ERASMUS Monographs No. 17

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EXPERIENCES OF ERASMUS STUDENTS 1990/91

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Wissenschaftliches Zentrum für Berufs- und Hochschulforschung der Universität Gesamthochschule Kassel

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The present report has been prepared in the context of the monitoring and evaluation of the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS). It is designed primarily for use within the services of the Commission of the European Communities, and although the report is being placed at the disposal of the general public, it is emphasized that the views which it contains are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Commission.

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Preface

The European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) was established by the Council Decision of 15 June 1987. The first phase of the Programme covered the academic years 1987/88 - 1989/90, the second phase being based on the amended Council Decision of 14 December 1989. The Programme is open to all types of higher education institution and all subject areas.

A central element of the ERASMUS Programme is the furthering of student mobility within the European Community. The student mobility programmes established under the Programme offer university students a chance to undertake a substantial period of study (minimum three months) in another Community Member State fully recognized by the home institution as an integral part of their degree. The Inter-University Cooperation Programmes (ICPs) set up under ERASMUS can also incorporate other activities such as teaching staff mobility, development of new curricula, and intensive programmes. Collectively, the ICPs constitute the European University Network established under ERASMUS.

In 1989, the European Community Course Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was introduced as an experimental pilot project designed to test the European potential of credit transfer as an effective means of academic recognition.

Furthermore, ERASMUS offers the possibility to academic and administrative staff of undertaking preparatory or study visits to other higher education institutions within the Community, and provides support for a wide range of complementary activities seeking to improve the climate for academic cooperation within the Community.

Since the inception of ERASMUS, great importance has been attached to ensure thorough monitoring and evaluation of the Programme's progress. The Task Force Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth of the Commission of the European Communities has therefore commissioned or supported the preparation of a number of studies on various aspects of the Programme's development.

Some of these studies, though designed primarily for use within the services of the Commission of the European Communities, are now being published in the ERASMUS Monograph series, in order to make them accessible to a wider public. Each in its own way contributes to the overall evaluation process of the Programme in more than just a historical sense. These evaluations of academic recognition matters, of the development of specific subject areas, of the role of language training, of accommodation matters etc. are of relevance to those working with or having an interest in ERASMUS. The full list of studies appears elsewhere in the present volume.

1

Introduction

In 1987, the Commission of the European Community inaugurated an Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS). The objective of the ERASMUS programme is significantly to increase the proportion of students at higher education institutions in Europe spending a period of study in another EC Member State and to improve the quality of higher education in Europe through cooperative activities.

Among the activities for which the ERASMUS programme provides support, undoubtedly the most visible one, involving large numbers of students each year, is the provision of grants for students spending a study period from three months to a full academic year in another country of the European Community. The grants are supplementary, aiming to cover, in principle, the costs for travel to and from the host country as well as additional costs abroad. They are predominantly awarded to students taking part in Inter-University Cooperation Programmes (ICPs), where two or more university departments in different EC Member States cooperate to organise the regular exchange of students. ICPs as a rule incorporate various administrative and educational measures to increase the success of exchange, and aim to secure (at least to some extent) the recognition of study achievements abroad upon return by the home institution of higher education. In addition, some students, who are individually mobile, i.e. outside the framework of such ICPs, are awarded ERASMUS grants in certain Member States.

In 1990/91, the fourth year of ERASMUS programme, awards for supplementary grants were made to 1,592 ICPs, with a potential mobility of about 44,500 students according to the applications.[1] In the event, 30,000 students went to

1 Commission of the European Communities. ERASMUS, Task Force: Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth. *ERASMUS and Lingua Action II Directory 1990/91*. Brussels and Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1991.

another EC Member State with the support of an EC mobility grant.[2] From the outset of the ERASMUS programme, efforts have been made to evaluate both the processes and outcomes of student mobility supported by the ERASMUS programme as well as the provisions of the scheme and their impacts. Among other measures, the Commission decided to support biennial surveys aiming to analyze the experiences of a large number of ERASMUS students.

This study is based on replies to a written questionnaire by 3,263 students who undertook a study period abroad in 1990/91 with the help of an ERASMUS grant (see detailed information in the Appendix). The study, conducted a few months after the beginning of the subsequent academic year, provides information on the participating students, their preparation for their sojourn, how they lived and studied in the host country, and what supportive provisions had been made by the home and host institutions of higher education. It also includes statistics on their financial resources and expenses, their perception of the academic, cultural and foreign language impact of the study period abroad, their general assessments of the scheme and, finally, the degree of recognition granted by their home institutions on return. In addition to this general range of themes, special emphasis was placed on issues of academic and administrative support by the home and host institution, both for the preparation and for the study period abroad.

The concepts as well as the methodology of the study were largely based on the experience acquired in the framework of a large-scale evaluation project on various types of study abroad programmes and various support schemes, including the Joint Study Programmes (the support scheme by the Commission of the European Communities preceding the ERASMUS programme).[3] The first survey of this kind on ERASMUS students covered those who had been abroad in 1988/89.[4] More than two-thirds of the questions posed in the 1988/89 and 1990/91 questionnaires were identical, thus allowing a comparison of the results,

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2 U. Teichler, R. Kreitz and F. Maiworm. *Student Mobility within ERASMUS 1990/91.* Kassel Wissenschaftliches Zentrum für Berufs- und Hochschulforschung, 1992, mimeo.

3 B.B. Burn, L. Cerych and A. Smith (eds.). *Study Abroad Programmes.* London: Jessica Kingsley, 1990; S. Opper, U. Teichler and J. Carlson. *The Impacts of Study Abroad Programmes on Students and Graduates.* London: Jessica Kingsley, 1990.

4 F. Maiworm, W. Steube and U. Teichler (eds.). *Learning in Europe: The ERASMUS Experience.* London: Jessica Kingsley, 1991 (ERASMUS Monographs, No. 14); cf. also the abbreviated report in U. Teichler. *Experiences of ERASMUS Students: Select Findings of the 1988/89 Survey.* Kassel: Wissenschaftliches Zentrum für Berufs- und Hochschulforschung, 1991 (ERASMUS Monographs, No. 13).

i.e. an analysis of the change in the ERASMUS programme and its impacts over a time-span of two years.

It should be noted that the survey addressed only ERASMUS students going abroad in the framework of Inter-University Cooperation Programmes. Individually mobile students, so-called "free movers", the number of whom is very small, were not included because their addresses were not known to the ERASMUS Bureau at the time the survey was undertaken. Students participating in the credit transfer programme ECTS were not included, because they are surveyed annually using a questionnaire which, in addition to the issues raised in this study, addresses special issues of credit transfer as well.[5]

The study was conducted by a research team at the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work of the Comprehensive University of Kassel (Federal Republic of Germany). Friedhelm Maiworm, Wolfgang Steube and Ulrich Teichler, the head of the research team, carried out the study and wrote this report. Students from the various EC Member States helped in the analysis of the responses and the data processing. Kristin Gagelmann took over many responsibilities in administering the survey and Paul Greim in the processing of this text. Irene Magill was responsible for all the proof reading and Martine Herlant Neave did the translation into French. The study was eased by substantial support from the Task Force for Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth, and from the ERASMUS Bureau. Persons in charge of coordinating the student mobility at the various departments participating in ICPs provided the students' addresses. Many experts in charge of academic or administrative aspects of ERASMUS programmes in various Member States of the European Community provided valuable advice and support for all stages of the project. Last but not least, those 3,263 completing the questionnaire were the key persons in ensuring a set of comprehensive and interesting findings on the experiences of the ERASMUS students.

5 F. Maiworm and U. Teichler: *Experiences of ECTS Students 1989/90*. Kassel: Wissenschaftliches Zentrum für Berufs- und Hochschulforschung, 1992; F. Maiworm and U. Teichler: *Experiences of ECTS Students 1990/91*. Kassel: Wissenschaftliches Zentrum für Berufs- und Hochschulforschung, 1992, mimeo.

2

The Participating Students

2.1 Purpose of the Overview

Some basic data asked for in the questionnaire, i.e. country of home institution, country of host institution, field of study, age, years of study prior to the study period abroad, and finally the duration of the study period, are already available about all ERASMUS students. They are documented in the annual statistical profile of ERASMUS students. Such data allowed us to examine the extent to which the respondents were representative of all ERASMUS students (see Appendix). Further biographical data were surveyed, such as nationality, parents' educational background, prior educational and work experience, prior stays abroad, changes of field of study, and family status. All data presented in this chapter serve as reference data for the subsequent analysis which asks "what are the characteristics of the students responding to the questionnaire?"

2.2 Nationality and Field of Study

For convenience sake, we talk of "British", "French", "Spanish" students etc. in the subsequent text if we refer to the country of the home institution of higher education; we do so because all the major issues in this study relate to contrasts or cooperation between partner institutions of higher education from the respective countries. One should bear in mind, though, that two percent of the ERASMUS 1990/91 students (1988/89: 3 %) were foreigners, i.e. not citizens of the country of the home institution of higher education. The quota of foreign students was four percent at institutions in Belgium, Spain, and the United Kingdom, two percent at institutions in Germany, Denmark, and France, and one per-

cent or less in the remaining six countries. Some students from home institutions located in Spain (2 %), Germany, and the Netherlands (1 % each) stated a double citizenship.

The distribution of students according to the country of the home institution of higher education is provided in Table 2.1. More than half of the ERASMUS students responding studied prior to their sojourn in the three "large" countries France (22 %), Germany and the United Kingdom (17 % each). Italy (11 %), Spain (10 %), Belgium (7 %) and the Netherlands (6 %) could be named "medium size" countries as far as the absolute numbers of ERASMUS students were concerned, while altogether about 12 percent of the students surveyed were from Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Portugal, and Luxembourg.

Table 2.1
Country of Home Institution and Host Country (absolute numbers)

	Host country											Total
Country of home institution	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
B	0	33	8	32	40	3	15	8	29	9	47	224
D	13	0	8	57	146	7	39	38	19	6	231	564
DK	5	16	0	6	6	1	6	4	6	1	31	82
E	18	43	1	0	97	5	26	12	13	4	103	322
F	16	160	8	100	0	8	36	26	11	7	334	706
GR	7	12	1	5	21	0	1	3	3	1	20	74
I	24	49	5	67	70	8	0	9	24	9	78	343
IRL	7	27	1	11	27	0	7	0	1	0	7	88
L	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
NL	19	38	17	23	22	3	22	4	0	3	57	208
P	10	11	5	12	18	1	7	3	6	0	21	94
UK	22	113	18	50	230	4	76	6	30	4	0	553
Total	143	502	72	363	680	40	235	113	142	44	929	3263

Question 2.5: Please state: Home university, country of home university, host university, country of host university.

Major host countries of the ERASMUS students surveyed were the United Kingdom (28 %), France (21 %), and Germany (15 %). Spain (11 %) and Italy (7 %) were not infrequent hosts either. Less than five percent went to Belgium, the Netherlands (4 % each), Ireland (3 %), Denmark (2 %), Greece, and Portugal (1 % each). The United Kingdom and Ireland received substantially more students than they sent, whereas the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium, Greece and Portugal received substantially less of the students surveyed than they sent. None of the students surveyed went to Luxembourg.

In looking at the "flows" from home to host countries, we note that 37 percent of the students surveyed were exchanged among the United Kingdom, France and Germany. A further 46 percent of the flows were between these three countries and the other EC Member States, and 17 percent among the other EC Member States.

The largest proportion of ERASMUS students surveyed were enrolled in business studies (24 %) during the period abroad, followed by foreign language studies (18 %), engineering (11 %), law (10 %), and social sciences (8 %). Five percent each were enrolled in humanities and natural sciences, four percent in medical fields, three percent each in mathematics/informatics and art/design, two percent each in agricultural sciences, architecture/urban and regional planning, education/teacher training and geography/geology, and, finally, one percent in communication/information sciences and in other fields. Altogether, seven percent of the ERASMUS students surveyed named different major fields of study prior to the study period abroad from those they were enrolled in while abroad. On the other hand, five percent of the ERASMUS students moved to a different field when returning to the home institution from the one in which they were enrolled abroad. In some cases, a lack of a clear match of fields or a slightly different categorisation of fields between the partner institutions explain these shifts. However, six percent returned afterwards to a different field of study in their home institutions from the one they were enrolled in prior to the study period abroad.

2.3 Age and Previous Study

Fifty-five percent of the ERASMUS students surveyed were 21-23 years old at the end of the study period abroad, with only 13 percent older than 25. The average reported age was 23.3 years. Most Irish (21.0 years on average), British (22.4 years), and French students (22.5 years) were relatively young, while Danish (25.5 years), Portuguese (25.0 years), German (24.8 years), and Dutch (23.9

years) were the eldest. Female ERASMUS students surveyed were on average 23.0 years old as compared to 23.8 years for the male students. The differences in age at the time of the study period abroad, in addition to the age at the time of the first enrolment, reflected to some extent the timing of the study period abroad in the course of study. Thirty-three percent of students spent their study period abroad during the third year of study, with the fourth and fifth year of study the next most frequent options (21 % and 17 %); 13 percent went abroad during their second year of study and seven percent during the first year, almost half of these at the beginning of their studies. Altogether, ten percent had already completed five or more years of study before going abroad on an ERASMUS grant.

The average length of study prior to the study period abroad was 2.8 years. This varied according to home country, from 2.0 years in the case of the United Kingdom and 2.1 years for Irish students to 3.9 years in the case of Portugal. Students in business studies went abroad earliest in their course of study, while study periods at relatively late stages were most often reported by students in agriculture, architecture, fine arts, geography and geology, law, and medical sciences.

2.4 Duration and Activities Abroad

On average, students surveyed spent 6.9 months abroad in the framework of the ERASMUS grant scheme; 20 percent spent up to 3 months, 37 percent 4-6 months, and 39 percent 7-12 months abroad. Four percent reported a stay abroad supported by ERASMUS for more than one year.

On average, students from Luxembourg (4.8 months) and Belgium (5.0 months) spent the shortest periods abroad. Duration above the mean was reported by French (7.8 months), Irish (7.5 months), British, Spanish (7.4 months each), and German students (7.2 months). In most cases the high proportion of relatively long study periods abroad by business studies students (8.2 months) accounts for the difference. In addition, a duration longer than average was reported by engineering students (7.6 months) and an average duration by language students (7.0 months). On the other hand, stays abroad of less than five months dominated in architecture, medical sciences, and fine arts.

Altogether 72 percent of the ERASMUS students surveyed in 1990/91 were engaged in full-time study during the period abroad and a further 17 percent (1988/89: 15 %) in part-time study. Only seven percent (1988/89: 6 %) spent their study period exclusively on thesis preparation, work placement, laboratory work or other study-related activities.

Table 2.2
Major Activities During the Study Period Abroad, by Field of Study (percent; multiple reply possible)

	Field of study*																Total
	Agr	Arc	Art	Bus	Edu	Eng	Geo	Hum	Lan	Law	Mat	Med	Nat	Soc	Com	Other	
Full-time study	15	35	51	51	34	27	35	53	61	63	42	13	18	46	42	41	46
Work placement	22	1	1	1	5	8	4	1	0	0	6	21	4	3	6	3	3
Work on thesis	7	6	1	1	5	6	12	4	1	2	3	2	4	3	3	3	3
Part-time study	0	4	4	3	10	1	2	9	7	8	5	4	3	7	9	13	5
Laboratory work	7	1	2	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	1	2	12	0	0	3	1
Full-time study/ work placement	2	2	2	24	15	8	0	3	6	6	3	10	3	7	3	3	10
Full-time study/ work on thesis	5	5	7	6	2	7	10	10	8	7	11	0	1	11	3	3	7
Full-time study/ other activities	7	14	6	6	2	16	4	6	7	5	10	11	29	10	6	9	9
Part-time study/ other activities	22	24	18	7	21	12	16	12	10	8	14	19	13	13	24	16	11
Other activities/ or combinations	15	7	7	1	7	12	14	2	0	1	4	17	14	2	3	6	4
Not ticked	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(60)	(80)	(89)	(772)	(61)	(364)	(49)	(178)	(585)	(332)	(93)	(117)	(154)	(261)	(33)	(32)	(3260)

Question 2.6: What were your major activities during the study period abroad?

* Explanation see Table 4.1

Twenty-one percent (1988/89: 22 %) of the respondents participated in work placement in the host country, 18 percent in addition to study and three percent solely in that activity; 18 percent worked on their thesis, three percent exclusively. Ten percent were engaged in laboratory work during their study period abroad, one percent exclusively. A further ten percent mentioned "other study-related activities" (none of them exclusively). Table 2.2 shows the various combinations of activities during the study period abroad.

Work placements were most common among students in medical fields (60 %), agricultural sciences (40 %), education/teacher training (33 %; 1988/89: 11 %), business studies (32 %), engineering (26 %), and natural sciences (23 %). The work placement periods lasted 4.0 months on average (1988/89: 4.5 months). Fifty-six percent of those who participated in 1990/91 reported work placement periods of 1-3 months, 34 percent of 4-6 months, while ten percent experienced even longer work placement periods in the host country. Among the six disciplines in which work placement was relatively often provided, the average duration of work placement periods varied from 5.2 months in engineering to 3.2 months in medical sciences and education/teacher training.

2.5 Select Biographical Information

Fifty-six percent of the 1990/91 respondents were female. The percentage of women among all ERASMUS students from the Member States (excluding the five participants from Luxembourg, who were all female) ranged from 72 percent in Ireland to 44 percent in Denmark. As one would expect, however, the differences according to home country strongly reflected the composition according to field of study. Women were most often represented in foreign language fields (81 %), followed by education, humanities, social sciences, and fine arts. They were least represented in engineering (17 %), mathematics, and geography and geology.

Thirty-five percent of the ERASMUS students surveyed reported that their father had completed a degree at an institution of higher education, while only 20 percent stated that their mothers were college trained. This finding was not specific to the parents of ERASMUS students, but reflects different educational opportunities between men and women in the parents' generation. The proportion of ERASMUS students whose parents merely had compulsory education (and possibly subsequent vocational training) was remarkably high, as Chart 2.1 shows. It suggests that the ERASMUS programme does not merely serve the students from high educational backgrounds.

Around 15 percent of students reported that both parents were graduates from institutions of higher education, and in a further 20 percent of the cases, only the fathers or, in a few exceptional cases (4 %) only the mothers were graduates. The percentage of ERASMUS students with higher education-trained parents (either one or both of them) varied substantially according to home country, as Table 2.3 shows. It was the highest in Belgium (48 %) and the United Kingdom (45 %) and by far the lowest in Denmark (22 %) and in the Netherlands (28 %).

