveyed. Females account for 54% of all students in the total third level population in Ireland. In Flanders, France and Italy as well as in the Wallonia-Brussels community in Belgium, the proportion of women also exceeds that of men. Only in the Netherlands, Austria and finally Germany are women still in the minority, although they are clearly approaching the 50% mark.

Fig. 2: Family status of students





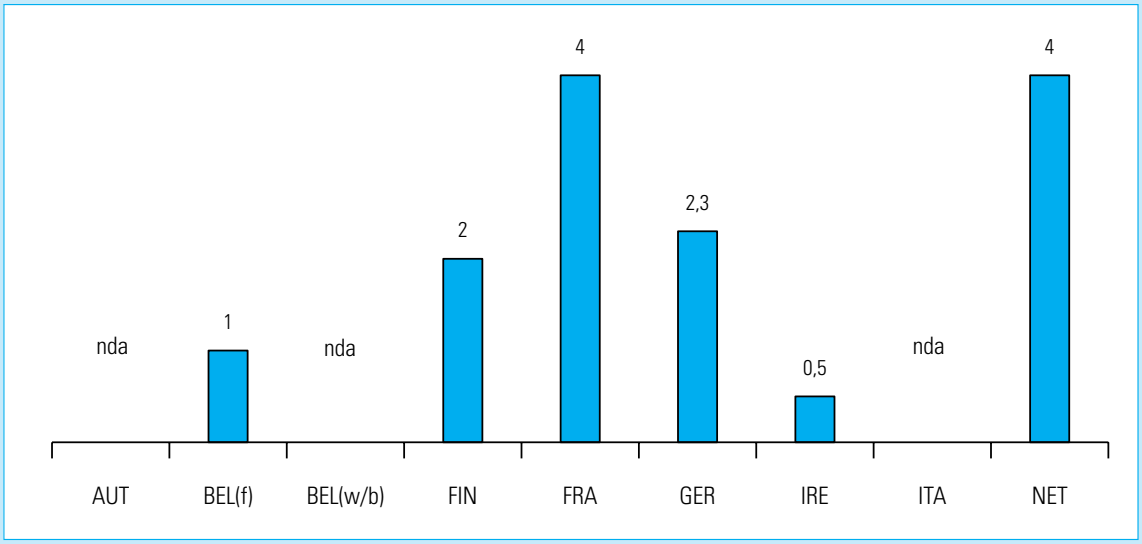
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

The proportion of married students among the student population differs from one country to the next (see top chart) and is highly age dependent. At 15% in Finland, married students account for the comparatively highest proportion. The rate of married students in Austria and Belgium is already markedly lower. 29% of the part-time students but only 4% of the full-time students in Ireland make up the just under 7% share of married students in the Irish student population. Finally, in the other countries, only about one in twenty students are married.

A look at the proportion of students with children (bottom chart) reveals similar differences between countries as a result of the connection between family status and age. The largest proportion of married student mothers and fathers is found among Finnish students, where it is around 15%. The lowest values are characteristic of the Netherlands and Italy. In these countries, only around 3% of students have one or more children.

Fig. 3: Physically-disabled students

in %



Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

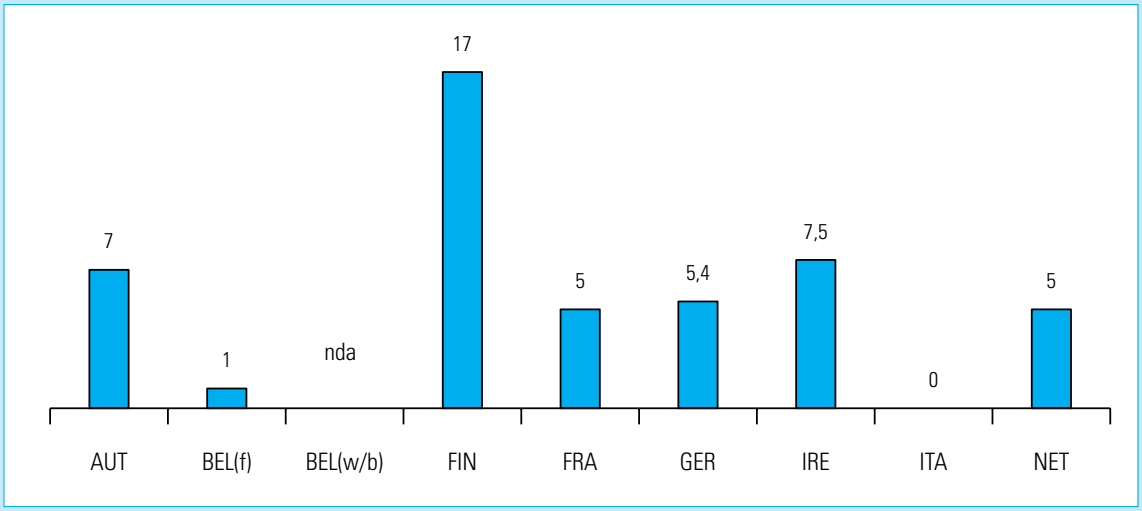
In order to be able to give greater consideration to the special needs of disabled students and to promote their integration into society and the working world, various reform programmes are being developed in the surveyed countries. The basis for the design and structure of such programmes is provided, inter alia, by detailed information on the proportion of students with health impairments and disorders. The details at hand are based on self-assessments made in response to given national categories. This shows that in the participating countries students with health impairments/ disorders account for a proportion of the student body of between 0.5% (Ireland) and 4% (Netherlands, France). Flanders, Finland and Germany produce values in the middle range.

The above details on students with health impairments/disorders relate to physically-disabled students. It must be assumed that the countries did not use absolutely identical definitions, although this only partly restricts the information value.

Access to higher education

Fig. 4: Non-traditional routes to higher education

in %



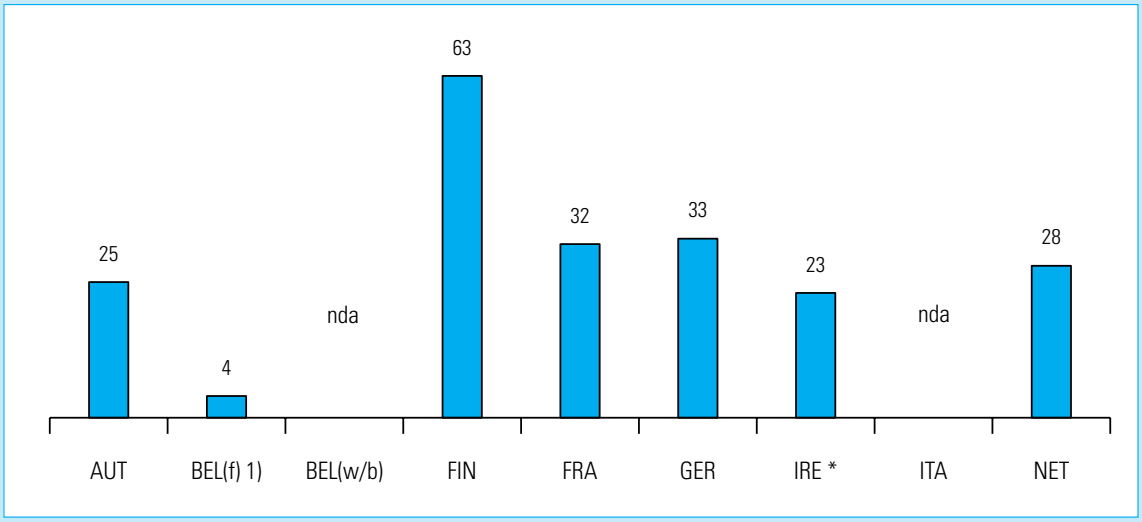
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

The paths along which prospective students gained their higher education entrance qualification differed to varying degrees in the participating countries. Besides the classical access routes to higher education via the general schooling system, additional access opportunities, so-called "non-traditional routes" are now being offered. The proportion of students deciding in favour of the non-traditional routes varies from one country to the next. Most use is made of this option in Finland, namely by 17% of students. For persons not holding a formal higher education entrance qualification, the route to university passes through programmes offered by the Open University. Access to the polytechnics can by achieved via various vocational/executive qualifications. In addition, a combination of both routes is also possible in Finland.

In the other countries, much less use is made of unconventional paths, namely only by between 5% and 8% of students. In Austria, many of these take a special aptitude test which enables them to enrol for specific degree courses only. The relatively few students who commence their higher education studies via a non-traditional route (5%) in Germany do so, in most cases, via the second-chance education route (evening grammar school). In addition, there is a small proportion of talented or particularly qualified working people who can commence their studies via a third access route. Around 8% of Irish students gained entry on the basis of a supplementary qualification, such as a post-Leaving-Certificate award or on the basis of their mature age (23 years of age and older). Finally, only a very small minority (just under 1%) chooses an unconventional path in the Flemish community in Belgium Italy offers no alternative route to university study other than the traditional higher education entrance qualification.

Fig. 5: Work experience before entering higher education

in %



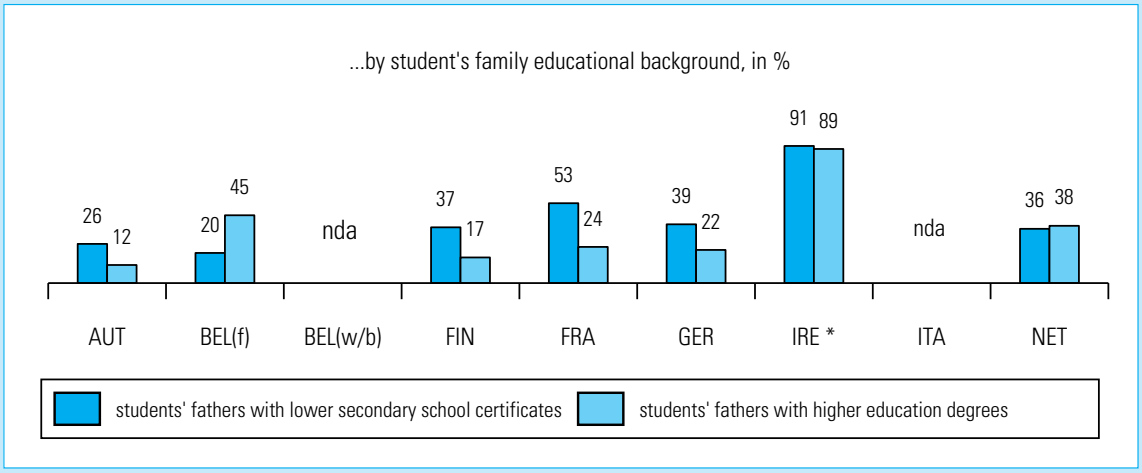
*Adding "casual vacation employment" to "paid occupation" produces a value of 90% for Ireland.

1) Includes "casual vacation employment"

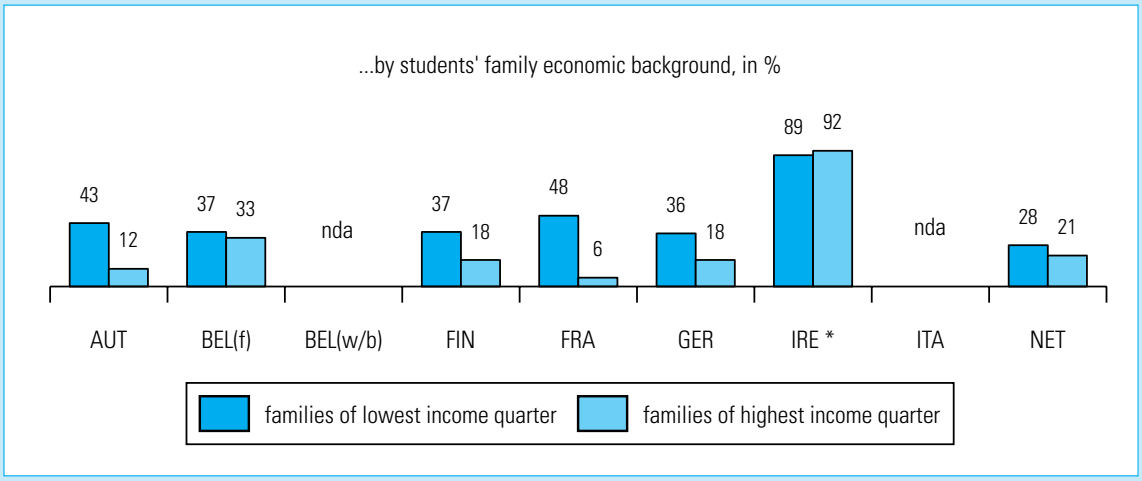
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Depending on which country was considered, either a higher or lower proportion of students had already gained work experience before commencing their studies. Apart from Finland (63%), students in all other countries who had already completed their vocational training and/or gained work experience before commencing their studies accounted more or less for a minority of the overall student population. In France and Germany, they made up around a third of the student population, while in Austria, Ireland and the Netherlands their share was around a quarter. Only an insignificantly small proportion of the study entrants in Flanders have work experience (4%). Only among Finnish students had a majority (63%), well above that in other countries, gained work experience in the one form or the other before commencing studies. Essentially, this can most probably be attributed to the existing higher education admissions restrictions. Of those who do not receive a study place, many spend the waiting period in employment and/or in vocational training.

Fig. 6: Students with work experience before entering higher education by social background



* The definition of "with work experience" is very broad; incl. casual vacation employment.



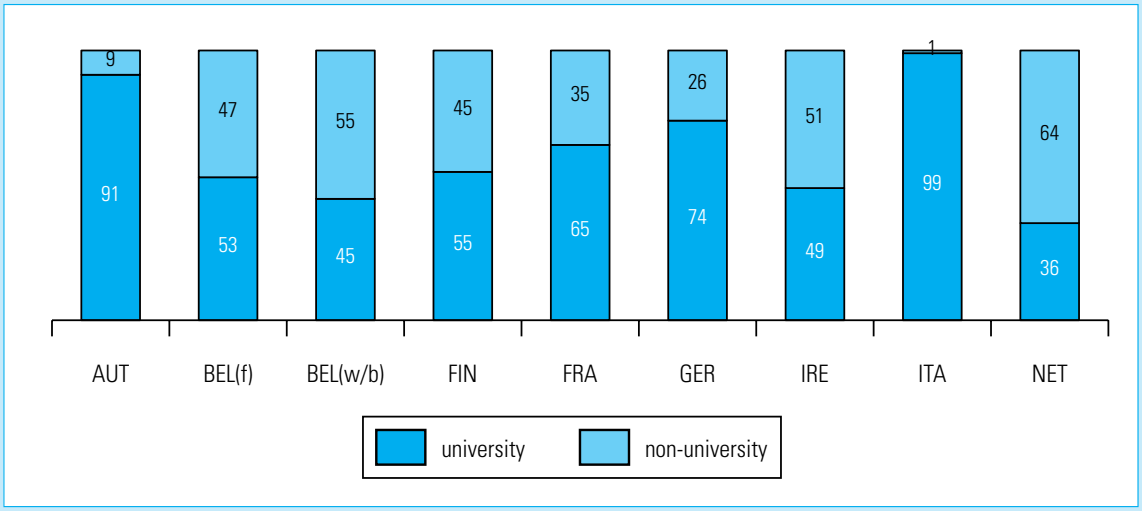
* The definition of "with work experience" is very broad; incl. casual vacation employment.

Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

In some countries, there is a clear correlation between social background and students holding vocational qualifications. For example, students from less educationally-oriented and economically-weak parental homes in Austria, Finland, France and Germany will more frequently have gained work experience than those whose parents hold a university degree as their highest educational qualification or can be attributed to the highest income quarter. Such a correlation does not exist in other countries. Although more than 90% of the Irish students had been in employment, including casual/vacation employment, or had already completed a course of vocational training before commencing their studies, this group is more or less equally made up of students from various social backgrounds. In Flanders, only an extremely small proportion (4%) of the student body have any kind of previous vocational qualification at all.

Fig. 7: Type of institution which students attend

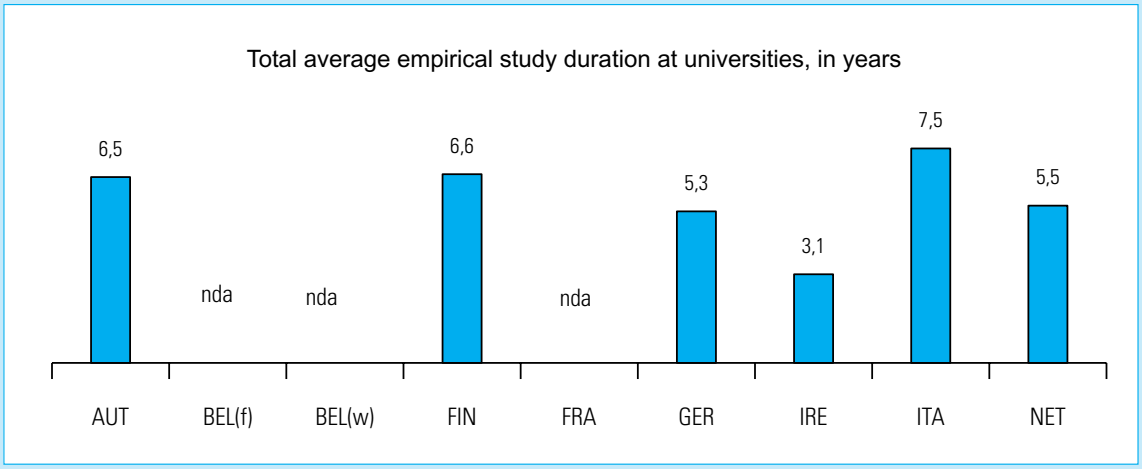
in %

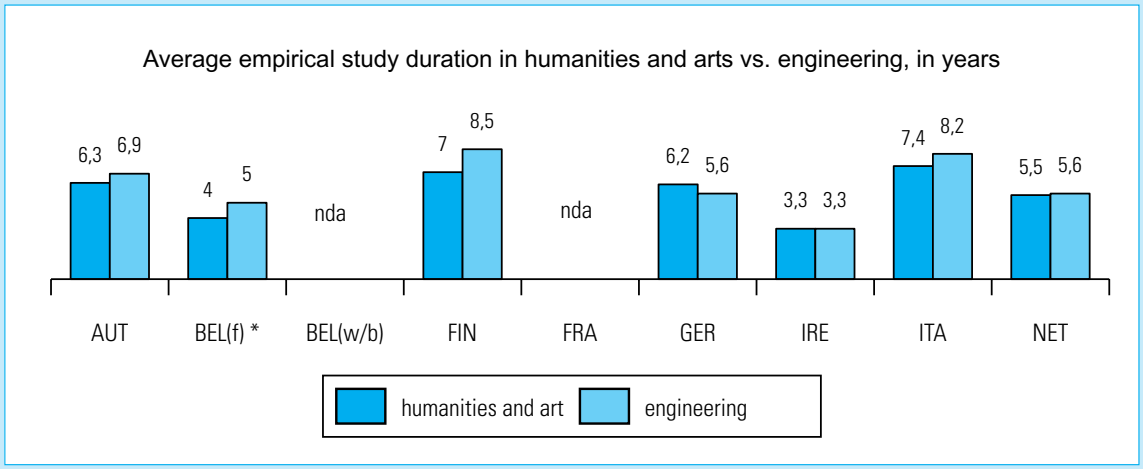


Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

In order to meet the changing social and economic (financial) demands which higher education faces, most member countries are pursuing policies of differentiating their higher education system. Germany with its practice-oriented universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen - FH) and the Netherlands with its similar institutions (Hoger Beroepsonderwijs - HBO) are pressing ahead with a process of institutional differentiation. In these countries, 26% respectively 64% of the surveyed students are currently studying in institutions in which the teaching focuses strongly on applied and practical aspects. Corresponding measures have also been initiated and carried out in Austria, where it is expected that the number of FH students will continue to rise. Experience shows that there is a great demand for this type of higher education institution with its strong emphasis on an applied and practical education and training. In Finland, a number of polytechnics (amk-institutions) were established in the 1990s alongside the traditional universities. The majority of students in France (two thirds) attends universities, even though there is a growing proportion of students who prefer to complete their studies in the more prestigious Grand Ecoles and their preparatory classes. Irish students are distributed more or less evenly, with half going to universities while the other half attend other kinds of tertiary education institutions. The majority are enrolled in degree courses (70%), at undergraduate and postgraduate level, while around 30% are enrolled in Diploma or Certificate courses. Diploma and Certificate courses are also offered at universities and represent a form of curricular rather than institutional differentiation. In Italy, 99% of the students prefer study at a university.

Fig. 8: Duration of study programmes by field of study





* Due to the "year system" the average empirical duration comes very close to the theoretical duration of the study programme (humanities and arts: average 4 years, engineering: 4-5 years).

Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Statistics

Duration of study programmes by field of study

Compared to the substantially shorter study times in other European countries, such as Ireland, those countries with above-average study times, for example, Italy and Austria, are increasingly facing questions about the framework conditions for higher education study in their countries. The study time differences can partly be attributed to structural differences, such as a two-cycle study structure with differentiated degrees (for example, in Ireland) versus largely single-cycle study structures for the first degree course (in Austria and Germany).

A comparison of the study time needed for the first degree in the university sector (top chart) shows that Ireland clearly has the shortest study time, namely 3.1 years. At the other end of the scale, we find graduates in Austria and Italy with an average study time of 6,5 [2] or respectively 7.5 years, and Finland with 6.6 [1] years . The Netherlands and Germany take a middle position with average times of 5.5 (only traditional universities) and 5.3 [2] years, respectively.

A breakdown of these times based on the subject groups of "humanities and arts" and "engineering" (bottom chart) shows subject-specific variations in the average study time: In Finland, studies in "engineering" take around 1.5 years longer on average than in "humanities and arts". The pattern in Italy is similar, although the difference there is only 0.8 years. Austria and the Netherlands also show these differences, although at a much lower level. Related to the above-mentioned subject groups, the picture in Ireland is an homogenous one. Only in Germany do students reading "humanities and arts" subjects take around half a year longer to complete their studies than those studying engineering fields.

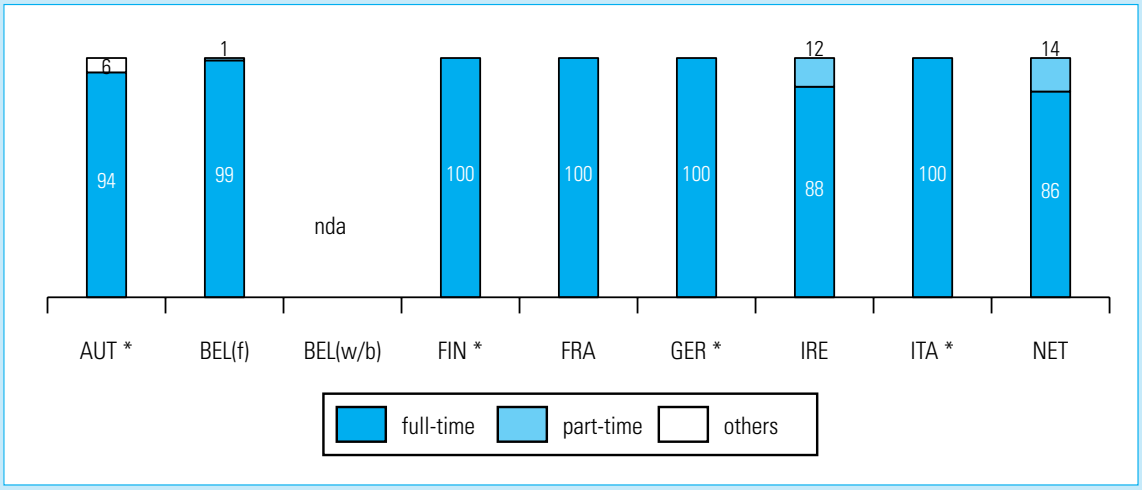
[1] Study times at polytechnics are shorter.

[2] Average study times at universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen) are shorter.

Study performance

Fig. 9: Student status: Full-time and part-time

in %



*There are part-time students

Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

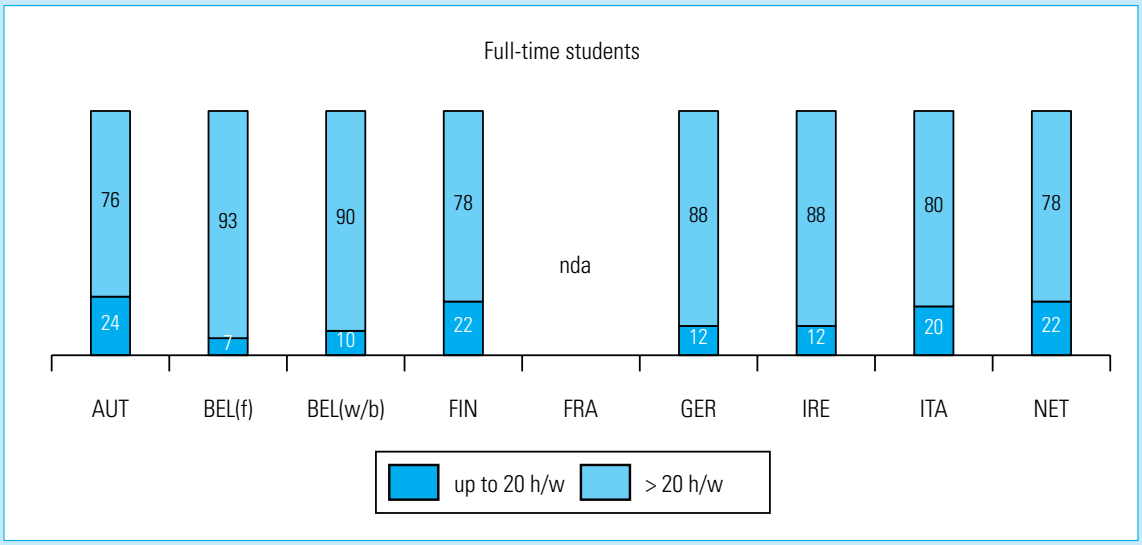
Student status: Full-time and part-time

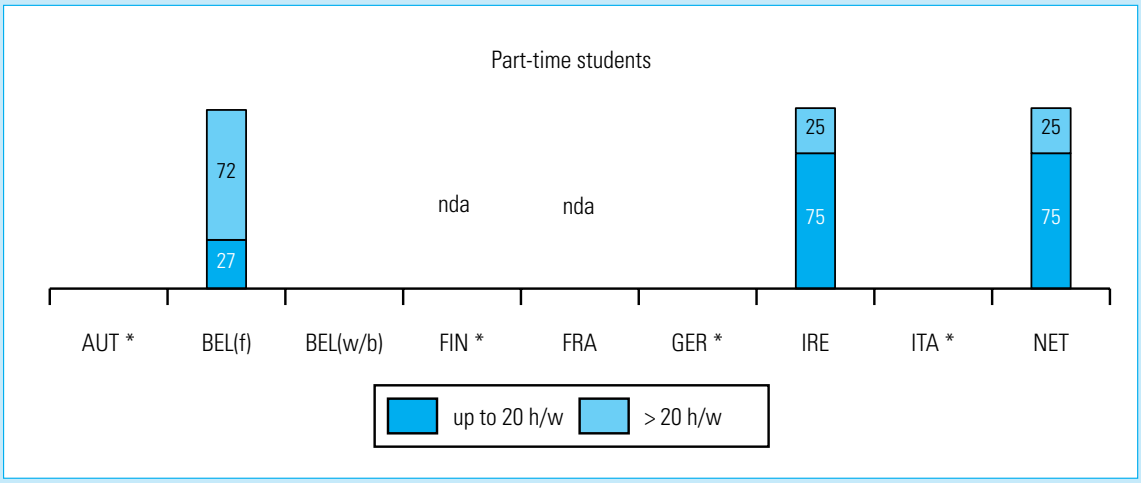
Officially, formal part-time studies only exist at the higher education institutions of a few countries, namely in Ireland and the Netherlands. However, even in these countries most of the students studying for a higher education degree are enrolled as full-time students.

Part-time studies are most common in the Netherlands, where this status applies to around 14% of students. At Irish universities and colleges, more than 12% of the students are enrolled in part-time study, with a more or less even split between male and female students. Officially, there is no part-time study format for regular university or college students in Austria, Finland, Germany or Italy, where students are expected to be full-time learners. However, the time budgets (see Fig. 42) show that a significant proportion of students in these countries take up employment besides their studies during term/semester or care for children, and so spend much less time on their studies than those who do not take up secondary employment and therefore can spend more hours per week on their studies. The extent of unofficial part-time studies is substantial (see next Fig. 10).

Fig. 10: Full-time and part time students by duration of study-related activities per week

in %





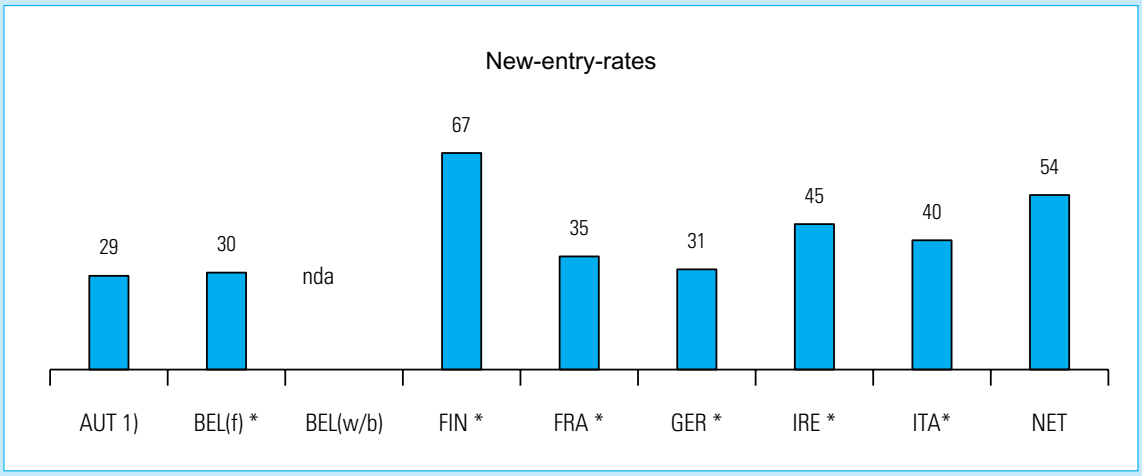
*There are part-time students

Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Full-time and part time students by duration of study-related activities per week

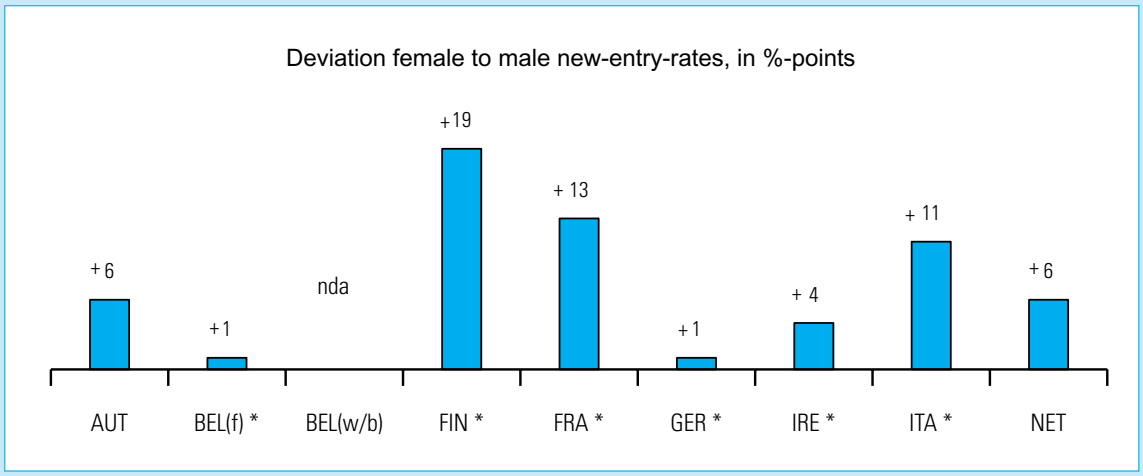
In Austria, Finland, Germany and Italy, students are officially enrolled as full-time students at universities and colleges. The large majority practise a time budget which concentrates on study activities and largely corresponds with the ideal of a full-time student. Nevertheless, there are also students in these countries who actually are pursing their studies part time, although the formal conditions for this, for example, in the form of corresponding study regulations, very largely do not exist. Between 12% (Germany) and indeed 24% (Austria) state that they spend no more than 20 hours per week on their study activities. De facto, these students are studying part time. And even in countries in which part-time study is provided for (Ireland and the Netherlands), a proportion of those students who chose full-time status actually spend so little time in pursuit of their studies that they should really be placed in the part-time category. On the other hand, there are among part-time students around a quarter, and in Flanders even almost three quarters, who spend more than 30 hours a week on study activities and so, formally, should rather be counted among the full-time students.

Fig. 11: Participation in higher education



* BEL(f), FIN, FRA,GER, NET, ITA 1999 , IRE 1998 and AUT 2000/2001

1) pross rate



* BEL(f), FIN, FRA,GER, NET, ITA 1999 , IRE 1998 and AUT 2000/2001

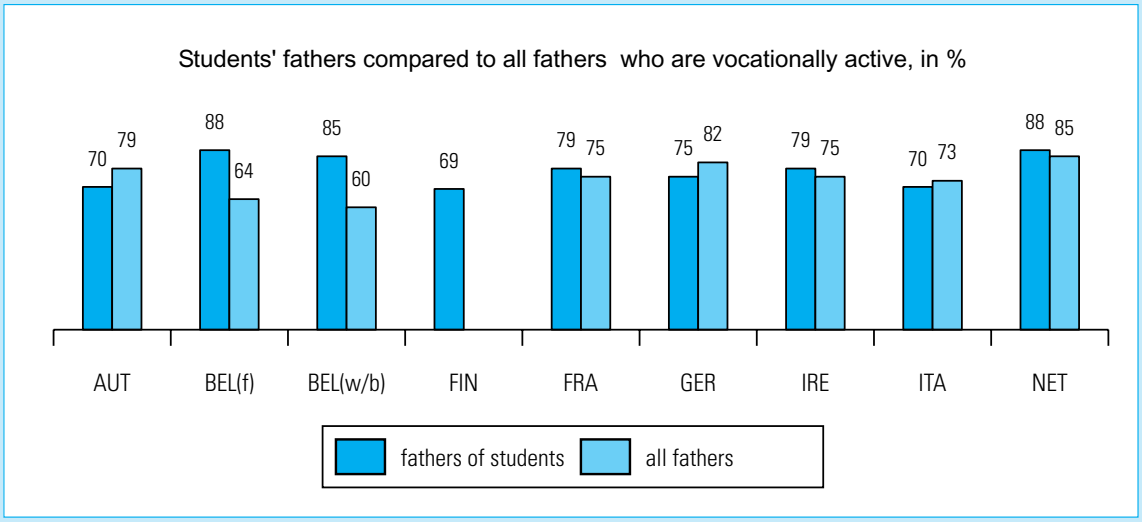
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles; OECD EAG 2001

Participation in higher education

In Finland, more than two thirds of the young people of the respective age group commence a course of higher education study, while in the Netherlands around half still manage to do so (top chart). In Ireland, around 45% commence studies, while the entry rate in Italy is 40%. Substantially lower rates are recorded in the other countries for first course entry into tertiary education: In Austria, the Flemish community in Belgium, Germany and France, participation rates are between 29% and 35%.

As far as access to higher education is concerned, women have meanwhile overtaken the men. The proportion of female study entrants in the age and gender-specific population is higher in all countries than that of male entrants (bottom chart). In Finland, the difference is +19 percentage points, in France and Italy it still amounts to +13 and +11 percentage points respectively. Austria (+6 percentage points), Ireland and the Netherlands (+3 and +4 percentage points respectively) follow at a distance. Germany and Belgium (Flanders) have the most balanced new entry rates for the two genders, with a difference of around one percentage point only.

Fig. 12: Work status of students' fathers



Men aged in AUT, GER, IRE, NET 40-60, in ITA: 40-64, in FRA:40-60, in BEL (fl): 15-64, in BEL(w/b):25-50

Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

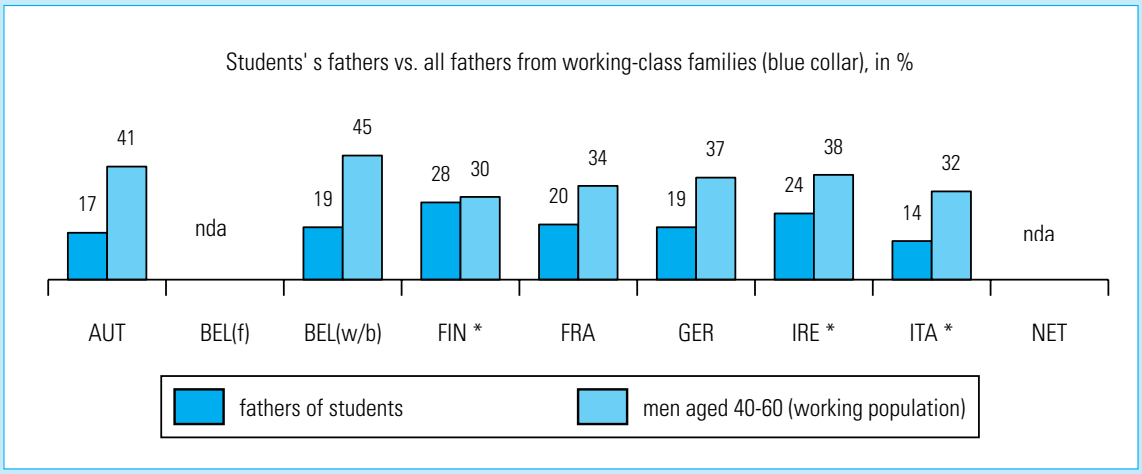
Work status of students' fathers

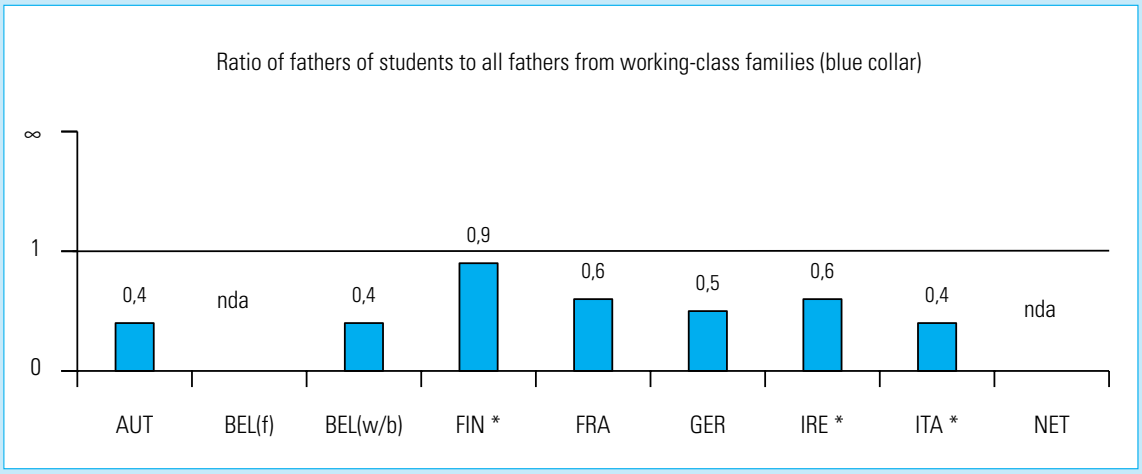
The following data on social make-up and educational background (Fig. 12 to Fig. 14) aim to provide an international comparison of the social family background of students. The employment status of parents is an important indicator in this respect and is divided into the main categories of economically active, unemployed, vocationally not active, and retired. It is based on the work status of students' fathers.

Fig. 12 presents the proportions of students whose fathers are economically active (dark columns). The proportional values range from 59% to 88%. In Finland, students from economically-active parental homes account for a good two thirds of the student population. This means that they, together with Italian and Austrian students, are to be found at the lower end of the scale. At the upper end, the survey found students from Flanders and the Netherlands, in both cases with substantially higher shares of 88% or from Wallonia with a share of 85%. The other countries are to be found in the middle range.

For closer examination, the survey took the proportion of the same-aged male population (light columns) as a comparative benchmark. The survey could not confirm the assumption that the parents of students are more frequently in employment than the parents of the same-aged population. No uniform pattern of deviation is recognisable across all countries. In the case of Austria, Germany and Italy, students' fathers are slightly less economically active than are the fathers of the same-aged general population. This means that they are under-represented as regards employment. However, the reason for this lies not in unemployment, because students' fathers are actually under-represented in that category. Rather, the differences can largely be explained by the age-related greater frequency of entry into retirement. The situation is France and Ireland is slightly different: In these countries, employment among students' fathers is comparatively more widespread. However, compared to the same-aged male population, unemployment also plays a comparatively less significant role in these countries. It should be noted that the work status structures of students' fathers, on the one hand, and males in the flat population, on the other, generally differ marginally from one another and that these differences are primarily caused by the age structure.

Fig. 13: Students' social background - Occupational status of students' father





* FIN: men aged 40-59; FRA: men aged 40-60; ITA: men aged 40-64; IRE: National Population under 15 years and higher education entrants in 1998
Interpretation aid: value < 1.0 = below-average educational participaton rate for working-class children
value > 1.0 = above-average educational participation rate for working- class children

Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

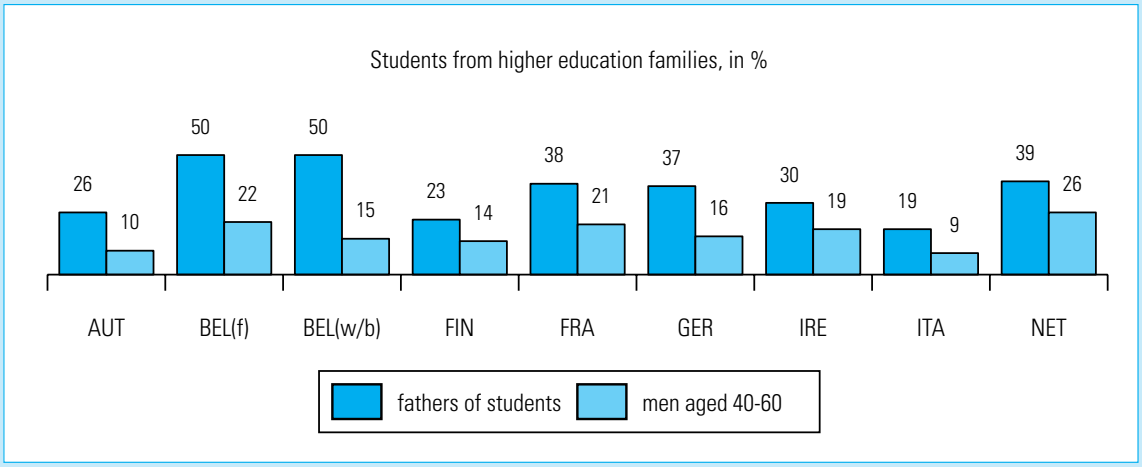
Students' social background - Occupational status of students' father

The proportion of students from working-class (blue-collar worker) families among the total student body differs substantially from country to country (see top, dark column). In Finland and Ireland these students account for almost around a quater of the total student body and thus shape the student body to a much greater extent than in all the other surveyed countries, where this group drops gradually until it accounts for a share of only one fifth or less. In this relation (proportion of working-class children in the total student body) the proportional values merely mirror national differences in the make-up of the student population.

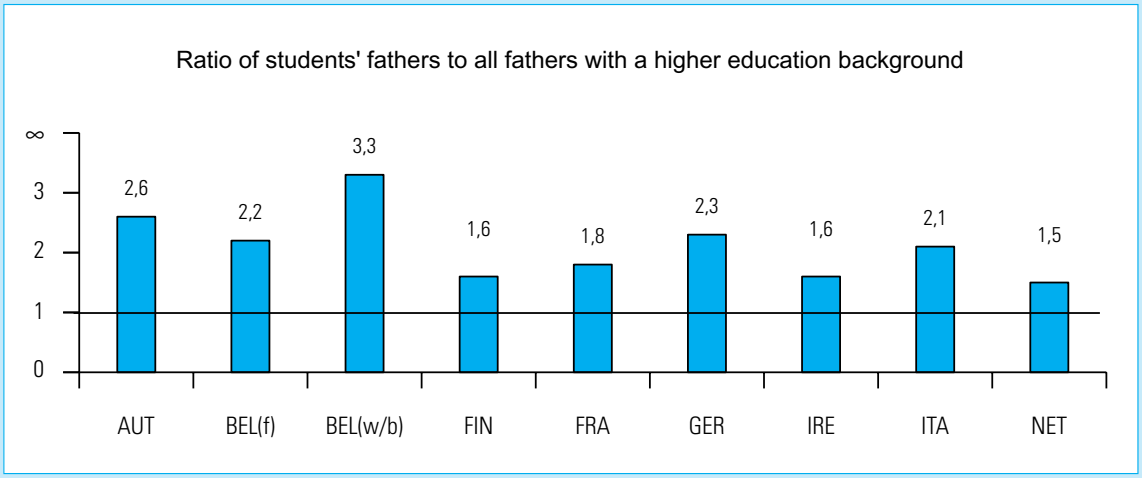
An indicator in which the proportion of working-class children in the student population is set in relation to the proportion of blue-collar workers in the appropriately-aged population is a more informative one (see bottom chart). At a value of = 1.0, a representative level of participation would have been achieved, while at values < 1.0 a below educational participation of working-class children and at values of > 1.0 an above-average educational participation must be assumed. As expected, the values are below 1.0 in all countries, meaning that the participation rate of working-class children in education is below-average in all countries. However, this relative perspective does not cause any substantial changes in the ranking of countries. Finland and Ireland continue to top the group, although Finland managed, despite a slightly lower proportion of working-class children in the student population, to achieve higher education participation rates for this social group at a level almost equivalent to their proportion in the general population (0.9). France (0.6), Germany (0.5) and Italy and Austria (both 0.4) follow at quite a distance.

However, we cannot rule out the possibility that the delineating definitions given to the "blue-collar worker" category in the individual countries do not absolutely coincide, although such a lack of absolutely clear borderlines cannot fully explain the substantial differences found in the educational mobilisation of disadvantaged groups. So we can only make assumptions as to the possible reasons for the differing degrees of mobilisation. It can be supposed that greater differentiation in the school and higher education system, stronger direct financial incentives and special access routes for groups without an educational tradition have contributed to social barriers being more easily overcome in Finland and Ireland.

Fig. 14: Students' educational background
- School-leaving qualification of students' fathers



Men aged in NET: 45-60, in IRE, ITA: 40-64, in AUT, FRA ,GER: 40-60, in BEL (fl): 25-64 and in FIN: 40-59



Men aged in NET: 45-60, in IRE, ITA: 40-64, in AUT, FRA, GER: 40-60 , in BEL (fl): 25-64 and in FIN: 40-59

Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Students' educational background - School-leaving qualification of students' fathers

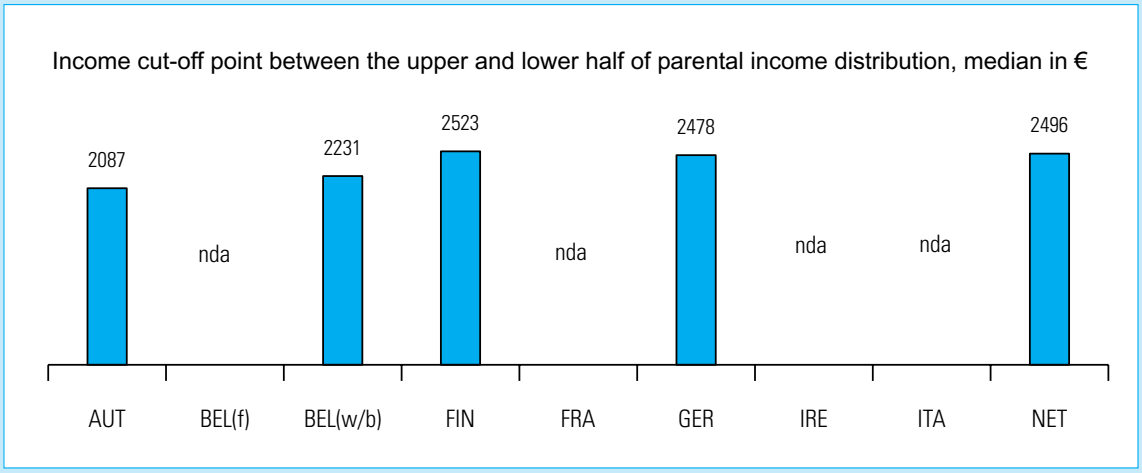
In comparing the social background of students, the survey not only considers the "Work status of parents" (Fig. 12) and the "Occupational status of students' fathers" (Fig. 13), but also the highest educational qualification attained by students' fathers.

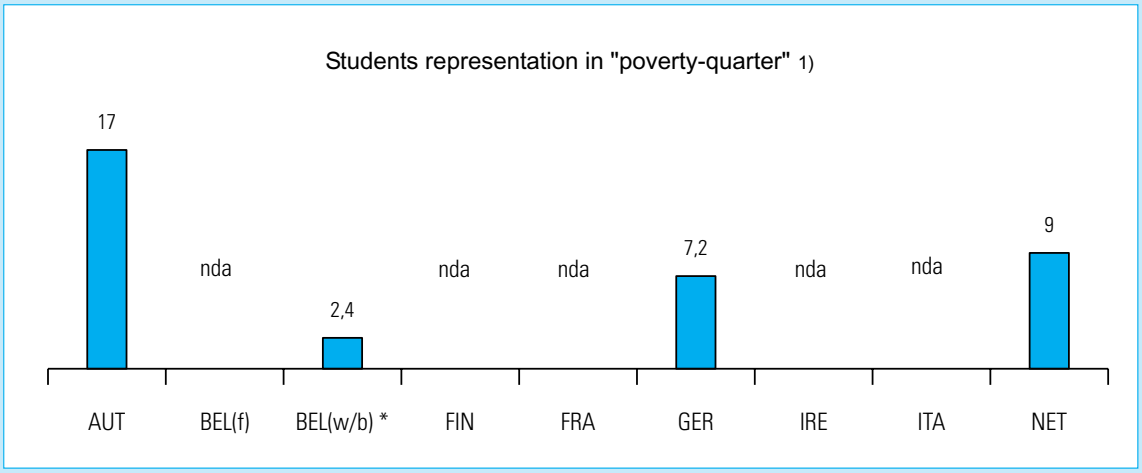
The proportion of students from households in which the father holds a higher education degree (academics) varies substantially from one country to the next (top chart). At the one end of the spectrum, Belgium (Flemish and Wallonia-Brussels communities) easily has the highest proportion of students from academic families with a value of 50%. At the other end of the spectrum - Austria, Finland, Italy - the proportions are much smaller. Only one in four or respectively one in five students from these countries has a father who gained a university degree.

If, in a second step (bottom chart), the survey compares the proportion of students' fathers holding a university degree among the general student population to the proportion of male 40 to 60-year-olds holding a university degree in the base population, then a similar pattern appears across the board. The values are well above 1.0 in all countries, meaning that academic families achieve above average rates for reproducing their faction of the population. The leading group is made up of Belgium, Austria, Germany and Italy. Values in excess of 2.0 and up to 3.3 show that among students' fathers proportionally more than twice as many and sometimes even three times as many are found holding a university degree than among the general male population of 40 to 60-year-olds. The Netherlands (1.5) as well as Finland and Ireland (each with 1.6) have the lowest values. In these countries, families with a greater educational background only achieve a slightly above-average participation rate.

Conversely, this means that none of the countries has managed to enable young people from families in which the father merely holds a primary school or a lower secondary school qualification to participate in higher education at a level which is proportional to their share in the population. Finland and Ireland some closest to achieving this.

Fig. 15: Income of students´ parents versus all private households





1) "Poverty quater": percentage of students` parents having income below the income cut-off point for the lowest income quarter of all private households

* approx.

Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

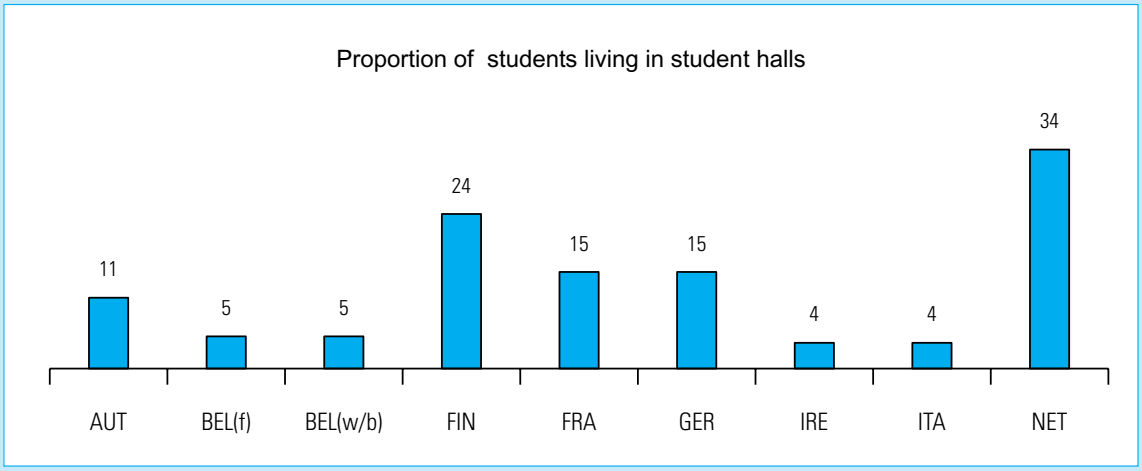
Income of students´ parents versus all private households

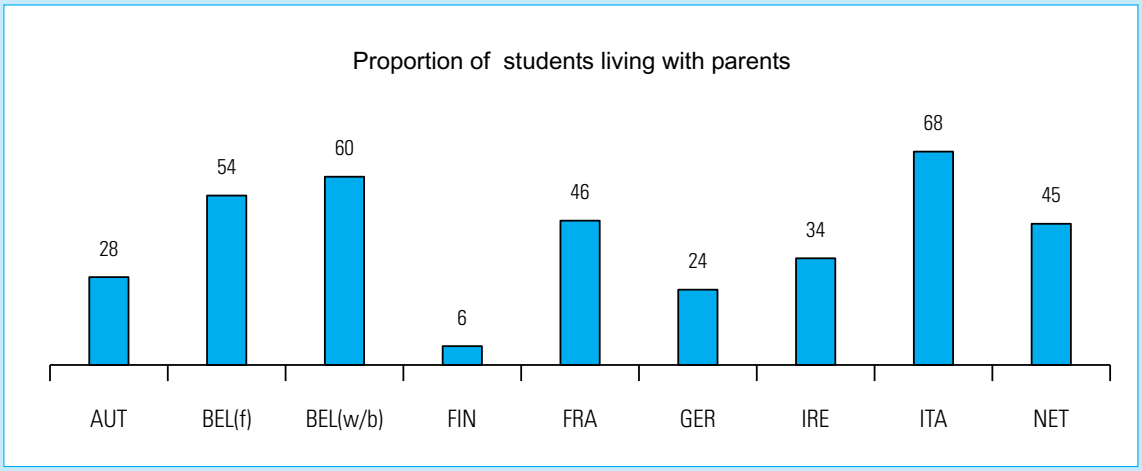
In analysing the economic situation of students' parents, the survey had to take the following into account: Statements on the income situation are regarded as very sensitive in most countries. This is why students were asked to provide details on the income of their parents within general categories. In some cases, the details provided are estimates. The following should therefore be regarded as approximate values.

The average monthly income of students' parents fluctuates from around 2,100 to 2,500 (median). Minor differences indicate a relatively uniform income situation in students' families in the surveyed EU member countries.

The bottom chart shows the percentage of students' parents who have a lower monthly income at their disposal than the economically weakest 25% of private households in the general population (low income quarter). This indicator shows whether students' parents are under-represented in this lower income quarter (< 25%), are proportionally represented (= 25%) or are over-represented (> 25%). All given values lie well below 25%. While the value for Austria (17%) comes closest to the lowest income quarter of the overall population, the corresponding values in the Netherlands and Germany (9% and 7%, respectively) are substantially lower. This means that an above-average number of students seem to come from more well-off parental homes.

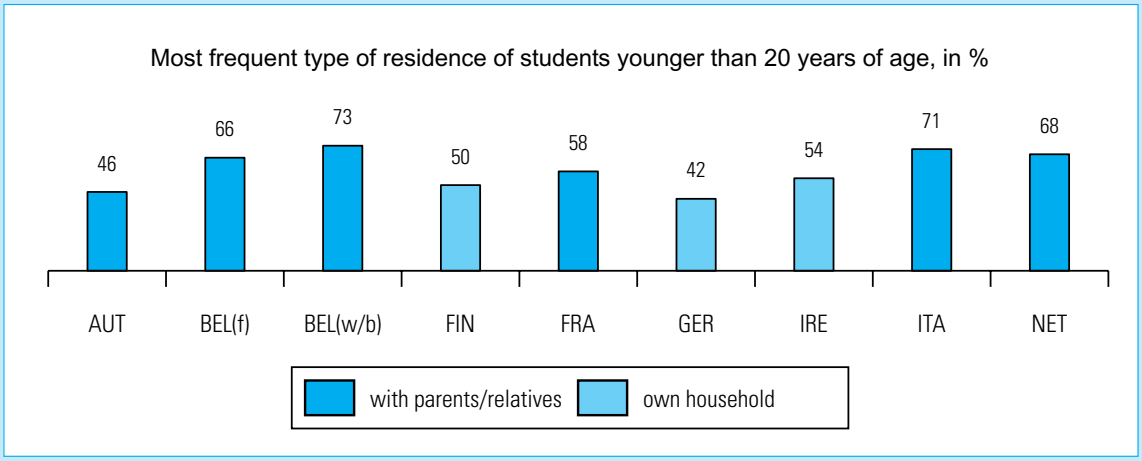
Fig. 16: Student type of residence

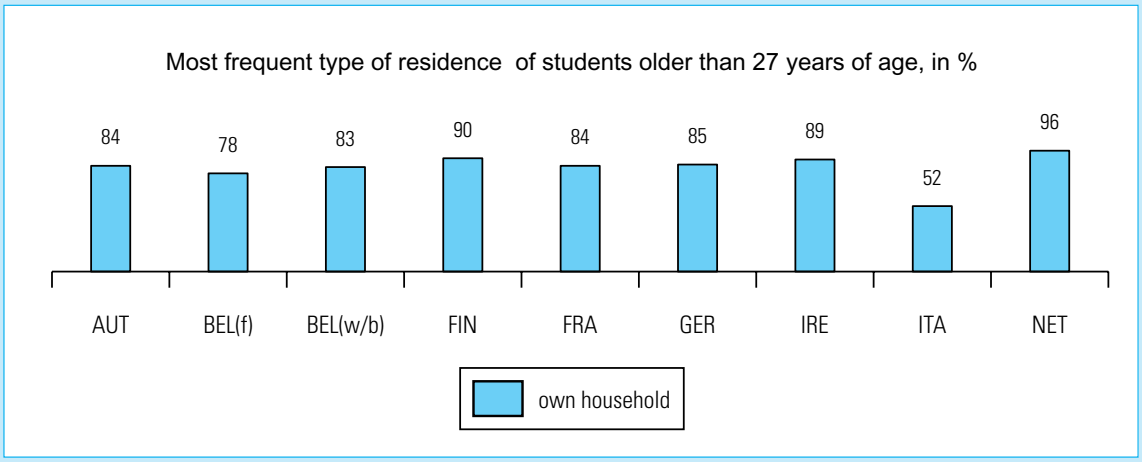




Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Fig. 16a: Student type of residence by age





Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Student type of residence by age

The proportion of students living in student halls of residence differs substantially from one country to the next (top chart). In the Netherlands, more than a third of the student body lives in student halls. Finland follows with around a quarter of students doing so. In Ireland and Italy, only a small proportion of 4% live in hall, while in Belgium it is 5% in both communities (Wallonia-Brussels and Flanders). France, Germany (both with 15%) and Austria, where one in ten students live in hall, hold a middle position. The average across all countries therefore shows that a relatively small proportion of the student population is accommodated in halls of residence.