Chart 2.1
Fathers' and Mothers' Educational Attainment (percent)

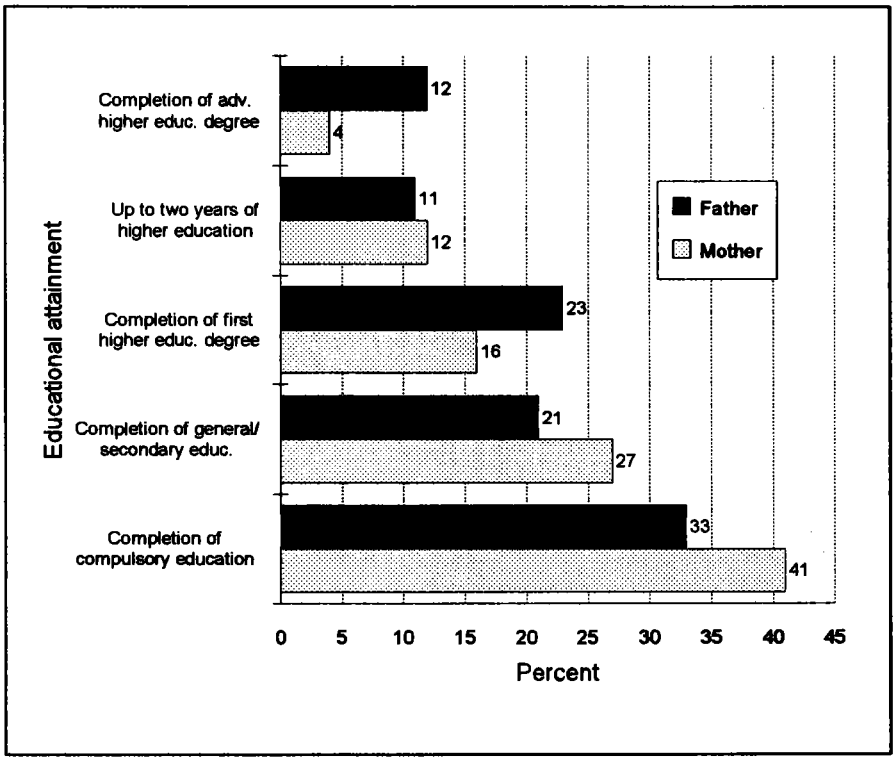


Table 2.3
Parents' Higher Education Attainment, by Country of Home Institution (percent)

	Country of home institution of higher education												Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	L	NL	P	UK	
Both graduates from higher education institution	21	12	10	13	13	14	16	14	20	9	18	21	15
Father only	24	24	10	23	21	26	19	14	40	18	16	17	20
Mother only	3	3	2	3	4	4	7	10	0	1	5	7	4
Neither	52	61	78	61	62	57	58	63	40	72	61	55	60
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(221)	(558)	(81)	(319)	(687)	(74)	(341)	(88)	(5)	(200)	(94)	(542)	(3210)

Question 1.4: What is the highest level of education attained by your father and mother?

Table 2.4
Income Status of Parents, by Country of Home Institution (percent)

	Country of home institution of higher education												Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	L	NL	P	UK	
1 = considerably higher than average	7	9	4	4	3	1	2	6	0	20	9	8	7
2 = above average	38	38	34	31	34	18	26	19	40	41	41	39	34
3 = average	47	39	49	51	49	68	61	52	60	31	37	37	46
4 = below average	6	11	11	12	11	11	11	19	0	7	13	13	11
5 = considerably lower than average	1	3	2	2	3	1	0	4	0	1	1	3	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(216)	(552)	(82)	(318)	(693)	(73)	(340)	(84)	(5)	(204)	(93)	(536)	(3196)

Question 1.5: Please estimate roughly the income status of your parents as compared to the average income situation in your home country.

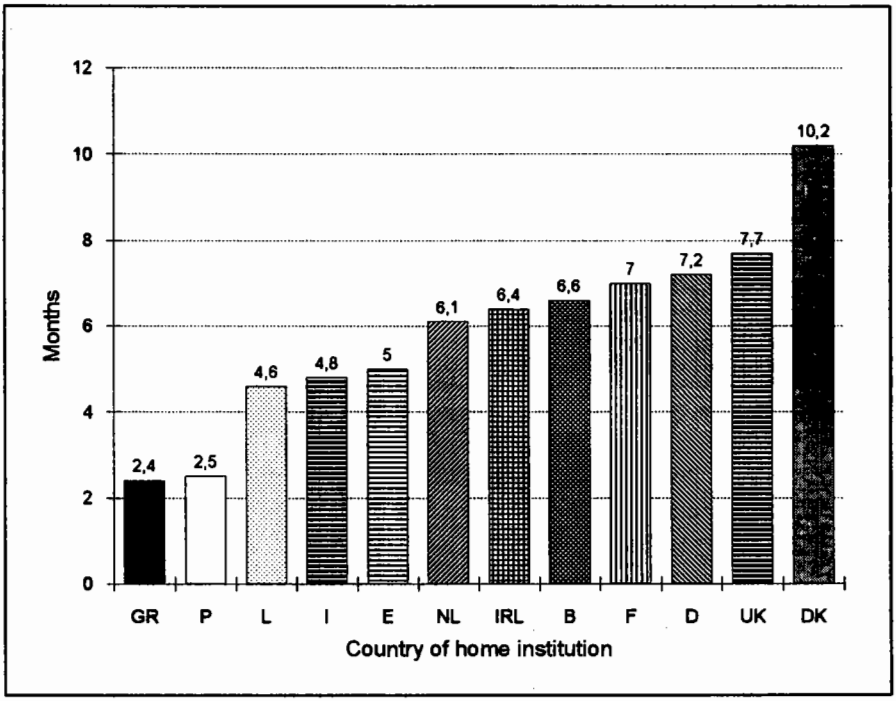
In principle, the socio-economic status of the parents might have been best indicated by parental occupation. However, an individual occupation does not necessarily have the same status in all European countries. Therefore, ERASMUS students 1990/91 were asked instead to estimate their parents' income status on a scale from 1 = "considerably higher than average" to 5 = "considerably lower than average". Actually, 41 percent of the ERASMUS students considered their parents' income above average and 13 percent below average. As Table 2.4 shows, Dutch students reported the highest status of their parents according to this measure (61 % above average), while Greek (19 %), Irish (25 %) and Italian students (28 %) considered their parents' income to be least often above average.

ERASMUS students were also asked whether they had been abroad for a period prior to the ERASMUS-supported period since they were 15 years old. More than 80 percent responded affirmatively; 47 percent had spent a previous period in the host country of the ERASMUS sojourn. The average total duration of stays abroad was 6.5 months (for all respondents), with 1.8 months spent in the host country of the ERASMUS study period.

Prior stays abroad varied to some extent by home country. Notably, students from Greece and Portugal, but to a lesser extent students from other southern European countries as well, had less experience of staying in foreign countries, as Chart 2.2 indicates. In addition, fewer students from the Netherlands reported previous stays abroad than students from the other EC Member States, but if they had been abroad, it was for a relatively long period overall.

Ten percent of the students lived with a partner immediately before the ERASMUS-supported period abroad, and one percent had children at that time. Almost half of them left their partner and possibly their children behind in the home country while studying abroad. Altogether, these data suggest that students who live with a partner, as well as students who have children, rarely opt for an (ERASMUS-supported) study period abroad.

Chart 2.2
Months Spent Abroad Since the Age of 15, by Country of Home Institution
(mean)



2.6 Motives

Students were asked to state the reasons influencing their decision to study abroad from a list of 12 possible motives. A factor analysis extracted four dimensions of motives which influenced the decision to study abroad. In looking at the proportions of students being highly influenced (1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = "strong influence" to 5 = "no influence at all" of the factor variables) by the various motive factors, the following figures emerged:

- 75 percent stated cultural matters as important;
- 67 percent wanted to gain new experiences abroad;
- 46 percent stated academic reasons; and
- 4 percent reported other reasons (for example, other friends were going, did not think much about it, because period abroad was required for the degree

programme etc., expectation to get better marks/examination results after return from the study period abroad).

The responses regarding the individual aspects are documented in Table 2.5. Learning a foreign language (86 %), self-development (81 %), desire to gain academic learning in another country (77 %) and the desire to enhance understanding of the host country (72 %) played the most important role for the decision to study abroad. Only a few students gave as important motives the expectation of better examination results (16 %), the fact that friends were going abroad (7 %) or requirements of their study programme (9 %).

Motives underlying students' decision to study abroad varied substantially by home country. Gaining new experiences was most often stated by Irish and Italian students (79 % each) as a reason for studying abroad. Comparatively low importance of this factor could be observed in students from Greece (51 %), Portugal (53 %) and Spain (54 %). Conversely, students from the Mediterranean countries stated more often that academic matters were important in their decision to study abroad than students from the northern EC countries. German students stated most often cultural reasons (88 %), while only half of the Portuguese students stated cultural motives as important. The proportion of Irish students who stated that they had not thought much beforehand about their decision to study abroad was surprisingly high (31 % as compared to 9 % of all ERASMUS students).

Altogether, the motives to study abroad varied much more by the home country of ERASMUS students than by host country or by field of study. No noticeable variation could be observed regarding the duration of the period abroad or the gender of students. Regarding the host country, we note that students spending their period abroad in Belgium (58 %) or the Netherlands (59 %) more often reported academic motives than students going to other EC countries. Cultural motives were less important for students going to Belgium (56 %) and the Netherlands (47 %), while students going to Spain (85 %), Portugal (80 %), Italy and France (79 % each) emphasized these as reasons for going abroad.

Students from minority subjects, categorized as "other areas of study" (31 %), engineering (36 %) and mathematics (38 %) least often stated academic motives as important in their decision to study abroad. The highest proportions of students wishing to become acquainted with new subject matters or teaching methods could be observed in art and design (65 %) and education and teacher training (58 %).

Table 2.5
Reasons for Decision to Study Abroad, by Country of Home Institution (percent*)

	Country of home institution of higher education												Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	L	NL	P	UK	
New subject matter	32	33	33	39	18	55	27	16	0	19	58	16	27
Expectation of better examination results	7	19	9	18	16	8	11	43	0	7	7	23	16
Experience of new teaching methods	54	38	52	64	62	67	69	26	100	38	61	22	49
Academic learning in another country	80	67	77	86	87	89	64	67	100	81	90	69	77
Learning foreign language	75	95	86	84	92	67	87	84	20	76	63	85	86
Desire to travel	53	46	57	54	70	36	68	74	40	54	57	77	62
Other friends were going	2	11	8	5	6	10	2	17	20	3	10	10	7
Desire to gain another perspective	50	66	30	44	45	59	49	44	80	46	36	44	49
Enhancing understanding of host country	66	81	70	67	76	47	64	75	60	61	56	76	72
Wanted a break	54	53	72	36	68	49	62	59	60	66	53	49	56
Self-development	82	88	84	81	71	82	91	92	40	90	46	82	81
Not thought much about it	2	7	8	10	6	0	I	31	0	3	1	23	9

Question 1.8: Which of the following reasons influenced your decision to study abroad?

* Percent 1 or 2 on a scale from 1 = "strong influence" to 5 = "no influence at all"

2.7 Information About Study Abroad Possibilities

The majority of ERASMUS students (67 % in total) were informed by the academic staff of their home institution of higher education about the possibilities of studying abroad within the ERASMUS programme. Many students, however, reported more than one source of information. As Table 2.6 shows, students also got to know about the possibility of studying abroad in the framework of the ERASMUS programme through other students and friends (35 %), visual information at the home institution, such as posters (28 %), ERASMUS programme information material (14 %), administrative staff members (11 %), and information from newspapers, radio, television, etc. (8 %).

Official information material on the ERASMUS programme most often reached Belgian students (28 %), but also above average numbers of Danish (21 %), Italian, Dutch (20 % each) and Portuguese students (19 %). Information through newspapers and other media played a substantial role for Belgian (21 %), Italian (17 %) and Greek students (15 %) while administrative staff most often helped to inform students from Luxembourg (60 % of the few participating students of this country), French (21 %) and Irish students (20 %). Finally, other students and friends were an important source of information for Italian (49 %) and Greek students (46 %).

Table 2.6
Information About Possibility to Study Abroad, by Country of Home Institution (percent; multiple reply possible)

	Country of home institution of higher education												Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	L	NL	P	UK	
Information from newspaper/radio/tv	21	3	7	8	11	15	17	1	0	10	2	1	8
Visual information at the home institution	30	47	30	33	12	19	52	15	0	25	45	13	28
ERASMUS programme information material	28	7	21	13	12	16	20	15	0	20	19	10	14
Academic staff members	75	55	43	64	73	72	43	86	60	55	67	89	67
Administrative staff members	10	10	17	8	21	7	5	20	60	7	6	7	11
Others students/friends	43	41	39	34	29	46	49	40	0	39	37	18	35
Other	1	7	6	4	5	0	3	6	0	8	2	7	5
Not ticked	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Total	210	170	163	166	165	174	189	183	120	164	180	146	169
(n)	(224)	(564)	(82)	(322)	(706)	(74)	(343)	(88)	(5)	(208)	(94)	(553)	(3263)

Question 3.1: How did you get to know about the possibility to study abroad within the ERASMUS programme?

2.8 Application and Award

One of the complaints frequently heard about the ERASMUS programme is the late decision about the financial award for the study period abroad. As no detailed information was available, this survey addresses the issue of the timing of awards and applications in detail. Students were asked to state:

- the time of application for the ERASMUS supported period;
- the time of notification about the acceptance;
- the notification that they will receive a grant;
- the notification about the amount of grant; and
- the time of receipt of the first money.

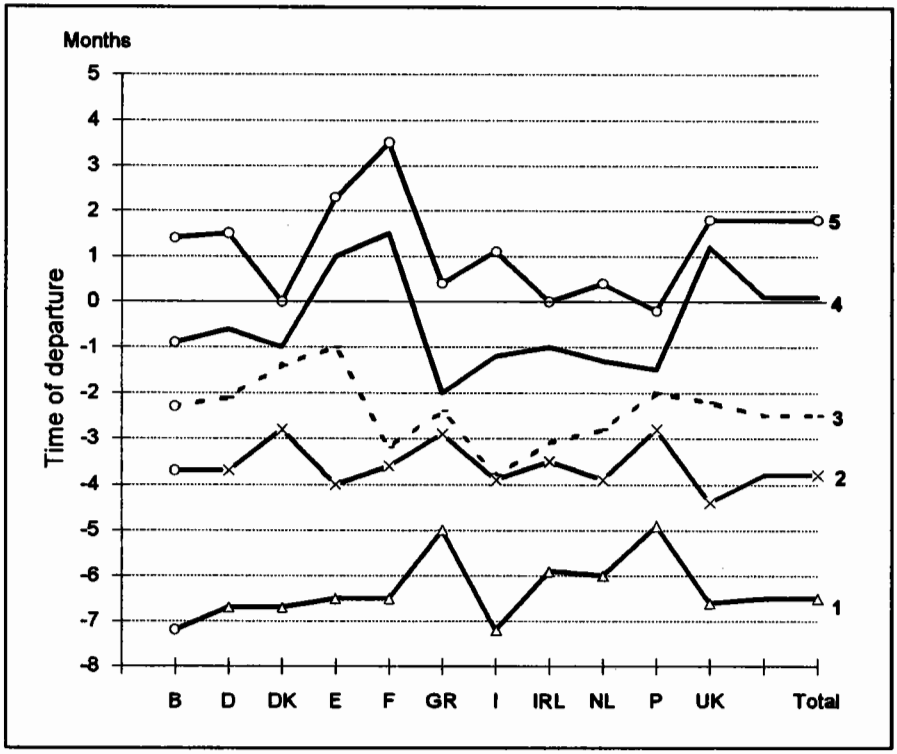
Chart 2.3 summarizes the typical timing, i.e. the timing reported by half of the ERASMUS students ranging closest to the average. Accordingly, students wishing to be awarded an ERASMUS grant in 1990/91 typically:

- had to apply 5-8 (on average 6.5) months prior to the study period abroad;
- got to know, as a rule, 2-4 months (on average 3.8) prior to departure that they were accepted. The time span between application and notification of acceptance was, thus, 2.7 months on average;
- were officially notified that they would receive an ERASMUS grant between four months prior to departure and the time of departure (on average 2.5 months prior to departure). Students, thus, had to wait 1.3 months after the notification of acceptance for the official notification that they would receive an award;
- got to know the amount of grant mostly between one month before and one month after the departure (on average 0.1 month after departure). Thus, students got to know the amount of ERASMUS grant on average 3.9 months after notification of their acceptance and 2.6 months after the notification of award of an ERASMUS grant; and
- typically received the first money between the time of departure and two months after (on average 1.8 months after departure). This was, on average, 1.7 months after they had been informed about the amount of the award.

Some ERASMUS students were informed of or received financial support extraordinarily late. Thirty-five percent were informed only during the last two months before departure that they were accepted for the study period abroad while 30 percent did not know for sure even two weeks before departure whether they would be awarded an ERASMUS grant. As many as 62 percent of students did not know two weeks before departure how much ERASMUS support they

would receive and 57 percent had not received any ERASMUS money two weeks after the arrival at the host institution.

Chart 2.3
Most Frequent Timing of Application, Award and Financial Support



1 = Timing of application for ERASMUS support as compared to departure date
2 = Notification about the acceptance for the ERASMUS supported period as compared to departure date
3 = Notification of the receipt of the ERASMUS grant as compared to departure date
4 = Information about the amount of the ERASMUS grant as compared to departure date
5 = Time of the receipt of the first money as compared to departure date

Chart 2.4 shows the average timing of application and award according to country of home institution. In most countries, students had applied for ERASMUS support six to seven months in advance. The time span between application and

notification about the acceptance was two to three months in most countries, thereby leading to an average time of notification of three and a half to four months.

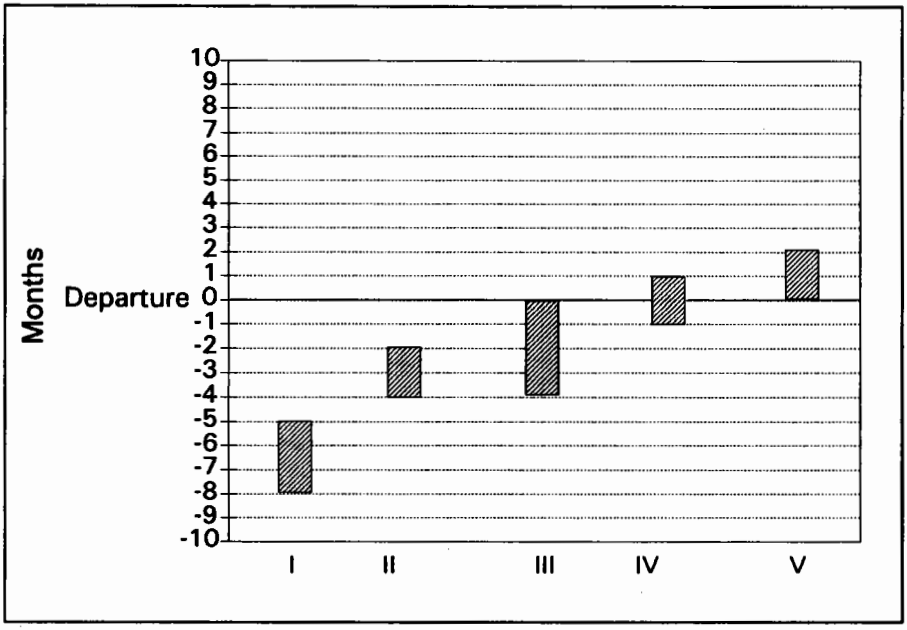
Greek and Portuguese students applied on average only about five months prior to departure. Although the time span between application and response was relatively short, they were notified slightly later than students from the other countries. The time span between application and first notification was longest for Danish, Belgian and Italian students. For the Belgian and Italian students this was because they had applied on average at a very early stage, while for Danish students it was because they received the notification of the award relatively late.