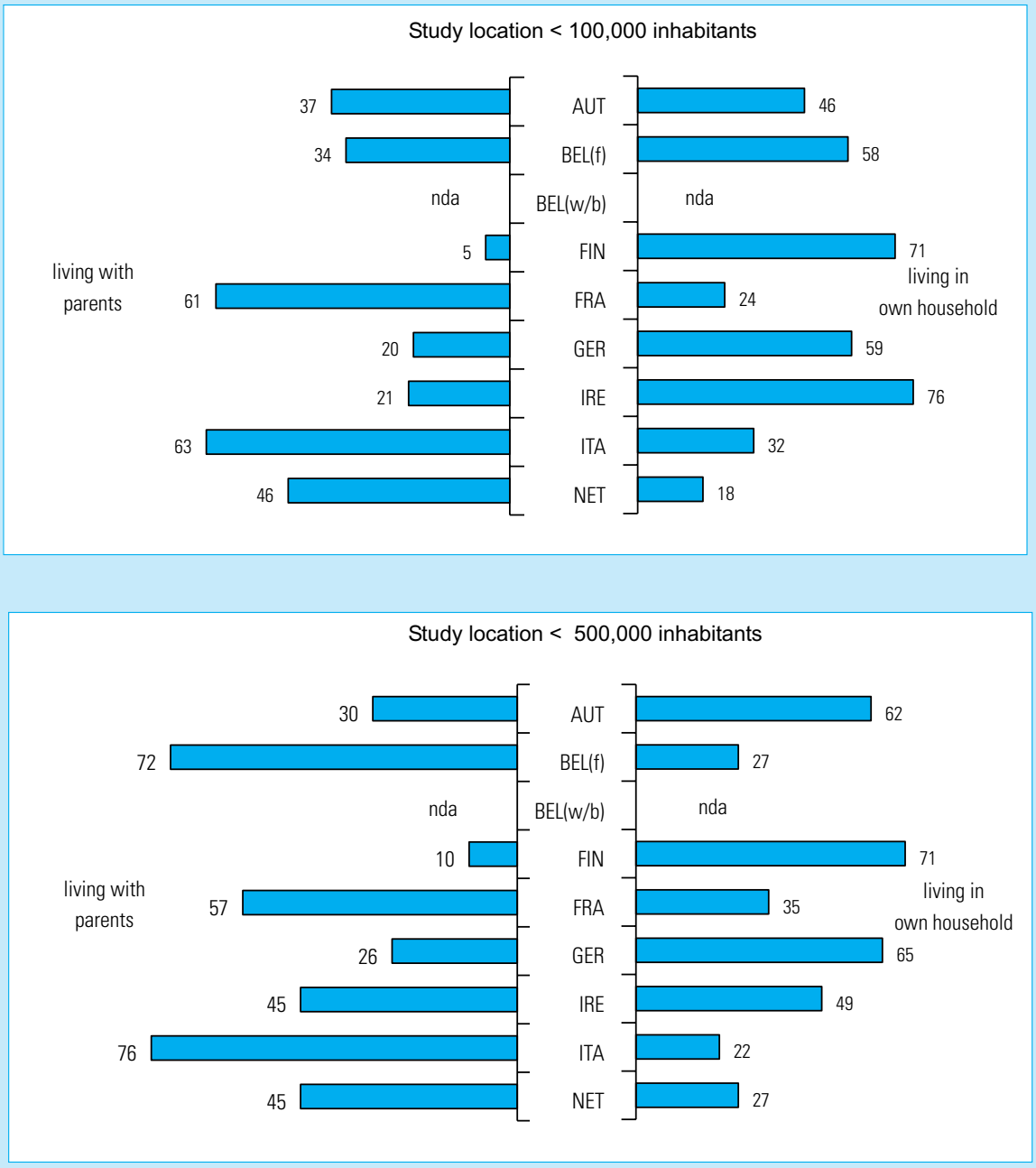
Many more students prefer the alternative of living with their parents (bottom chart). Students living with their parents clearly shape the profile of the student body in Italy, where around two thirds continue to live with their mothers and fathers. A proportion of 60% live with their parents in the Walloon community of Belgium, while in Flanders more than half the students do so. Living with parents is also popular among French and Dutch students (46% and 45% respectively). On the other hand, in Finland, where students prefer to live in their own household (70%) above all other forms of accommodation, only a very small proportion of students live with their parents. The situation in Germany and Ireland is similar. Both forms of accommodation - living in student halls of residence and living with parents - are less frequently represented in these countries. Rather, some 61% of students in both countries prefer to run their own household. These include students living in private rental accommodation, lodgings and students who own their own homes.

The choice of accommodation type depends greatly on the age of students (Fig. 16a). Younger students (up to 20 years of age) in six of the eight surveyed countries preferred to live in the parental home. In this age group, students in Finland, Germany and Ireland prefer to live in their own household, with the proportion ranging between 42% and 55%. As students grow older, the proportion of students living with their parents or in student halls of residence falls in all countries, while the proportion of those living alone in a flat or sharing it with a partner rise. The by far most popular type of accommodation among those aged 27 and over is that of running their own household. As expected, Italy, with a share of 52%, deviated downwards from the otherwise very high values of between 78% and 96% found in all other countries.

Accommodation

Fig. 17: Type of residence by size of study location

in %

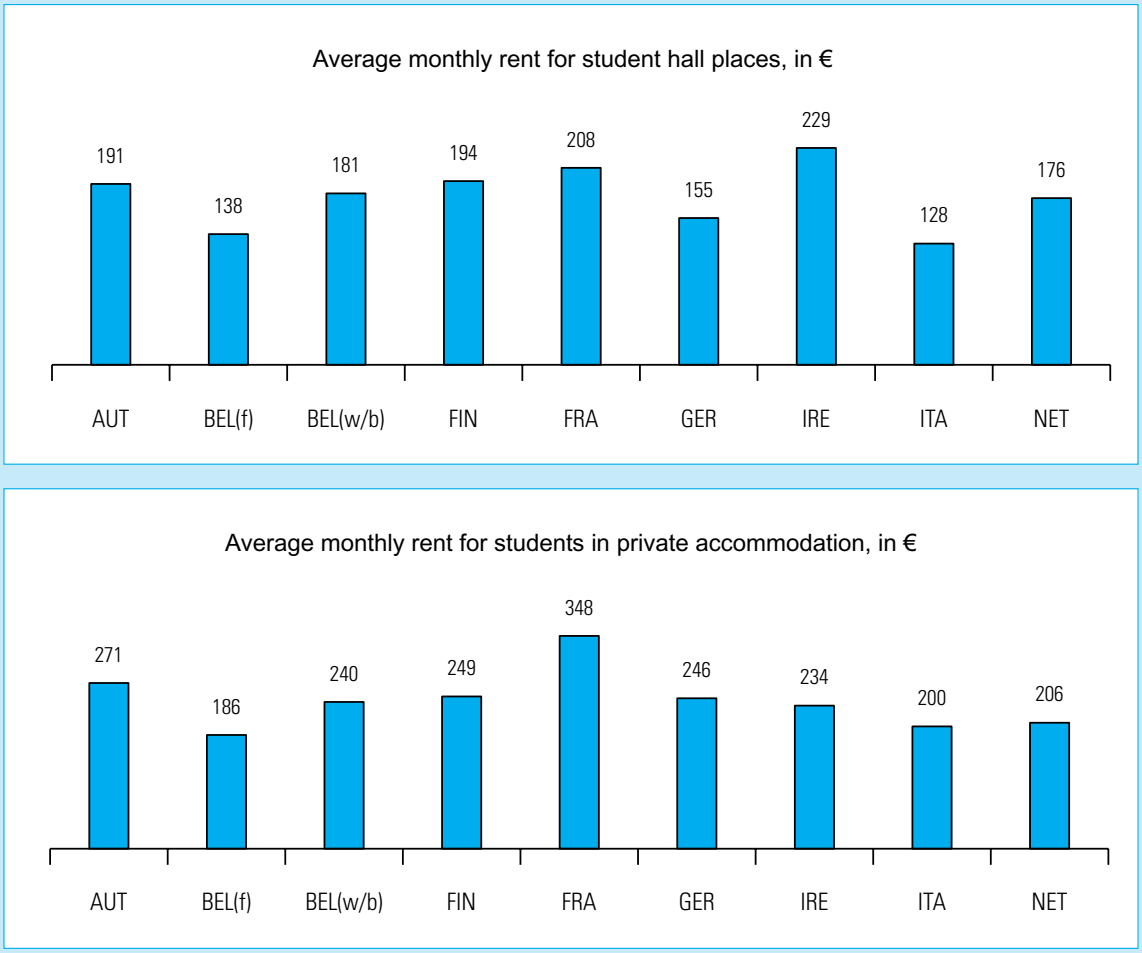


Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Type of residence by size of study location

The utilisation of certain forms of accommodation differs from one country to the next according to the size of university town. However, no clear correlation can be identified between these two parameters. Whether students prefer to run their own household or alternatively decide in favour of living with their parents is a question that is determined by several factors, including the university's catchment area, the situation on the local private housing market and the range of available hall of residence places. These regional conditions are by no means uniform, neither between the participating countries nor within those countries themselves. Therefore, it is hardly possible to make any further-reaching generalisations applicable to all countries. We recommend that statements are interpreted in the context of the respective country (cf. the country descriptions on CD-ROM).

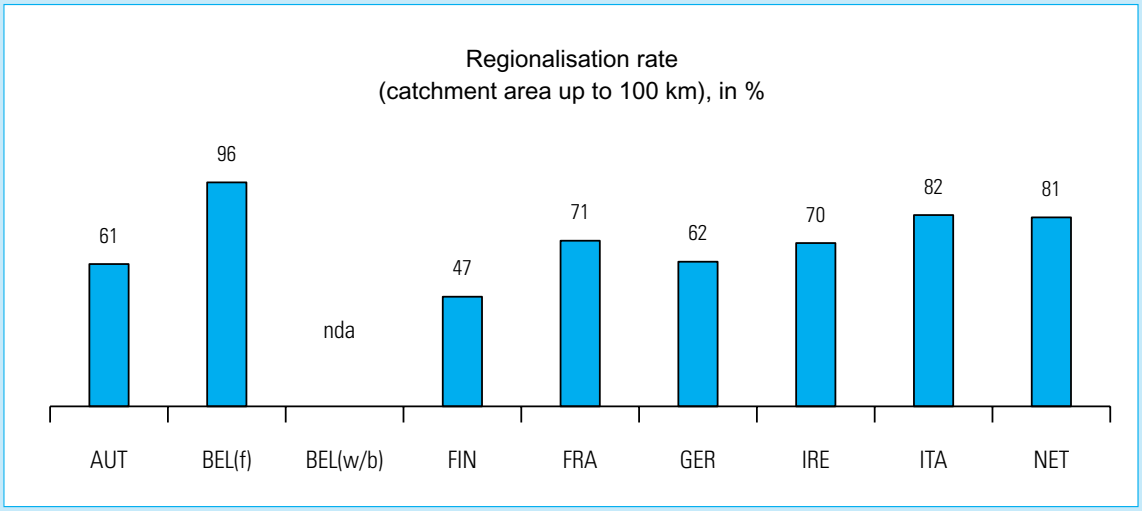
Fig. 18: Cost of accommodation



Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

The average monthly amount spent on rent is, in particular, dependent on which of the variously expensive forms of accommodation students choose. Irrespective of the varying rent levels in the countries, living in student halls of residence is the most economical form of accommodation in each of the surveyed countries. In Austria, for example, students have to spend 30% less on such accommodation than students running their own household. On average, rent levels are highest for French students running their own household. This is primarily caused by the fact that students are above all concentrated in the metropolis of Paris, where generally high cost of living levels prevail.

Fig. 19: Higher education catchment area



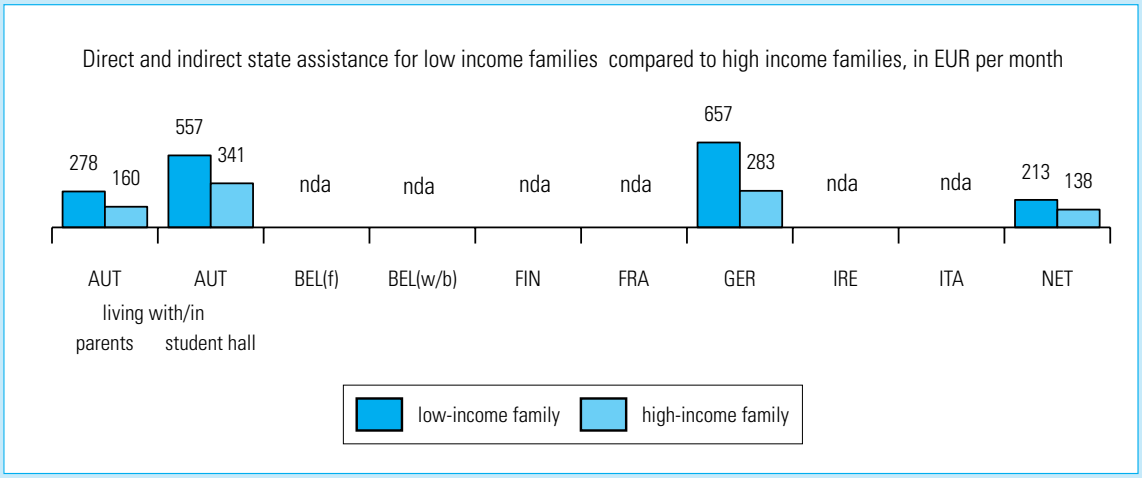
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

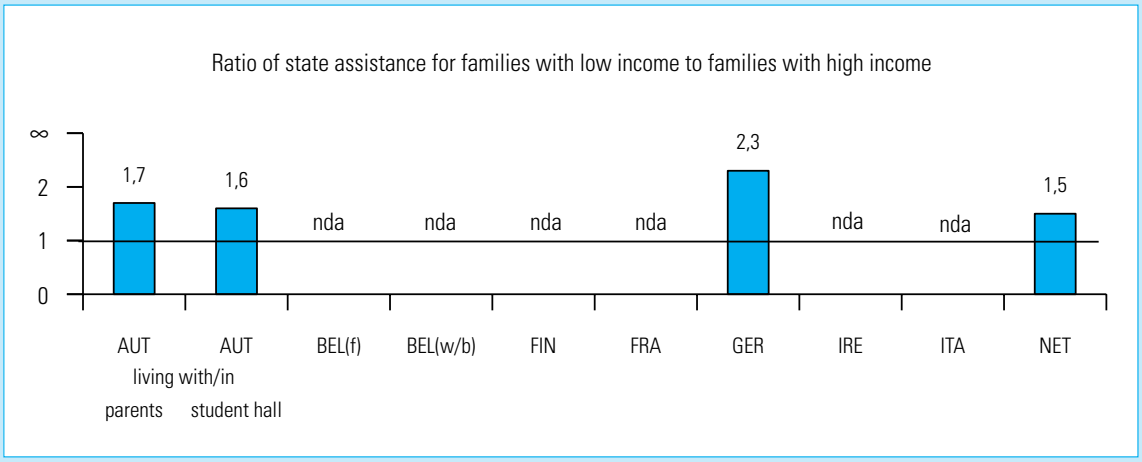
The indicator for the regional catchment area is taken as the proportion of students who grew up within a 100 km radius of the university or college they are attending. At 47%, the lowest value comes from Finland, with the other end of the scale being taken by small area Flanders, at 96%. Although the catchment area of universities in Finland is regionally focused, the capital of Helsinki with its major higher education institutions at the same time also draws a substantial share of its students from more distant areas and thus contributes to the comparatively low regional catchment rate.

An overall examination across all participating countries shows that a generally high degree of regionalisation cannot be overlooked, however. In five of the eight countries, this amounts to more than two thirds. In Italy, political efforts over the past 20 years have resulted in additional higher education facilities being made available decentrally and thus in the rate, which was high anyway, being further increased to a current value of 82%. The high proportion of students living with their parents also contributes to the close regional catchment areas in Italy. The majority of Italian students study close to their parents' place of residence, with only one in three choosing a further distant, but more prestigious study location. The small area Netherlands achieves a similarly high value at 81%. In France and Ireland, the rate is 70%. A relatively tight network of universities and colleges in Germany also leads to only a small proportion of students (38%) attending a university which is more than 100 km from their parents' place of residence. The situation in Austria is similar. Although no higher education institutions exist in a third of the Austrian states and, additionally, a number of degree courses are only offered at a few universities, the regionalisation rate amounts to 61%.

Fig. 20: Public transfers to families with children in higher education

Indicator of social subsidiarity





Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

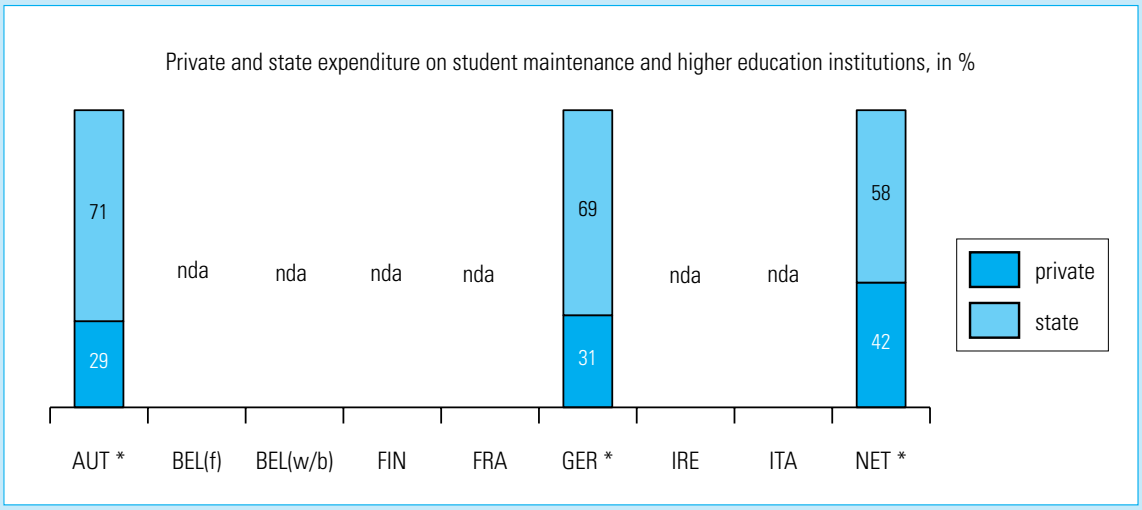
Public transfers to families with children in higher education

The educational assistance which the participating countries provide differs both in terms of the type and kind of transfers made as well as in the social balance objectives which it seeks to achieve.

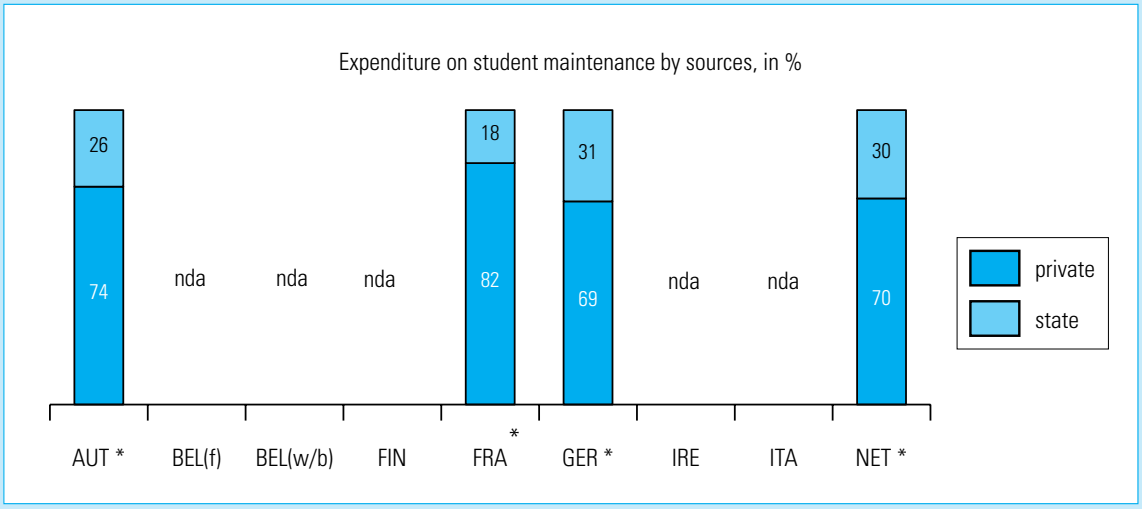
Comparison of the financial volume of study-related transfer payments made to low net income families with the corresponding financial volume paid to high net income families produces an indicator of the degree of social balance (subsidiarity) for low-income families with children (top chart). The level of the respective transfers is composed of direct and indirect public monetary transfers or transfers in kind to students and their parents.

All the countries providing information on this aspect achieve a value of > 1. In each case, this means that as family income decreases, the level of state assistance increases. This correlation is strongest in Germany, where in 1998 low-income families received study-related public transfers which were more than twice as high (2.3) - around 657 EURO (bottom chart) - as those received by high-income families at 282 EURO. These payments cover a substantial proportion of a student's living expenses (cf. Fig. 22 and Fig. 23). State assistance is also income dependent in Austria, although less pronounced. In 1998, families with low net incomes received average payments of 557 EURO as against 341 EURO for more well-off families, whereby the amounts paid out apply to students living in a hall of residence. The indicator value is 1.6. In the case of Austrian students living with their parents, the value is 1.7, with a generally lower level of public transfers. Up to a maximum age of 27, students in the Netherlands receive direct payments from the state. If they come from low-income families, they receive an average amount of 213 EURO. Students and families with a high annual net income receive around 138 EURO.

Fig. 21: Public and private expenditure on higher education



* AUT and GER 1998, NET 2000



* AUT, FRA and GER 1998, NET 2000

Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 ; OECD - EAG 2001

ad Fig. 21) **Public and private expenditure on higher education - student living expenses and higher education facilities Calculation Scheme**

Sources / Expenditure	Private Sources		Public Sources
	student self-financing	family members (less state-transfer)	
student living expenses	earnings from employment	cash contributions (less state transfer)	public support (grant / loan)
	other income (savings,...)	non-cash contributions to students not living with their parents	subsidies for student refectories/halls of residence
		non-cash contributions to students living with their parents	
	sum:	sum:	sum:
higher education facilities	private contributions to institution		public contributions to institution
	sum:	sum:	
TOTAL	sum:		sum:

datasource:

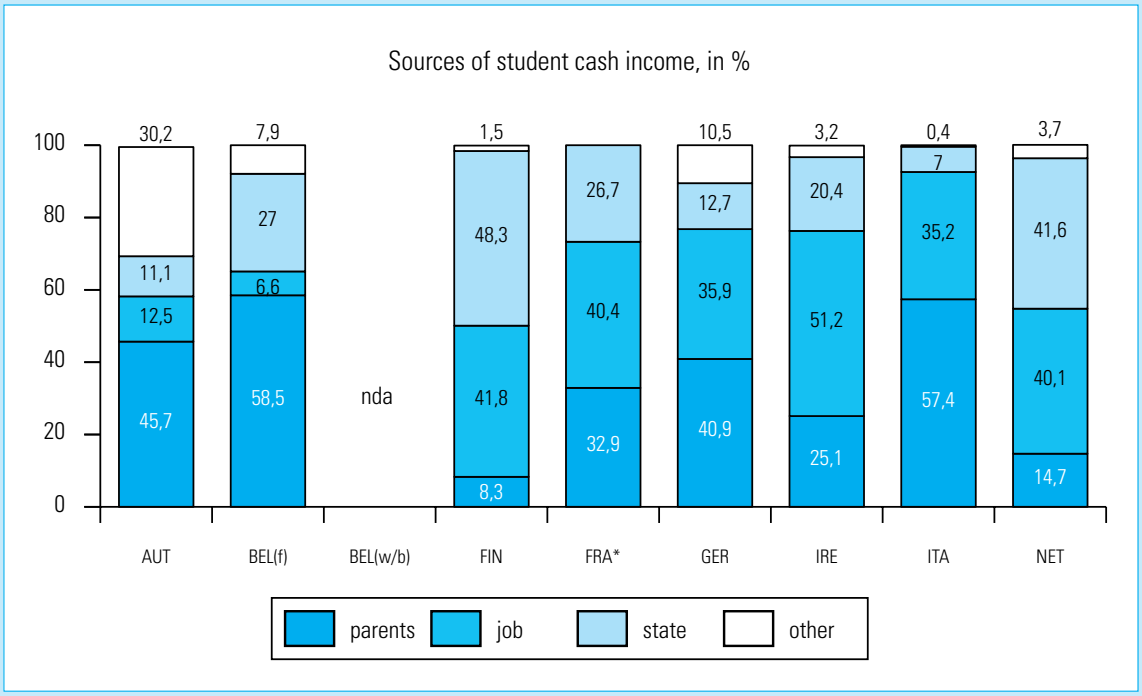
- *survey+instructions*
- *survey*
- *official national statistics*
- *OECD EAG 2001*

Public and private expenditure on higher education

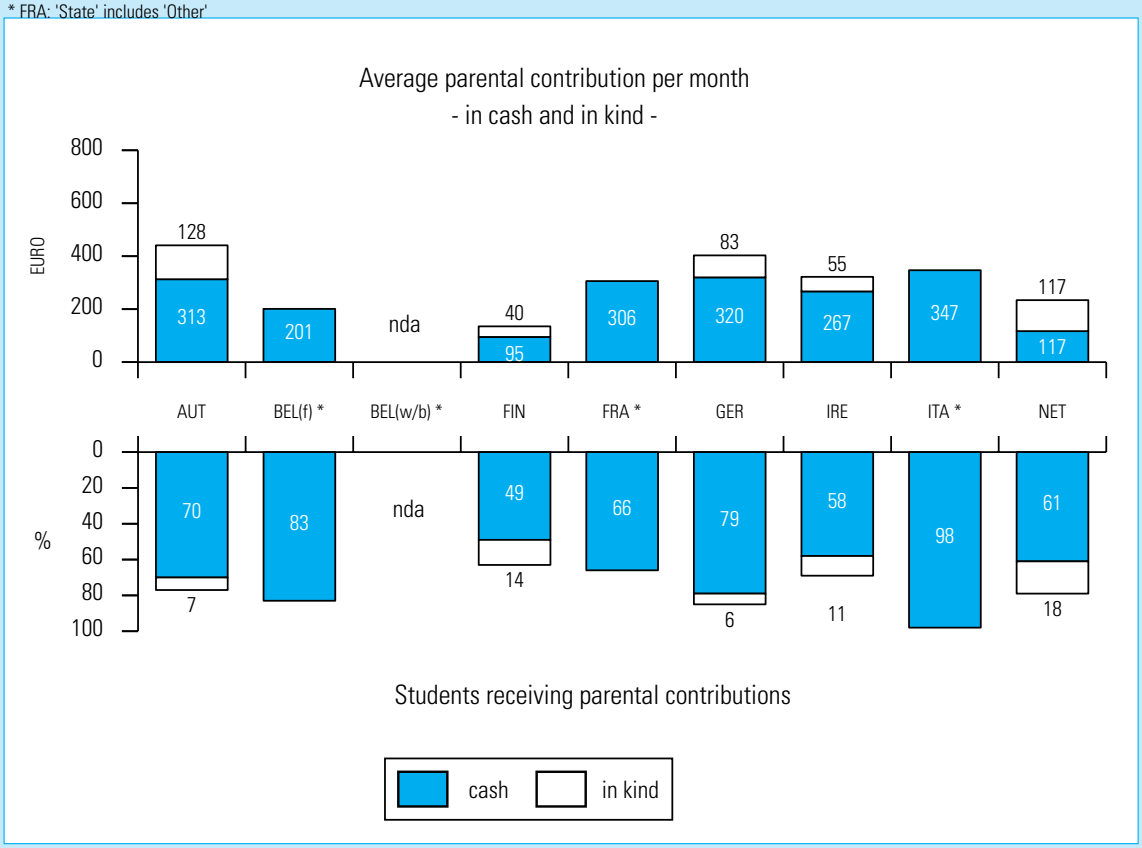
The representation of expenditure on higher education in the participating European countries takes account of students' living expenses as well as of expenditure on higher education facilities, and differentiates between public and private sources (cf. Calculation Scheme). Taking all higher education costs together (top chart) shows that the proportion provided by the state varies from one country to the next as follows: The highest value is achieved in Austria at 71%, while the Netherlands has a low rate at 58%. At 69%, Germany takes a middle position. The ratio of public to private expenditure is therefore clearly borne by the state in all participating countries.

The bottom chart relates only to the funding of student living expenses. On the one hand, these expenses are covered from private resources, i.e. by students themselves - for example, earnings from employment - as well as by parents. Students receive payments in cash as well as in kind, for example, free accommodation, from their parents. On the other hand, transfers made by the state - primarily public transfers, such as educational assistance for students and transfers to parents (including child benefit, educational allowance) - need to be taken into account. In addition to this, state support provided to student services, the halls of residence, the refectories, and so on must be included. In all the countries providing information on this aspect, the survey found that parents and students very largely themselves cover the living expenses of students. In France, private expenditure accounts for a proportion of 82% of total expenditure, while in Austria, the Netherlands and Germany the proportion covered by parents or students is also well above two thirds. By contrast, the state only bears a small proportion of the burden, namely between 18% and a maximum of 31%.

Fig. 22: Sources of student income - Students maintaining their own household



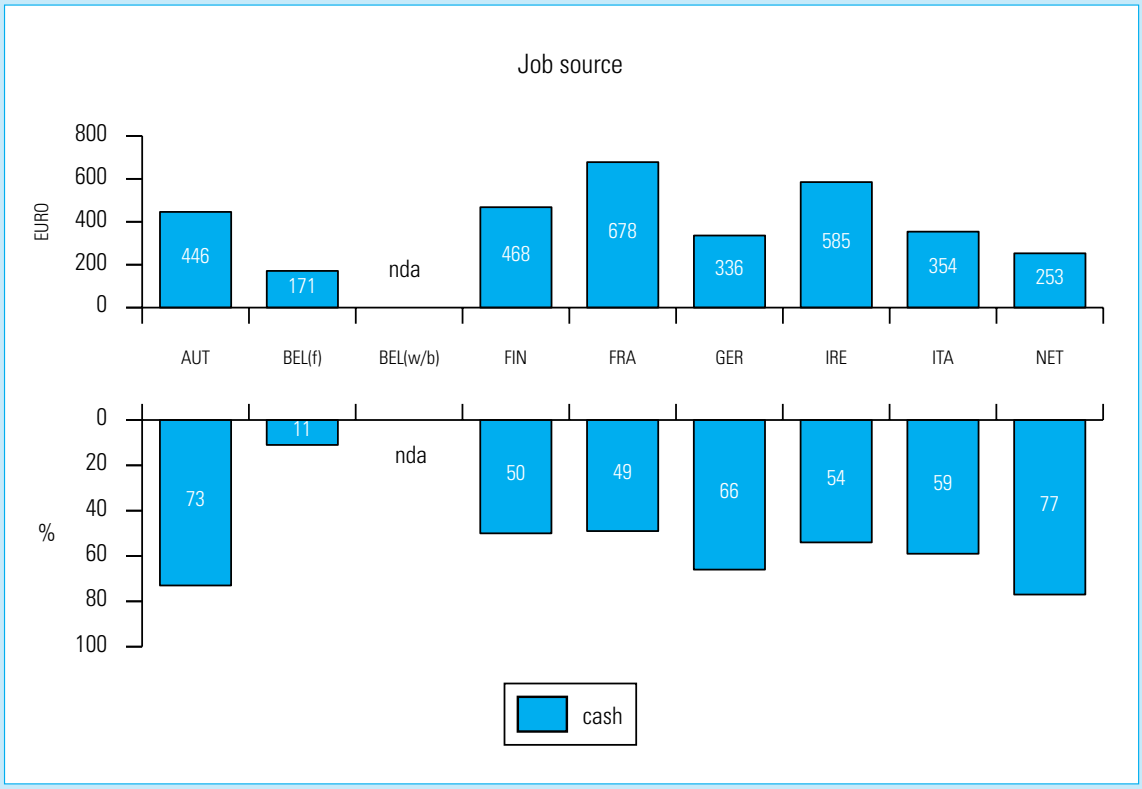
* FRA: 'State' includes 'Other'

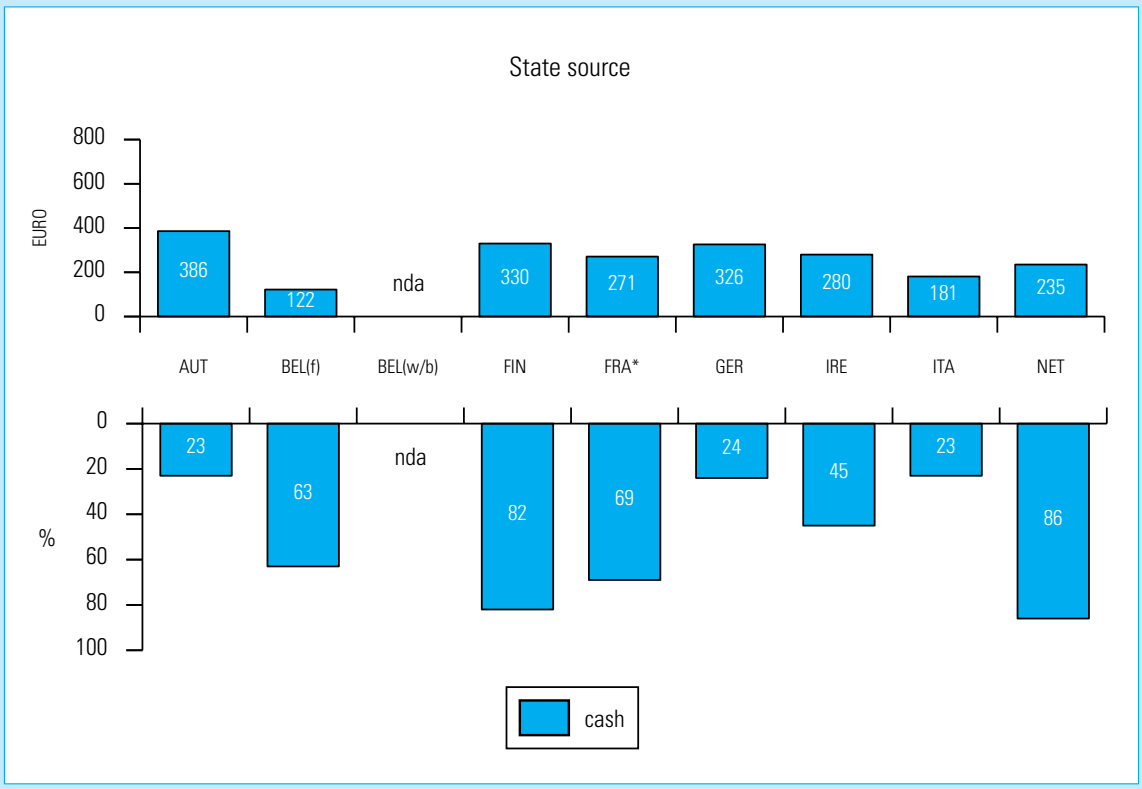


* no data available on payments in kind

Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Fig. 22: Sources of student income - Students maintaining their own household





* FRA: 'State' includes 'Other'

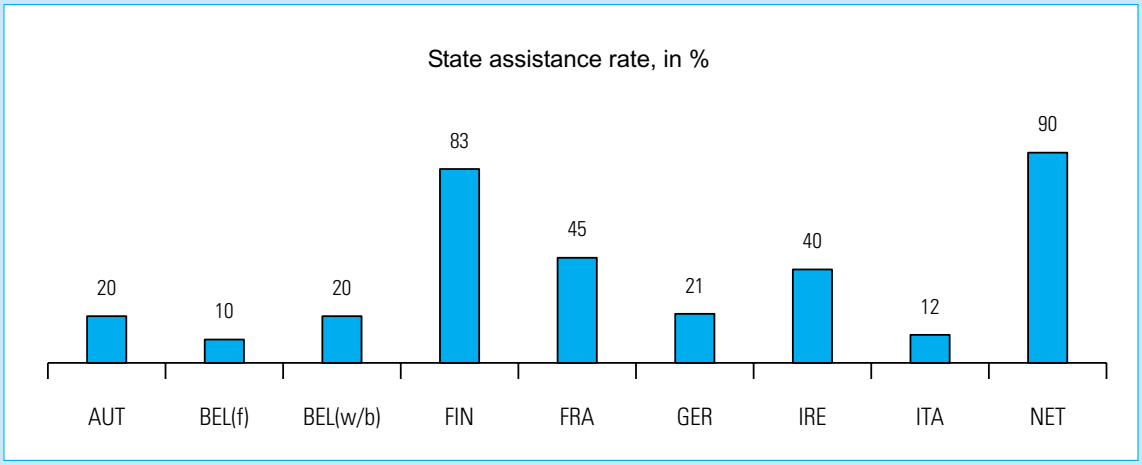
Sources of student income - Students maintaining their own household

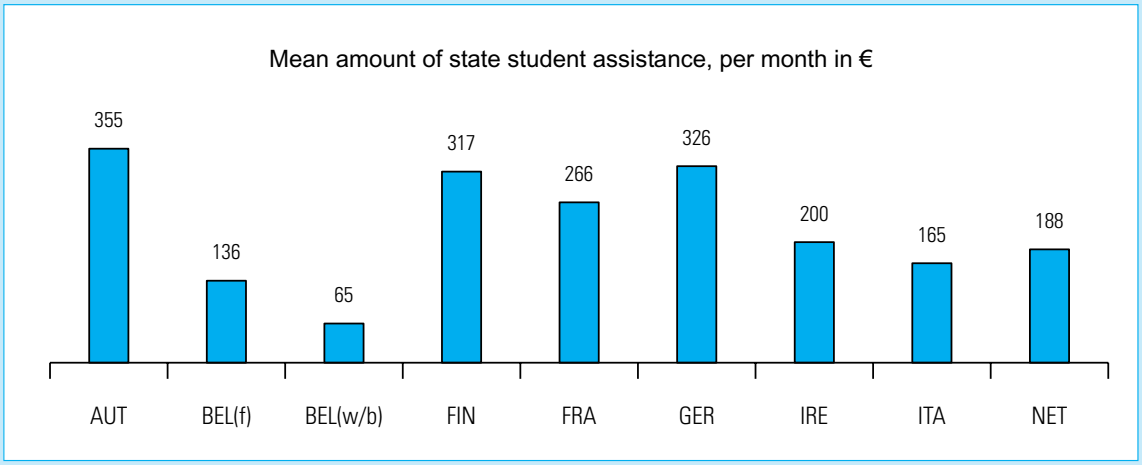
Students' monthly monetary income is essentially made up of three sources in all the countries: Parental contributions, personal earnings and state assistance. However, the significance - defined by the share of the monthly income taken by each funding source - of the various sources does vary substantially from one country to the next (top chart). In Flanders, Italy and Germany, parents provide the largest share of the resources with which students cover their living expenses. In these countries, this source ranges from 59% to 41%. In countries such as Ireland, Austria and France, personal earnings form the major supporting pillar with a share of between 40% and 51%. State assistance is only the major income source in two of the eight surveyed countries: In Finland and the Netherlands state assistance averages out at a contribution of 48% and 42% respectively to the monthly monetary income of students.

The significance of the various funding sources for those who profit from these sources can be read from the following three charts. In these, each of the upper series of columns represents the average sums made available by each funding source. The lower series of columns in each case shows the proportion of students who have this source at their disposal.

The average amount which parents make available to their children in cash and in kind ranges from 135 EURO to 441 EURO. Only in the case of Germany and Belgium (w/b) is this sum also the highest contribution to students' total income. In the other countries, the proportions are - sometimes substantially - below those sums which students have at their disposal each month from personal earnings. In Austria, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands, the self-financing share from personal earnings makes the highest contribution to students' total income.

Fig. 23: State assistance for all students





Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

State assistance for students

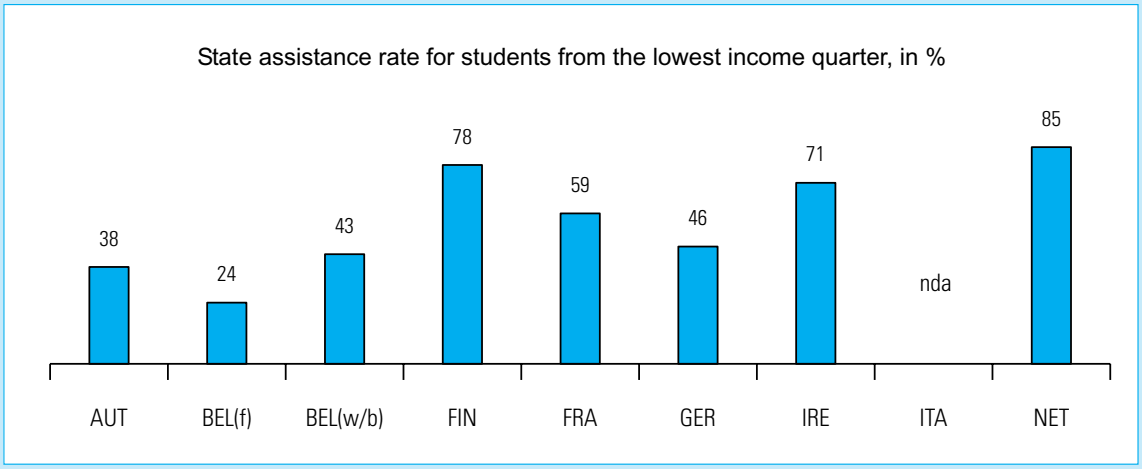
The structure of the entitlement to and the amount of educational assistance provided in the form of direct financial payments differs greatly in the individual countries.

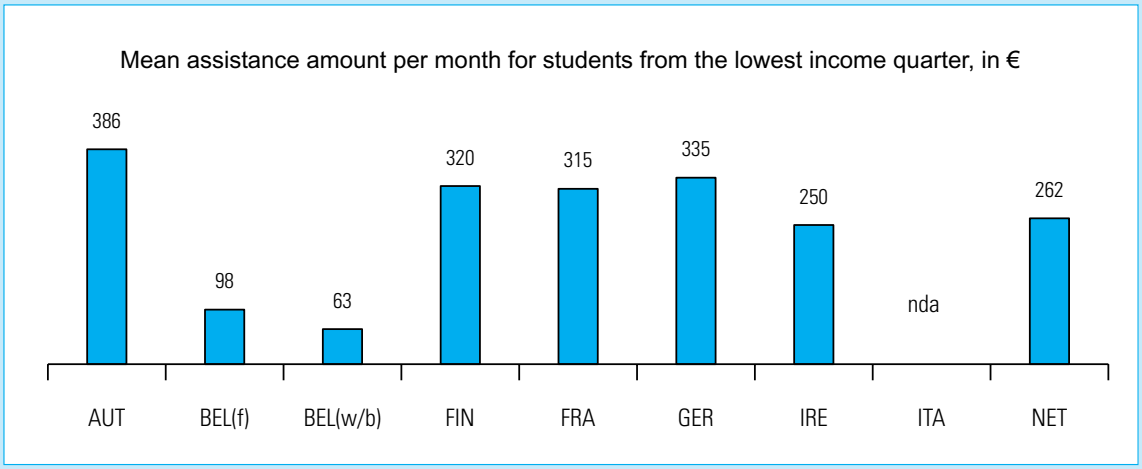
The proportion of those receiving support among all students is by far the highest in the Netherlands and Finland. 90% and 83% respectively of the students enrolled in higher education in these countries receive state assistance towards their living expenses (top chart). In France (45%) and Ireland (40%) the state assistance rate is only half as high. In part, this is balanced out by indirect transfers to parents (see Fig. 20). In Ireland, for example, there are free tuition fees for all full-time undergraduate students, and these transfer do not feature in this data.Yet, around one in five students in Austria [3] , in the Walloon community and in Germany do still receive financial assistance from the state. Italy and Flanders are at the bottom end of the scale, with around one in ten students who make use of educational assistance. Compared with earlier years, the proportion of recipients has increased in Italy.

The average monthly amount of assistance paid out also differs greatly from one country to the next (bottom chart). Its level varies depending on various criteria, e.g. level of parental income. In Austria, an assisted student receives an average sum of 355 Euro per month. Average sums in excess of 300 Euro per entitled student are also paid in Germany and Finland. In these countries, state assistance makes up an not insubstantial part of the student income budget of these assisted students. In the other countries, the assistance is substantially lower.

[3] Data from the national survey. Students receiving educational assistance are over-represented here. According to official figures, the corresponding value is around 14%

Fig. 24: State assistance by income of students` parents





Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

State assistance by income of students` parents

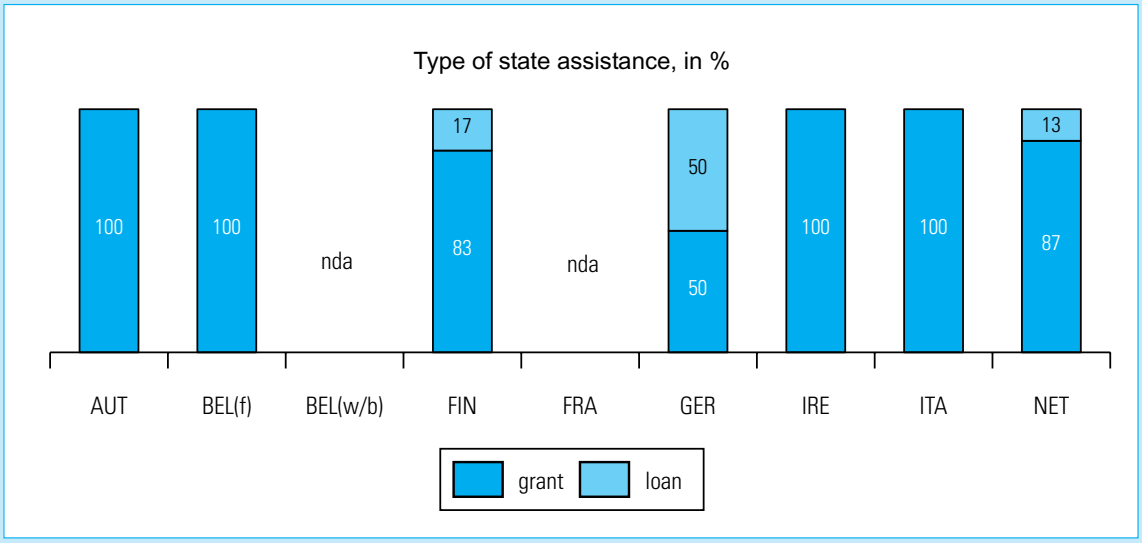
Within the context of direct state educational assistance for students, two different types of assistance systems can be identified in relation to the participating countries: On the one hand, there are assistance systems which take the income of students' parents into account when setting the award level (parent dependent), and, on the other hand, there are systems which support students irrespectively of their parents' income (parent independent). Parent-dependent assistance systems are to be found in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and Ireland. Finland has a parent-independent system, while the Netherlands operates a mixed system of parent-dependent and parent-independent assistance [4].

The upper chart compares the proportions of assisted students from financially-disadvantaged families (lower quarter of net incomes) in this group. In those countries which award parent-dependent educational assistance, there is a close correlation between parental income and the proportion of assisted students The respective support rates for students from low-income families in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and Ireland are substantially higher than the average national support rate (see previous Fig. 23). The values confirm the intensive assistance given to students from low-income parental homes. The parent-independent system in Finland makes support dependent on various factors, including students' personal earnings, although the assessment basis is set at a very high level. This means that only few students fail to receive any support at all, which in turn means that the rate of 78% for students from families in the lower income quarter is also relatively high. The survey found a similar situation in the Netherlands, where the rate is actually even higher, namely at 85%.

The average amount of monthly assistance paid to students from low-income families varies from country to country (bottom chart). With the exception of Belgium, the amounts are all above 250 EURO. This once again clearly shows that in countries with parent-dependent systems students from low-income families generally receive a higher monthly sum than fellow students whose parents are well-off. In countries with parent-independent assistance systems no such correlation is given.

[4] A detailed review of the various educational assistance systems is provided in "Financial support for students in higher education in Europe – Trends and debates" (European Commission 1999) and in "Current developments in the educational assistance systems in Western Europe in connection with the family burden equalisation system" (DSW 1997).

Fig. 25: State assistance - Grants and loans



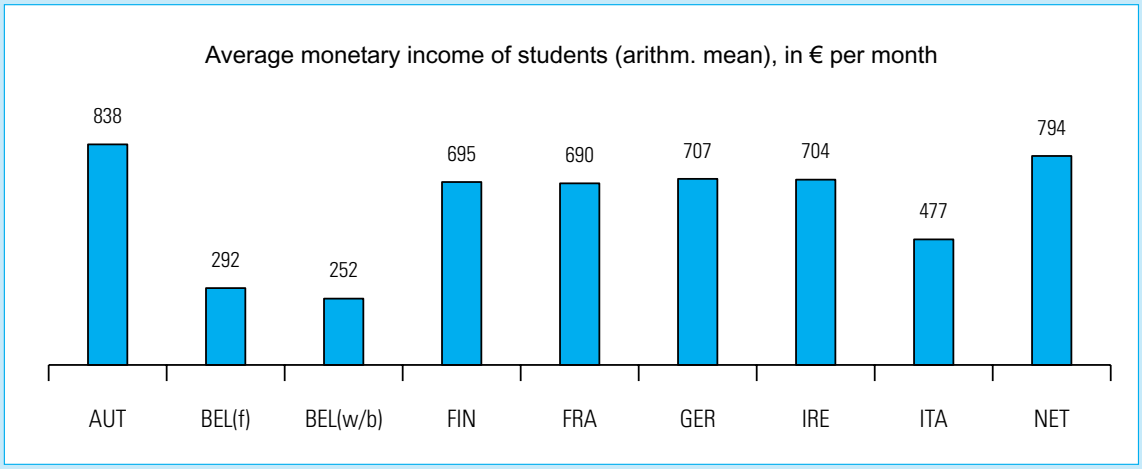
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

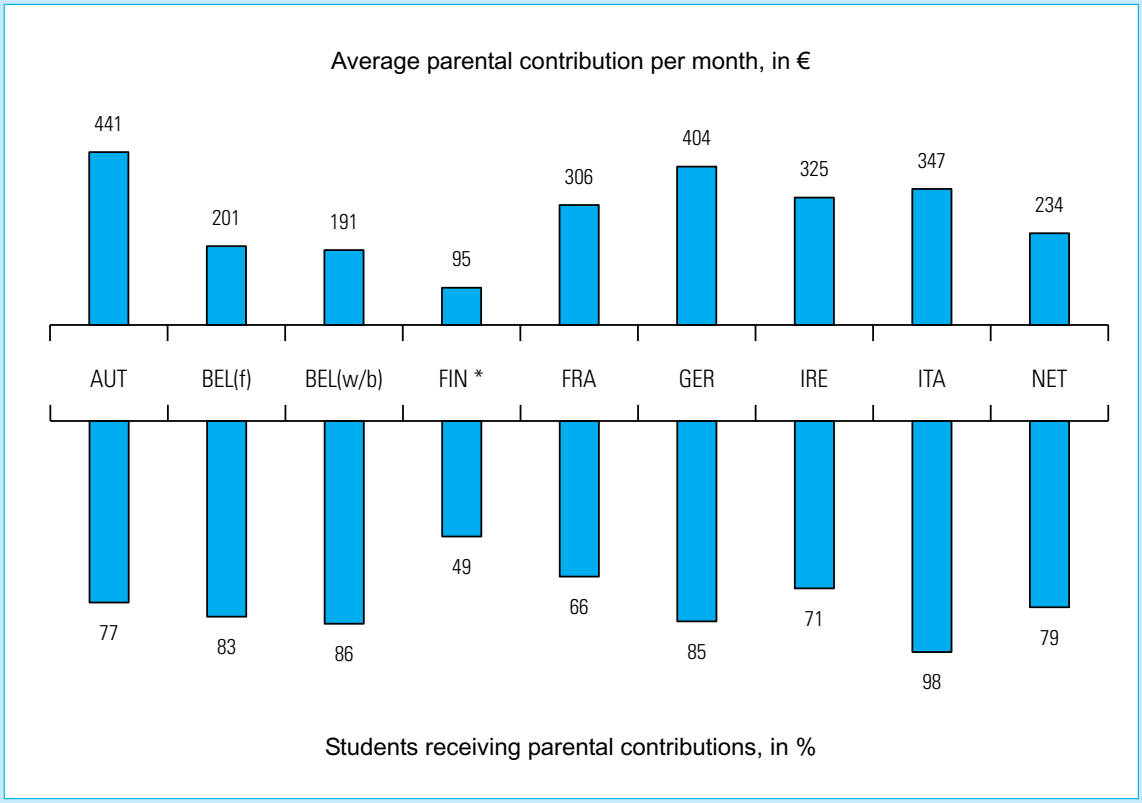
State assistance - Grants and loans

The most important forms of direct financial educational assistance from the state for students in the surveyed countries are non-repayable grants

A system of purely grant-based assistance, at least for students who engage in and complete their studies properly, is to be found in Austria, Belgium (Flemish community), Ireland and Italy. In Finland and the Netherlands, the proportion of grants in the assistance systems is high. Germany awards educational assistance on a half loan and half grant basis. Some of those countries in which the assistance system is solely or mainly based on grants are currently discussing the introduction of a loan system, however.

Fig. 26: Total income of students maintaining their own household
- Importance of the parental contribution -





* only cash contributions (no payment in kind)

Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

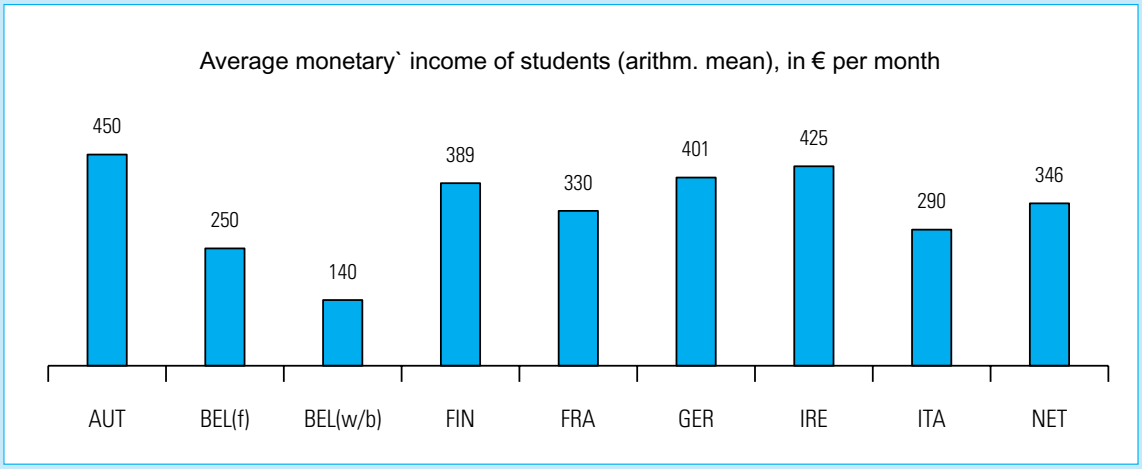
Total income of students maintaining their own household - Importance of the parental contribution -

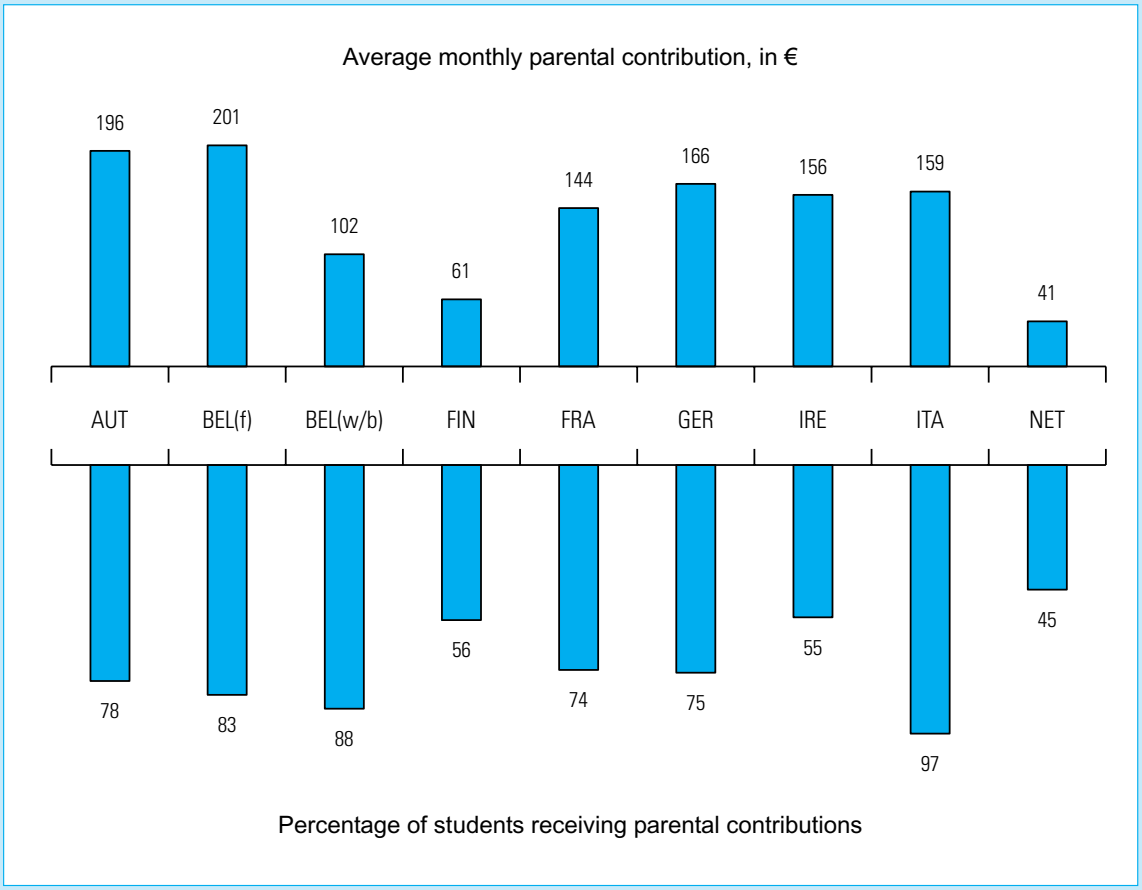
The average total amount (top chart) which students have at their disposal each month is highest in Austria at over 800. 42% of Austrian students maintaining their own households can dispose of such a sum. Dutch students have just under this amount. Students in the countries placed in the middle range of income levels have between 652 and 707 at their disposal. For example, one in five Irish students have income in excess of 800. Primarily, these are part-time students who are also in some kind of full-time employment. By comparison, the financial resources available to Italian students are tight. The average income for the two Belgium communities is extremely low.

As far as the level and frequency of parental contributions (bottom chart) are concerned, above-average values are achieved almost throughout in comparison to the total student body. The reason for the additional burden on parents is justified by the fact that student children no longer live in the parental home, while parents continue to be obliged to maintain their children. Only in Finland [5] is the parental contribution for students living away from home extremely low due to the general system of parent-independent assistance.

[5] Ignoring payments in kind.