The official notification of the receipt of grant was, on average, sent 3.8 months prior to departure to Italian students with French (3.2 months) and Irish students (3.1 months) also receiving this notification at a relatively early stage. In all of these three countries, the first notification was in most cases the official notification of receipt.

The time span between the first information of acceptance and the official notification of receipt of grant was less than one month on average in the majority of countries. It was exceptionally long for Spanish (3.0 months) and for British students (2.2 months). While British students were informed about acceptance at a very early stage, Spanish students were informed about the receipt of grant at a very late stage: on average just one month before they departed to the host country. Greek, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian and Danish students were informed about the amount of the ERASMUS grant on average between one and two months prior to departure. In most of these countries, the period between the notification of the receipt of the grant and information on the amount was relatively short. On the other hand, French and British students got to know the amount of the ERASMUS grant on average more than one month after their departure; in both countries, the time span between notification of receipt and information about the amount of grant was exceptionally long (4.7 and 3.4 months respectively).

The time span between information about the amount of the grant and the actual receipt of first money was between one and two months on average in most countries. Late receipt of the first money was most often reported by French as well the few students from Luxembourg. On the other hand, most Danish, Greek, Irish, Dutch and Portuguese students had received their first money prior to departure or at about the time of departure.

Chart 2.4
Average Timing of Application, Award and Financial Support*



I. Time of application for an ERASMUS supported period abroad
II. Notification about the acceptance
III. Notification about of receipt of an ERASMUS grant
IV. Information about the amount of the ERASMUS grant
V. Time of receipt of first money

* Timing reported by half of the ERASMUS students ranging closest to the average.

3

Academic and Administrative Support

3.1 Ways and Areas of Preparation

As a rule, students need to anticipate life and study abroad and prepare themselves in various ways prior to the study period abroad; it is recognized that preparation helps reduce feelings of uncertainty and ensures that the knowledge necessary to ease integration and to cope with the academic requirements during the study period abroad is acquired. In the framework of the Inter-University Co-operation Programmes under the ERASMUS programme, most home institutions offer preparatory courses, arrange preparatory meetings and possibly provide written material for the students' preparation.
The survey shows that:

- 66 percent of the ERASMUS students 1990/91 (67% of the 1988/89 students) prepared themselves through self-study;
- 52 (58) percent made use of written material provided;
- 40 (44) percent took part in preparatory meetings;
- 39 (51) percent attended mandatory courses of preparation; and
- 31 (33) percent attended optional preparatory courses.

In looking at the proportions of students having made use of the most organized preparatory provisions, we note that:

- 39 (51) percent of the ERASMUS students participated in mandatory preparatory courses (sometimes additionally in optional courses and/or meetings);
- 19 (16) percent participated at least in optional preparatory courses (sometimes also in meetings); and
- 13 (13) percent at least attended preparatory meetings.

Thus, altogether 71 (79) percent participated in preparatory meetings and courses. Of the remaining students:

- 20 (16) percent prepared themselves for the study period abroad without attending meetings and courses, though possibly with the help of written material provided;
- 7 (5) percent stated that they went abroad without any specific preparation for the study period in the host country; and
- 2 percent did not provide any information whether, and if so, how, they prepared.

The proportion of ERASMUS students 1990/91 making use of preparatory provisions was eight percent smaller than the respective proportion of ERASMUS students 1988/89. Notably, a smaller proportion of 90/91 students attended mandatory courses.

As regards home country, the lowest participation rates in preparatory courses or meetings could be observed in the case of students from Portugal (44 %), the Netherlands (53 %) and Greece (55 %). The respective participation rate was highest among British (83 %), German (78 %), French (77 %) and Irish students (76 %).

The data available allow us to examine how many students actually could have made use of courses, meetings or other ways of preparation provided by the home institution prior to the ERASMUS-supported period abroad. Seventy-two percent stated that preparation was provided. About 80 percent of students from the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland, but less than half of the Portuguese and Luxembourg students, were provided with preparatory means from their home institutions. About two thirds of participants in preparatory courses reported that at least some of those courses were part of the regular course programme. This was most often reported by Irish (83 %) and French students (79 %). Only 32 percent of Greek students had preparatory courses recognized as part of their regular course programme. The integration of preparatory courses into the regular course programme was reported by about the half of the students from Belgium, Portugal, Denmark and Germany.

Students were asked to specify their ways of preparation in terms of four different areas:

- 74 percent of the 1990/91 students surveyed (78 % of the 1988/89 students) prepared themselves through learning a foreign language;
- 65 (67) percent regarding practical aspects of living in the host country and studying at the host university;

- 60 (67) percent as regards culture and society of the host country; and
- 54 (61) percent reported academic preparation.

Thus, a smaller proportion of the 1990/91 ERASMUS students were involved in preparation regarding each of the four areas than were the 1988/89 students.

With the exception of preparation regarding practical aspects of living and studying abroad, the most common way of preparation was self-study. As Table 3.1 shows, courses played an important part in foreign language and academic preparation.

Table 3.1
Ways and Areas of Preparation (percent)

	Academic preparation	Linguistic preparation	Practical aspects of living and studying	Society and culture of host country
Written material	18	15	35	23
Meetings	14	4	29	10
Courses: mandatory	21	31	6	11
Courses: optional	9	25	3	5
Self-study	23	43	27	38
No preparation	43	24	33	38
Not ticked	2	2	2	2
Total	130	144	136	128
(n)	(3263)	(3263)	(3263)	(3263)

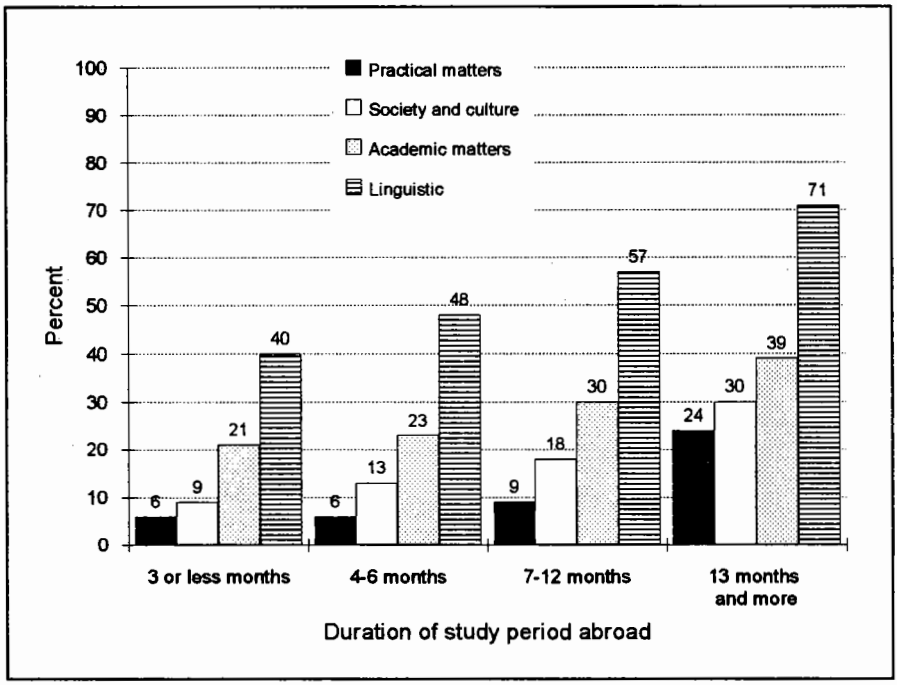
Question 5.1: How did you prepare for your stay abroad before you actually left? Which courses did you attend?

The longer the study period in the host country, the more likely students were to attend preparatory courses. As Chart 3.1 shows, this applies to all four areas of preparation addressed in the survey.

Students going to the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium and Greece were most likely to report that there was no preparatory foreign language training. These were also the host countries for which the home institutions least often prescribed participation in mandatory foreign language courses. Obviously, it was not a widespread knowledge of the host country languages which accounted for

this pattern. Rather, in most of these host countries for which foreign language preparation was least common, some universities had opted to offer at least part of the courses for ERASMUS students in languages different from the host country language.

Chart 3.1
Participation in (Mandatory and/or Optional) Courses Regarding Academic Aspects, Foreign Language, Host Country Culture and Society, and Practical Aspects of Living and Studying Abroad, by Duration of the Study Period Abroad (percent)



Mandatory foreign language courses were most often provided for British and French students (50 % each). This might to some extent reflect limitations in the previous foreign language competencies of students from these countries.

Support for preparation regarding practical aspects of living and studying abroad varied most strongly by home country. German, Dutch and Danish students made more use of written materials while British and Irish students more frequently attended preparatory meetings than ERASMUS students from the

other EC Member States. A high proportion of British students attended preparatory meetings for these purposes (48 %), while German students most frequently made use of written materials (67 %).

Preparatory courses or meetings providing information about the culture and society of the host country were most often attended by students from languages and philologies (38 %), business studies (29 %), social sciences (25 %) and from other humanities. The least frequent participation on such courses or meetings was reported by students from natural sciences (5 %), architecture (6 %), agriculture (8 %) and medicine (9 %). The findings show clearly that preparation on culture and society is more likely in those disciplines which generally address issues of culture and society. The proportion of students from different home countries which prepared themselves with the help of courses, meetings, written material or by self-study ranged from 41 percent in the case of Greece to 81 percent in the case of Germany. As regards the host country, more than 80 percent of the students going to Greece or Ireland reported preparation activities while only about half of the students going to Germany or the Netherlands stated preparation activities regarding the host country culture and society.

ERASMUS students 1990/91 were also asked to assess the various types of preparatory provisions. They rated the foreign language provisions at their home institution of higher education more positively than other preparatory provisions as, on average, 2.6 (the 1988/89 students also rated 2.6) on a scale from 1 = "very good" to 5 = "very poor" compared with 2.8 (2.9) for academic preparation, 3.0 (3.3) for preparation for host country culture and society, and finally 3.2 (3.3) for preparation for practical matters. The findings suggest that the ratings were better the more highly organized the preparatory provisions were.

Altogether we note that the mean scores were so close to the centre of the scale, that improvement of preparatory provisions was needed at many institutions, according to the students' views. The ratings by the 1990/91 students, particularly those regarding academic preparation, were slightly more positive than those by the 1988/89 students. The overall assessment of the preparatory provisions did not vary very much by the home country of the ERASMUS students. Only Portuguese students assessed the preparatory provisions clearly better than students from other countries (2.7). As regards host country, the assessment of the preparatory provisions in general and on the individual areas was less favourable than average in the case of students going abroad to Belgium and Greece, but did not differ markedly otherwise.

3.2 Assistance and Advice Prior to the Period Abroad

In addition to issues of preparation, students were also asked about the assistance, guidance, and advice they were provided with prior to the period abroad by their home institutions. They were asked to state both the extent to which they were provided with assistance ("substantial", "modest", "none"), and the degree of satisfaction they felt with it (scale from 1 = "very high" to 5 = "very low").

ERASMUS students were provided with a list of 12 categories, which refer - like the questions about preparation - to academic issues, foreign language, host culture and society, as well as practical matters abroad. In addition, students were asked about the advice and assistance provided by the home and host institution regarding personal matters and information about the ERASMUS programme.

Almost all students were provided with assistance in one way or the other. Only two percent reported no assistance in any of the 12 categories by the home institution of higher education. Assistance varied substantially by area. As Table 3.2 shows, no assistance, guidance, and advice was provided, according to the students' statements, for 27 percent of them on financial matters, 31 percent regarding academic matters, and for 39 percent regarding foreign language training.

The extent of assistance, guidance and support provided varied substantially by home country. Taking an average across the 12 aspects addressed, we note that students from Ireland (33 %), the United Kingdom (35 %) and France (36 %) were least often left without support by their home institutions. No advice on many aspects prior to the period abroad was most common in Luxembourg (61 %), Denmark (51 %) and Italy (50 %).

In some areas, the amount of assistance, guidance and advice provided by the home institutions was clearly related to the duration of the period abroad. The longer students stayed abroad, the more support was provided by the home institutions regarding language training, academic matters and general information about the host country as well as about the local community in which the host institution was situated. On the other hand, assistance and advice regarding financial matters was slightly less, the longer the period abroad lasted. Students from business studies and languages were more often provided with assistance and advice than students from other fields, notably as regards foreign language. Students of engineering and mathematics also received more than average guidance and advice from their home institutions, particularly regarding registration and course selection at the host institution. Students from architecture, law and

Table 3.2
Proportion of Students not Being Provided With Assistance/Guidance/Advice by Home Institution of Higher Education, by Country of Home Institution (percent)

	Country of home institution of higher education												Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	L	NL	P	UK	
Information about the ERASMUS programme	9	10	9	11	22	14	21	5	80	16	9	15	15
University registration etc. at host institution	26	35	44	20	29	40	39	28	40	36	33	36	32
Accommodation	47	40	45	35	34	39	53	32	60	38	38	32	39
Matters regarding financial support	26	28	13	24	31	26	35	22	40	16	51	23	27
Other practical matters (e.g. insurance etc.)	59	58	59	52	45	79	73	42	80	67	47	48	55
Academic matters	44	27	38	16	40	39	36	20	40	42	22	22	31
Work placement matters (if applicable)	58	58	78	81	46	58	72	62	75	41	40	48	56
Information about the host country institution	45	29	50	33	34	45	59	34	60	45	22	36	38
Language training	53	47	59	41	22	41	58	29	50	58	64	21	39
The host country in general	63	56	75	43	38	51	56	30	40	63	48	30	47
The local community	57	63	82	62	52	57	67	62	80	61	70	57	60
Personal matters	62	67	71	56	54	65	61	45	100	65	53	62	60

Question 6.2: To what extent were you provided with assistance/guidance/advice concerning your ERASMUS study period abroad, by your home institution prior to the study period abroad and by your host institution? And to what extent were you satisfied with the assistance/ guidance/advice provided?

those from communication and information sciences received least assistance and advice.

Asked about the degree of satisfaction with the assistance provided by the home institutions of higher education prior to their period abroad, ERASMUS students rated, on a scale from 1 = "very high" to 5 = "very low", assistance regarding:

- information about the ERASMUS programme and recognition 3.0;
- language training 3.0;
- academic matters 3.2;
- various practical matters 3.3;
- various aspects regarding host country culture and society 3.4; and
- personal matters 3.4.

It is obvious that students were not satisfied with assistance and guidance provided by their home institutions. According to the students view, improvement of support is needed at many home institutions.

The degree of satisfaction with the assistance and advice provided by the home institution of higher education was highly correlated (0.61 to 0.76) with the amount of the assistance and advice provided. Obviously a high degree of assistance and advice by the home institution was highly appreciated as a rule. Given the high correlation, it is not surprising to find a similar ranking of countries, if we calculate the satisfaction of students with the assistance provided on average for all aspects. Assistance provided by French and Belgian institutions was most highly appreciated (3.1 each on average), while the extent of assistance provided by Italian institutions of higher education (3.6) was most often criticised.

There were notable differences in the responses of male and female students on this topic. Female students were less satisfied with almost all aspects of assistance by the home university. As they hardly differed in their statements regarding the amount of assistance provided, the finding suggests that women expect a higher quality of assistance from their home institution than men.

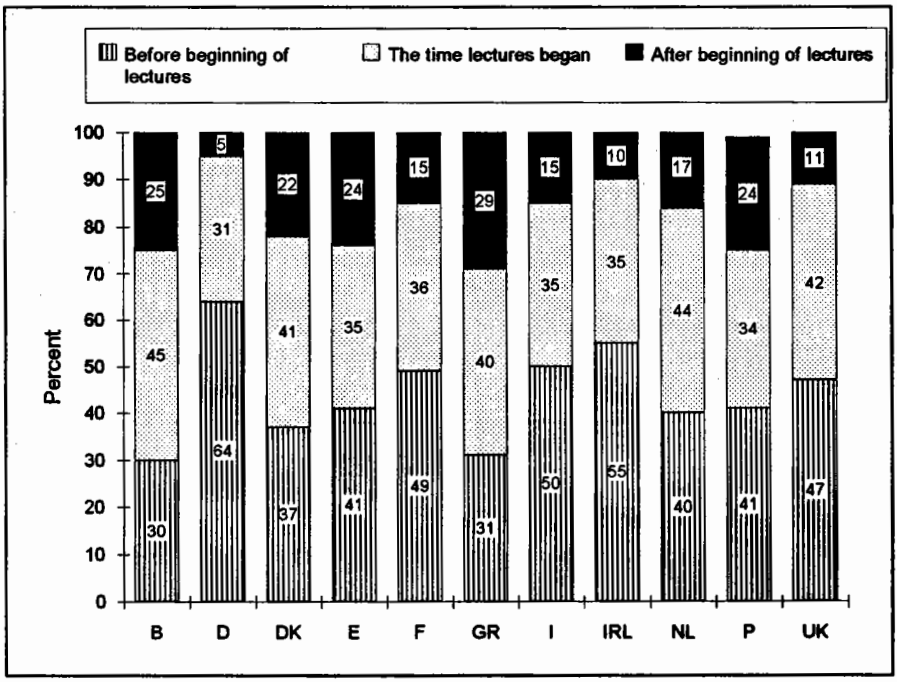
3.3 Assistance and Advice During Study Period Abroad

Some 48 percent of the ERASMUS students arrived in the host country before the beginning of the lecture period - on average 2.5 weeks prior. Thirty-eight percent arrived at the time when the lecture period began, and 14 percent after the start of the lecture period - on average 8.5 weeks later - in the host country.

Timing of arrival in the host country is strongly related to the duration of the stay abroad with 28 percent of the students who spent at most three months in the host country arriving before the beginning of lectures. The respective proportions in the other duration periods were 42 percent of those students spending 4-6 months and 63 percent of those students staying abroad for more than half a year.

The best match between the period abroad and the academic calendar of the host countries was reported by students from the United Kingdom, only six percent of whom arrived after the beginning of the lecture period. All of the few participating students from Luxembourg were late arrivals as well as a substantial proportion of Portuguese (38 %), Italian (29 %) and Spanish students (21 %).

Chart 3.2
Timing of Arrival at the Host Institution, by Host Institution (percent)



Question 6.4: When did you arrive in the host country as compared with the beginning of the lecture period?

As Chart 3.2 shows, 29 percent of the ERASMUS students going to Greece arrived there after beginning of the lecture period. Similar figures could be observed for students spending their period abroad in Belgium (25 %), Spain (24 %) and Portugal (24 %).

In some cases academic and administrative matters were settled prior to the students' arrival in the host country:

- arrangements for academic recognition upon return (52 %);
- the programme of courses to be taken at the host institution (43 %); and
- types of examinations to be taken during and after study abroad (38 %).

With the exception of the course programme to be taken at the host institutions, other issues were more likely to be settled in advance the longer the scheduled study period abroad. Regarding host country, fewer students spending their period abroad in Ireland, Belgium and Portugal reported that matters of study and recognition were settled in advance than students going abroad to other host countries.

Students enrolled in mathematics (62 %) and medicine (60 %) stated most often that they were certain about the course programme at the host institution at the time of arrival. This was true to a lesser extent for students enrolled in communication sciences (27 %), law (32 %), agricultural sciences and languages (33 % each). Comparatively less certainty about study and recognition matters at the time of arrival in the host country was reported by students in education and teacher training as well as agricultural sciences, while a higher degree of certainty was reported by students from business studies and engineering.

Altogether, these findings show that preparatory measures by the home institution addressing issues relating to the study period and the subsequent return afterwards played an important role in students' degree of satisfaction. They are certainly significant for the success of the period abroad. However, it seems appropriate to assume that the host institution plays the key role in academic and administrative support during the study period in another country. Students were asked to state the extent to which they were provided with assistance and advice abroad by the host institution and, in some aspects by the home institution also, and the degree of satisfaction they felt with that assistance, guidance and advice.

Altogether, very few ERASMUS students reported minimal assistance and advice by the host institution. As Table 3.3 shows, no support and advice was most often reported regarding students' financial support (65 %), personal matters (44 %), information about the ERASMUS programme and recognition matters (42 %), and other practical matters, such as insurance and registration with civil authorities (40 %).

Table 3.3
Proportion of Students not being Provided With Assistance/Guidance/Advice by the Host Institution, by Host Country (percent)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Information about the ERASMUS programme	29	43	30	42	48	40	46	35	28	55	42	42
University registration etc. at host university	14	20	15	22	17	24	26	7	13	25	9	16
Living accommodation	10	20	16	41	24	15	24	18	12	17	13	20
Matters regarding financial support	75	59	62	72	70	60	75	63	61	64	60	65
Other practical matters (e.g. insurance etc.)	40	32	30	58	47	34	42	38	34	38	34	40
Academic matters	11	18	8	16	16	15	23	10	12	15	12	15
Work placement matters (if applicable)	51	41	55	43	37	28	52	38	39	31	36	40
Orientation on the host country univ.	24	22	13	27	22	28	36	8	8	15	14	20
Language training	30	21	26	28	32	33	25	31	38	38	27	28
The host country in general	28	26	15	34	36	34	39	18	17	27	24	29
The local community	32	29	16	28	35	26	38	19	14	24	23	28
Personal matters	40	47	24	48	54	36	55	29	37	33	34	44
Social contacts with host country nationals	21	25	18	27	29	21	33	11	14	14	24	25
Cultural, sports, recreational activities	19	21	18	28	23	23	41	6	16	20	9	20

Question 6.2: To what extent were you provided with assistance/guidance/advice concerning your ERASMUS study period abroad, by your home institution prior to the study period abroad and by your host institution? And to what extent were you satisfied with the assistance/guidance/advice provided?

With the exception of information about the ERASMUS programme and financial matters, the respective host institutions provided more assistance than the home institutions. The amount of support by the host institutions was similar to that reported by ERASMUS students 1988/89.

The extent of assistance, guidance and support provided varied substantially by host country. In calculating averages across the 14 aspects, we note that students going to Ireland, Denmark, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom were least often left without support by their host institutions. On the other hand, students going to Italy, Spain and France reported more often that they did not receive assistance and advice. The findings of 1990/91 are almost identical with those reported by ERASMUS students 1988/89. One noteworthy exception is the increase of assistance and guidance provided by Portuguese host institutions in 1990/91.

Students were clearly more satisfied with assistance provided by the host institution (2.8 in 1990/91 on average of all categories on a scale from 1 = "very high" to 5 = "very low", 2.7 in 1988/89) than by the home institution of higher education (3.3 in 1990/91). Yet, the average ratings of assistance provided by the host institution are so close to the centre of the five-point scale that improvement is considered desirable by many students.

As regards individual areas, where assistance and guidance were provided for by the host institutions, we note highest ratings regarding academic matters, language training and various aspects of host country culture and society (2.6 each). On the other hand, ratings of assistance were less enthusiastic regarding personal matters (3.0), information about the ERASMUS programme and recognition matters (3.2) as well as questions regarding financial support (3.5). Students spending their study period in the Netherlands, Denmark and Ireland were most satisfied and those going to Italy, Spain, France and Greece least satisfied. Altogether, the average ratings of satisfaction did not differ widely according to the host institutions.

In general we note that responses on the amount and satisfaction with the assistance provided correlate positively: the more assistance was provided, the more likely it was to be favourably assessed. This shows that there is a corresponding demand for assistance, guidance, and advice and also that good support provided is, in general, appreciated.

3.4 Timing and Arrangements for Support Abroad

In order to get more information about the procedures of assistance, guidance and advice provided by the host institution of higher education, students were asked how and when the support was arranged. As regards the ways support was provided by the host institution, the survey shows that:

- 74 percent of the students were provided with written material;
- 69 percent were supported by means of information meetings;
- 66 percent attended courses (including language courses) at the host institution;
- 63 percent were supported with individual advice;
- 58 percent took part in social events;
- 48 percent made use of regular consultation facilities for ERASMUS students; and
- 2 percent stated other ways of support.

About two percent of the students stated that they did not receive any support from their host institutions. A further three percent did not give any information on the relevant question.

On average, students experienced four different ways of support during their period abroad. The proportions of students experiencing several ways of support were above average in those studying at host institutions in Denmark (4.7) and Ireland (4.6). About 80 percent of these students were supported with written material, made use of information meetings or were provided with individual advice. Regular consultation facilities were reported most often by students going to Belgium (67 %) and Ireland (65 %). Students spending the period abroad in Ireland (76 %), Denmark (71 %), the Netherlands and Portugal (68 % each) were more likely to state that their host institutions organized social events. Relatively little support in most respects was reported by students going to Italy, Spain and Portugal.

Students were asked to state at what point relative to the start of the lecture period, assistance, guidance and advice was provided by the host institution. The time scale presented to the students was divided in three categories: the time prior to the beginning of the lecture period, the first two weeks of lecture period and the time after the second week of the lecture period. The timing of assistance, as far as individual ways of assistance are concerned, is shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4
Ways and Timing of Assistance Provided by Host Institution
(percent; multiple reply possible)

	Timing of assistance /guidance/advice				
	Prior to beginning of lecture period	During first two weeks of lecture period	After first two weeks of lecture period	Not at all	Not ticked
Written material	38	36	7	18	8
Information meetings	31	37	7	23	9
Courses	21	35	17	21	14
Individual advice	23	36	16	27	10
Consultation facilities	19	26	19	39	13
Social events	15	30	25	28	14
Other	1	1	1	1	97
Not ticked	38	25	51	36	
Total	186	226	143	193	

Question 6.5: How and when was assistance/guidance/advice arranged by the host institution?

The responses made by the students can be merged into three types of timing of assistance provided in the host country:

- assistance in the initial phase (prior and during the first two weeks of lecture period) of the period abroad was reported by 47 percent of the ERASMUS students;
- continuous assistance (during and after the initial phase) also was stated by 47 percent; and
- assistance only after the initial phase was experienced by only four percent of the ERASMUS students.

The type of timing of assistance, guidance and advice varied slightly by host country. Students spending their study period abroad in Greece (57 %), Ireland (53 %) and Belgium (52 %) stated most often continuous support, and students going to Portugal (34 %), Denmark (40 %) and Italy (40 %) least frequently. Conversely, students going to Portugal and Denmark were most often provided with assistance and advice by their host institutions exclusively during the initial phase of the period abroad.

Regarding field of study, continuous support was stated by a relatively small proportion of students enrolled in communication and information sciences (32 %), geography and geology (33 %), and agricultural sciences (35 %). On the other hand, highest assistance, guidance and advice both during and after the initial phase were reported by students enrolled in law (53 %).

Finally, students were asked to state the extent to which they were provided with assistance, guidance and advice by academic staff, administrative staff, and students of their host and home institutions (on a scale from 1 = "substantial" to 5 = "no assistance provided"). Some 62 percent reported considerable assistance by teaching staff, 55 percent by students and 45 percent by administrative staff of the host institution. Assistance provided by staff and students was rated highest by students spending the study period abroad in Denmark and Ireland and rated above average by those going to Belgium, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Least assistance by academic staff, administrative staff and students of the host institutions was reported by students spending their period abroad in Spain, Italy, Greece and France.

Students from natural sciences reported most assistance by staff and students of their host institutions, while students from languages and from humanities were provided with least assistance. The longer the period abroad, the less often - according to the students - was substantial support provided by academic staff.

It is not surprising to find that persons from the home institution provide far less assistance during the study period than staff and students from the host institution. Only 20 percent of the students stated substantial assistance from academic staff, 16 percent experienced support from other students, and finally 11 percent from administrative staff of the home institution. Altogether, students from the Mediterranean countries were provided more often with substantial assistance and advice from staff and students of their home institutions than students from the northern EC countries.

Students from medical fields, geography and geology as well as mathematics (18 %) reported the highest extent of support from staff and students of their home institutions. On the other hand, least assistance, guidance and advice were provided by persons from the home institution of higher education for students of education and teacher training, communication and information sciences as well as for students from relatively small fields which were categorized as "other fields of study".

Asked about contacts with teaching staff from their home institution during the study period abroad:

- 47 percent of the students stated direct contacts with teaching staff (33 % by means of a single visit of the teaching staff; 12 % stated various visits; 2 %

reported that staff member(s) of the home institution were present at the host institution during the whole period);
- 45 percent had indirect contacts by telephone and letters;
- 6 percent stated other types of contacts mostly during short visits to their home institution; and
- 24 percent reported that they had no contacts at all.

The longer the period abroad, the more direct contact with teaching staff from the home institution was stated by the ERASMUS students. As Table 3.5 shows, 33 percent of the students staying abroad for up to three months and 37 percent staying abroad for 4-6 months stated direct contact with teaching staff. The respective figure was 58 percent for a period of 7-12 months, as well as 76 percent of students staying abroad for more than a year. As regards home institutions of higher education, the responses did not match those on the degree of assistance provided. The highest proportion of students from Luxembourg, the United Kingdom and Ireland reported visits by home institution teaching staff during the study period abroad.

Table 3.5
Contact with Teaching Staff from the Home Institution During Period Abroad, by Duration of Study Period Abroad
(percent; multiple reply possible)

	Duration of period abroad in months				Total
	3 or less	4-6	7-12	13 and more	
Yes, presence during the whole period	3	1	1	1	2
Yes, various visits	5	6	19	36	12
Yes, one single visit	25	30	38	41	33
Yes, indirect contacts (by telephone, letters etc.)	39	46	47	38	45
Yes, other contacts	4	6	7	2	6
No contact at all	35	28	17	14	25
Not ticked	2	1	1	1	1
Total	112	120	130	133	123
(n)	(661)	(1195)	(1255)	(135)	(3246)

Question 6.7: Did you have any contact with teaching staff from your home institution during your study period abroad? If yes, for which of the following aspects do you consider this contact to have been helpful?

Table 3.6
Contact with Teaching Staff Regarding Various Aspects, by Country of Home Institution
(percent; multiple reply possible)

	Country of home institution of higher education												Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	L	NL	P	UK	
Course selection at the host institution	33	12	22	22	23	16	27	30	0	9	24	11	20
Matters of course content	24	27	29	46	39	51	25	37	0	32	14	35	33
Matters relating to recognition of academic achievements	46	44	53	45	36	33	52	65	100	29	45	38	42
Administrative matters	29	27	9	22	27	23	17	15	50	20	24	29	25
Organisational matters relating to work placements	12	11	9	10	23	16	4	4	50	22	16	14	14
Financial matters	12	33	12	22	24	16	10	23	0	16	16	25	22
Personal matters	14	21	24	33	11	47	25	30	0	28	42	33	24
Other	20	11	12	8	12	7	12	23	0	13	9	14	13
Total	190	186	171	207	196	209	172	225	200	169	189	199	192
(n)	(164)	(317)	(58)	(223)	(506)	(43)	(223)	(71)	(2)	(116)	(76)	(436)	(2235)

Question 6.7: Did you have any contact with teaching staff from your home institution during your study period abroad? If yes, for which of the following aspects do you consider this contact to have been helpful?

Students who had contacts with their home teaching staff during their period abroad were also asked about the impacts of these contacts. They noted strongest impacts on academic matters, notably recognition (42 %) and course content (33 %). As Table 3.6 shows, the level of impact varies markedly according to the country of home institution.

3.5 Overall Satisfaction with Assistance and Advice

Asked about the degree of overall satisfaction (on a scale from 1 = "very satisfied" to 5 = "very dissatisfied) with the assistance, guidance and advice prior to, during and subsequent to their period abroad, ERASMUS students rated assistance regarding:

- provision from home institution prior to the period abroad at 3.0;
- provision from home institution during the period abroad at 3.4;
- provision from home institution after the period abroad, 3.0; and
- provision from host institution, 2.4.

The assessment of assistance by the host institution was clearly more positive than the ratings about support provided by the home institution. Obviously, many ERASMUS students were not satisfied with assistance and advice provided by their home institution prior, during and after the study period abroad.

The highest degree of satisfaction with the provisions from the home institution were expressed by Portuguese and Belgian students (2.9) and the lowest by students from Luxembourg (4.2) and Italy (3.4). As regards assistance by host institution, students going to Irish, Dutch, Danish and British host institutions (2.1 each) most highly appreciated the assistance provided. Least satisfaction could be observed by students going to Italy, Spain and France, where the host institutions provided the least support to incoming students.

4

Study and Experiences in the Host Country

4.1 Study and Other Activities in the Host Country

ERASMUS students participated in a weekly average of 16 hours of courses (including laboratory work etc.) at the host institutions. The course load abroad was on average 3.2 hours less (17 % less) than that taken at the home institution of higher education (19.2 hours). As Chart 4.1 shows, only Italian and Danish students took more course hours abroad than at home, probably because students from these countries took least course hours at home (both 14.4 hours). Conversely, Irish (5.9 hours), French (5.5 hours) and Portuguese (5.4 hours) students reduced their course hours abroad the most.

Students were asked to estimate all weekly hours spent on various types of study, including practical projects, foreign language learning, independent study, work on theses, field trips etc. As Table 4.1 shows, they reported 38 weekly hours spent on studies during regular working weeks at the host institution.

Of this total, 15 hours were spent on attending courses. Nine hours were devoted to independent study, and about four hours each for practical projects and work on theses. Only three hours per week were spent on average for language training. The host country's educational styles had an impact on the distribution of study time abroad: students spending their study period abroad in France spent more time following courses (16.1 hours), reflecting the amount of time "home" French students normally spend on lectures. Students going to Portugal (9.2 hours) and Greece (10.2 hours) spent least time on lectures.

The type of study activities varied according to field of study notably regarding practical projects, laboratory work etc. This ranged from one hour per week in law to about 14 hours in agriculture and medical fields and 20 hours in natural sciences, as Table 4.1 shows. The average number of weekly hours spent

Table 4.1
Weekly Hours Spent on Study, by Field of Study (mean)

	Field of study																Total
	Agr	Arc	Art	Bus	Edu	Eng	Geo	Hum	Lan	Law	Mat	Med	Nat	Soc	Com	Other	
Courses and course-related activities	8.6	10.6	12.3	19.0	12.8	12.2	10.3	12.4	16.3	16.2	14.8	8.7	8.9	12.9	13.4	12.4	14.7
Practical projects, laboratory work etc.	13.4	6.4	11.9	2.0	1.2	9.3	4.3	1.8	.9	1.0	6.3	14.0	20.0	1.7	4.3	7.6	4.5
Independent study	5.2	10.2	12.9	7.5	9.2	6.9	7.8	11.3	9.4	9.8	7.6	9.6	7.2	9.6	8.2	7.1	8.6
Work on thesis	3.8	5.6	2.5	3.1	3.5	6.1	7.1	5.7	3.0	2.2	6.2	2.6	3.4	4.1	2.8	2.8	3.7
Field trips, study-related excursions, observations	2.7	5.3	5.0	1.3	3.6	1.0	4.6	2.7	2.1	1.4	.9	2.6	1.4	1.7	1.2	2.1	1.9
Language training	1.9	2.5	1.6	2.9	3.1	2.0	3.1	3.2	3.9	2.6	2.0	2.0	1.5	3.9	2.5	4.2	2.9
Other study activities	5.7	1.2	1.4	.8	1.7	2.1	.5	1.0	.5	.9	1.0	4.9	1.0	1.3	3.1	.1	1.2
Total	41.4	41.8	47.5	36.6	35.2	39.5	37.8	38.2	35.9	34.1	38.7	44.4	43.5	35.1	35.4	36.3	37.6

Agr = Agricultural sciences
Arc = Architecture, urban and regional planning
Art = Art and design
Bus = Business studies, management sciences
Edu = Education, teacher training
Eng = Engineering, technology
Geo = Geography, geology
Hum = Humanities
Lan = Languages, philological sciences
Law = Law
Mat = Mathematics, informatics
Med = Medical sciences
Nat = Natural sciences
Soc = Social sciences
Com = Communication and information sciences

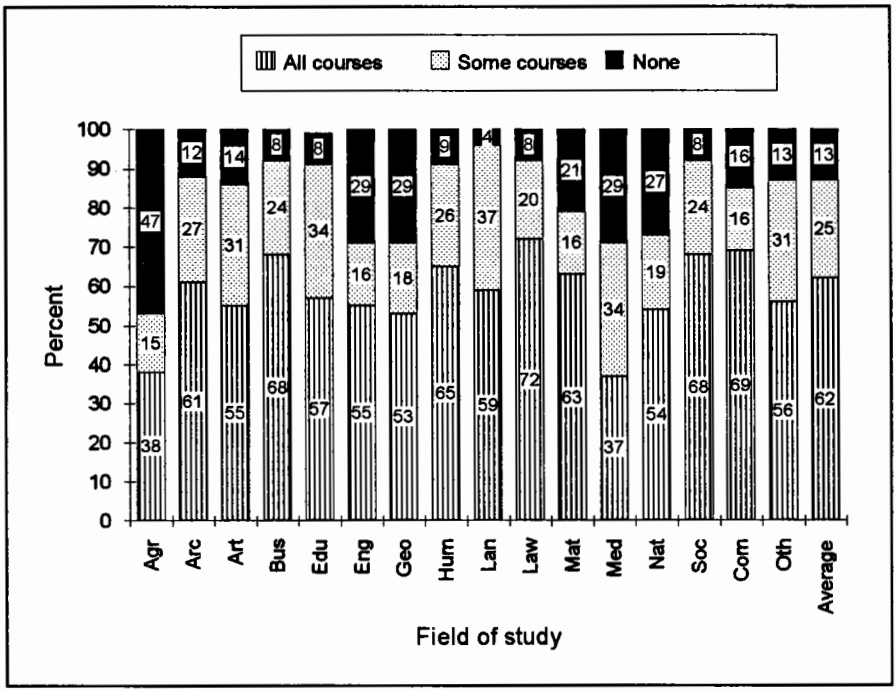
Question 6.9: How many hours per week did you spend on average on the following types of study? Please estimate for the ERASMUS academic study period only (i.e. excluding work placement and holiday period).