Fig. 27: Total income of students living with their parents
- Importance of the parental contribution -





Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

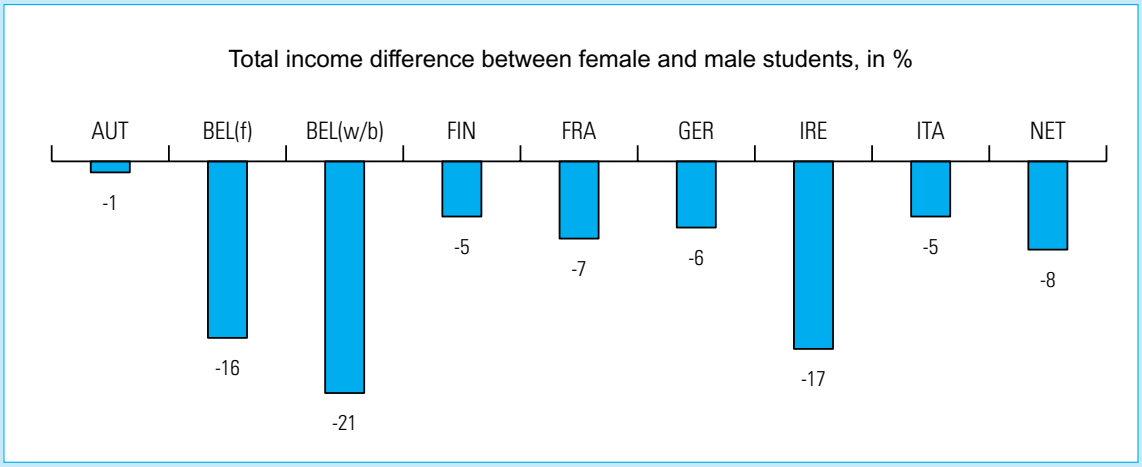
Total income of students living with their parents - Importance of the parental contribution -

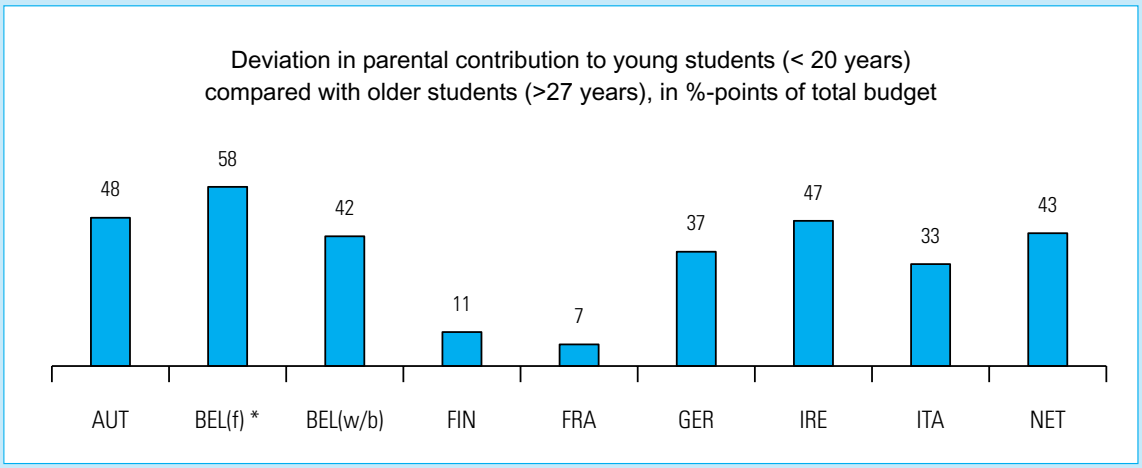
While Fig. 26 allows conclusions to be made regarding the income of students maintaining their own household, the following charts relate to the income of students who live with their parents. In Italy, the student body is clearly dominated by those living with their parents, where more than two thirds fall into this category. In Belgium, around half the student population lives with their parents. This type of accommodation is also very popular in France (46%) and the Netherlands (45%). In Ireland, Austria and Germany, on the other hand, the great majority of students prefer to run their own household. Only in exceptional cases do students in Finland choose to live with their parents (6%).

All in all, students living with their parents have a lower average monthly sum at their disposal to fund their living expenses (top chart) than their fellow students who maintain their own household, because substantial expenditure items, such as accommodation and food, are generally paid directly by their parents. The fact that the sums vary in level between the individual countries can essentially be put down to differences in national cost of living levels.

In all countries, a more or less large majority of students receives financial support from their parents (bottom chart). The average monthly sum placed at the disposal of students by parents ranges from 41 to 201 and is thus generally much lower than that received by students running their own household. Since important sections of the maintenance costs (living space in the parental home) would accrue anyway, regardless of whether the child stays in the parental home or lives away from home, students who live with their parents represent a substantial cost advantage for parents. However, such a practice limits students' options of living where the best study and living opportunities are to be found.

Fig. 28: Income profile of specific student subgroups
- Gender and age differentials among students with their own household -





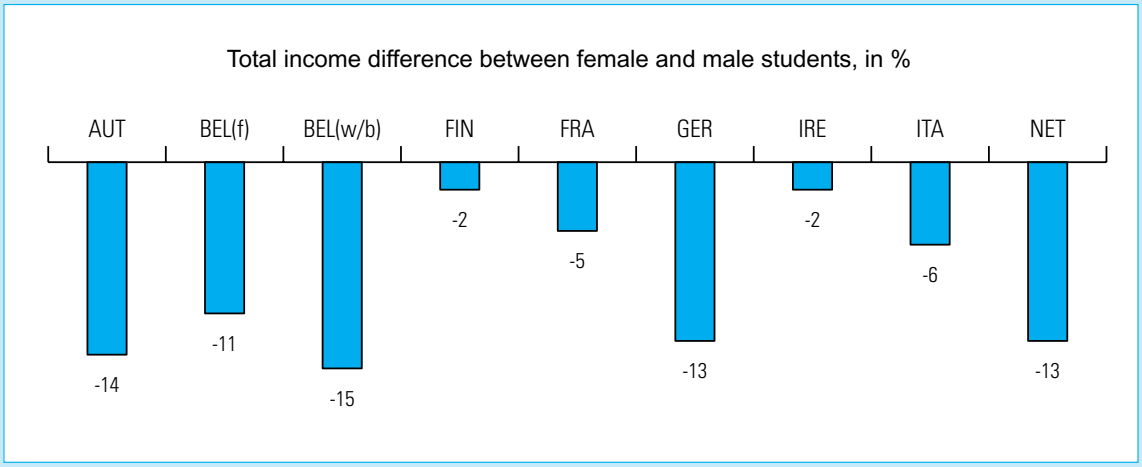
* BEL (f): older students (>24 years)

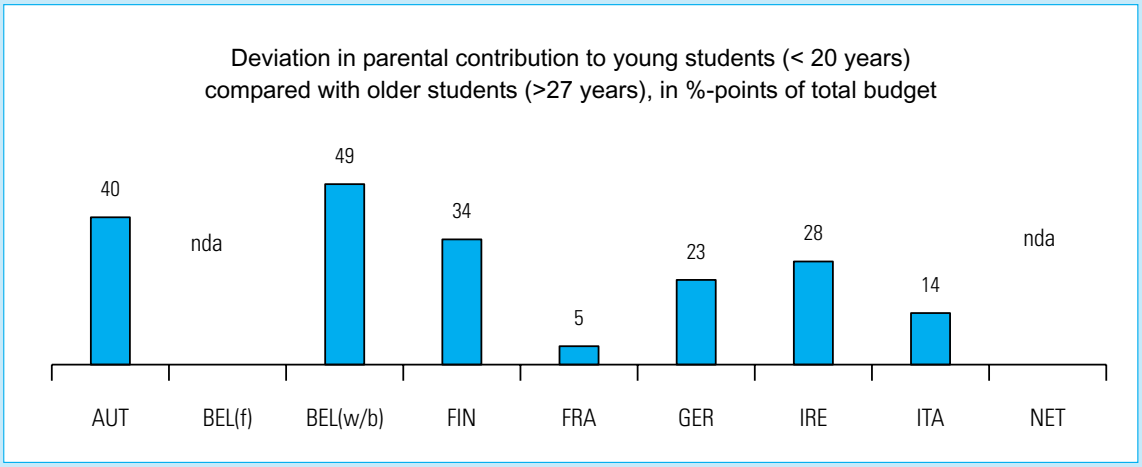
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

The level of monthly income sources available to students is more or less strongly influenced by various factors. If students are distinguished by gender, then in most countries female students are shown to have slightly less income than male students, although the gap between their income and that of their male counterparts is only a few percentage points (top chart). Only in Ireland and Belgium (w/b) are larger differences recorded. In these countries, female students have a monthly average sum at their disposal which is up to 21% lower than the corresponding amount which their male counterparts have.

The correlation between the age of students and the proportion which parents contribute to the overall budget (bottom chart) is much more distinctive: In all countries, the proportion which parents contribute to the monthly income of the youngest students (< 20 years of age) is higher than in the case of older students aged 27 years and over. In Austria, for example, parental support for students below twenty years of age amounts to 75% of their total income, while it is only 27% in the case of students over 27 years of age. This results in a difference of -48 percentage points. The small difference of only -11 percentage points in Finland results primarily from the lowest proportion of parental funding by far being provided to the youngest students in that country, namely 17%. This is countered by a proportion of 6% for older students.

Fig. 29: Income profile of specific student subgroups
- Gender and age differentials among students living with their parents -





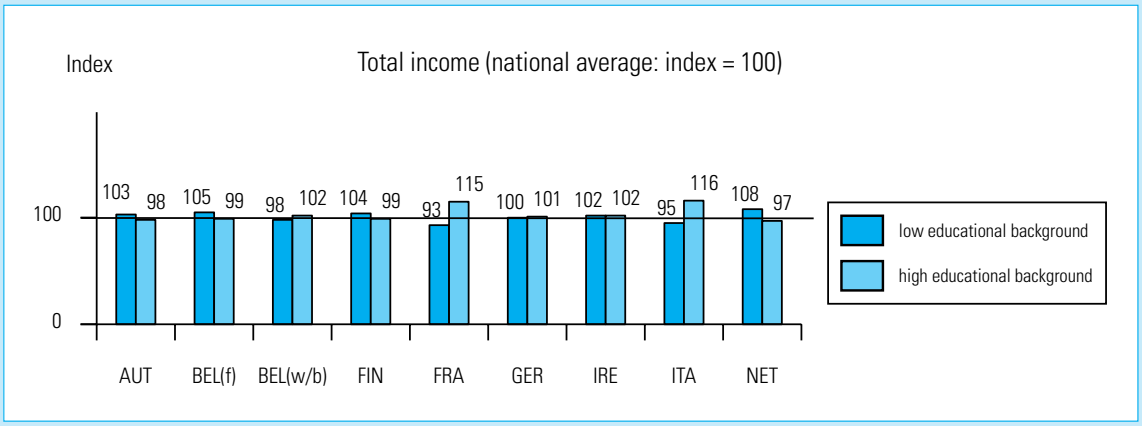
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

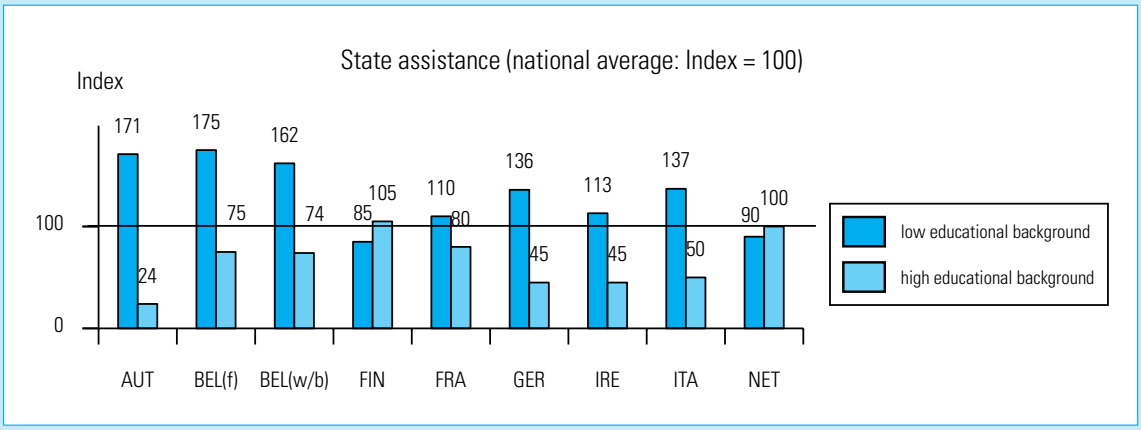
Related to students living with their parents and as far as the total level of students' monthly income is concerned and differentiated by the sex and age of students, a similar picture appears as that seen for students running their own household (cf. Fig. 28), although to a less pronounced degree.

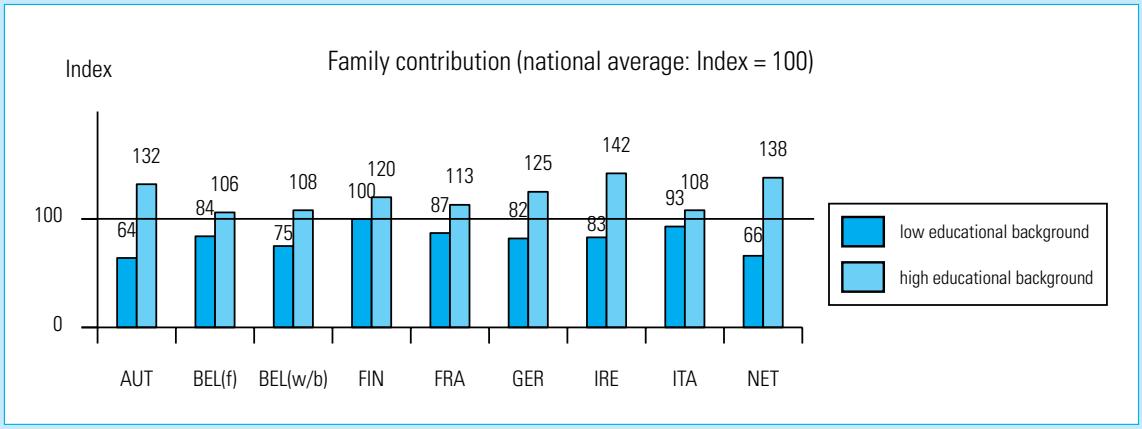
Here, too, female students in all participating countries have a comparatively smaller monthly sum at their disposal (top chart). At the same time, the make-up of monthly income by sources is age dependent (bottom chart). The proportion which parents contribute to students' overall monthly income drops as students grow older, although the differences in this case are not as great as for students running their own household. Finland is an exception to this.

Fig. 30: Income profile of students maintaining their own household by educational background

Student families with a low and high educational background are compared with regard to total income, state assistance and family contribution.







Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Income profile of students maintaining their own household by educational background

These three charts illustrate the extent to which the social origin of students - in this cases, measured by a "father's education" - influences the level or the make-up of students' total monthly income by various sources of funding. The difference is presented as a deviation from the respective national average value, which is set at an index value of 100.

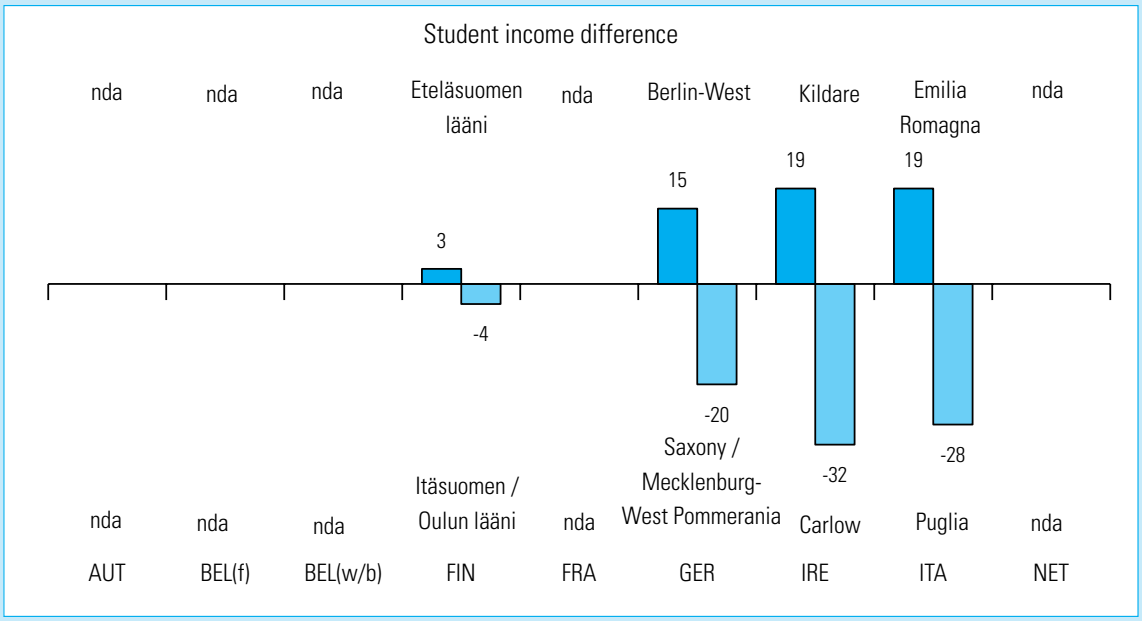
The level of total monthly income is only marginally influenced by students' social background. For example, the differences in the level of income between students who come from less educationally-oriented strata and all other students is small in almost all countries (top chart). Only in France and Italy are the deviations slightly greater. Student children from strata with a lesser educational background clearly fall below the average value, while those from families with a greater educational background are clearly above that average level.

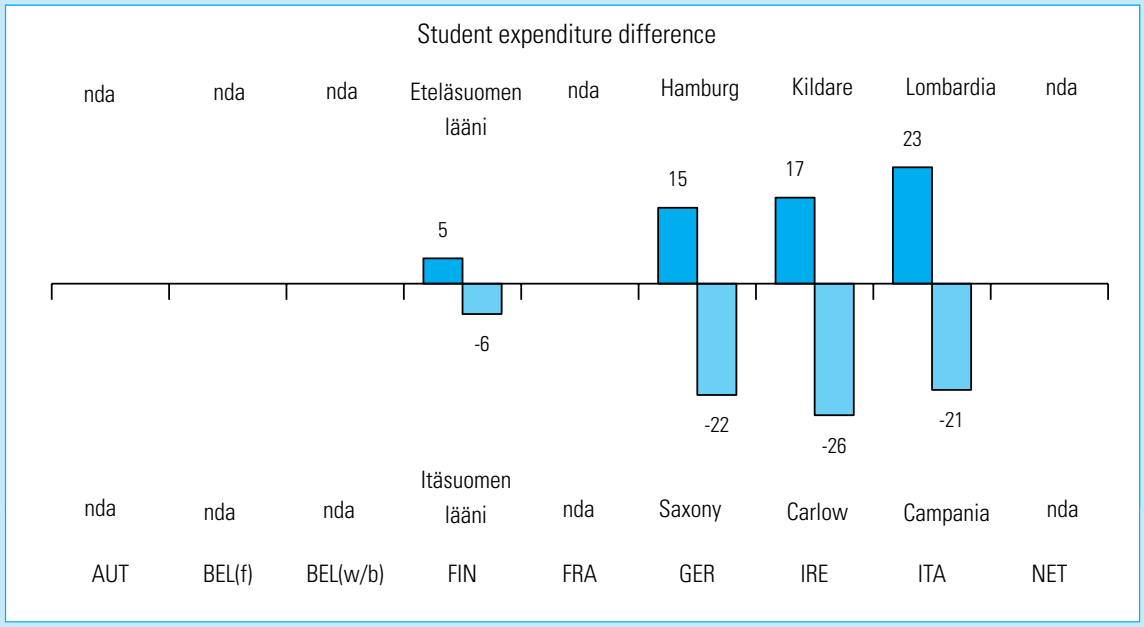
Clearer gaps appear as far as state assistance (centre chart) is concerned: State assistance is of above-average significance in the budget of students from financially less well-off families. The social component is strongest in Austria, Germany, Ireland and Italy. Finland is an exception. Since the state provides support independently of any family income in Finland, no subsidiary structure of state assistance exists.

As far as family contributions are concerned, similar gaps are seen between students from parental homes with a lesser educational background and those with a greater educational orientation, but in reverse form. Ireland has the greatest range. In Finland, students from less educationally-oriented parental homes receive a level of parental support that corresponds with the average. While those from more educationally-oriented homes receive maintenance from their parents at a level which is slightly above average.

Fig. 31: Student income and expenditure differences by region

in %-points





Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Student income and expenditure differences by region

The level of student monthly income and expenditure not only differs between the individual participating countries, but also within these countries. In some cases, substantial differences exist. In the following representation, the respective national average value was set at 100 and regional differences were set in relation to this index value. This identified regions in which students had the lowest income and expenditure as well as regions with the highest income and expenditure.

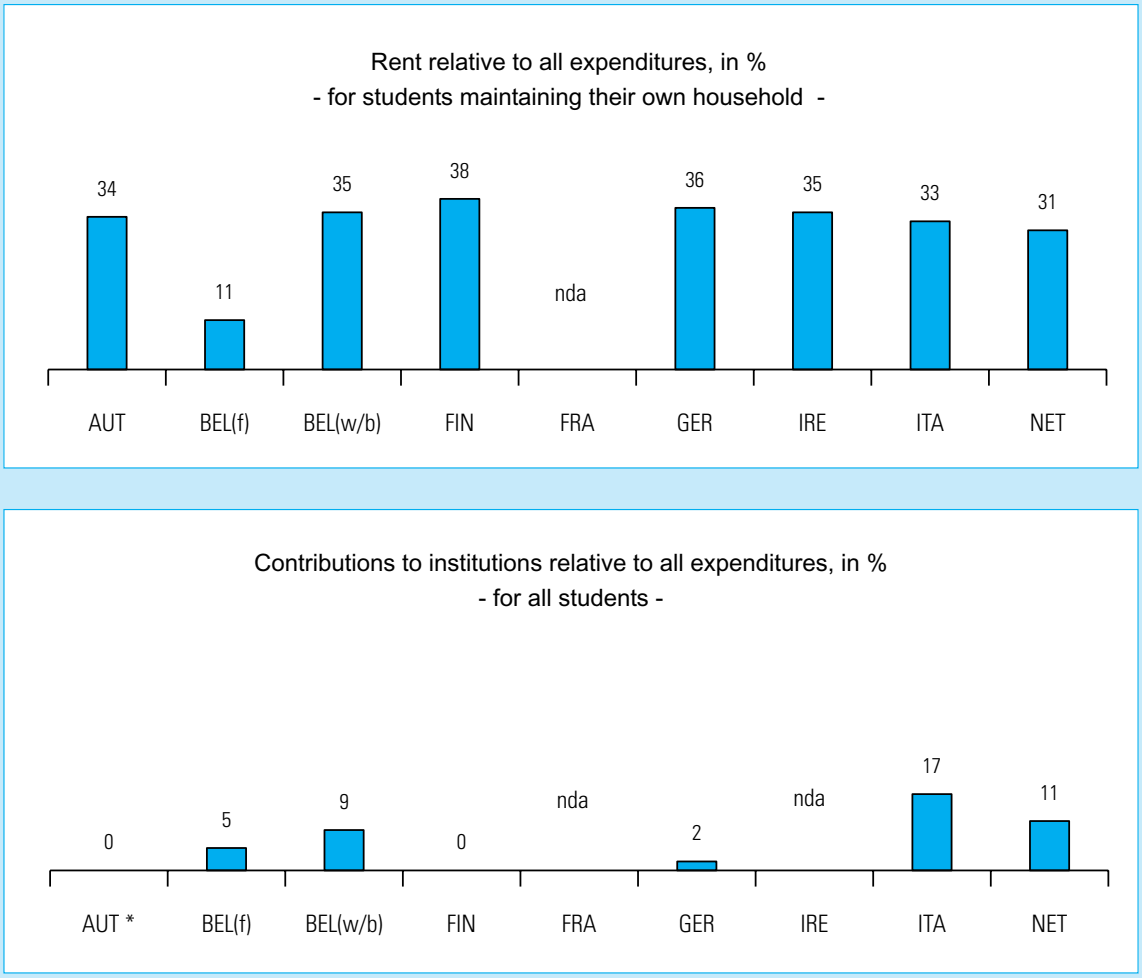
Income

Of the countries which provided information on this aspect, Ireland has the greatest variations. Students with the highest average income (19% above the national average) are to be found in Kildare, while those with the lowest income (32% below the national average) are to be found in Carlow. This may have to do with the sample however as a disproportionate number of older students, many of whom would be in full-time jobs, were surveyed in Kildare. As for Italy, the deviations from the national average mirror the regional economic differences and the various cost of living levels which are closely related to this: The more affluent northern parts of Italy, including Emilia Romagna (+19%), compare with the economically relatively less well-developed southern parts of the country, for example, Puglia (-28%). In Germany, substantial differences still exist between student income levels in the old (formerly West Germany) and new (former East Germany) Länder: Students with the lowest income levels are to be found in Saxony and Mecklenburg-West Pomerania (-20%) and those with the highest in the city-state of Hamburg (+15%). The smallest deviations were found in Finland.

Expenditure

Regional differences are also found in respect of student expenditures. Once again, Ireland shows the greatest variations. Analogously to the income situation, Kildare (+17%) and Carlow (-26%) are again the regions in which students with the highest respectively lowest expenditures are to be found. Student expenditure in Italy also reveals similar regional structures as those for student income. In the more affluent north, for example, in Lombardia (+23%) students face the highest costs, while students with the lowest costs live in southern Italy, for instance, in Campania (-21%). In Germany, students living in the city-states, such as Hamburg (+15%), spend most on their living expenses. The student monthly costs which fall most clearly under the national average in Germany are found in the new federal states, for example, in Saxony (-22%).

Fig. 32: Profile of students` direct costs



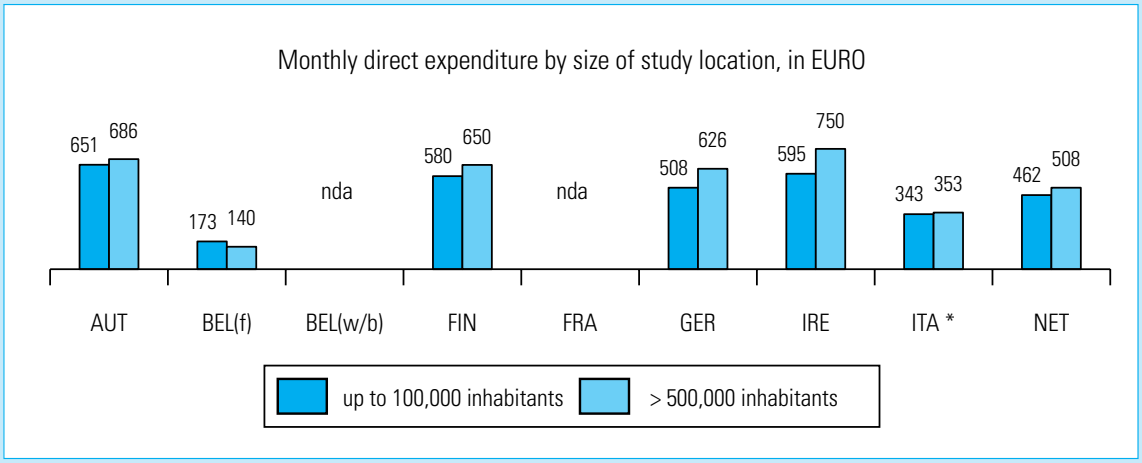
*none before 2001

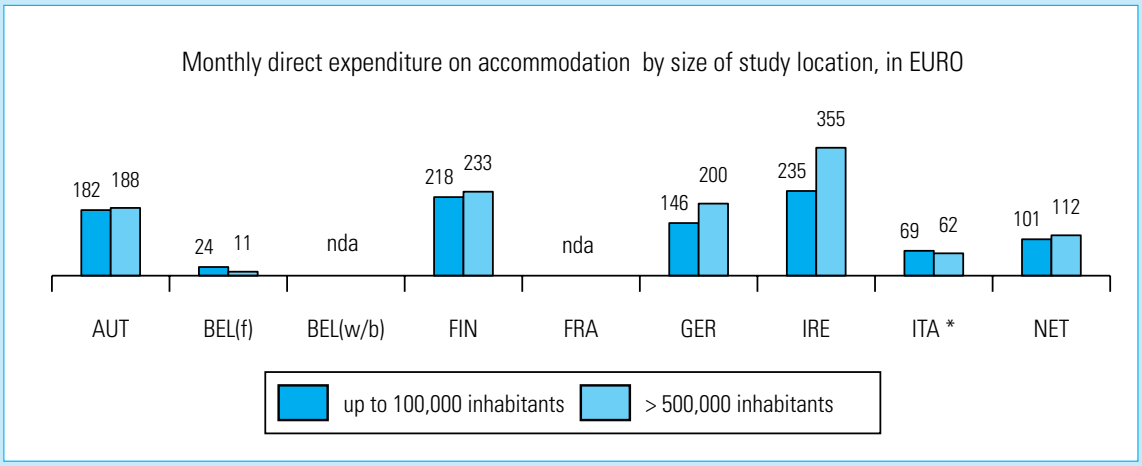
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

In all countries, students who maintain their own household spend the greatest proportion of their monthly outgoings on rent (including extra costs) (top chart). In Finland, Germany, Ireland, Wallonia and Austria, students spend more than a third of the total monthly budget on this item. And students in Italy and the Netherlands spend only marginally less on this item.

Considerable proportions of the budget are spent on tuition fees and social contributions in Italy (17%), the Netherlands (11%) and Wallonia-Brussels Community (9%). In all other countries which provided details on this aspect, tuition fees only play a secondary role, such as in Flanders (5%) and Germany (2%). In Finland and Austria, studies were tuition free at the time of the survey. In Ireland, also, there are free tuition fees for full-time undergraduate students.However, Austria introduced tuition fees as from autumn 2001.

Fig. 33: Monthly direct expenditure by size of study location





* included living at home students

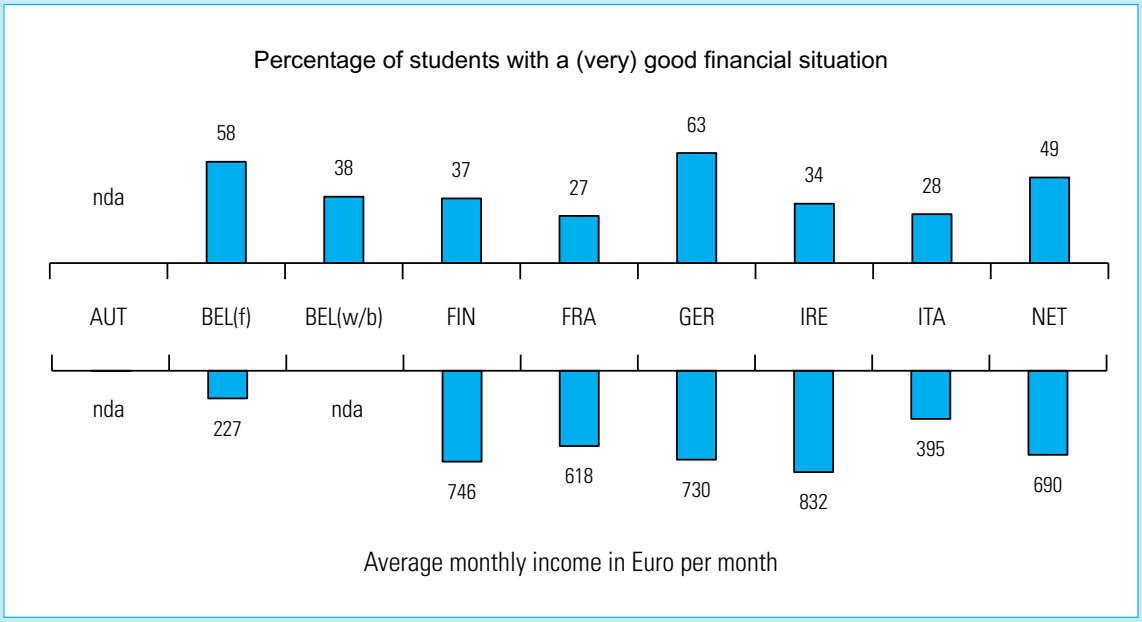
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

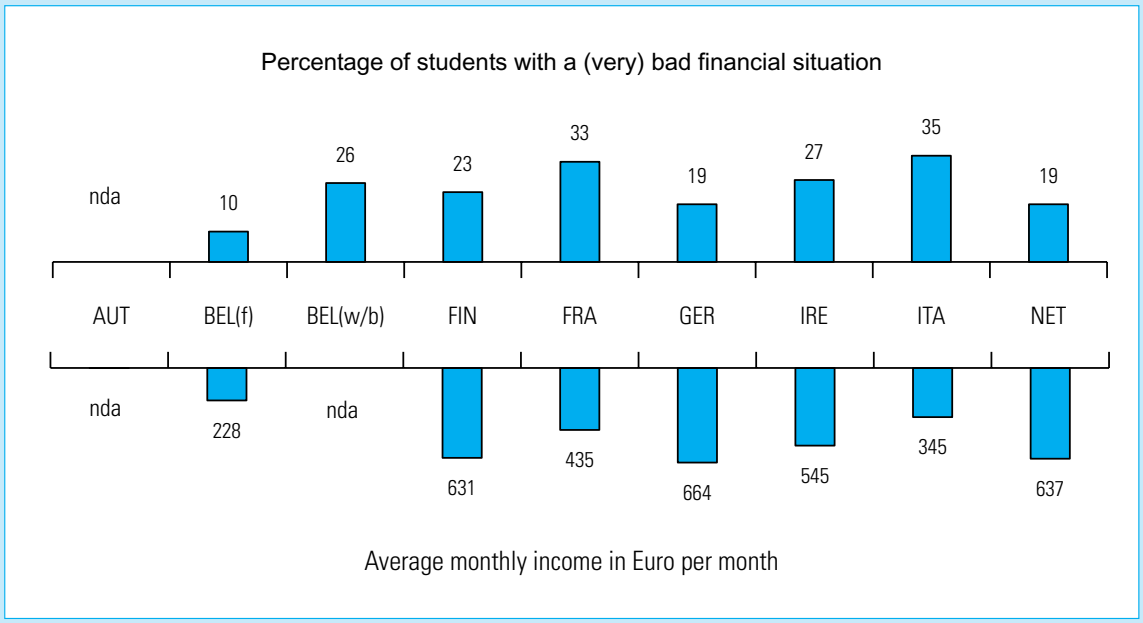
Monthly direct expenditure by size of study location

Regardless of the differing levels of average monthly expenses, the cost of living faced by students differs in all countries depending on the size of study location and is influenced by the residential population in the study locations (top chart). This shows that in most of the participating countries students who are enrolled at higher education institutions in locations with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants have lower monthly expenses than their counterparts in larger study locations with up to 500,000 inhabitants. This correlation is clearly recognisable in Ireland, Germany and Finland. In these countries, student life in the major cities is more expensive by between 70 and 171. This situation is slightly less pronounced in the Netherlands, Austria and Italy.

The difference between students' monthly living expenses in smaller and larger study locations is influenced to a high degree by the lower rent levels in smaller locations. As the bottom chart clearly illustrates, students in most countries pay a lower average sum for rent for each of the various forms of student accommodation in smaller towns than in larger cities. In Ireland, the difference is 120, while in Germany it is just above 50. As far as the other countries are concerned, rent levels vary less. In Italy, the survey found that slightly higher rents are paid in smaller study locations than in the larger ones.

Fig. 34: Students` assessment of their financial situation and their average income





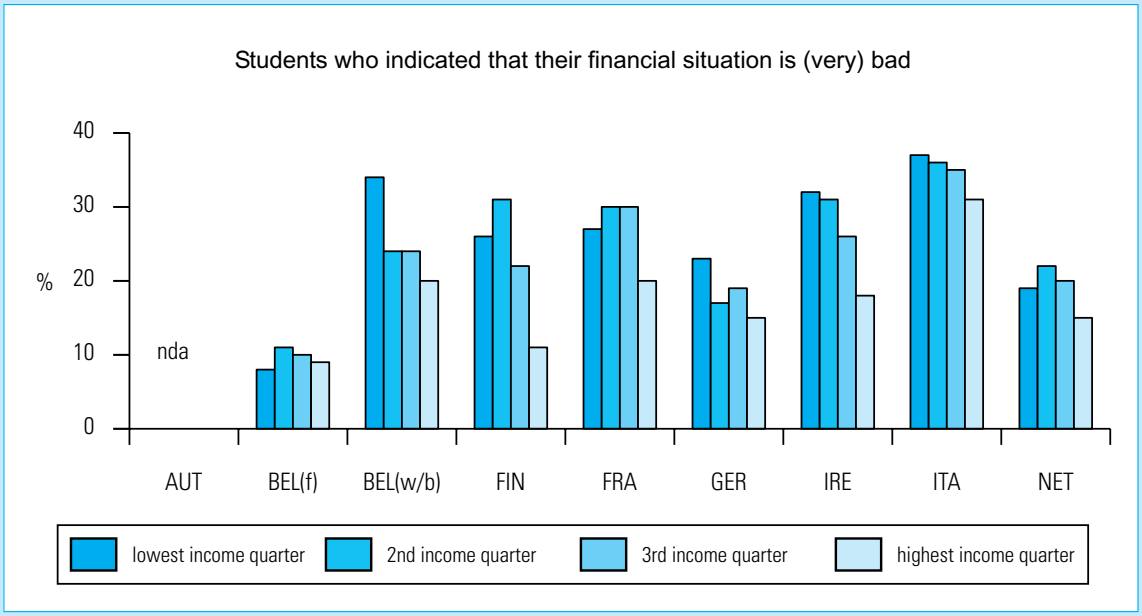
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Students` assessment of their financial situation and their average income

The proportion of students who assess their individual financial situation as "good" or "very good" differs across the various countries (top chart). In Germany, a majority of 63% considers the situation to be positive. Most Flemish students (58%) also consider their financial situation to be good or very good. Among French, Italian, Irish, Finnish and Wallonia-Brussels students, only a minority can be found (between 27% and 37%) who express this degree of satisfaction. The Netherlands takes a middle position. On the other hand, more than one in five students across almost all countries assess their financial situation as "poor" or even "very poor" (bottom chart). In Flanders, such an assessment is only given by one in ten students, while in other countries a third and more do so.

Although the fact that the degree of satisfaction with the individual financial situation also rises as the average monthly income increases is indeed the case, as in France, this does not apply to the majority of countries. For example, in Flanders students who assessed their situation as "very poor" have more or less the same income level as those who had assessed their financial situation as "very good". In Germany, students who assessed their situation as "very poor" could dispose of higher income levels than their fellow students who had placed themselves in the middle range. Similar findings are found in Italy and the Netherlands. The objective income difference between a subjective "good" and subjective "poor" livelihood from the available income is not very great, therefore. For example, the subjective assessment among German students depends more on their expectations than on objective orders of magnitude. The expectations attached to higher income levels rise as students grow older and is oriented in line with the age-related consumer habits of the general public.

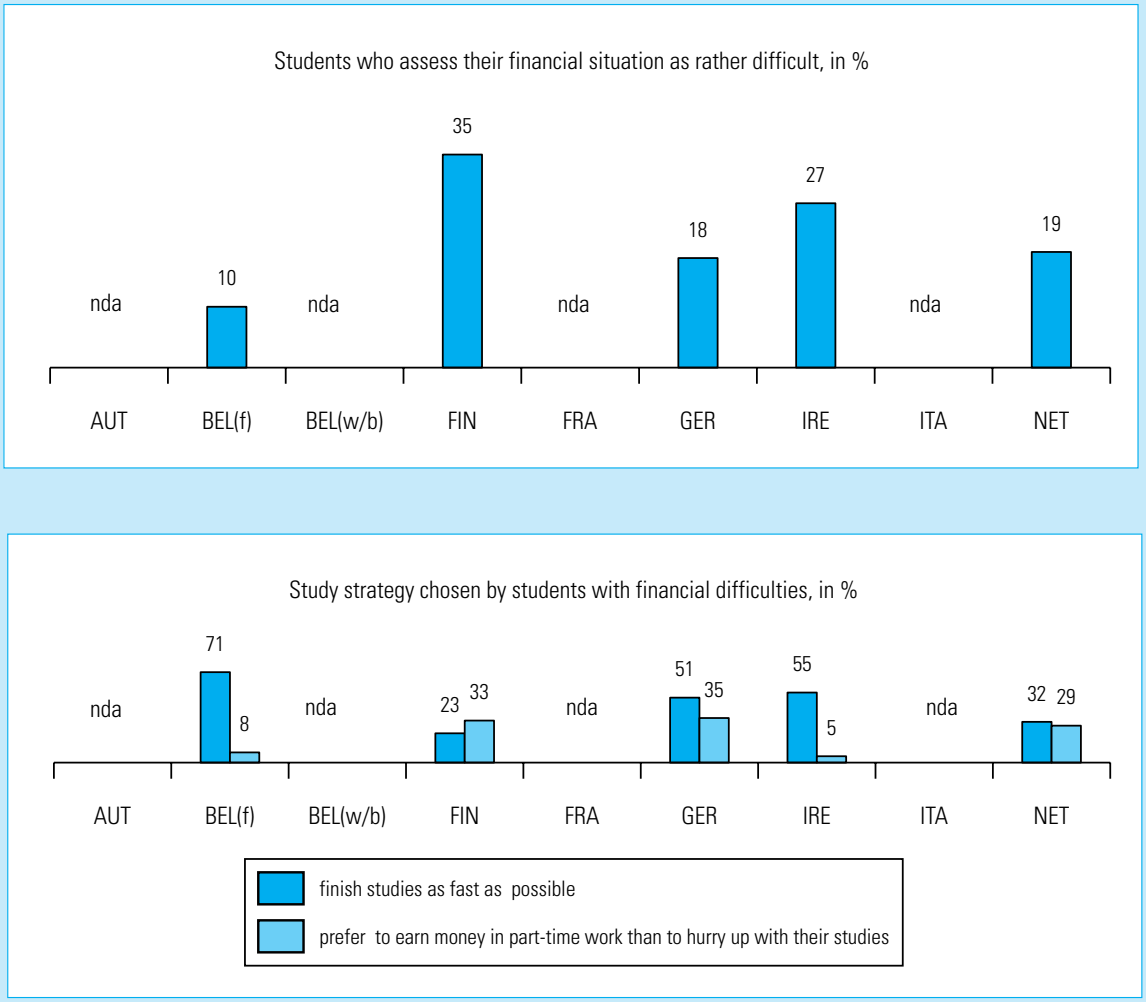
Fig. 35: Assessment of the financial situation by student income differentials



Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Related to all countries, no definite correlation could be identified between income level and the degree of student satisfaction with their financial situation. Only in Italy did the proportion of students who assessed their financial situation as poor continually drop as their income increased, albeit only marginally (from 37% to 31%). No uniform pattern can be seen in any of the other countries. This once more underlines the statements made about Fig. 34: It is not the absolute income level that is decisive for the degree of financial satisfaction among students. Rather, it is the result of the interaction between various factors, including available income in relation to the differing expectations (for example, varying - age-dependent - personal needs; various lifestyles) or regional and subject-related conditions.

Fig. 36: Study strategy in view of the financial situation



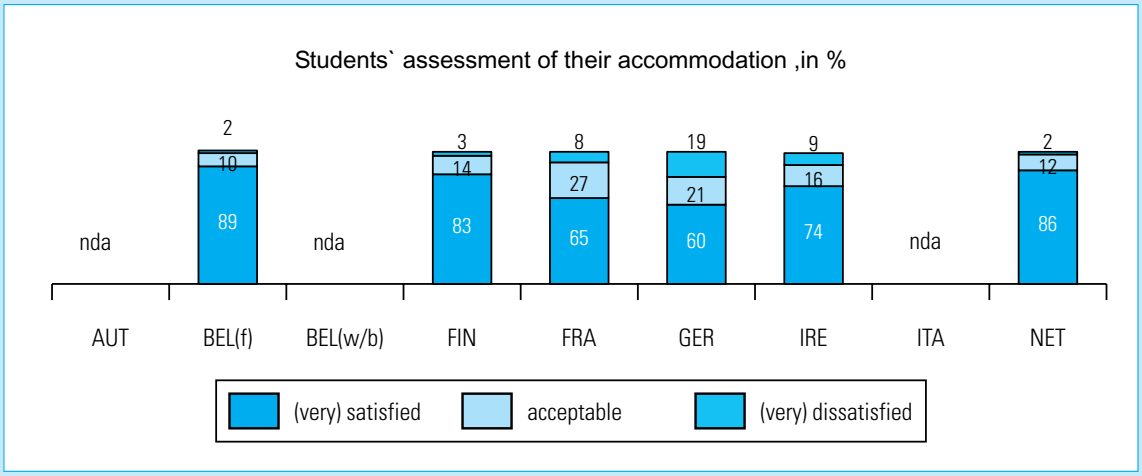
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

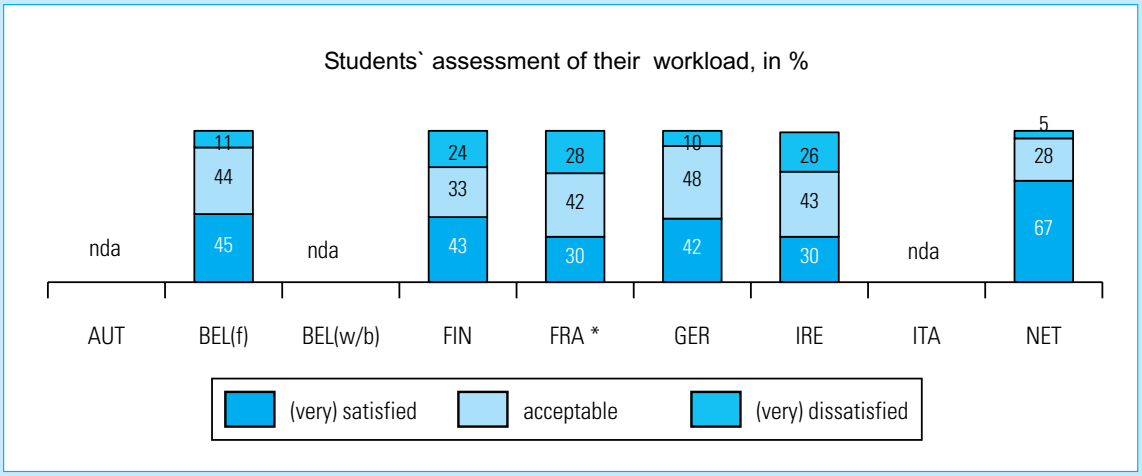
Study strategy in view of the financial situation

The proportion of students among the total student body who assess their personal financial situation as "difficult" varies from one country to the next (top chart). In Finland, more than a third of those students regard their financial situation as (very) poor or difficult, while in the Flemish community in Belgium only one in ten students voice such a view. The values for the other countries which provided details on this aspect fall somewhere in-between these two poles.

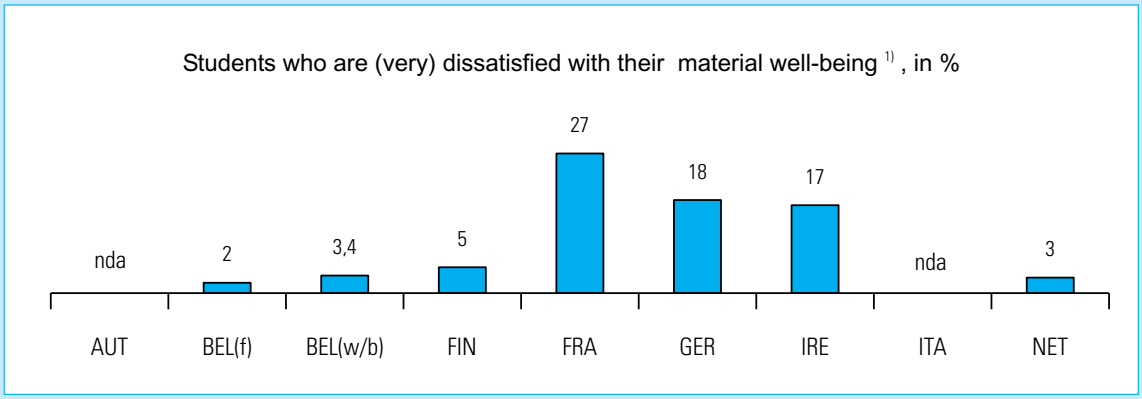
These students respond to the difficult financial situation by adopting varying study strategies (bottom chart). With the exception of Finland and the Netherlands, the majority of students who find themselves in a tight financial situation prefer to complete their studies as quickly as possible. This applies particularly in Belgium (Wallonia-Brussels), where 71% pursue such a strategy. Only a low 8% decide to take the alternative route, namely of taking up employment during their studies to earn some money, thereby accepting longer study times. An essentially similar pattern is found in Ireland, although at a lower level. The majority of German students facing a tight economic situation also decide to complete their studies as quickly as possible (51%). On the other hand, a majority of Dutch students (39%) pursue no particular strategy. This also applies to most Finnish students (44%). If they do decide to pursue a particular strategy, then the preference lies with accepting longer study times, because they choose to work in employment parallel to their studies (one third).

Fig. 37: Students` assessment of their living conditions - All students





* rhythm of life



1) FRA: source of income

Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Students` assessment of their living conditions - All students

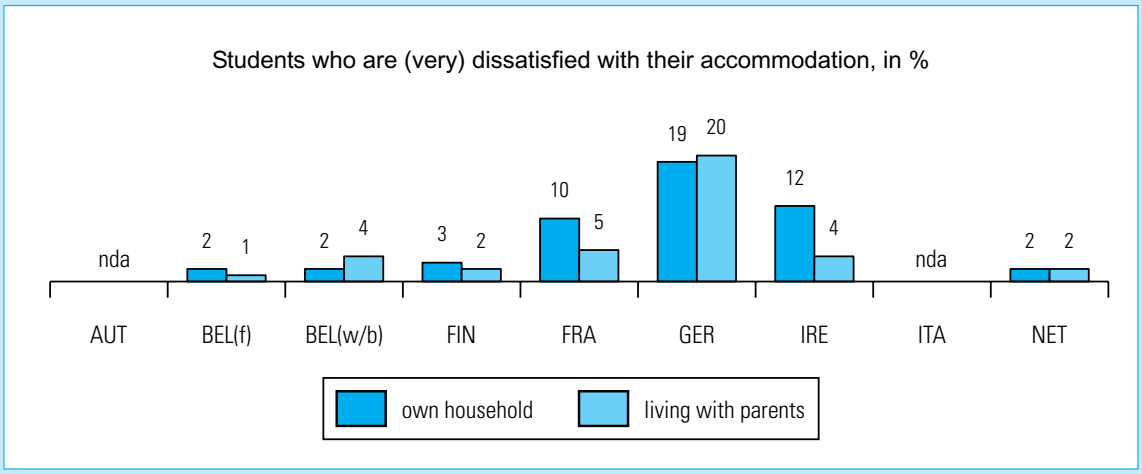
Students' living conditions were assessed on the basis of three dimensions:
- accommodation
- workload
- general material well-being.

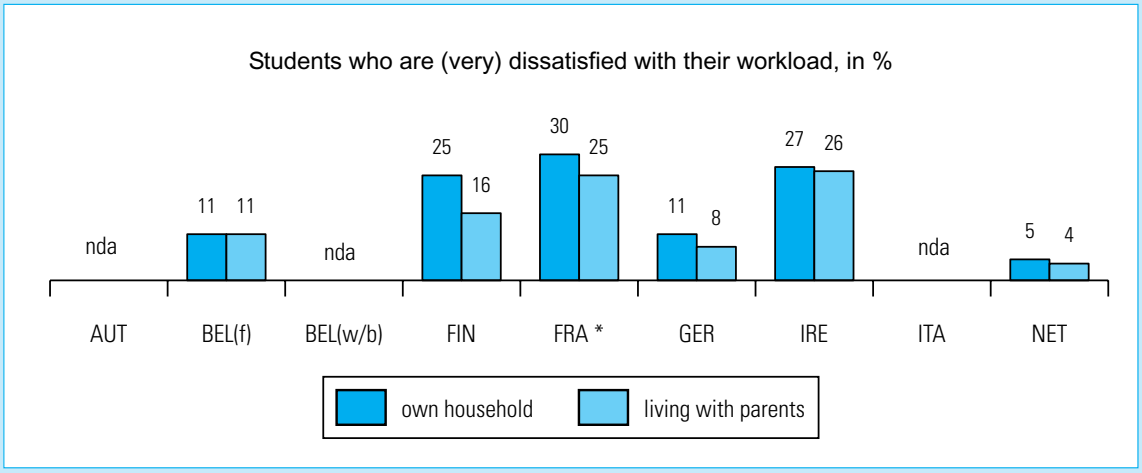
In all participating countries, a great majority of students claimed that they were (very) satisfied with their accommodation (top chart). Apart from Germany, only a small minority are dissatisfied with this dimension. Among German students, however, one in five claimed that they were (very) dissatisfied with the accommodation situation.

Around a quarter of the student population in Ireland, France and Finland (centre chart) suffer under the high workload of studies and employment. Substantially fewer students suffer in Germany and Belgium, namely around one in ten, while in the Netherlands it is only one in twenty. On the other hand, two thirds of Dutch students are really satisfied with the extent of their workload. This easily places them at the top of this league. Other countries register values of between 30% and 45%. A significant proportion of students from Flanders, Germany and Ireland tend to accept the burden as a "necessary evil".

The majority of students in all countries are largely satisfied with their material well-being (bottom chart). While in most countries, the group of dissatisfied students is negligible, this aspect seems to present problems for a not insubstantial minority of students in Germany and Ireland. Almost one fifth of the student body in both countries complains about their material well-being.

Fig. 38: Students' assessment of their living conditions
- Students with their own household vs. students living with their parents





* relation between time dedicated to work and leisure: 'life rhythm'

Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

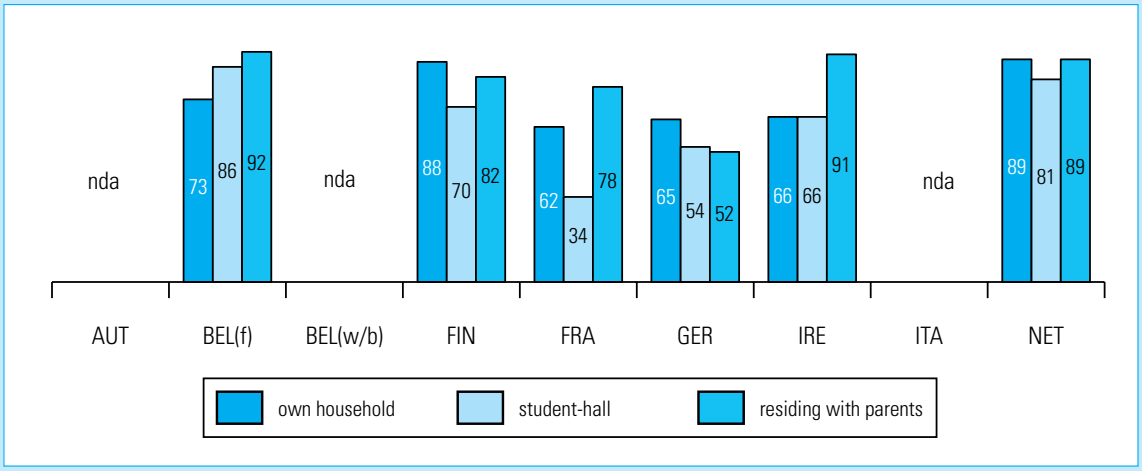
Students' assessment of their living conditions
- Students with their own household vs. students living with their parents

In some countries, students maintaining their own household are proportionally more likely to be dissatisfied with their accommodation than are their fellow students who live with their parents (top chart). However, the values diverge only marginally in the case of Flanders and Finland. Additionally, the dissatisfaction values are only at a negligibly low level (1% to 3%). The Netherlands shows balanced values. In Germany, the assessment reverses in favour of those maintaining their own household. Although here, too, the differences are essentially negligible. In Ireland and France, on the other hand, the assessments made by those students living with their parents and those maintaining their own household differ to a greater extent. In fact, in both countries, students living with their parents are much more satisfied with their accommodation than those maintaining their own household.

As far as the workload is concerned (studies and employment) a more definite pattern can be identified across all countries (bottom chart). Students with their own household in all countries have slightly higher dissatisfaction values than students living with their parents. However, the assessments only diverge to an extremely small degree. Only in Finland do students assess their situation differently (25% vs. 16%).

Fig. 39: Assessment of student accommodation by type of residence

Percentage of (very) satisfied students



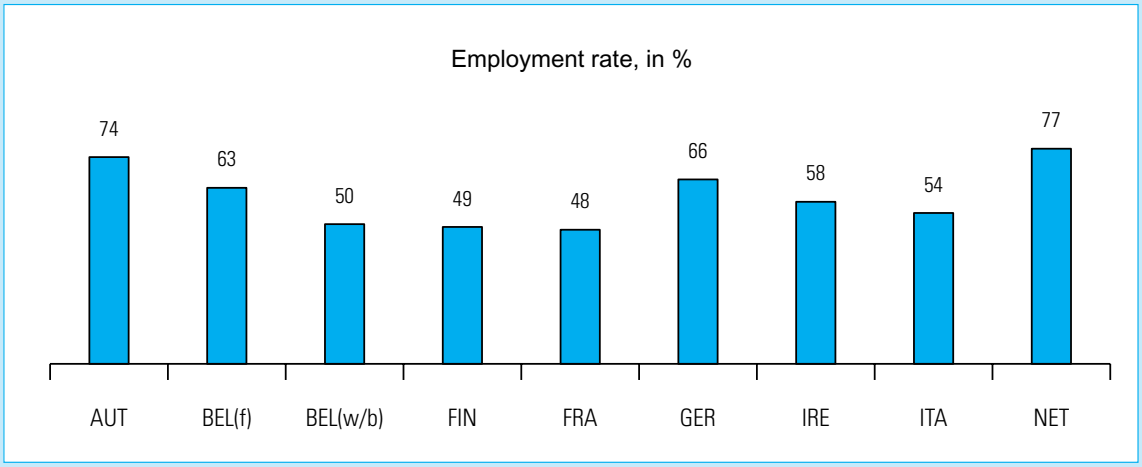
* (Very) satisfied students

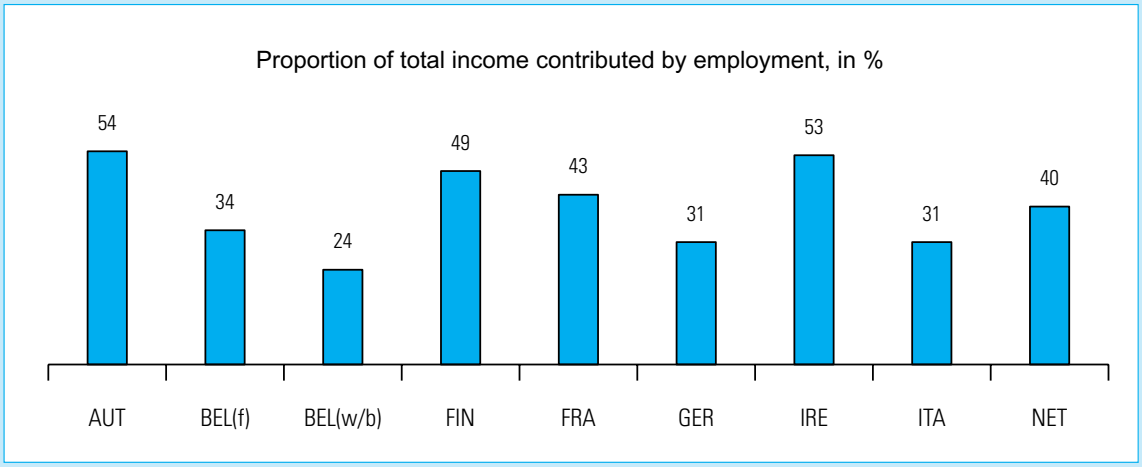
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

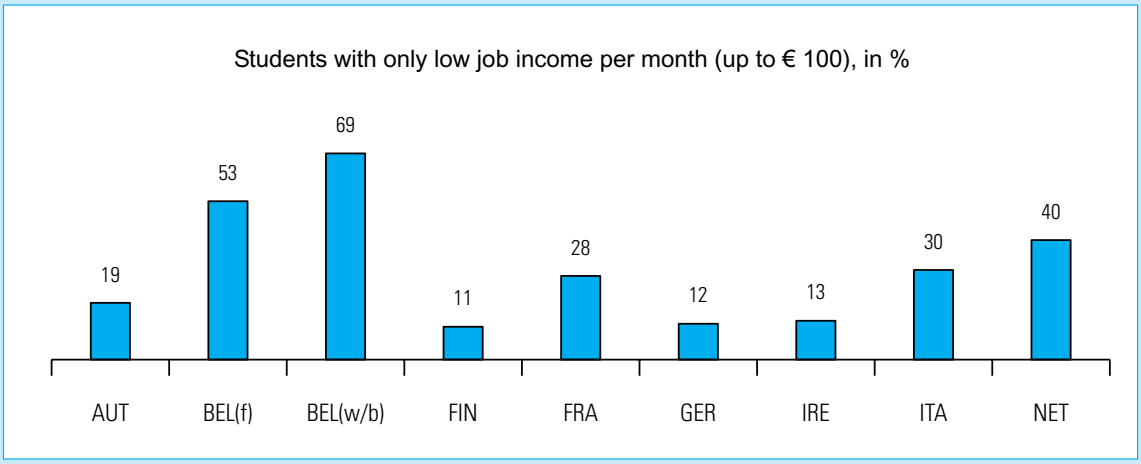
Assessment of student accommodation by type of residence

Figure 37 compares the proportion of satisfied students based on the various types of student residence. Regardless of the varying absolute satisfaction levels in the participating countries, a first glance shows that there is no particular form of accommodation which achieves the highest satisfaction values across all countries. For example, the respectively highest proportions of satisfied students are found in approximately equal amounts among those living with their parents and those maintaining their own household. Between 34% and 86% are satisfied with their accommodation in student halls of residence. Accommodation in student halls of residence receives the worst assessment in France (only 34% satisfaction), while the best values are recorded in the Netherlands, Belgium (f) and Finland.