Table 4.2
Activities for Academic Enhancement During the Study Period Abroad, by Host Country
(percent; multiple reply possible)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Take courses inv. content/ topics not avail. at home inst.	63	68	61	56	65	52	73	79	67	52	64	65
Take courses inv. teaching meth. not practised at home inst.	41	41	49	33	40	32	34	51	54	52	56	45
Utilize labs. or other (e.g. comp. data anal.)	31	27	39	15	25	25	17	35	42	25	49	32
Take courses to broaden acad. and cultural background	48	47	49	41	45	30	43	59	42	27	43	44
Develop a new area of specialization	27	20	21	17	23	15	24	19	28	16	19	21
Change an earlier chosen specialization	6	5	8	5	6	2	6	5	6	5	5	5
Take language courses in the host country language	43	61	56	50	49	42	54	52	35	59	44	49
Take language courses in other language	31	38	22	21	27	5	8	23	15	7	20	24
Not ticked	6	3	6	8	6	13	6	1	4	7	5	5
Total	294	309	310	247	286	217	265	326	293	250	306	291
(n)	(143)	(502)	(72)	(363)	(680)	(40)	(235)	(113)	(142)	(44)	(929)	(3263)

Question 6.11: During your ERASMUS study period abroad, did you:

Chart 4.2
Courses at the Host Institution Together with Host Country Students, by Field of Study (percent)



Question 6.12: Did you take courses at the host institution together with host country students?

The host country language was least often (solely or partly) the language of instruction for students going to Greece (51 %), the Netherlands (41 %) and Denmark (48 %); in these cases, English was frequently used as a language of instruction for incoming ERASMUS students. Among the relatively small host countries with less widely taught languages, Portugal turned out to be an exception; almost all ERASMUS students going to Portugal were taught in Portuguese.

The longer the study period in the host country, the more likely were courses to be given in the host country language. Fifteen percent of students going abroad for up to three months did not take any courses in the host country language, while the respective proportions were 11 percent for those going abroad for 4-6 months and three percent for those going for 7-12 months.

Table 4.3
Language of Instruction* During Study Period Abroad, by Host Country
(percent)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Host	34	61	12	62	69	23	70	75	12	66	82	65
Home	16	1	18	0	2	0	5	5	28	2	1	4
Host+home	4	7	6	5	8	9	8	6	6	9	3	6
Home+other	4	0	0	0	1	9	1	1	6	0	0	1
Host+other	17	23	27	23	15	17	10	12	20	16	10	16
Host+home+other	6	8	3	6	4	3	2	1	3	2	3	4
Other	19	1	34	3	0	40	3	0	25	5	0	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(140)	(484)	(67)	(349)	(647)	(35)	(223)	(108)	(133)	(44)	(890)	(3120)

Question 6.14: What was the language of instruction in the courses you took at the host university? If you were taught in more than one language, please state percentages.

* "Home" was coded if host country language and country of home institution language were identical.

The most common language of instruction for the surveyed ERASMUS students 1990/91 was English with 41 percent of the courses at the host institutions taught in English. Other languages which were used not infrequently were French (22 %), German (15 %), Spanish (10 %), and Italian (7 %). The languages of the smaller countries - Dutch, Danish, Greek and Portuguese - were the common language of instruction in only about one percent of the courses.

Asked about various cultural and social experiences and activities aimed at getting to know the host country, 72 percent mentioned that they often listened to or read news about the host country, 64 percent often had discussions and conversations with students of the host country, 57 percent reported frequent discussions and conversations with other people of the host country, and 55 percent had frequent contacts with the teaching staff of the host country. Two-thirds of the ERASMUS students often visited museums or attended concerts, theatre, cinema, etc., and 60 percent frequently had joint leisure activities with host country nationals; 58 percent of the ERASMUS students often travelled in the host country.

Reports about the frequency of experiences and activities aimed at getting to know the host country varied most markedly according to the duration of the study period in the host country. The longer the ERASMUS students stayed in the host country, the higher was the proportion stating that they listened to or read news about the host country (ranging from 60 % of those staying up to three months abroad to 82 % of those staying more than one year abroad). Finally, students at the host institution became a more important reference group over time.

4.2 Characteristics of Courses at Host Universities

To what extent do teaching and learning environments which ERASMUS students experienced at the host institution of higher education contrast or correspond to those prevailing at the home institution? To what extent do we observe characteristics of national systems of higher education in the European Community or a high degree of homogeneity? In order to explore these questions, students were asked to compare their home and their host institution of higher education using 12 variables rated on a scale from 1 = "strongly emphasized" to 5 = "not at all emphasized". The variables referred to general cognitive dimensions, international dimensions of learning, teaching styles, modes of assessment, and finally modes of learning.

On average, ERASMUS students reported substantial differences between higher education in their home and their host institutions. The differences perceived, according to the 12 aspects surveyed, were at least 1.0 and at most 2.0 points on the five-point-scale. This finding underscored the variety of higher education systems in the European Community. The largest perceived differences between the host and home institutions of higher education were the emphasis placed on: out-of-class communication between teachers and students and on written examinations (2.0 each); on regular class attendance (1.9); teacher as the main source of information (1.8); independent work (1.7); and on students' freedom to choose specific areas of study (1.6).

The characteristics of higher education of the various EC Member States can be described from the perspective of students spending their ERASMUS supported period in that country. This is done in comparison with the pictures of higher education of that country provided by home students.

Higher education in the Netherlands was characterized both by incoming and Dutch ERASMUS students by its strong emphasis on the use of publications in foreign languages, independent work and written examinations. In addition, Dutch students perceived a stronger emphasis on understanding theories whereas

incoming students felt more emphasis on providing comparative perspectives and the use of evaluation papers. According to incoming ERASMUS students, strong emphasis was placed on regular class attendance in the Netherlands - a view not shared by the Dutch students.

Germany was viewed by incoming ERASMUS-students as a country in which the students' freedom and independence were highly regarded. Students had a high degree of freedom in choosing courses and areas and were expected to work independently. Little emphasis was placed on regular class attendance. Understanding theories, concepts and paradigms was highly appreciated. Assessment through written examinations and evaluation of papers submitted seemed to dominate. In slight contrast to the host students, German students believed that evaluation of papers submitted played a much more limited role than written examinations.

Higher education in Denmark was viewed by incoming ERASMUS students in a similar way to higher education in Germany. This applied to students' freedom and independence as well as to a strong emphasis on theories. Evaluation of papers submitted seemed to play a role as well. Most marked contrasts between Danish and German higher education were, as seen by the foreign students, more out-of-class communication between teaching staff and students in Denmark as well as more emphasis on using publications in foreign languages. Danish students themselves found less emphasis on providing comparative perspectives at home and more emphasis on written examinations.

United Kingdom institutions of higher education were characterized by a strong emphasis on independent work and out-of-class communication between teaching staff and students, by the important role of written examinations and evaluation of papers submitted, and by little use of publications in foreign languages. Students from other countries and British students agreed highly in such perceptions.

Institutions of higher education in Ireland were similarly viewed by foreign ERASMUS students to those in the United Kingdom. This applied to a comparatively strong emphasis on communication between teaching staff and students as well as little use of publications in foreign languages. Irish students differed from foreign students in perceiving a stronger emphasis on regular class attendance.

Institutions of higher education in France, according to ERASMUS students going there, placed high emphasis on the acquisition of facts, regular class attendance, the teacher as the main source of information, written examinations and evaluation papers. Little emphasis seemed to be placed on students' freedom of choice and autonomy or on out-of-class communication between teachers and students. In contrast to students from other countries, however, French students

did not perceive a comparatively low emphasis on independent work of students in France.

Higher education in Belgium was viewed, in some respects, similarly to that in France by ERASMUS students from other countries, notably regarding acquisition of facts, emphasis on regular class attendance - a view not shared by Belgian students of their home institutions of higher education - and little concern about out-of-class communication between teachers and students. In contrast to France, however, students going to Belgium noted widespread use of publications in foreign languages, and provision of comparative perspectives as well as emphasis on oral examinations.

Higher education in Portugal was viewed by students from other countries as placing emphasis on regular class attendance and on teachers as the main source of information. Also similarly to France, Portuguese students and students from other countries noted a strong emphasis in Portugal on the acquisition of facts and on written examinations. In contrast to France, however, ERASMUS students perceived a substantial use of literature in foreign languages in Portugal.

Students spending the ERASMUS-supported period in Spain noted the importance of the role of the teacher as the main source of information and written examinations, as well as little emphasis placed on students' freedom of choice and independent work. Spanish students, however, perceived some emphasis on theories and on independent work.

Italian institutions of higher education emphasized, according to the students' views, both understanding of theories and acquisition of facts. Students had little choice and were not expected to do independent work. Oral examinations were in the foreground and comparative perspectives or the use of publications in foreign languages were not strongly emphasized. In most respects, Italian institutions were similarly viewed by foreign and Italian students.

Foreign students reported a strong emphasis in Greece on the acquisition of facts, the teacher as the main source of information and written examinations. Little emphasis was perceived regarding independent work, the freedom to choose specific areas and the use of publications in foreign languages.

4.3 Problems Faced During the Study Period Abroad

Living and studying abroad may pose significant difficulties for students. In order to examine the extent to which problems occur, what major problems the students face, how they are related to certain programme settings, and to what extent they influenced the outcomes of the study period abroad, students were

presented with a list of 20 possible problems (on a scale from 1 = "very serious problems" to 5 = "no problems at all").

Altogether, 53 percent of the 1990/91 ERASMUS students named problems of living and organizing the conditions of study in the host country, 29 percent mentioned problems of social contacts, 42 percent problems of study, and 20 percent stated foreign language problems. About one quarter did not rate any of the 20 possible problems posed as serious (scale points 1 and 2).

As regards living and organizing conditions of study abroad, problems of accommodation were experienced by 22 percent of the ERASMUS students 1990/91. Problems regarding administrative matters (18 %) and regarding financial matters (21 %) were reported almost equally often, as Table 4.4 shows. Problems such as finding a quiet place for self-study and guidance on non-academic matters (10 % each) were experienced less frequently. This figures are almost identical to those found by 1988/89 students.

Financial and accommodation problems are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. These aside, administrative problems were by far most often faced by ERASMUS students in Italy (37 %) followed by those who had spent their study period in the Federal Republic of Germany (27 %); fewest administrative problems were reported by students who went to Ireland (3 %), the United Kingdom (7 %) and Denmark (9 %). Conversely, Irish (35 %) and British students (32 %) were much more frequently confronted with problems in administrative matters abroad. Certainly, support in administrative matters by the host institution turned out to be very limited in some countries. In addition, students coming from countries in which universities tended to provide support to their students in non-academic matters were most disappointed about the limited support in administrative matters abroad.

As regards academic matters, few students felt problems regarding the academic level of courses at host universities (3 %). Problems regarding crediting and credit transfer (18 %), guidance on academic matters (14 %), differences in teaching and learning styles (13 %) and the readiness of teachers to meet and help students (12 %) were most often stated. Differences in the teaching and learning styles were less often seen as problems by 1990/91 students than by 1988/89 students.

The frequency of academic problems reported varied to some extent by host country and home country. Most academic problems were felt by students who spent their study period abroad in Italy and France. In contrast, students who went to Ireland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Denmark reported few academic problems.

Table 4.4
Problems During Study Period Abroad, by Host Country (percent*)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Matters of credit transfer	15	19	11	21	17	18	23	19	20	12	18	18
Taking courses in a foreign language	7	14	11	11	8	24	14	5	11	24	8	10
Taking examinations in a foreign language	7	15	7	13	13	4	15	12	10	10	8	11
Too high academic level of courses	2	5	5	4	5	0	3	4	2	3	2	3
Differences in teaching/learning betw. home and host inst.	11	12	12	14	18	3	21	7	10	14	10	13
Readiness of teachers to meet/help foreign students	10	16	1	16	19	13	26	4	3	8	5	12
Differences in class or student project group size	3	9	3	11	11	0	10	3	2	3	3	7
Administrative matters	10	27	9	23	22	15	37	3	11	17	7	18
Financial matters	12	18	26	31	20	26	30	25	11	7	21	21
Guidance concerning academic programme	16	17	4	19	18	19	18	5	8	28	9	14
Guidance concerning non-academic matters	11	10	4	13	13	24	15	6	5	8	4	10

(to be cont.)

(Table 4.4)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Finding place to concentrate on studies outside class	7	5	3	16	10	11	24	10	9	27	6	10
Accommodation	15	20	13	37	22	25	29	26	21	21	15	22
Climate, food, health etc.	4	5	3	4	6	8	6	6	4	5	15	8
Lifestyles of nationals in host country	4	6	1	2	3	0	6	1	2	2	8	5
Interaction among/with host country students	12	13	13	8	16	13	11	5	9	10	12	12
Not enough contact with people from your own country	4	4	6	4	4	3	3	1	4	7	6	4
Too much contact with people from your own country	10	23	11	16	21	16	16	19	7	15	25	20
Communicating in foreign language outside the class	9	8	14	5	5	21	11	5	10	17	6	7
Not enough time available for travel	7	14	17	12	14	13	13	12	11	7	16	14

Question 8.1: To what extent did you have significant problems in any of the following areas during your study period abroad?

* Percent 1or 2 on a scale from 1 = "very serious problems" to 5 = "no problems at all"

As regards home country, we note that British and Irish students reported a higher number of problems relating to academic issues than students from the other countries. More frequently, they had problems regarding contacts, class size, guidance and teaching and learning styles. As will be shown below, British and Irish students reported less academic progress abroad than other ERASMUS students. These findings suggest that the problems faced by British and Irish students regarding the educational environments abroad, i.e. experiencing lesser contacts between teachers and students and less emphasis on good teaching practice than at home, led to less academic progress.

Eleven percent of the ERASMUS students who were taught abroad mostly in a foreign language reported significant problems in taking examinations in a foreign language. Taking courses in that language (10 %) and communication in a foreign language outside the classroom (7 %) posed slightly less often problems. Difficulties in taking examinations in a foreign language did not vary substantially by home country and host country. Most difficulties were stated by students who went to Germany and to Italy, with Irish and British students the visitors who reported these problems most often. These findings in 1990/91 were almost the same as those in 1988/89.

A substantial proportion of ERASMUS students disliked too many contacts with people from their own country. This was particularly felt by students of those ICPs sending large numbers of students abroad. Some of the positive effects of a more systematic support and of curricular coordination of large programmes seemed to stem from the fact that students going abroad together with fellow students from the same department tended to stick together and thus limit exposure to the host environment. Problems of interaction among or with host country students were reported by 12 percent of the respondents, notably those going to France (16 %). Most problems of interaction with host country students (18 %) were reported by Greek students.

Few difficulties were felt regarding the lifestyles of host country nationals or the climate, food, etc. abroad. Both problems were most often stated by Greek students (18 % and 14 %). In addition, integration into the host countries culture seems to be a difficult process for a significant proportion of Greek students.

4.4 Integration into the Academic and Social Life of Students at the Host Institution of Higher Education

As to the extent to which they felt integrated into the academic life and into the social life of students at the host institution of higher education, students replied in a cautiously positive way. On a scale from 1 = "to a great extent" to 5 = "not at all", the mean ratings were 2.4 for the former and 2.5 for the latter. The ratings were higher the longer the period abroad lasted; they ranged from 2.6 or 2.7 in the case of stays of up to three months, to 2.0 or 2.1 in the case of students staying abroad for more than one year.

ERASMUS students felt most integrated in Ireland and the United Kingdom as Chart 4.3 shows. The differences of integration felt according to host country were neither clearly linked to the average duration of stays in those countries nor to the extent of instruction in the language of the host country. They seemed to be most clearly associated with proficiency in the host country language outside the classroom and the frequency of contacts with host country students, teaching staff and nationals.

Students from Luxembourg (2.0), Spain and Greece (2.1 each) felt integrated to the highest extent in the academic life of the host institutions, while British, Irish and Danish students felt academically least integrated (3.0 each). As regards social integration, a similar pattern can be observed, though the difference was somewhat smaller (2.1 and 2.9). It seems that the level of expectation varies among students from different countries: as British institutions of higher education seemed to foster communication both among students and between teachers and students most strongly, British students seemed to expect a high degree of communication abroad and therefore negatively rated the setting abroad; alternatively, they might have had genuinely more problems in communicating abroad. Conversely, French and Spanish students who experienced little communication at the home institution might have perceived foreign higher education milieus more favourable to integration, or they might in fact have found it easier to become integrated into the academic or social life of host institutions. As regards integration into the social life Greek students stated the most significant problems.

5.2 Main Modes of Accommodation in Home and Host Country

Around 49 percent of the students supported by the ERASMUS programme in 1990/91 were provided with university accommodation (halls of residences provided by institutions of higher education or other agencies for the accommodation of students) during the study period abroad. Thirty-one percent of the students had an apartment or house abroad which they shared with other students, while 11 percent had lived in a room in a private home. Other modes of accommodation played hardly any role (altogether 12 %).

The total figures reported by ERASMUS students 1990/91 do not differ substantially from those of the preceding years, as Chart 5.1 shows. For example, the proportion of those living in university accommodation declined from 52 percent in 1988/89 to 49 percent both in 1989/90 (these figures are based on student report forms which ERASMUS students had to fill in as part of their contractual obligation) and in 1990/91. This shows that host institutions succeeded in providing university accommodation for the same proportion of incoming ERASMUS students during a period in which the total number of students awarded an ERASMUS grant more than doubled.