Fig. 40: Student employment and income







Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

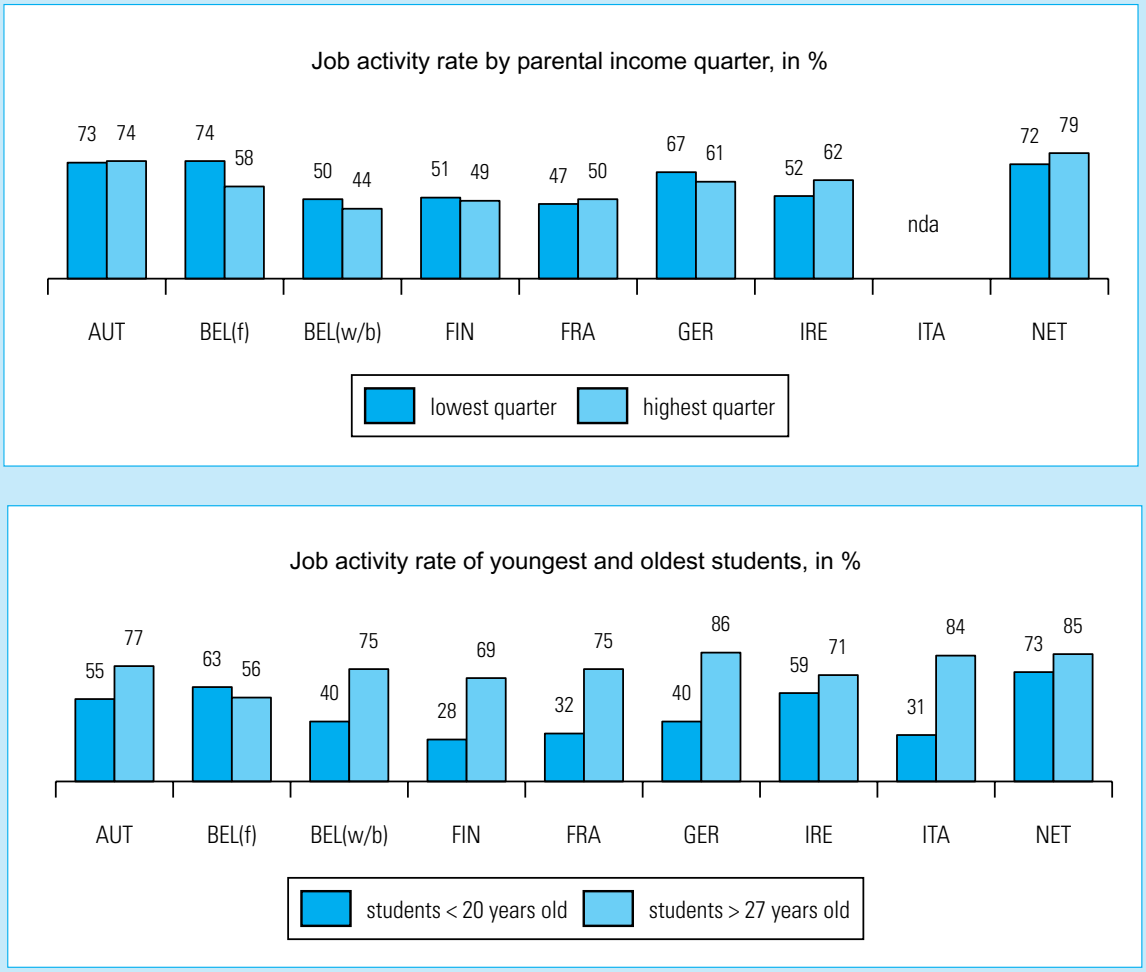
Student employment and income

The practice of taking up employment while also studying is meanwhile part of everyday life for a not insubstantial proportion of students, both during the lecture period (term/semester) as well as during the non-lecture period (recess). The proportion of students engaged in one type of employment or another to varying extents and with varying regularity ranges from 48% in France or 49% in Finland to maximum values of 74% in Austria or 77% in the Netherlands (top chart).

Students with income from employment use these resources to fund a more or less high proportion of their living expenses (centre chart). Students in France cover more than two thirds of their monthly income requirement through earnings from employment pursued alongside their studies. In Austria and Ireland, students actually do cover more than half of their monthly income requirement, while in Belgium, Germany and Italy only around a third of the monthly income requirement is covered in this way. In the Wallonia-Brussels community in Belgium, the proportion is around a quarter. Finland and the Netherlands lie somewhere in-between these two poles.

The significance of student earnings from employment varies substantially from one country to the next. The proportion of students who earn no more than 100 per month from employment is used as an indicator for the significance of additional earnings. It is assumed additional earnings at such a level produce no problems for the time budget dedicated to studies. In Wallonia-Brussels Community, more than two thirds of the students make do with such pocket-money level earnings. This high proportion is probably caused by the fact that study entrants are over-represented in the random sample. The Netherlands (40%) and Italy (30%) follow at an already substantial distance. And only around one fifth of French and Austrian students have such a low level of additional earnings. In Finland, Germany and Ireland this small earnings group accounts for a proportion of below 10%. Conversely, this means that earnings from employment in most cases represent an important funding pillar in these countries.

Fig. 41: Student earnings by parental income and age

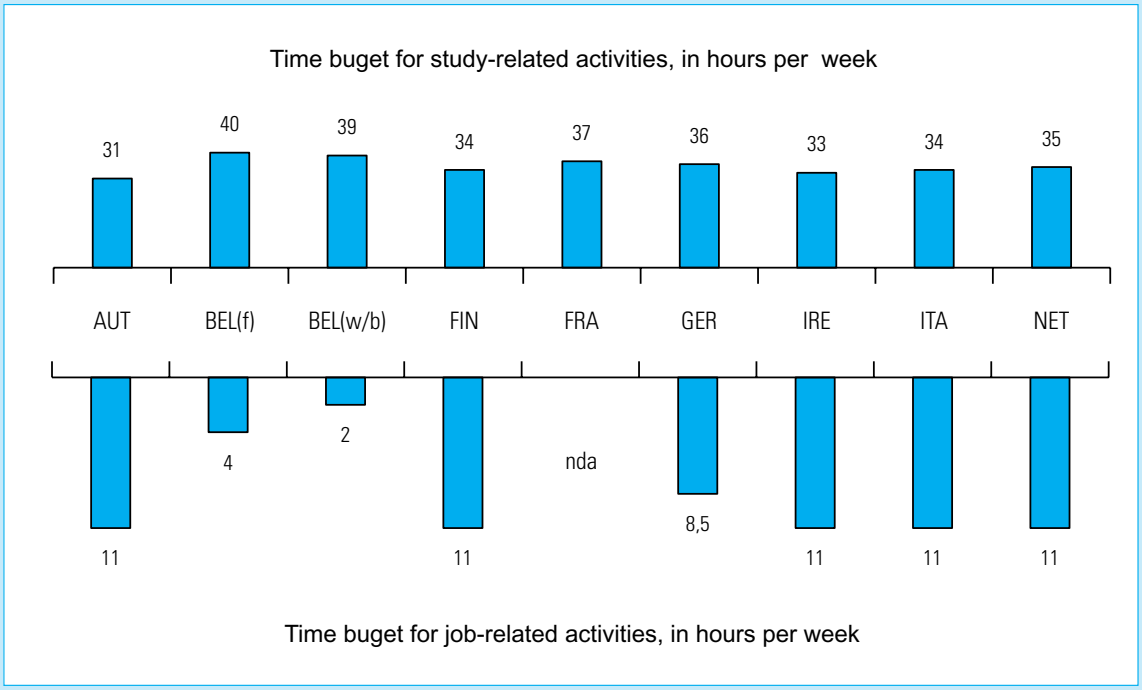


Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

The proportion of working students in the student body varies from one country to the next. At the same time, the employment rate within countries differs depending on the social background of students (top chart). However, it is not possible to identify a uniform pattern. It can be seen in Flanders, Germany and Finland that, measured by parental income, students from the lower income groups proportionally make more frequent use of personal earnings to cover their living expenses than their fellow students whose parents dispose of a relatively high income. However, this identified correlation is relatively weak in some countries. In France, the Netherlands and, above all, Ireland, the situation is actually the reverse. While, the situation in Austria is more or less balanced.

A substantially clearer correlation exists between the age of students and the extent of their personal earnings (bottom chart). The degree of employment continues to increase throughout as students grow older across all countries. The proportion of those whose personal earnings are used to cover their living expenses increases as does the average level of those earnings. Increasing student employment and thus related age-dependent changes in expectations are probably the main reasons for the increase in additional earnings.

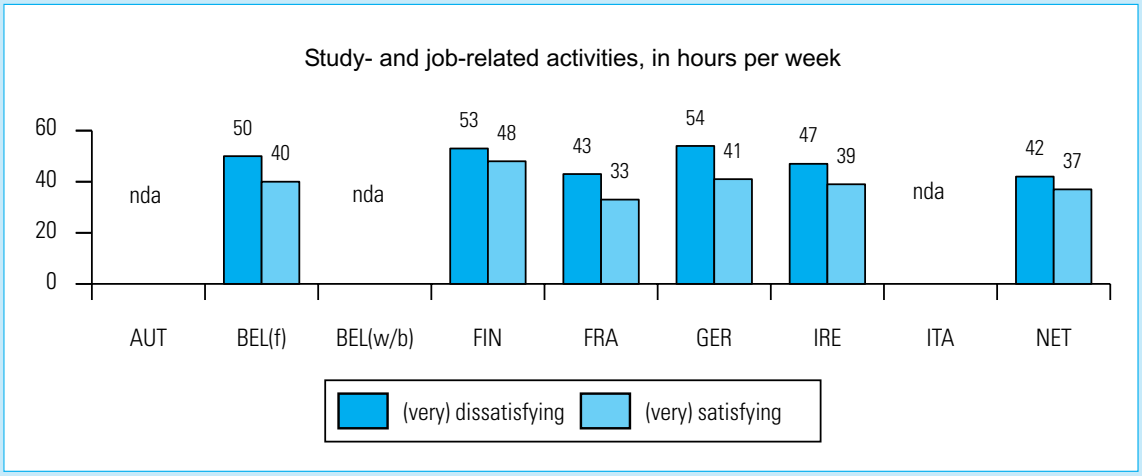
Fig. 42: Weekly time budget relative to the extent of employment



Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

The average weekly time budget dedicated to the attendance of courses and personal study differs across the various participating countries: In Belgium, the average study week amounts to around 40 hours, in Austria it is 31 hours. In all other surveyed countries, the study loads fall somewhere in-between these two poles in various gradations. In addition to the study load comes time spent in employment. In half the countries, working students spend an average of 11 hours a week in paid employment. Only Belgium shows a lower value of four (Flanders) respectively two (Wallonia-Brussels) hours per week (study entrants over-represented in the random sample). The extent of student employment reduces the time budget dedicated to studies and to leisure activities. Added together, study load and employment load amount to a time budget of over 40 hours per week. Students in Finland and Italy have the highest overall time budget at 45 hours per week.

Fig. 43: Students` assessment of their workload by extent of study- and job-related activity

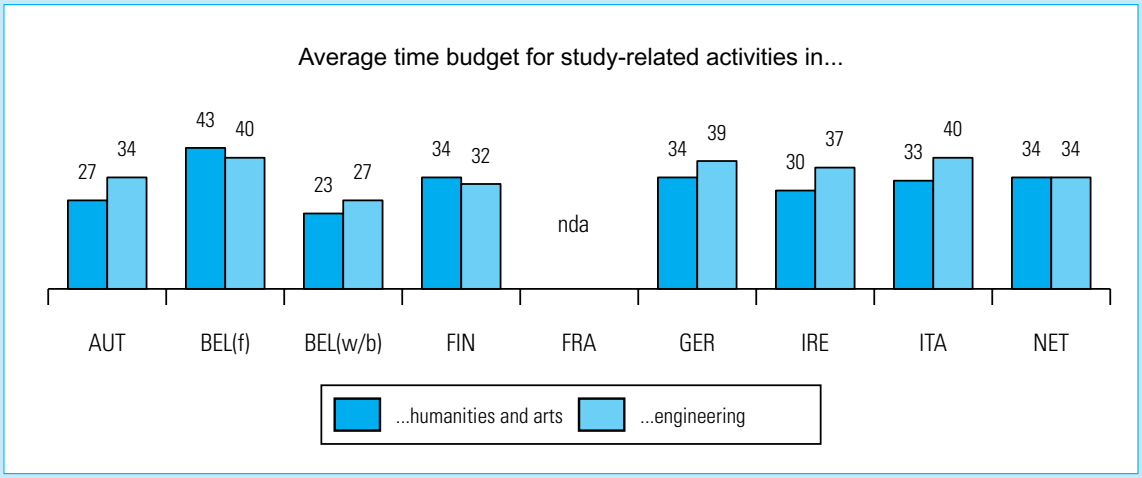


Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Individual students have a greater or lesser overall workload than the average time budget which has been identified under consideration of the time dedicated to the attendance of courses, to personal study and to paid employment. In fact, the overall burden can scatter relatively widely. Seen against this background, it is necessary to ask up to how many hours per week students can still assess their workload as being acceptable. This answer was collected on the basis of self-assessments given by students. The spectrum of weekly hours which students considered to be (very) satisfactory ranged from 33 hours in France to 48 hours in Finland. All other countries have values which lie in-between these two values. Asked about at which weekly time budget students considered their workload to be (very) burdensome, students in the Netherlands quoted a value of 42 hours per week, while German students cited 54 hours. All the other countries are positioned in-between in various gradations. It becomes clear that students' assessment of the degree of satisfaction in the face of a certain workload is very subjective. A particularly good work morale is found in Finland. Finnish students find a workload of 48 hours to be (very) satisfactory. A similarly high weekly workload is already found to be burdensome by students in France, Ireland and the Netherlands.

Fig. 44: Weekly time budget by field of study

in hours per week

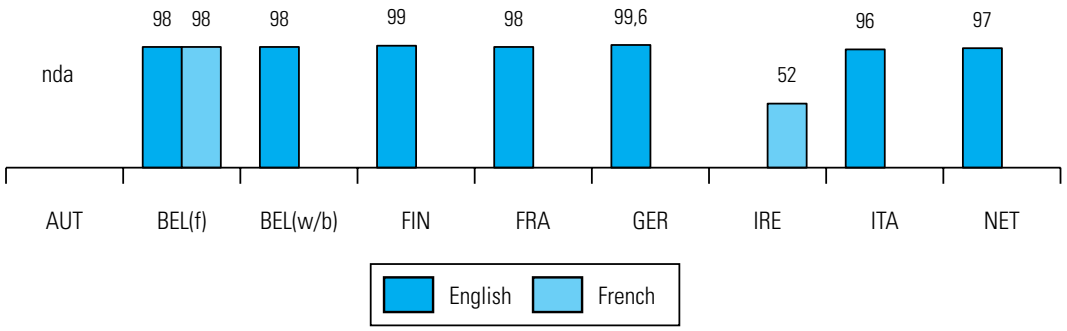


Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

The culture of specific disciplines, including typical study-organisational features, such as the extent to which a degree course is regimented, plays a substantial role as far as the weekly time budget for the attendance of courses and personal study is concerned. Irrespective of the general level of the weekly time budget in the subject groups "humanities and arts" or "engineering", comparison of the two subject groups as well as between the various countries reveals three clear-cut models. In half the participating countries, namely in Austria, Germany, Ireland and Italy, students reading engineering subjects spend between four and seven hours per week more on their studies than do their counterparts reading humanities and arts subjects. The reverse situation is found in Flanders and Finland. Here, students of humanities and arts disciplines have a weekly study load which is two to three hours higher than in engineering. Hardly any significant subject-specific differences in the weekly time budget dedicated to studies are found among students in Wallonia-Brussels Community or the Netherlands.

Fig. 45: Student language proficiency

Proficiency in the first foreign language, in %



Proficiency in a second and third foreign language

	Language	
	Second	Third
AUT	*nda*	*nda*
BEL(f)		*German (84%)*
BEL(w/b)	*Dutch (90%)*	*Spanish (29%)*
FIN	*Swedish (95%)*	*German (68%)*
FRA	*German (60%)*	*Spanish (58%)*
GER	*French (72%)*	*Spanish (39%)*
IRE	*German (23%)*	*Spanish (7%)*
ITA	*French (59%)*	*Spanish (28%)*
NET	*German (93%)*	*French (79%)*

Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

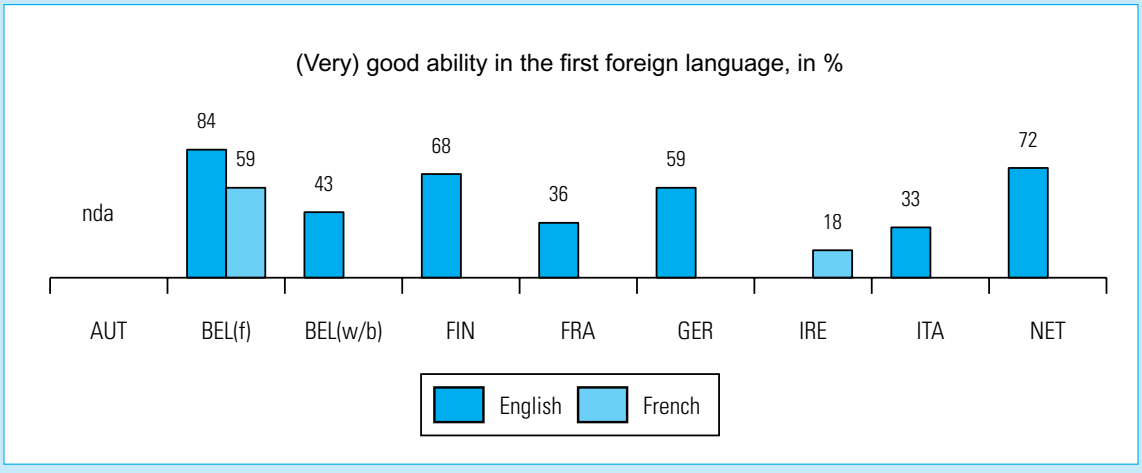
Student language proficiency

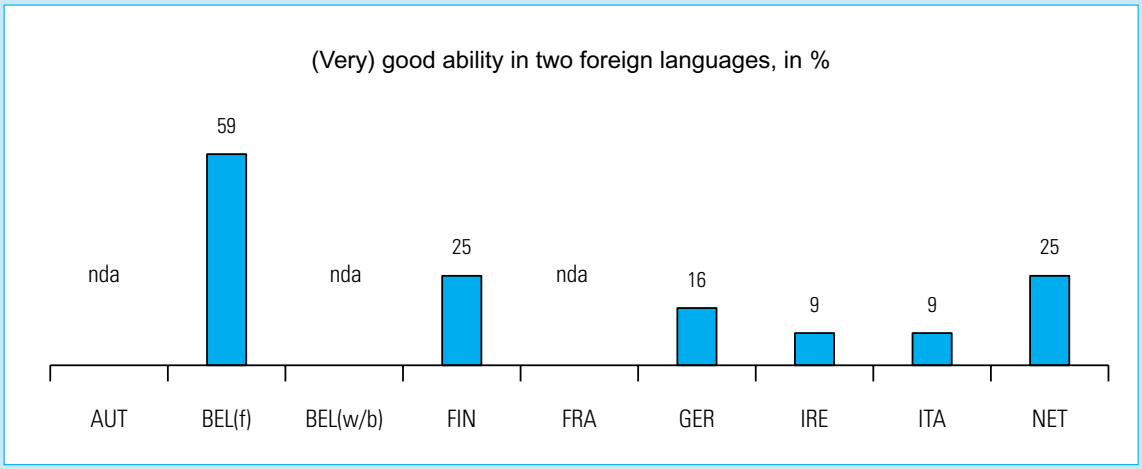
The ability to communicate in another language is one of the foremost key qualifications these days. Sound foreign language skills are important prerequisites for international communication in business and industry, in science, research and education, and on the World Wide Web.

In seven of the eight countries, English was the most widespread foreign language among the surveyed students (top chart). In each case, more than 97% of the students stated that they had a knowledge of this first foreign language. In Flanders, French and English are equally positioned. Ireland is a special case. Only around half of the Irish students has a knowledge of a first foreign language, in this case French.

As far as the second and third foreign languages are concerned, the situation becomes less uniform and, in some cases, much less positive (see table). 84% of the Flemish students claim to have a knowledge of a third foreign language (German). 90% of students in the Wallonia-Brussels Community in Belgium have skills in a second foreign language (Dutch), while 29% actually have a knowledge of a third foreign language (Spanish). 79% and more of the students in the Netherlands also have a second or third foreign language (French or German). Almost similar proportions are found among students in Finland. 95% claim to have a knowledge of Swedish as a second foreign language, while 68% claim skills in German. Germany, France and Italy follow at a clear distance. And the values are even lower in Ireland.

Fig. 46: Degree of language proficiency





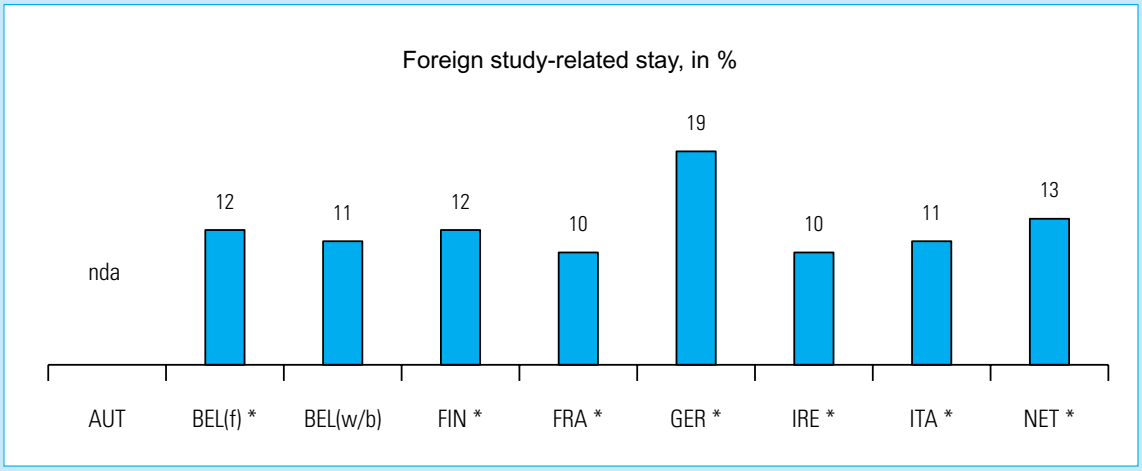
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Degree of language proficiency

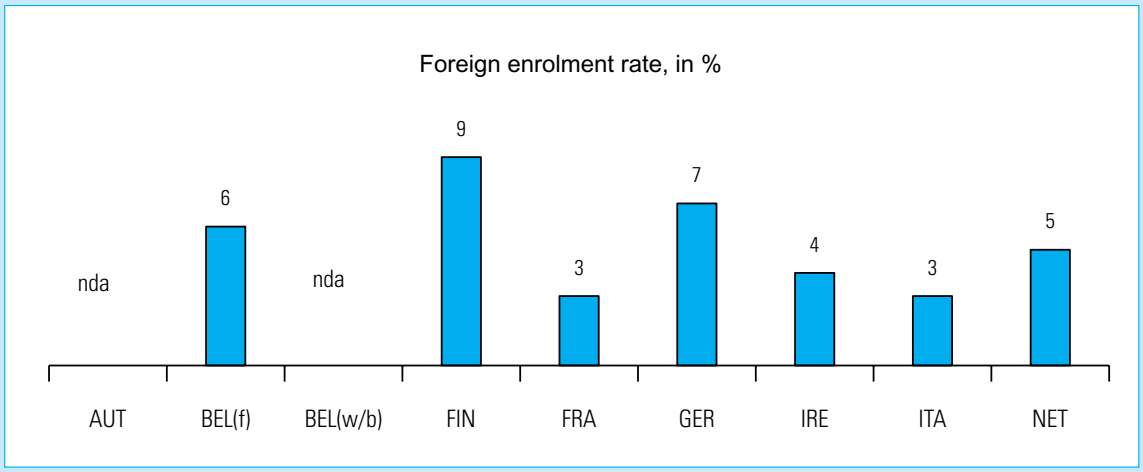
Although English is most widespread as a foreign language among students, this fact cannot be regarded as any statement of the quality of these skills. The proportion of students who claim to have good to very good written and spoken language skills varies from one country to the next (top chart): In Italy and France, this group only accounts for one third of the student body. In the Wallonia-Brussels Community of Belgium, the group has a 43% share. The next best at a significant distance is Germany (59%). The proportions in Finland and the Netherlands are around 70%. Students from Flanders stand alone at the top of the league. 84% of Flemish students claim that they have good or very good skills in the first foreign language, in this case English. The other extreme value is provided by Ireland: Only 18% of Irish students assess their knowledge of French, the first foreign language among students in this country, as good or very good.

The percentage of multilingual students is at a depressing low - except Flemish student (59 %) - in most of the participating countries (bottom chart): In Finland (English and Swedish) and in the Netherlands do a quarter of the students believe that they have a good or very good knowledge of two and more foreign languages. This is followed at a large distance by German (16%) students. The corresponding values are even lower in Ireland and Italy at 9% each.

Fig. 47: International student mobility



* Study-related stay includes only: Studies + internship + language course

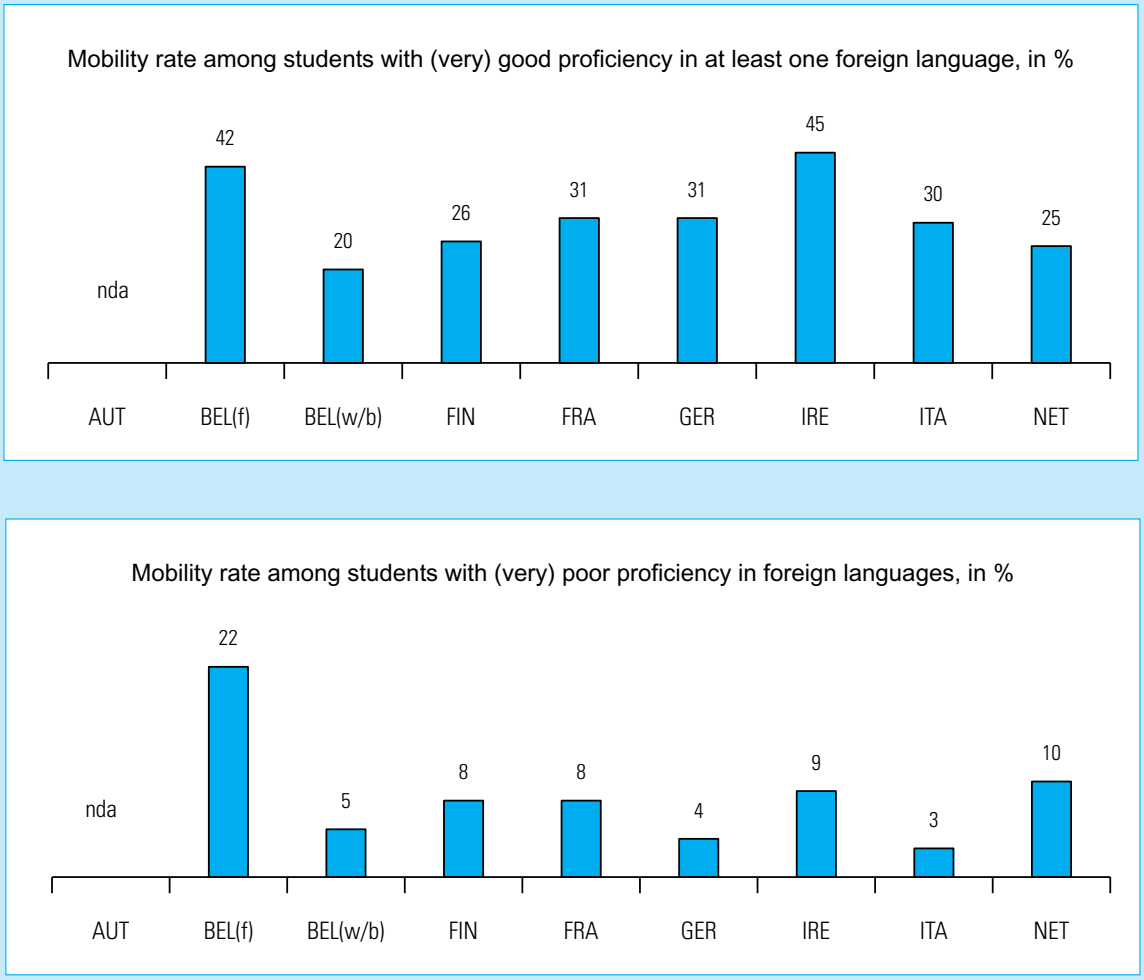


Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Many students in the participating European countries venture across national borders for the purpose of study-related stays (top chart). The highest value in this respect is provided by Germany, where nearly one in five students completed some form of study-related stay abroad. While in the other countries between 10-13% had completed a period of practical training abroad, a language course or internship.

The proportion of students who completed a temporary period of study at a foreign university or college is much lower (bottom chart): France and Italy with just 3% each are overtaken in this respect by all other countries. It is interesting to note that the league table of countries has changed. A high foreign study rate does not necessarily also mean a correspondingly high foreign enrolment rate and vice versa. While French students, for example, go abroad relatively frequently for study-related stays (e.g. language courses), only very few of them also enrol at a foreign higher education institution. A different situation is found in Finland, where the foreign study rate is only 13%, while the foreign enrolment rate actually reaches a value of 9%, representing the highest value among all participating countries.