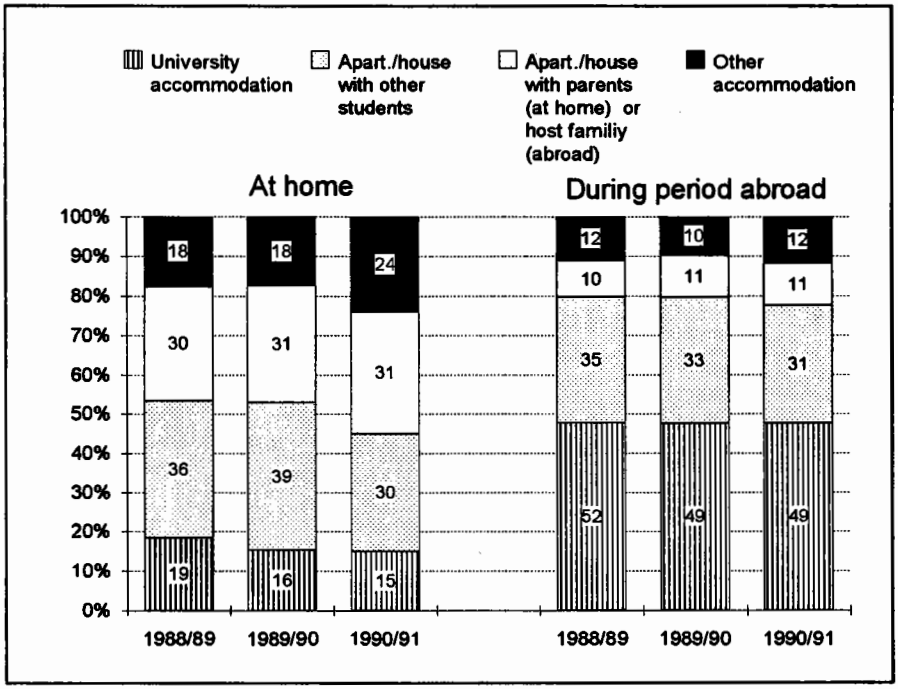
By individual host country, however, we note some shifts from 1988/89 to 1990/91. By and large, we observe a trend towards a diminishing difference in the proportion of students living in university accommodation:

- France (62 % in 1990/91), Germany (60 %) and the United Kingdom (57 %) continued to be the host countries in which the majority of ERASMUS students were provided with university accommodation. However, the respective proportion clearly declined in the United Kingdom;
- university accommodation for ERASMUS students became more frequent notably in Greece (from 38 % to 52 %), Portugal (from 24 % to 39 %) and Ireland (from 9 % to 24 %), while it became less frequent in Denmark (from 48 % to 31 %).
- in Spain, more than 60 percent of ERASMUS students continued to live in apartments or houses or rooms with other students; in the Netherlands and Ireland the respective proportion continued to be about one half; and
- a relatively high proportion of ERASMUS students going to Greece lived in a hotel, a pension or a boarding house (26 % in 1988/89 and 20 % in 1990/91).

Students were also asked about their accommodation while studying at home. As Chart 5.1 shows, only 15 percent lived in student halls of residence while studying at home, i.e. less than one third of those living in university accommodation during the study period abroad. Thirty percent lived in apartments and houses

together with other students - almost exactly the same proportion as during the study period abroad while 31 percent lived at their parents' or relatives' apartment or house, and 14 percent lived in a house or apartment of their own. In comparison to the preceding years, we note a substantial increase in the proportion of students living in their own apartments or houses. On the other hand, the proportion of those who lived in university accommodation at home prior to the ERASMUS-supported study period declined slightly.

Chart 5.1
Development of Accommodation at Home and During Study Period Abroad from 1988/89 to 1990/91 (percent*)



Question 7.1: Where did you live most of the time during your studies at your home institution and during the study period abroad?

* Multiple reply possible, if students moved

Again, differences of accommodation while studying at home varied substantially by home country. In 1990/91, students from the United Kingdom (29 %),

Denmark (29 %) and France (19 %) most often lived in halls of residence. Sharing apartments or houses with other students was most often reported by British (56 %), Irish (39 %) and Belgian students (39 %). A relatively large proportion of Danish (30 %), Greek (23 %), German (22 %) and French students (21 %) lived in their own apartment or house. Living with parents and relatives was the dominant mode of students from Luxembourg (all of the few students surveyed) and from southern European countries, i.e. Spain (69 %), Italy (57 %), Portugal (55 %) and Greece (54 %).

In most countries, institutions of higher education provided a much larger proportion of incoming ERASMUS students with accommodation in halls of residence than their own students tend to live in. For example, only five percent of the Greek students surveyed lived in halls of residence prior to the ERASMUS-supported period, but 52 percent of students spending the study period abroad in Greece lived in university accommodation. As Chart 5.2 shows, only Danish and Spanish institutions failed to provide substantially more university accommodation to incoming students than was normal for home students.

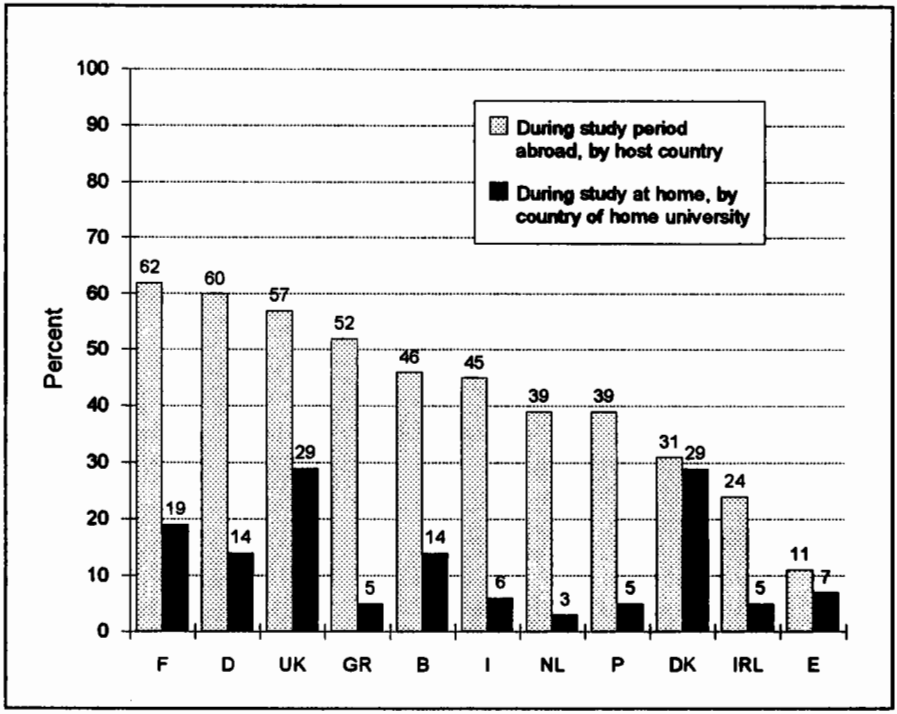
The majority of students (60 %) stayed for the whole study period abroad in the same accommodation, 22 percent moved once, and 18 percent twice and a few even more often. On average, students had 1.7 homes during their study period abroad. These data for 1990/91 do not differ significantly from those for 1988/89.

ERASMUS students participating in work placement abroad moved 1.1 times on average as compared to other ERASMUS students moving 0.6 times on average. Thus, we can infer that almost every second ERASMUS student participating in work placement had to move due to the distance between work place and host university.

The frequency of change of accommodation varied according to the duration of the study period abroad to a lesser extent than one might have expected. Thirty-one percent of those staying abroad for up to three months moved at least once compared with 42 percent of those staying abroad for more than six months. Most of those staying abroad for more than one year moved (80 %), the majority of them more than once.

More than half of the students going to Spain, Greece and Portugal changed accommodation during the study period abroad. On the other hand, only one quarter of students going to Denmark and Belgium moved during the study period abroad.

Chart 5.2
Proportion of ERASMUS Students Living at Home in and Hosted Abroad in University Accommodation (percent)



5.3 Provision of Accommodation and Time Span for Search

As already mentioned in Chapter 4, ERASMUS students were asked what kind of assistance and advice they were given by the host university and how satisfied they were with the assistance provided. Forty-seven percent of the students rated the extent of assistance and advice regarding accommodation as "substantial" and 33 percent as "modest", while 20 percent reported no assistance in this respect. In 1988/89, 52 percent had rated the support as "substantial". In Spain, far less assistance and advice regarding accommodation was provided than in all other countries with 41 percent of the students who went to Spain (in 1988/89, 48 %) obtaining no assistance and advice on accommodation.

Fifty-one percent of the 1990/91 ERASMUS students stated that they were satisfied with the support provided by the host institution (responses 1 or 2 on a scale from 1 = "very high" to 5 = "very low degree of satisfaction"). Again, this proportion was slightly lower than in 1988/89. In both surveys, ERASMUS students rated support regarding accommodation slightly less positively than support regarding registration and related issues and support regarding academic matters. The support provided in Denmark (71 %), the Netherlands (64 %) and the United Kingdom (62 %) was rated most positively and that provided in Spain (only 27 % positive ratings) and in Italy (40 %) least positively.

Asked in more detail about the role of the host institution (staff as well as students) in finding accommodation:

- 56 percent of ERASMUS students reported that regular accommodation was provided;
- 10 percent were provided with temporary accommodation;
- 16 percent at least had assistance in their own search for accommodation;
- 10 percent reported that they had no support regarding accommodation; and
- 9 percent had their own accommodation arrangements, and had therefore informed the host institution that they did not need any support.

Students of the host institution of higher education played a relatively minor role in finding accommodation for the incoming ERASMUS students. They found regular accommodation in five percent of the cases and temporary accommodation for three percent of the guest students. A further 12 percent of the students reported other kinds of help from the host institution students: finding accommodation in cooperation with the university staff or assisting the incoming students in their own search.

Host institutions, as a rule, most effectively help ERASMUS students by providing university accommodation but, in addition to this, 40 percent of ERASMUS students not living in halls of residence during their study period abroad, reported that they found accommodation through the help of host institution staff or students.

Only 57 percent of the students could move directly into a regular room or other kind of accommodation upon arrival. Forty-three percent had to wait: 30 percent had to wait for up to one week and one percent for over one month. Again, the findings for 1990/91 do not substantially differ from those for 1988/89. In two countries, Ireland (67 %) and Spain (63 %), the majority of incoming students had no regular accommodation upon arrival.

5.4 Problems Encountered in Search for Accommodation

Around 50 percent of the ERASMUS students surveyed in 1990/91 faced some difficulties in the search for accommodation in the host country which they considered worth mentioning. In 1988/89, only 44 percent of the ERASMUS students stated such problems.[1]

As Table 5.1 indicates, the three problems most often noted refer to the housing market: expensive accommodation (27 %), scarcity of accommodation (25 %) and poor quality of available accommodation (17 %). Another problem was also related to the housing market, although in a specific context: 11 percent reported that most of the accommodation available was too far away from the institution of higher education or too inconveniently located in general.

Problems related to the foreign students' difficulties in searching for accommodation were mentioned much less often, though they cannot be considered marginal: some did not know where and how to look (13 %), and some had language difficulties (10 %).

Problems finding accommodation due to owners' or landlords' specific reservations against the students searching for accommodation were less often noted: a few owners, landlords, etc. did not like students (4 %), had difficulties because of nationality, religion or colour (2 %), or difficulties because of sex (1 %). Eleven percent of students noted difficulties related to the ERASMUS period abroad: for example, the overall length of the period did not match the period home students rent rooms, or the arrival time was atypical. Other difficulties were mentioned by six percent of the students.

In general, though not in all cases, more problems were stated on average by students going to those countries in which the host institution least often took over the task of providing students with accommodation. There are two exceptions, though: on the one hand, few students faced problems in search for accommodation in the Netherlands, although many had to seek, and, on the other hand, a relatively high proportion of students going to Portugal cited problems in the search for accommodation - obviously many of those trying to change in the course of their stay abroad.

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1 One category was added in 1990/91 to the list of possible problems, namely: "You had difficulties because of the ERASMUS period abroad (length of the stay, arrival outside academic terms)". If we exclude responses to that item, 49 percent of the ERASMUS students in 1990/91 still state problems.

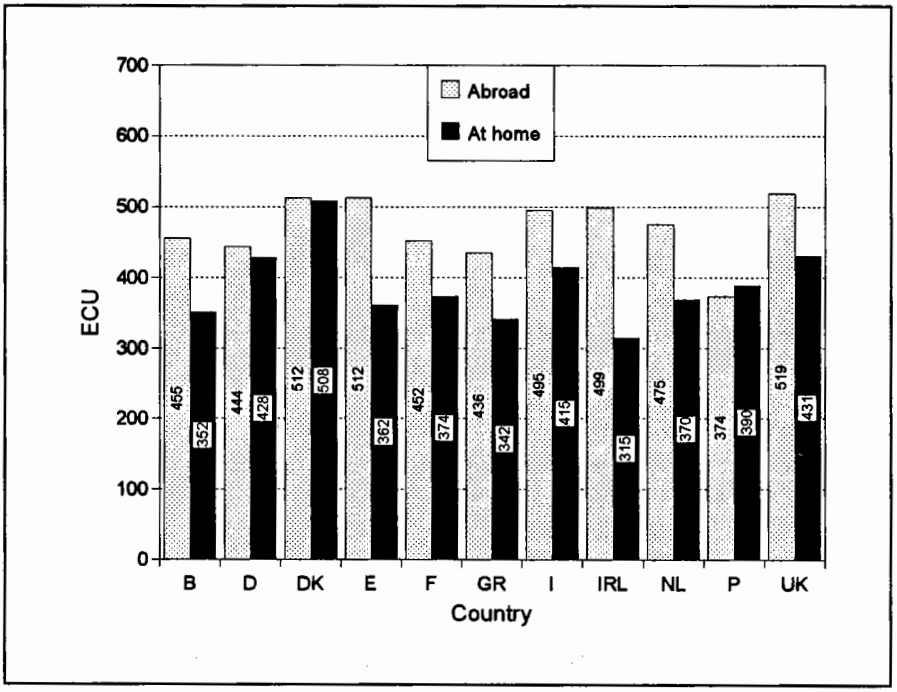
Table 5.1
Problems Encountered in Search for Accommodation Abroad, by Host Country (percent; multiple reply possible)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Did not know where and how to look	7	12	6	25	15	10	13	16	11	23	8	13
Had language difficulties	8	9	3	23	11	20	16	7	4	36	4	10
Accommodation was scarce	17	34	13	43	25	17	29	37	23	32	14	25
Quality of accommodation available was mostly poor	17	5	3	34	16	25	16	39	8	23	18	17
Accommodation available too far from univ., inconv. located	6	10	6	17	12	10	12	26	5	11	10	11
Accommodation was expensive	9	19	18	48	27	25	38	35	18	27	25	27
Too busy studying etc.	1	2	0	1	3	0	1	4	1	5	1	2
Some owners/landlords etc. did not like students	1	4	1	8	6	0	7	10	0	2	2	4
Difficulties because of length of ERASMUS period	15	8	4	19	11	7	15	16	5	14	8	11
Difficulties because of nationality/religion/colour	1	2	0	5	3	2	8	0	1	2	0	2
Difficulties because of sex	0	0	0	3	1	0	3	2	0	5	0	1
Other	6	6	4	4	7	10	7	6	3	9	6	6
Not ticked	60	54	69	23	51	47	46	30	65	32	56	50
Total	148	165	126	253	188	175	212	227	142	220	153	180
(n)	(143)	(502)	(72)	(363)	(680)	(40)	(235)	(113)	(142)	(44)	(929)	(3263)

Question 7.5: What problems did you face in the search for accommodation?

The differences found by host country did not match fully assumptions about differences in general living expenses. There are various factors which might lead to unexpectedly high expenditures in the host country, for example shortage of reasonable accommodation, relatively short study periods which might cause higher costs per month, or students' difficulties in adjusting to food and the lifestyle prevailing in the host country. On the other hand, general subsidies to studies, food, accommodation etc. in some countries benefited the visiting students as well and thus reduced the costs of living abroad.

Chart 6.1:
Comparison of ERASMUS-Students' Monthly Expenses for Life and Study* Abroad and at Home - by Country** (ECU)



* Excluding tuition and other fees (both students abroad and at home), and excluding round-trip fare to the country and continued expenses at home while abroad (students abroad)

** Expenditures during the ERASMUS-supported period abroad, by host country, and expenditures at home, by country of home institution of higher education.

As regards the proportion of individual items of expenditures we note that ERASMUS students' expenditure for life and study abroad were similar to those at home. However, while abroad they spent somewhat less on books and somewhat more on other travel. Of all the expenses for life and study:

- 38 percent at home and 39 percent abroad were used for food, household, clothes, hygiene, etc.;
- 33 percent at home and 34 percent abroad for accommodation;
- 5 and 4 percent respectively for travel to the institution of higher education;
- 7 and 10 percent respectively for other travel;
- 9 percent at home and six percent abroad for other study-related supplies; and
- 7 percent both at home and abroad for other expenses.

ERASMUS students reported that they spent 24 ECU per month on average in the home country while being abroad. Notably, some students kept their accommodation at home while being abroad for a short period. Danish students had by far the highest average expenses of this kind (62 ECU).

6.2 Expenses for Travel to the Host Country

On average, the round-trip travel costs to the host country added 77 ECU to the monthly expenses abroad.[1] Overall, the ERASMUS students 1990/91 surveyed spent on average altogether more than 500 ECU for travel to the host country and back to the home country.

Only 29 percent of the ERASMUS students travelled just once, i.e. to the host country and back to the home country after the completion of the ERASMUS supported period; 28 percent travelled twice, 20 percent three times, and 23 percent more than three times. The average number of round-trip journeys was 2.9.

As might be expected, students are more likely to travel home several times, if the duration of the study period abroad is long (see Chart 6.2). In addition, the number of journeys was higher, the lower the round-trip fare. Therefore, travel from and to centrally located countries was more frequent.

Table 6.1 shows the average travel expenses per round-trip between the various EC Member States. Data based on 3-9 students are presented in brackets

1 The monthly expenses of 77 ECU for the round-trip travel stated in 1990/91 were far higher than those stated in the previous survey by the 1988/89 ERASMUS students. In contrast to the 1988/89 questionnaire, when students had been asked only to name the expenses on return travel abroad, the 1990/91 students were explicitly asked to state the number of return travels they made and the overall costs for these travels.

in order to indicate possible random elements. No information is provided, if the number of respondents was less than 3. The highest average travel costs were reported by ERASMUS students going from Portugal to Italy (almost 800 ECU), from Denmark to Spain as well as from Spain to Ireland and from Ireland to Spain (each about 600 ECU). In contrast, ERASMUS students moving within the geographical centre of the European Community, i.e. between Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Germany, paid on average only a little more than 100 ECU on average for one round-trip journey.