Fig. 48: Effect of language proficiency on international student mobility

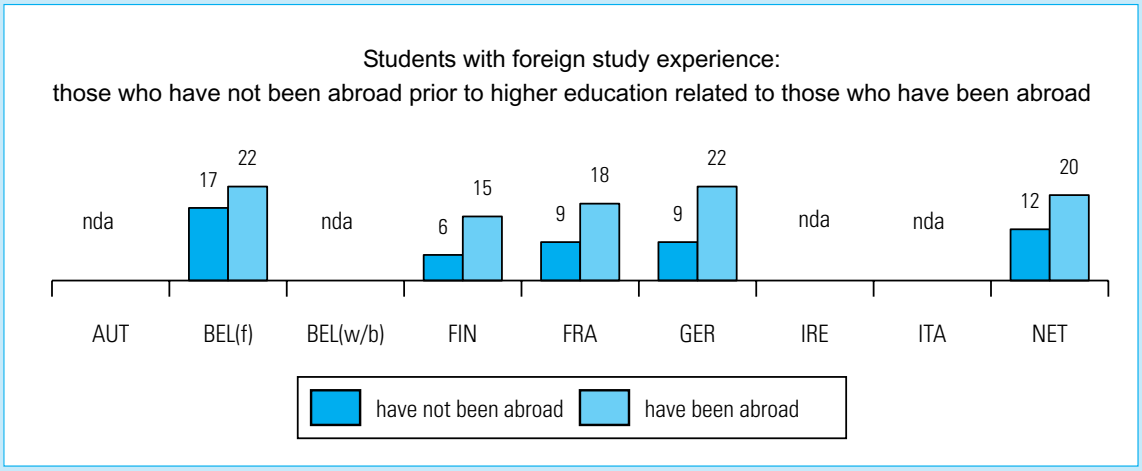


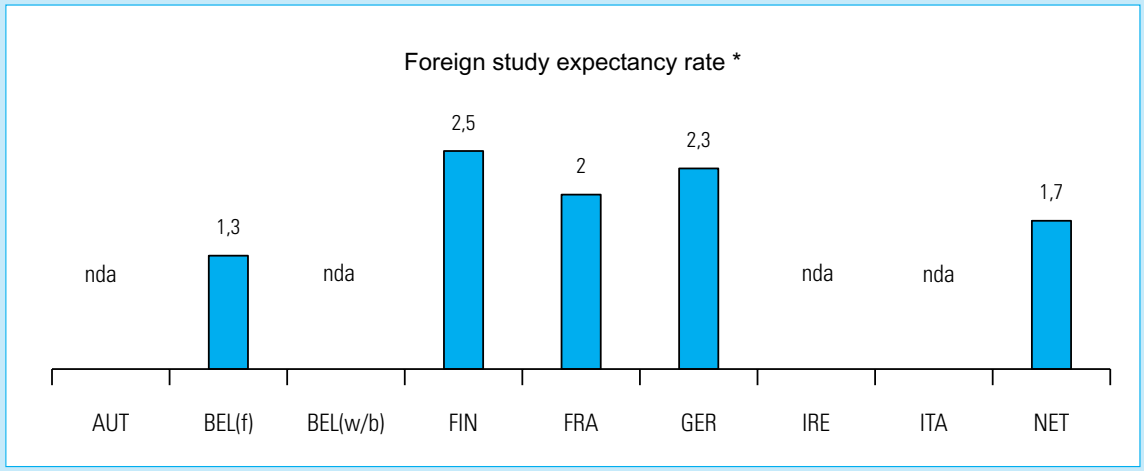
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Besides other factors, foreign language skills have a strong influence on the international mobility of students. It can be seen in all countries that the better students assessed their spoken and written proficiency in the foreign language they had learnt, the higher was their participation rate in international student mobility. Of the students with (very) good foreign language skills (top chart), up to 45% (Ireland) completed a stay abroad. As the quality of the foreign language skills fell, so too did the proportion of study-related stays abroad (bottom chart). The fact that the international student mobility values recorded here were much lower for students with -very- poor foreign language skills applied to all countries. They ranged from 3% (Italy) to 22% (Flanders) and thus only achieved a fraction of the above-mentioned values.

The survey at hand provides no details on the time of language skill acquisition. This means that the question regarding the extent to which the foreign language skills affect international mobility and/or conversely international mobility affects foreign language skills remains unanswered.

Fig. 49: Foreign study by stay abroad prior to higher education





* students who have been abroad prior to higher education related to those who not have been abroad

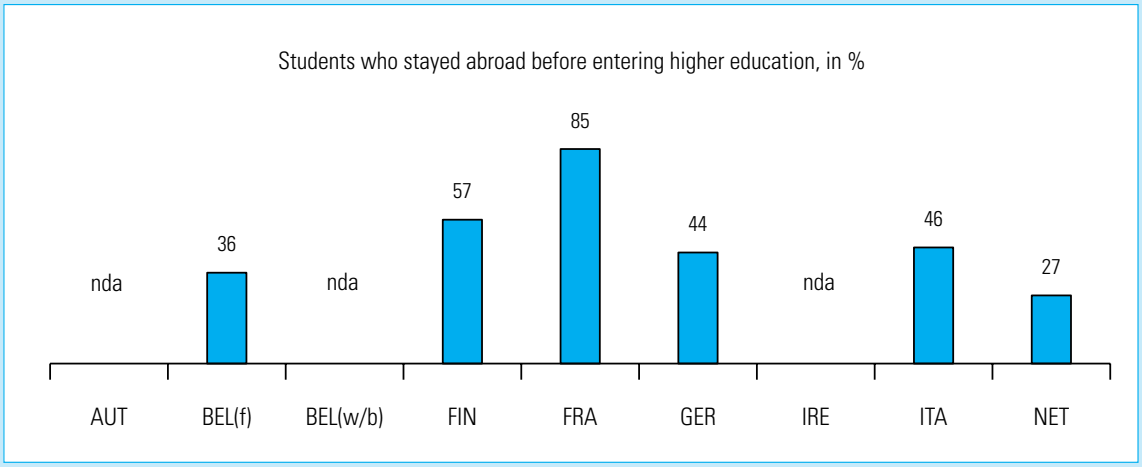
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

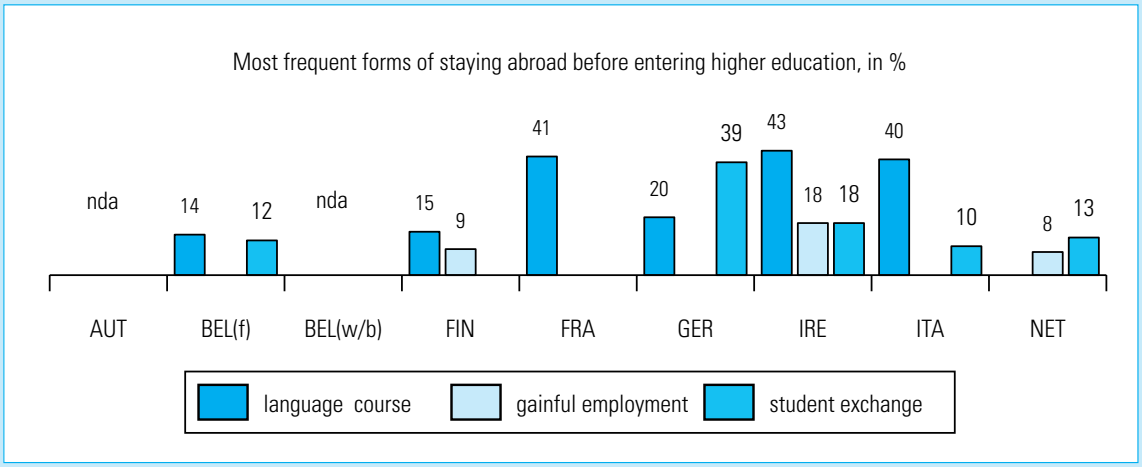
Foreign study by stay abroad prior to higher education

Regardless of the general degree of student experience abroad in the individual countries, it is possible to determine that only a small proportion of students who had not yet gained any experience abroad prior to the commencement of their studies also went abroad during their studies. Among students with international experience gained before entering higher education, the proportion is much higher (top chart). This effect can be observed in all the participating countries, although with varying degrees of intensity. So, in Flanders and Germany, for example, 22% of those students in both countries who had already been abroad before studying also went abroad while studying. Of those students without experience abroad upon the commencement of their studies, 17% from Flanders went abroad during their studies, while in Germany it was only a low 9%. So, while Flanders has a foreign study expectancy factor of 1.3 (bottom chart) and is thus positioned at the bottom of the spectrum, the values for Germany (2.3) and Finland (2.5) are at the other end of the spectrum. Consequently, stays abroad completed before entering higher education raise the rate of study-related stays abroad completed during higher education study in all countries, albeit to differing degrees.

These positive effects are found in the case of study periods abroad, in particular. In many countries, students with previous experience abroad are twice as likely - and in some cases three times as likely - to complete a study period abroad than students without such experience. Finland and the Netherlands are cited as examples. In these countries, the corresponding values are 7% versus 2% and 8% versus 4% respectively.

Fig. 50: Forms of stays abroad prior to higher education





Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

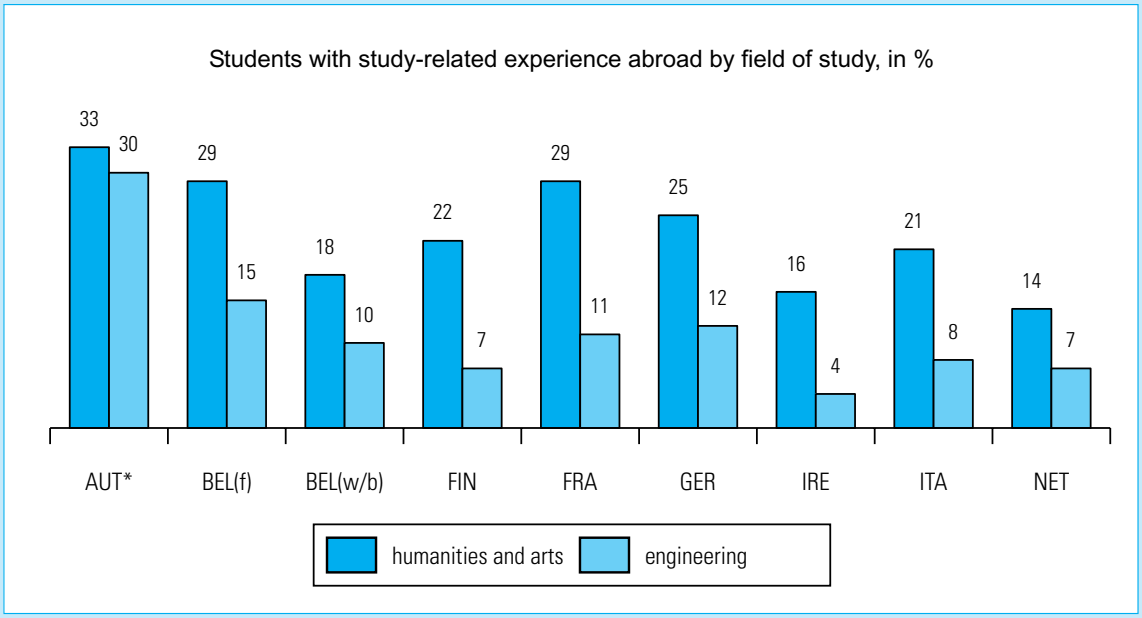
Forms of stays abroad prior to higher education

Education-relevant stays abroad which are completed before entering higher education encourage an international orientation on the part of students and pave the way for later study-related stays abroad. The survey ascertained the following forms of periods spent abroad prior to the commencement of studies: School exchange programmes, language trips, employment, au pair work, practical training/internships, or the option of having lived abroad. The survey ignored all tourist stays abroad.

The proportion of students who before commencing their studies had already been abroad for purposes which extend beyond pure tourism varies from one country to the next. With a proportion of 85%, France has by far the highest value (top chart). The largest proportion of French students (41%, bottom chart) went abroad as school pupils for the purpose of "language practice" [6] . On the other hand, more than half the students (57%) in Finland had also been abroad before entering higher education. 15% of these had attended a language school abroad. Italian and German students follow in order, where, in both countries, around 45% of the study entrants had already gained some international experience. While Italians preferred to complete a language course (40%), 39% of Germans had been involved in a pupil exchange programme. 36% of Flemish students had been abroad as language or exchange pupils (14% and 12% respectively) before commencing their studies. The 27% proportion of Dutch students who had travelled abroad before taking up their degree course primarily did so as exchange pupils (13%).

[6] "Language Practice" is not necessarily synonymous with "Language Course". Differences between countries in their terminological delineation cannot be ruled out.

Fig. 51: International student mobility by field of study



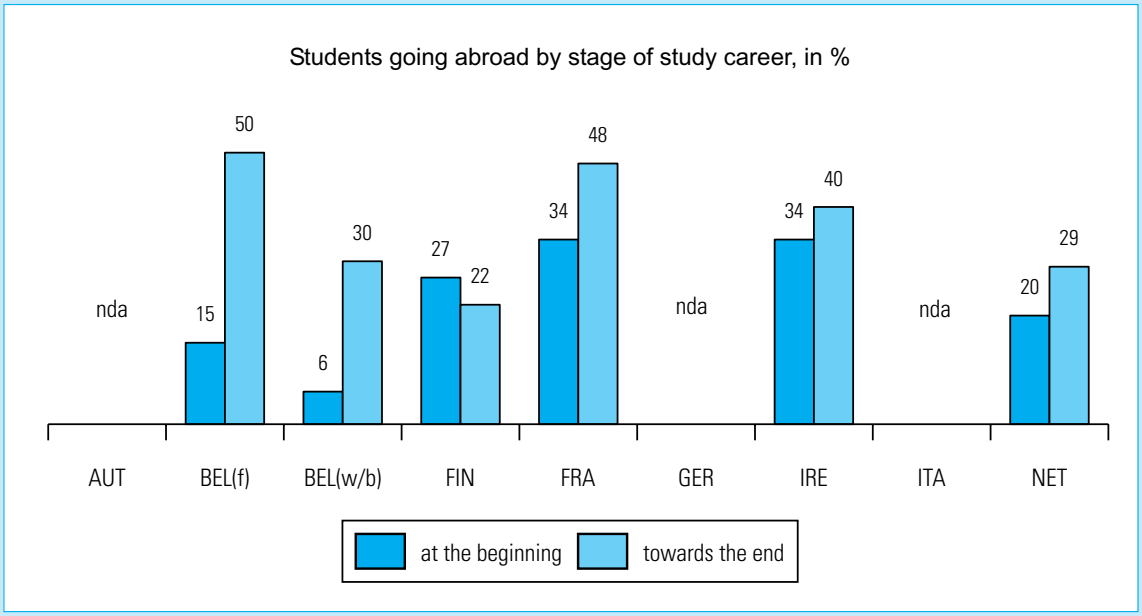
* Austrian data only consider graduates (ISCED 5A) of the 1998/99 academic year at universities and universities of arts (no graduates from FH schools for professional education).

Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

International student mobility is dependent on a large number of determinants. Differences in the various subject-specific cultures are one important factor of influence. Regardless of the general degree of international mobility in individual countries, it is possible to ascertain that students of engineering are consistently much less likely to complete a study-related stay abroad than are their fellow students reading humanities and arts disciplines. In Austria, where an above-average degree of international mobility can presumably be put down to the fact that the calculation solely considered graduates, differences between the fields of study are actually least pronounced. 33% of humanities and arts students and 30% of engineering students had already been abroad within the context of their studies. By contrast, Ireland, with generally quite a low degree of mobility, displays extreme differences between the subject-related cultures (16% versus 4%). Substantial differences were also found in the case of Italy, Finland and the Netherlands. In Belgium (Flemish and Wallonia-Brussels communities) and Germany, the ratio is around 2:1.

In Germany in this respect, interest in a study-related stay abroad is more developed among female students than among their male counterparts. While, all in all, the situation in Austria shows no gender-specific differences. However, when a subject-based differentiation is made, it can be seen than in education, humanities and arts subjects a significantly higher proportion of women complete a study-related stay abroad.

Fig. 52: Study-related experience abroad by stage of study career

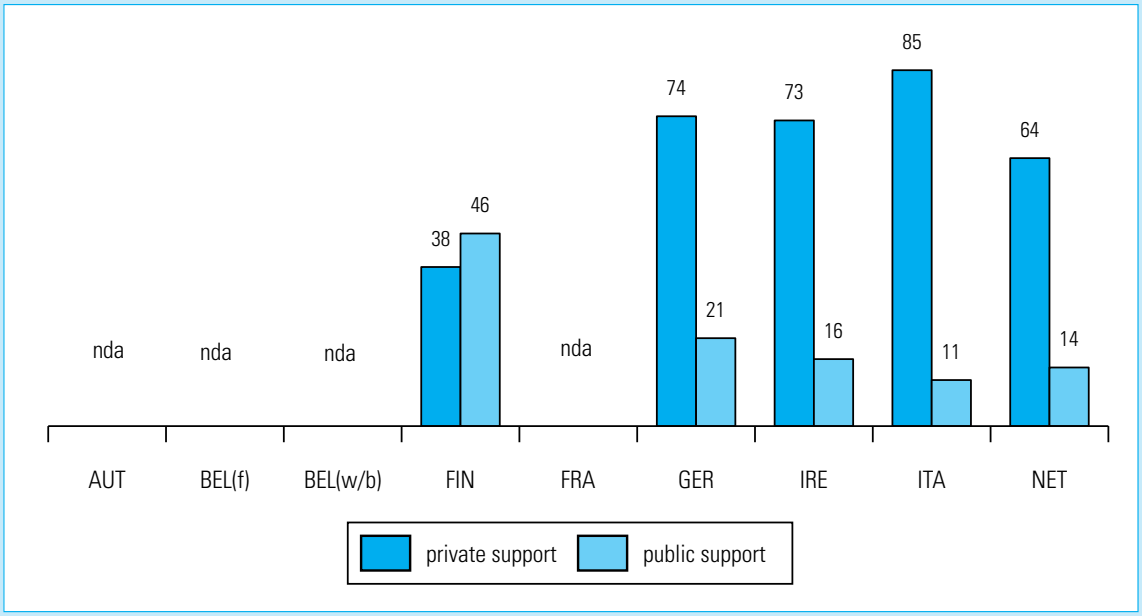


Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Only relatively few students complete study-related stays abroad as early as in the beginning phase of their studies. This situation applies to all the countries which provided data on this aspect. One reason could be that study periods abroad generally have to be extensively organised well in advance. In many cases, such preparations will not yet have been completed in the start-up phase of a degree course. Most students prefer to complete such a stay at a later period: In Flanders, France and Ireland, clear preference can be seen for completing the stay abroad towards the end of the degree course, with proportions of between 40% and 50% doing so. By contrast, more than half the Finnish and Dutch students who had been abroad for a study-related purpose had decided to do this mid-way through their studies.

Fig. 53: Sources of finance for study-related activities abroad *

in %



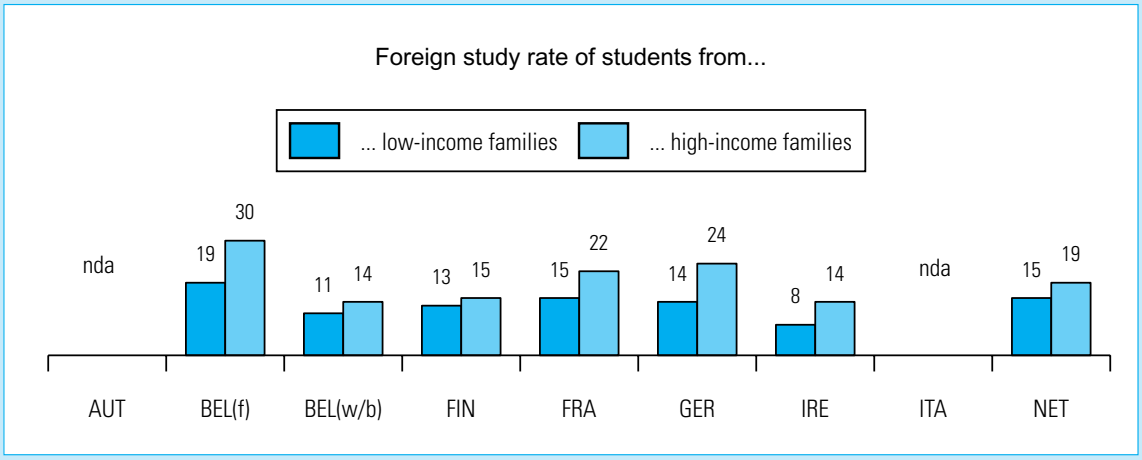
* "private", " public", or"not clearly specified"; without 'other'

Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

As far as the funding of study-related stays abroad is concerned, various structures can be identified. In three (Germany, Ireland, Italy) of the total of five countries that collected data on this aspect, more than three quarters of the funding for students' stays abroad are covered from personal resources (parental support, earnings from employment). Supplementary public resources, such as state support or national and international study grants make up a maximum of only one fifth of the expenditure required for this purpose. The situation in the Netherlands is slightly more balanced, where up to two thirds of the funding comes from privates sources. Only in one single state, namely Finland, are public sources primarily (46%) provided to promote student mobility. Only 38% of the necessary expenditure comes from private sources in Finland.

Fig. 54: Study-related stay abroad by parental income

in %

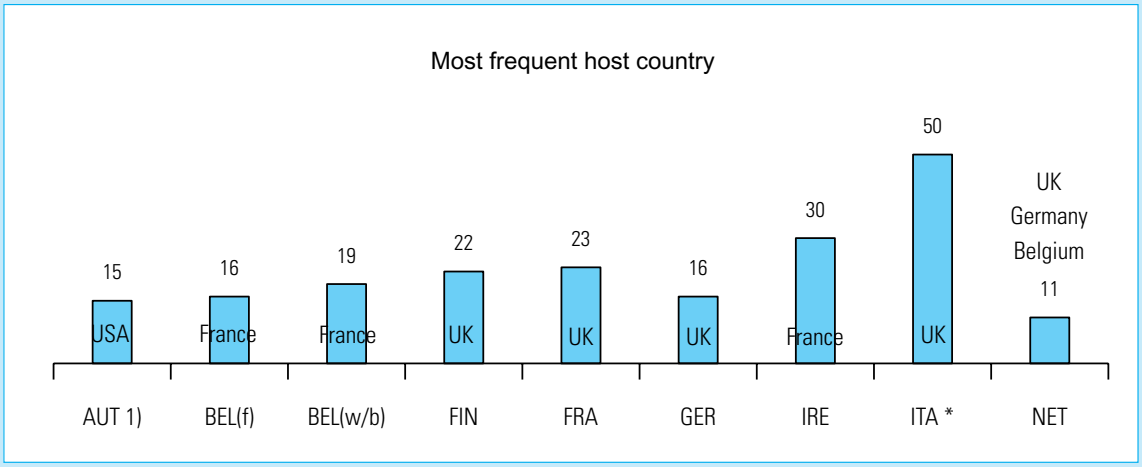


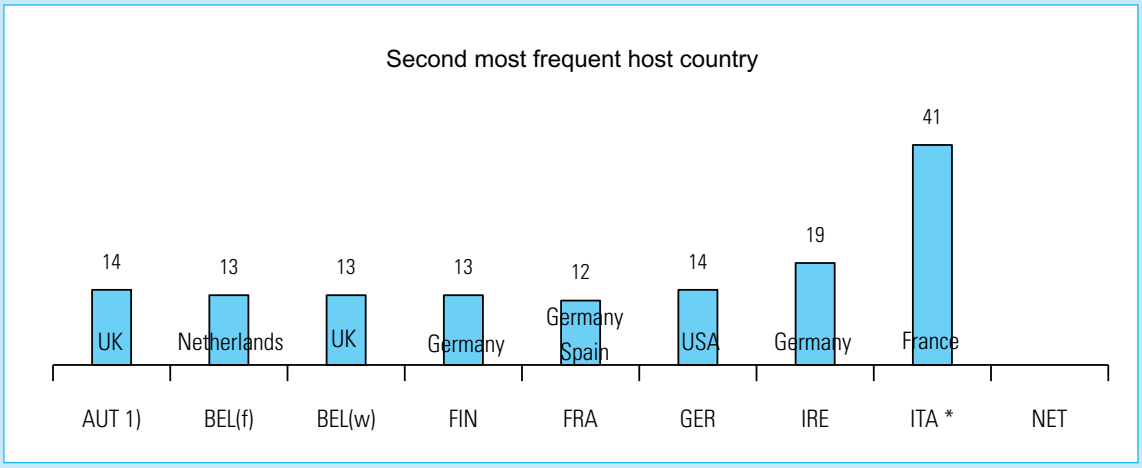
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

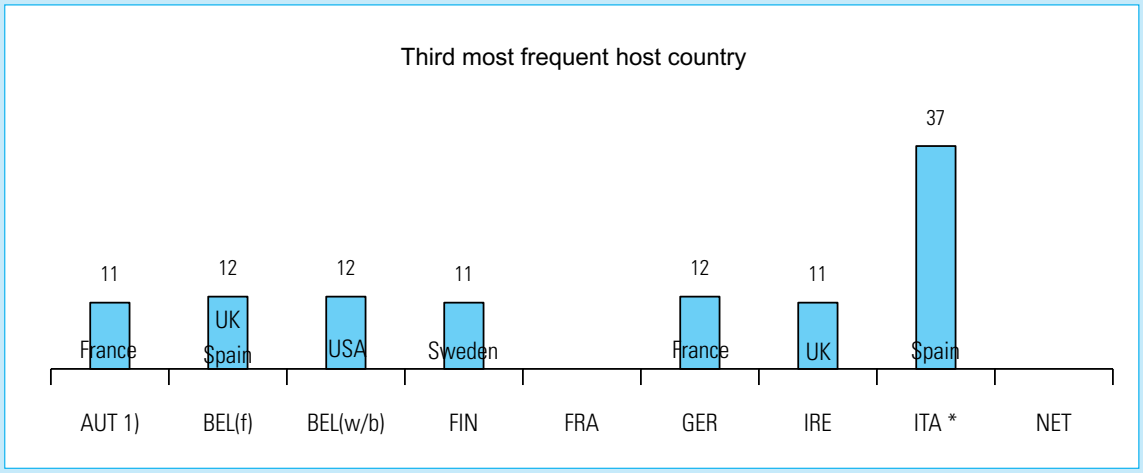
In all member countries, the probability that a study period will be completed abroad depends on how well-off the parental home is. Regardless of the general degree of international mobility in the individual countries, it is possible to ascertain that students from low-income families make substantially less use of the opportunities for studying abroad than do those from families with higher incomes. In Flanders, where an above-average degree of international mobility can probably be observed on account of the fact that the neighbouring countries speak the same language, 30% of the children from well-off families gained experience abroad, while only 19% of the children from low-income families were able to make use of this opportunity. Ireland, which generally has the lowest degree of mobility, actually shows a similarly sharp difference as far as the mobility of student children from varying economic backgrounds is concerned (14% vs. 8%). Practically class-independent participation is found in Finland (15% vs. 13%), while the financial background of the parental home was also seen to exert only a weak influence in the Netherlands. A substantial divide in the study abroad participation rate based on differing economic backgrounds is found in Germany (24% vs. 14%), although the educational assistance system in Germany (BAföG) provides special financial support for students from financially less well-off families. This indicates that barriers for international mobility are not only to be found in the economic capital, but also in the cultural capital.

Fig. 55: Choice of country for foreign study

in %







* Figures relate to all study-related stays abroad, thus total exceeds100.

1) Austrian data only consider graduates (ISCED 5A) of the 1998/99 academic year at universities and universities of arts (no graduates from FH schools for professional education).

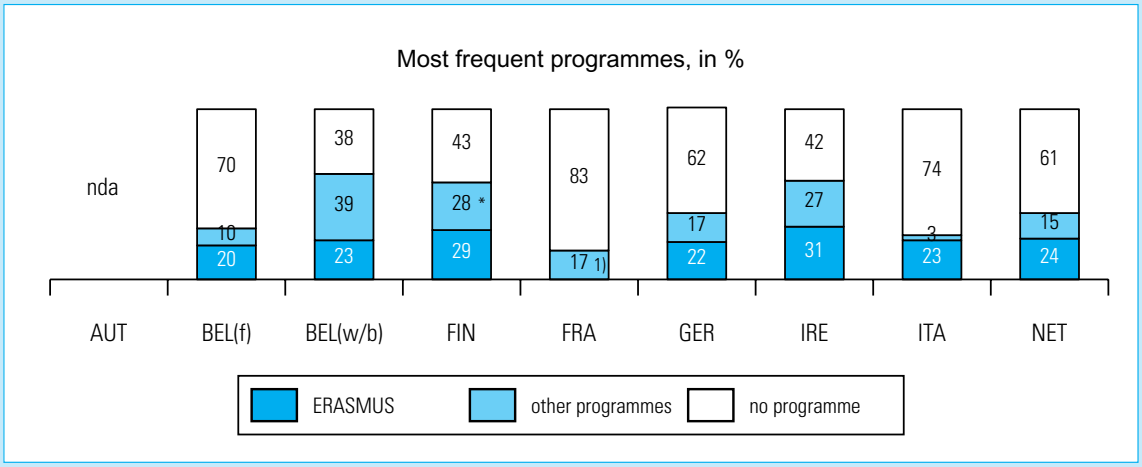
Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Choice of country for foreign study

In connection with study-related stays abroad, European countries play a major role in students' country preferences. Students in five of the total of eight surveyed countries primarily choose Britain. France, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium are also among the preferred target destinations. The United States, Spain and Sweden follow at a distance.

Language continues to be a decisive criterion for the choice of host country. The greatest proportion of stays lead to English-speaking or French-speaking foreign countries. Although a large part of the higher education instruction is meanwhile offered in English in some countries, this has - so far - not led to any substantial shifts in positions within the leading group, however.

Fig. 56: Study abroad programmes



* of which 6% Nordplus

1) only differentiated into programmes / no programmes

Data source: EURO-STUDENT 2000 - National Profiles

Study-related stays abroad are organised by students in various ways. However, without exception, students in the surveyed countries prefer the form of a self-organised stay abroad. As so-called "free movers", they account for a proportion of 42% of all the study-related stays made by students from Ireland, while free movers from France reach a value which is around twice as high. In the other countries, the degree of self-organised stays varies.

A notable proportion of more or less a quarter of the stays abroad were completed within the framework of the ERASMUS programme. The remaining stays abroad are run under other, partly EU, partly regional programmes, such as Nordplus in Finland.

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