Chart 6.2
Number of Round-trip Journeys to the Host Country, by Duration of Study Period Abroad (percent of students)

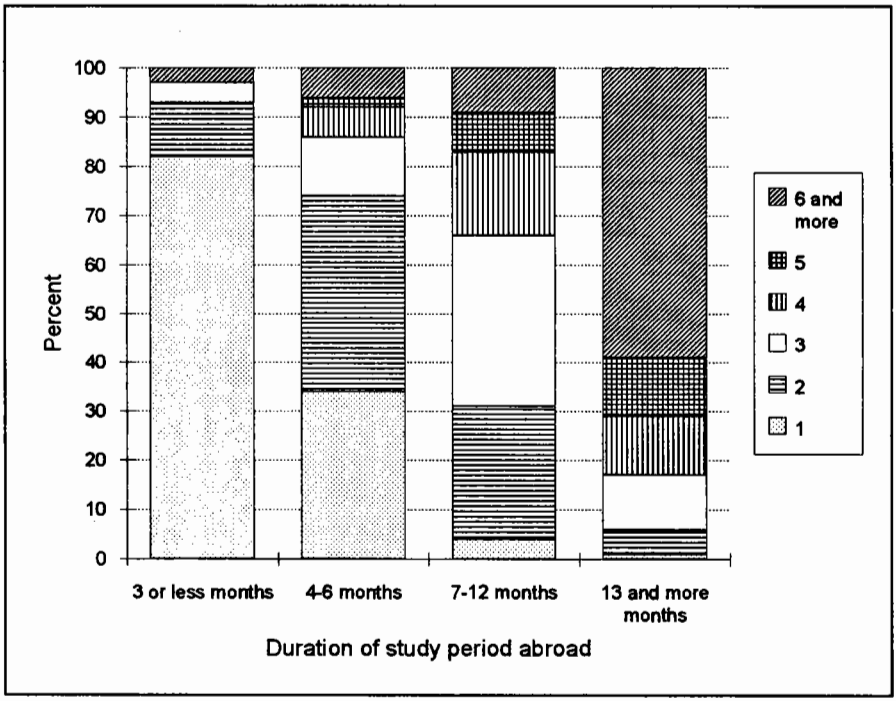


Table 6.1
Students' Expenses per Round-trip Journey to Host Country, by Country of Home Institution and Host Country (in ECU; mean)

Country of home institution	Host country										
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK
Belgium	-	79	*	202	91	226	189	(289)	25	(269)	154
Germany	(48)	-	(115)	284	130	(294)	162	295	70	(322)	215
Denmark	(282)	121	-	(599)	(281)	*	(365)	*	(197)	*	331
Spain	(355)	216	*	-	141	*	270	(604)	(228)	*	311
France	112	122	*	176	-	(336)	124	238	99	*	211
Greece	*	(617)	*	(322)	475	-	*	*	*	*	(473)
Italy	219	157	*	278	145	(361)	-	(284)	262	(324)	340
Ireland	(209)	309	*	(599)	266	*	(331)	-	*	*	(153)
Netherlands	16	56	157	223	91	*	223	(324)	-	(261)	144
Portugal	(331)	433	(481)	(186)	(486)	*	(795)	*	(437)	-	(537)
United Kingdom	138	210	235	244	232	*	393	(142)	166	(423)	-

Question 4.4: To how many return travels do the overall costs stated in 4.3 refer to?

* = No data provided in this table, because the number of respondents was less than three.

Data in brackets: based on 3 - 9 responses only

6.3 Tuition and Other Fees

ERASMUS students were asked to provide detailed information on tuition and fees. They were requested to state the respective expenses at the home institution while studying there, at the host institution while studying abroad, and at the home institution while studying abroad. The questionnaire provided four categories of fees: tuition fees, health insurance, student union fees, and other fees. It should be noted that figures will only be presented for the 63 percent of respondents who provided complete information to all questions on tuition fees in the questionnaire.[2]

Some 69 percent of ERASMUS students reported that, at home, they paid fees, i.e. tuition fees, other related expenses or both. Almost all of them continued to pay these fees at home while studying abroad.

Thirty-two percent of the ERASMUS students had some payments at the host institution. According to the students, 16 percent paid tuition fees (13 % tuition fees only and 3 % other expenses in addition); of these, eight percent reported that they paid only tuition fees at the host institution while studying abroad, while the other eight percent of students stated that they paid tuition fees at both the home and the host institution.[3]

The monthly tuition fees and other related fees ERASMUS students claimed to have paid or actually paid abroad were actually very low: they amounted to about three ECU monthly on average for all ERASMUS students. Therefore we decided to exclude them in the following section.[4]

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2 Only 25 percent of British students surveyed responded to these questions. Many of them might have been irritated by the phrasing: "Did you personally pay...", because they might not have known how to handle their case of paying tuition fees and getting them reimbursed.

3 In 1988/89, the respective figures were 8 and 6 percent. In the 1989/90 student reports, only 7 percent stated that they paid tuition fees at the host institution of higher education.

4 Even the monthly amount of 3 ECU raises issues. For example, 42 percent of ERASMUS students claimed to have paid tuition fees in Germany, although almost all institutions of higher education are public and do not charge any tuition fees. Secondly, some students might have stated fees for a semester or academic year as monthly fees.

6.4 Additional Expenses Abroad

Excluding tuition fees and other related fees, we note that ERASMUS 1990/91 students surveyed spent on average 400 ECU per month while studying at home and 581 ECU while studying abroad. During the study period abroad, they spent additionally, on average:

- 79 ECU for additional costs for life and study abroad (excluding additional tuition fees and other related fees);
- 24 ECU for expenses in the home country while being abroad (notably continued payment of rent in the country of the home institution of higher education); and
- 77 ECU for round-trip journeys to the host country (for all, on average 2.9, round-trip journeys were undertaken).

The additional costs abroad amount to 45 percent of those paid at home in a corresponding period. In adjusting the 1988/89 figures to the same calculation undertaken for 1990/91, we estimate that ERASMUS students 1988/89 spent 44 percent more abroad than they spent while studying at home.[5] Thus, the rate of additional expenses abroad remained more or less constant.

So far, we have addressed average expenses only. It is necessary, however, to take into account the distribution as well. Again excluding tuition fees and related fees we note that:

- 9 percent of the 1990/91 ERASMUS students had at least ten percent less expenses abroad than during a corresponding period at home;
- 13 percent had about the same expenses abroad they had at home;
- 33 percent had 10 to 50 percent higher costs abroad; and
- 35 percent had more than 50 percent additional costs abroad.[6]

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5 We calculated 37 percent additional expenses (135 ECU) for 1988/89 ERASMUS students. This was on the one hand based on an estimate - not information asked for in the questionnaire - of 30 ECU continued expenses at home while studying at home. On the other hand, students in 1988/89 were not asked about the number of travels to the host country; students named on average only half the costs of the trips they actually undertook. If we adjust the 1988/89 data on the basis of the additional information asked in 1990/91, the additional expenses for study abroad 1988/89 might be estimated as 44 percent (155 ECU).

6 If only expenses for life and study are compared (i.e. excluding expenses for round-trip travel to the host country and continuous expenses at home while studying abroad), 22 percent of ERASMUS 1990/91 students (16 % of the 1988/89 students) reported less expenses abroad and 17 percent (18 %) about the same expenses abroad and home, whereas 33 percent (35 %) spent 10 to 50 percent more abroad and 28 percent (31 %) even more than 50 percent more.

Table 6.2
Additional Monthly Expenses of ERASMUS Students During the Study Period in the Host Country, by Country of Home Institution (in ECU; mean)

Country of home institution of higher education	Expenses while studying at home*	Additional costs for life and study abroad	Expenses in home country while being abroad	Travel to host country	Total additional expenses abroad	Total expenses abroad*
Belgium	352	89	26	65	180	533
Germany	428	101	28	61	190	618
Denmark	508	41	62	87	191	699
Spain	362	133	31	107	271	633
France	374	85	25	72	182	556
Greece	342	208	33	135	376	718
Italy	416	80	16	82	177	594
Ireland	315	77	19	95	191	506
Luxembourg	261	139	0	87	225	487
Netherlands	370	125	20	49	194	564
Portugal	390	228	31	159	412	802
United Kingdom	431	-6	16	82	92	523
Total	400	79	24	77	181	581

* Excluding tuition fees and other related fees

Table 6.3
Additional Monthly Expenses[1] of ERASMUS Students During the Study Period Abroad, by Country of Home Institution and Host Country (in ECU; mean)

Country of home institution	Host country										
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK
Belgium	-	108	*	237	196	*	129	(136)	142	(231)	219
Germany	(165)	-	(136)	227	151	(82)	211	163	87	(205)	223
Denmark	(162)	77	-	(471)	(162)	*	(212)	*	(100)	*	190
Spain	(205)	187	*	-	*	317	393	(193)	(184)	*	367
France	43	115	*	205	-	(230)	104	230	(145)	*	219
Greece	*	(430)	*	(430)	318	-	*	*	*	*	(475)
Italy	203	119	*	257	109	(134)	-	(238)	185	(-63)	266
Ireland	(167)	162	*	(493)	119	*	(143)	-	*	*	(133)
Netherlands	136	147	242	218	235	*	189	(111)	-	148	218
Portugal	(366)	*	(527)	(332)	(174)	*	(776)	*	(482)	-	(370)
United Kingdom	138	84	129	68	61	*	158	(145)	202	(25)	-

Question 4.5: Apart from tuition fees and related expenses: How much, on average, did you spend per month during your study period abroad and while studying at home? Please state the amount in the currency of the country of your home institution.

1 Excluding tuition fees and other related expenses.

* = No data provided in this table, because the number of respondents was less than three.

Data in brackets: based on 3 - 9 responses only.

Table 6.2 shows the additional monthly expenses for studying abroad. Additional costs vary substantially according to the country of the home institution of higher education:

- they were highest on average for Portuguese (412 ECU additionally per month; 206 % of expenses at home) and Greek students (376 ECU, 210 %);
- they also were clearly higher than average for Spanish students (271 ECU, 175 %);
- broadly average additional expenses were reported by students from Luxembourg, Denmark, Germany, France, Belgium and Italy; and
- British students reported the lowest additional expenses on average both in absolute terms (92 ECU additional expenses) and in relative terms (121 % of the expenses at home).

Table 6.3 specifies the additional expenses for the individual combinations of home and host countries. The most extreme differences are reported for the student mobility between Italy and Portugal. While Portuguese students going to Italy reported 776 ECU additional expenses abroad, Italian students going to Portugal spent 63 ECU less per month for the study period abroad (including travel!) than they spent at home.

The additional monthly expenses varied by duration of the study period abroad to a lesser extent than one might have expected. They amounted to 65 percent for those going abroad for at most three months, 40 percent both for those going abroad for 4-6 months and 7-12 months, and finally 47 percent for those going abroad for more than one year.

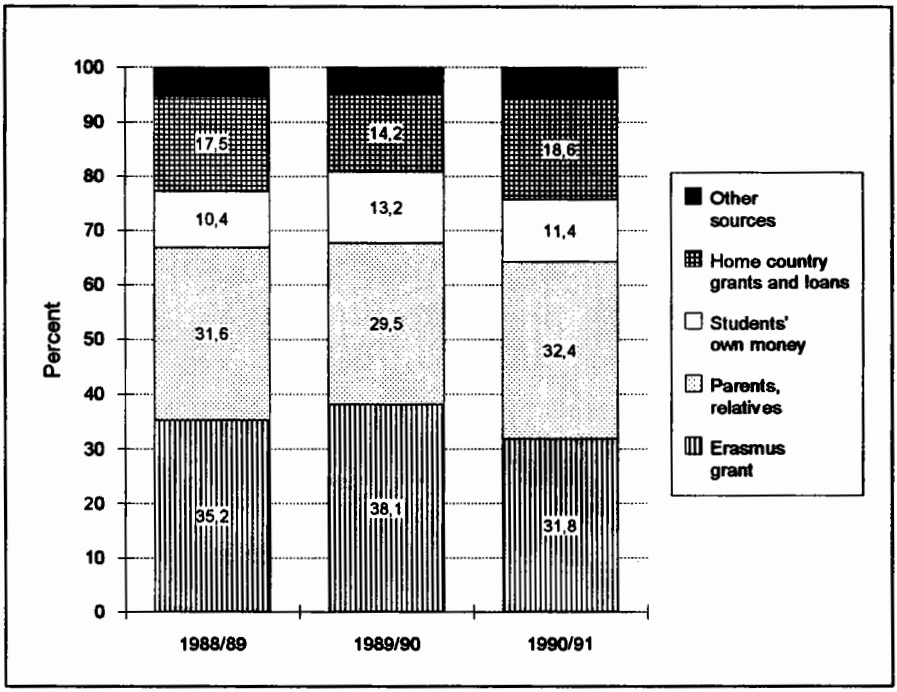
6.5 Resources for Funding Study Abroad and at Home

Of all the expenses ERASMUS students had during the study period abroad in 1990/91 (including tuition fees and other related fees), 31.8 percent was covered by the ERASMUS grant. In 1988/89, 35.2 percent of all expenses were financed that way, and in 1989/90 - according to the official students' reports - as much as 38.1 percent. As Chart 6.3 shows, the smaller proportion financed by the ERASMUS grant in 1990/91 was jointly made up by a slightly increased proportion of home country grants and loans (18.6 % in 1990/91), parents' contributions (32.4 %) and students' own money (11.4 %).

The ERASMUS grant covered more than 60 percent of the expenses for Portuguese students, as Table 6.4 shows. It also covered a higher than average proportion of expenses of students from Belgium and Italy. On the opposite end,

only 22 percent of the expenses of Dutch students in the context of their ERASMUS study period abroad were financed by the ERASMUS fellowship.

Chart 6.3
Sources of Financing the Study Period Abroad 1988/89, 1989/90 and 1990/91
(percent)



Home country grants and loans covered the highest proportion of expenditures made by Danish (51.7 %), Dutch (46.5 %) and British students (31.7 %). In all other EC countries except for Portugal and Luxembourg, the parents, relatives and the students themselves covered about half or more of the expenses.

ERASMUS students and their parents surveyed in 1990/91 had paid 70.3 percent on average of the expenses for study at the home institution. 26.4 percent of the expenses were covered by home country grants and loans, and 3.3 percent by other sources. The data do not differ significantly from those provided by the 1988/89 ERASMUS students. As already visible in the data on the study period

Table 6.4
Financing of Study Period Abroad, by Country of Home Institution of Higher Education (mean; percent)

	Country of home institution of higher education												Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	L	NL	P	UK	
ERASMUS grant	46.0	31.8	27.9	37.9	26.6	33.9	43.1	28.1	50.0	22.3	61.6	26.9	31.8
Other EC programme grant	.1	.0	.2	.3	.3	.0	.0	1.2	.0	.3	.0	.1	.2
Home country grant/scholarship	2.9	4.1	42.9	6.6	12.0	.1	3.1	10.9	7.5	43.6	1.9	29.6	15.2
Home country loan	.0	8.7	8.6	.7	2.8	.0	.0	5.5	17.5	2.9	.0	2.1	3.4
Host country grant/scholarship	.0	1.0	.4	.4	.5	.0	.1	.0	.0	.2	.1	.6	.5
Support by work placement or employer	.2	.8	.0	.7	2.8	.9	.1	1.9	.0	1.6	1.1	2.9	1.6
Other type of support abroad	.3	.5	.7	.3	.1	.8	.0	.8	.0	.0	.3	.5	.3
Other grants	1.2	1.0	3.7	.0	4.1	.0	.9	.2	.0	1.6	.7	1.9	1.8
Parents, relatives	40.1	35.7	3.6	38.2	36.7	56.7	41.4	28.9	25.0	17.0	20.7	26.5	32.4
Own money (work, savings)	8.6	15.5	10.2	14.6	11.2	7.6	9.6	20.8	.0	9.6	12.7	7.9	11.4
Other	.2	.7	1.5	.3	2.0	.0	.8	.2	.0	.5	.5	.6	.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(n)	(115)	(365)	(58)	(109)	(366)	(40)	(169)	(60)	(2)	(139)	(42)	(381)	(1846)

Question 4.1: How have you financed your study at your home university up to now, and how did you finance your ERASMUS-supported study period abroad (including travel and tuition fees if any)? Please estimate percentages (including possibly value of free rent, etc.). If applicable, state the name of the support scheme or of the supporting agency.

Table 7.3
Ratios of Recognition, Correspondence and Non-Prolongation, by Field of Study (mean of percentages)

	Field of study																Total
	Agr	Arc	Art	Bus	Edu	Eng	Geo	Hum	Lan	Law	Mat	Med	Nat	Soc	Com	Other	
Recognition	70	72	64	79	62	82	69	77	69	67	72	84	75	72	77	77	74
Correspondence	77	75	72	75	66	77	81	71	65	68	82	82	80	71	65	53	72
Non-prolongation	50	62	58	63	54	54	52	55	53	40	51	73	52	43	40	41	54

Agr = Agricultural sciences
Arc = Architecture, urban and regional planning
Art = Art and design
Bus = Business studies, management sciences
Edu = Education, teacher training
Eng = Engineering, technology
Geo = Geography, geology
Hum = Humanities
Lan = Languages, philological sciences
Law = Law
Mat = Mathematics, informatics
Med = Medical sciences
Nat = Natural sciences
Soc = Social sciences
Com = Communication and information sciences

7.3 Extent of Recognition and Level of Courses Taken

In seeking for an explanation regarding the limits of recognition of study achievements abroad, we asked the students to estimate the percentage of courses they considered less demanding or more demanding than the courses they would have taken at the home institution during the same period. One has to bear in mind, though, that responses to those questions are certainly not suitable for explaining the reasons for mismatches between the quality of courses abroad and at home. These could be due to quality differences in the academic provisions between the host and the home institution, lack of academic coordination and integration, students' academic and linguistic proficiency or due to students' choices.

As Table 7.4 shows, only half of the courses taken abroad were considered to be equally demanding as those they would have taken at home with 22 percent of the courses rated more demanding and 28 percent less demanding. Again, we note more substantial differences by country of home institution than by host country. Notably, Greek and French students rated a substantial number of courses taken abroad as more demanding and a small number of courses as less demanding. On the other hand, Dutch and German students (as well as the few students from Luxembourg) rated a substantial proportion of courses taken abroad as less demanding and few courses as more demanding. Conversely, students spending their study period abroad in Germany took a higher proportion of more demanding than less demanding courses in that country, while students going to Portugal took a much higher proportion of less demanding than more demanding courses during the study period abroad.

Asked about further explanations regarding the quality mismatch between courses abroad and at home:

- 16 percent of the students reported that they took part in courses abroad the academic level of which they considered clearly higher than courses they would take at home;
- 15 percent stated that the course load at the host institution was heavier than at the home institution;
- 33 percent of the students participated in courses abroad which were of a different type (more theoretical, more practical, etc.);
- 17 percent of students gave other explanations why courses they took abroad were more demanding;
- 30 percent took courses which turned out to repeat more or less what was learned already at home;
- 29 percent of the students attended courses which were more appropriate for an earlier year of study; and finally

Table 7.4
Academic Level of Courses at the Host Institution, by Country of Home Institution
(mean of percentages stated by students)

	Country of home institution of higher education												Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	L	NL	P	UK	
Courses were academically more demanding	20.7	14.9	19.5	16.1	31.4	31.3	31.2	22.8	14.0	13.6	13.4	22.5	22.0
Courses were academically equally demanding	47.4	48.7	52.4	59.4	45.6	53.3	56.7	45.7	34.0	51.4	67.7	47.3	50.3
Courses were academically less demanding	31.9	36.4	28.1	24.5	22.9	15.4	22.1	31.4	52.0	34.9	18.9	27.2	27.7
(n)	(198)	(512)	(76)	(301)	(640)	(48)	(297)	(81)	(5)	(180)	(66)	(480)	(2884)

Question 6.20: Approximately what percentage of the courses which you took while abroad were academically less or more demanding than courses which you would have taken at the home institution during the same period?

- 29 percent of the ERASMUS students gave other explanations why courses they took at the host institution were less demanding than courses they would have taken at home.

One should bear in mind that these percentages refer to the proportion of students not courses falling into the various categories. They do not explain the respective percentage of courses.

7.4 Self-Rating of Academic Progress Abroad

ERASMUS students in 1990/91 rated their academic progress during the period at the host university quite positively. Asked to compare their general academic progress abroad with what they would have expected in a corresponding period at home, they rated it 2.5 on average on a scale from 1 = "much better" to 5 = "much less". Fifty-three percent actually rated their academic progress at the host university more positively than academic progress at home, and 27 percent stated that it was on the same level. Only 20 percent considered the progress abroad to be less than at home, as Table 7.5 shows.

In 1988/89, the average ratings were also 2.5. In the official reports presented by ERASMUS students in 1989/90, the average score was 2.3. We cannot exclude the possibility that students present a somewhat more positive picture in an official report than in an anonymous survey.

The rating of academic progress abroad differed according to the duration of the study period abroad. It was slightly less favourably assessed by students spending about half an academic year (2.5) or a whole academic year (2.6) abroad than by students spending at most three months abroad (2.4) or more than one year abroad (2.3).

The ratings varied to some extent according to field of study, as Table 7.5 shows. As far as the fields most strongly represented in the ERASMUS programme were concerned, students of languages rated the academic progress abroad most positively. Among "smaller" fields, students of arts and design rated progress abroad most positively. While 1988/89 students of these fields rated progress abroad also very positively, we do not note in general a stability over time, as far as differences according to the fields of study are concerned.

The assessment of academic progress abroad varied more according to home country than according to host country. Altogether we note that students from northern European countries tended to rate the academic progress abroad less

positively than those from southern European countries. The same pattern was visible in the 1988/89 survey and in the 1989/90 student reports.

Table 7.5
Academic Progress Abroad, by Select Fields of Study (percent; mean)

	Field of study								Total
	Bus	Eng	Hum	Lan	Law	Med	Nat	Soc	
Much better (1)	1	13	22	25	16	17	19	18	19
Better (2)	34	32	27	38	33	35	33	37	34
Same (3)	27	33	31	22	30	33	27	26	27
Less (4)	20	17	15	12	16	13	19	14	17
Much less (5)	3	4	3	2	5	2	3	5	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(760)	(360)	(175)	(581)	(330)	(113)	(150)	(256)	(3212)
Academic progress abroad (mean*)	2.6	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5

Bus = Business studies, management sciences
Eng = Engineering, technology
Hum = Humanities
Lan = Languages, philological sciences
Law = Law
Med = Medical sciences
Nat = Natural sciences
Soc = Social sciences

Question 8.4: How would you rate your general academic progress during your study period abroad, compared with what you would have expected in a corresponding period at your home university?

* On a scale from 1 = "much better" to 5 = "much less".

In looking at the ratings both by country of home institution and host country, we took into account only those home-host country directions of exchange in which at least ten students replied to the survey (see Table 7.6). On average, more positive ratings than 2.0 were given by Spanish students going to Ireland (1.5) as well as by Greek students going to the United Kingdom, by British students going to Portugal and by French students going to the Netherlands (1.7 each). The most negative rating was found in the case of Dutch students going to Italy (3.5), Dutch students going to Spain and France (3.2 each) and Irish students going to France (3.2). If we focus on the exchange between students of the three countries most strongly represented in the ERASMUS programme, we note that French students rated their academic progress abroad as clearly more positive in Germany (2.3) and the United Kingdom (2.4) compared with academic progress

Table 7.6
Academic Progress Abroad, by Country of Home Institution and Host Country (mean[1])

Country of home institution	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
B	-	2.2	(2.5)	2.5	2.5	(2.3)	2.6	(2.0)	2.1	(2.7)	2.4	2.4
D	2.5	-	(2.6)	2.6	2.8	(2.9)	2.8	3.0	2.5	(3.3)	2.5	2.6
DK	(3.4)	2.9	-	(3.3)	(3.0)	*	(3.0)	(3.8)	(3.3)	*	2.4	2.9
E	2.4	2.2	*	-	2.2	(2.2)	2.4	1.5	1.9	(3.0)	2.1	2.2
F	2.2	2.3	(2.3)	2.3	-	(2.3)	2.1	2.2	1.7	(2.4)	2.4	2.3
GR	(2.2)	2.3	*	(3.0)	2.3	-	*	(2.3)	(2.0)	*	1.7	2.2
I	2.1	1.9	(2.4)	2.3	2.4	(2.0)	-	(2.2)	2.1	(2.8)	2.4	2.3
IRL	(2.6)	3.0	*	2.7	3.2	*	(3.1)	-	*	*	(1.9)	2.9
L	(3.0)	*	*	*	(2.7)	*	*	*	*	*	*	(2.8)
NL	2.7	2.9	2.5	3.2	3.2	(3.3)	3.4	(2.3)	_	(3.7)	2.8	2.9
P	(2.4)	2.5	(2.8)	1.9	2.2	*	(2.4)	(2.3)	(2.4)	-	2.3	2.3
UK	3.0	2.9	2.7	2.9	2.9	(3.0)	3.0	(1.8)	2.8	1.7	-	2.9
Total	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.7	2.4	2.3	2.8	2.4	2.5
(n)	(138)	(492)	(71)	(361)	(671)	(39)	(231)	(112)	(140)	(43)	(917)	(3215)

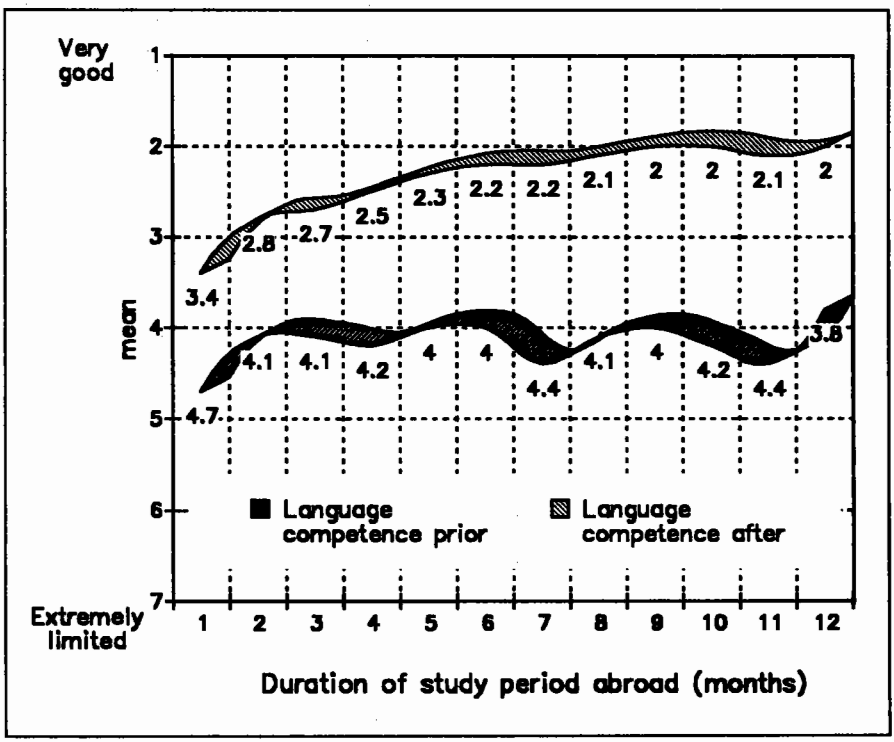
Question 8.4: How would you rate your general academic progress during your study period abroad, compared with what you would have expected in a corresponding period at your home university?

[1] On a scale from 1 = "much better" to 5 = "much less".

Data in brackets: based on 3-9 responses only

* = No data provided in this table, because the number of respondents was less than three.

Chart 8.1
Development of Language Competence by Duration of Study Period Abroad
(mean)



The study period abroad proved effective in improving the level of foreign language proficiency to a substantial extent. Self-ratings improved on average from 4.1 to 2.2 on the seven-point-scale. Mean values for listening and reading were 2.0 after the study period abroad, both in an academic setting and outside the classroom. Speaking and writing remained somewhat less highly rated than listening and reading, but improved to about the same extent, as Table 8.2 shows. Speaking in an academic context (2.5) remained more cautiously assessed than speaking outside the classroom (2.1).

In analysing the conditions for improvement of foreign language proficiency during the study period abroad, we naturally turn to the duration of the study period in the host country. In fact, we note a clear positive correlation between duration and the foreign language improvement. As Chart 8.1 shows, however, improvement did not continue beyond nine months.

In addition, the level of prior foreign language competence played an important role in the level of improvement during the study period abroad. The worse the prior foreign language competence was assessed by the students, the more it could be improved.

8.3 Knowledge about the Host Country

As in the case of foreign language proficiency, students were also asked to rate their knowledge about the host country as it was, retrospectively seen, immediately before and after the study period abroad ("now"). On a scale from 1 = "extensive knowledge" to 5 = "very minimal knowledge", they were asked to rate 13 aspects, covering politics, culture and society, the economic system and the geography as well as the higher education system of the host country.

ERASMUS students had, according to their retrospective self-rating, a low level of knowledge of the host country prior to the study period. The ratings were 3.5 on average, with knowledge of geography, the highest rated aspect, in the centre of the scale (3.1) between "extensive" and "minimal" knowledge. The least knowledge was reported on treatment of recently arrived immigrants (3.9) and on the system of higher education of the host country (3.9).

Knowledge of the host country prior to the study period abroad hardly varied according to the country of the home institution of higher education, but clearly according to the host country, as Table 8.3 shows. Students who went to Germany considered themselves the best informed about the host country (3.4 on average), while prior knowledge of the "smaller" countries of the EC was limited (Denmark 4.2, Portugal and Belgium 4.1 each, and Greece 4.0). The average knowledge about the host country did not differ markedly by field of study. As regards the single aspects, students were better informed on those aspects of the host country which closely related to their field of expertise. As one might have expected, students of business studies stated higher knowledge on the economic system of the host country (3.2 compared with 3.6 on average of all students). Also, not surprisingly, geography and geology students reported above-average knowledge on the geography of the host country (2.9 compared with 3.1 on average of all students).

Upon return from the study period abroad, students rated their knowledge of the host country substantially higher. The average score of 2.3 indicates an improvement by 1.3 on the five-point scale. The largest improvement was reported regarding higher education (1.9) and there was above-average improvement regarding cultural and social issues (except for treatment of recently arrived immi-

Table 8.3
Selfrating of Knowledge About Host Country* Before Study Period Abroad and Now, by Host Country (mean**)

		Host Country											Total
		B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Political system and institutions	before	4.1	3.4	4.3	3.7	3.6	4.0	4.0	4.1	4.1	4.2	3.5	3.7
	now	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.5	2.2	2.7	2.7	2.3	2.4
Foreign policy in general	before	4.0	3.4	4.4	3.8	3.7	4.1	3.9	4.0	3.9	4.2	3.4	3.7
	now	3.0	2.6	2.9	2.7	2.7	2.9	2.9	2.7	3.0	2.7	2.5	2.7
System of higher education	before	4.4	3.6	4.3	4.0	3.7	4.4	4.0	4.0	4.2	4.3	3.8	3.9
	now	2.2	1.9	2.1	2.1	1.9	2.5	2.0	1.8	2.2	2.2	2.0	1.9
Cultural life (art, music, theatre, etc.)	before	4.0	3.4	4.3	3.4	3.3	3.8	3.2	3.6	3.6	4.1	3.4	3.4
	now	2.3	2.2	2.0	1.9	1.9	2.3	1.9	1.9	2.2	1.8	2.1	2.0
Dominant social issues	before	4.1	3.5	4.3	3.7	3.6	4.1	3.7	3.6	3.9	4.2	3.6	3.7
	now	2.5	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.2	1.8	2.5	2.1	2.3	2.2
Economic system	before	4.0	3.3	4.2	3.7	3.6	4.0	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.4	3.6
	now	2.9	2.4	2.4	2.5	2.8	2.6	2.8	2.4	2.8	2.4	2.4	2.6
Social structure (family, class system)	before	4.0	3.3	4.0	3.4	3.4	3.8	3.3	3.7	3.8	4.0	3.5	3.5
	now	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.0	2.3	2.2	1.9	1.8	2.2	1.9	2.2	2.2
Customs, traditions, religion	before	3.9	3.3	4.1	3.3	3.3	3.6	3.2	3.5	3.7	4.0	3.4	3.4
	now	2.1	2.1	2.1	1.8	2.1	2.1	1.9	1.7	2.1	1.9	2.1	2.0

Question 8.2: How would you rate your level of knowledge with regard to the following aspects of the host country, immediately before you went abroad and now?

* Other items not included in this table were: dominant political issues; policy towards own country; treatment of recently arrived immigrants; sports, leisure/recreational activities; the country's geography

** On a scale from 1 = "extensive knowledge" to 5 = "very minimal knowledge"

grants); knowledge of political issues and the geography of the host country increased to a lesser extent.

Altogether, differences in levels of knowledge of the various EC countries were on average - according to the students' ratings - clearly smaller upon return than prior to the study period abroad; they also varied less between the individual aspects of knowledge. Finally, the degree of knowledge of the host country upon return was moderately related to the duration of study. Those students who had spent up to three months abroad rated their knowledge on the host country 2.5 on average while those staying more than a year reported 2.1 on average.

In comparing the improvement of knowledge about the host country between 1990/91 and 1988/89 students, we note that the total figures are almost identical. However, differences in prior knowledge according to home country and host country became smaller in 1990/91.

8.4 Opinions of Culture and Society

Students' opinions of a host country vary widely. One might hope that knowledge and experience would dissolve stereotypes, but this does not necessarily lead to more positive opinions. Empathy might grow along with experience, but other attitudes might become more negative in the process of discovering problems about which a foreigner not having lived in that country is usually oblivious. Opinions on specific issues might become more diverse as the knowledge base improves. Finally, opinions on the home country might become more positive or negative, depending on the experiences abroad, on the ways the individual coped with life and study abroad, or on the ways a period abroad stimulated reflections on one's home country.

On their return, ERASMUS students were asked to rate their opinions on the host country and on the home country both immediately before and after the study period abroad in respect of eight aspects, such as foreign policy, cultural life and the higher education system.

Altogether, we note that opinions of ICP students about the host country neither become clearly more positive nor clearly more negative (see Table 8.4). The average rating of all aspects across all host countries was 2.9 before the study period abroad, and improved marginally (not statistically significant) by 0.1. The opinions about the home country were on average (2.9) - the same as for the host country, before the period abroad, and they did not improve. Changes of opinions both on the home and host country cannot be explained by varying duration of the study period.

Altogether, the cultural life in the host country was most highly appreciated, while opinions on the host country's treatment of immigrants and on political issues were most negative. Opinions on the home country were similar on average to those of the host country, except for more negative ratings of the home country's environmental policies and of the home country's cultural life.

Opinions on the respective host countries varied substantially according to the individual aspects. For example, the Danish and the Dutch higher education systems (2.1 each) were most favourably assessed after the study period by the students who had spent the ERASMUS-supported period there, an average improvement in assessment of 0.3 and 0.4. The German system of higher education was rated third highest by the guest students (2.3 both before and after the study period abroad). German students viewed higher education in their home country somewhat more critically prior to the period abroad (2.6) but improved their opinions through the experiences abroad (2.3). German ERASMUS students, however, gave lowest marks to the higher education systems of their respective host countries (2.8 prior to the study period abroad and 3.0 on return).

Customs and traditions in Spain and Portugal were most highly appreciated by guest students after the study period abroad. Urban life was considered - upon return - most agreeable in Denmark (2.0) and least attractive in Greece (3.0), the United Kingdom (2.9) and France (2.8). German (1.8), Danish and Dutch (1.9 each) environmental policies were rated very positively upon return, while ratings of environmental policies of other countries were viewed far more negatively (3.3 to 4.2). Regarding those aspects, similar differences were noted by the home students of the respective countries, though the differences of the ratings to that of students from others countries were much smaller.

The presentation of mean scores might suggest a stability of opinions not very much touched by experiences. If we analyze, however, the frequency of changes of opinions, we can observe dynamic developments. An average of all ratings regarding the host country shows:

- 23 percent of ratings were more positive after the study period than before;
- 15 percent were more negative after the study period abroad;
- 45 percent were identical before and after the study period abroad; and
- 17 percent of return ratings could not be compared to ratings before the study period abroad as these had not been provided. (The students stated "do not know" before and in a few cases also after the study period abroad.)

Table 8.4
Opinions About Host Country Before and After Study Abroad, by Host Country (mean*)

		Host country											Total
		B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Higher education	before	2.6	2.3	2.4	3.1	2.7	3.3	2.9	2.9	2.5	3.2	2.6	2.7
	now	2.6	2.3	2.1	3.0	2.9	3.4	3.1	2.4	2.1	2.6	2.6	2.7
Foreign policy	before	2.9	2.8	2.7	3.0	3.0	3.3	3.1	3.1	2.8	3.1	3.4	3.1
	now	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.9	3.1	3.5	3.1	3.0	2.7	2.9	3.4	3.1
Cultural life	before	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.7	2.1	2.7	2.5	3.0	2.8	2.5
	now	2.3	2.2	2.1	1.9	2.1	2.3	2.0	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.2
Media	before	3.0	2.8	2.9	3.0	2.8	3.1	3.0	3.1	2.8	3.4	2.8	2.9
	now	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.8	2.7	2.9	3.1	3.2	2.7	3.4	2.8	2.8
Customs and traditions	before	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.4	2.6	2.8	2.4	2.9	2.7
	now	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.0	2.4	2.3	2.1	2.1	2.4	1.9	2.6	2.4
Treatment of recently arrived immigrants	before	3.3	3.4	2.7	3.2	3.4	3.3	3.3	2.8	2.8	2.9	3.3	3.3
	now	3.4	3.5	2.9	3.4	3.7	3.1	3.7	2.6	2.7	2.9	3.2	3.4
Social structure	before	3.0	2.9	2.7	3.0	2.9	3.1	3.0	3.2	2.8	2.8	3.2	3.0
	now	2.9	2.8	2.5	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.8	3.0	2.6	3.0	3.3	3.0
Urban life	before	2.9	2.8	2.5	2.8	2.8	3.2	2.9	2.9	2.8	3.2	3.1	2.9
	now	2.6	2.4	2.0	2.6	2.8	3.0	2.8	2.7	2.3	2.7	2.9	2.7
Governmental domestic policies	before	3.1	2.8	2.5	3.1	3.0	3.5	3.6	3.3	2.9	3.2	3.4	3.2
	now	3.3	2.7	2.5	3.1	3.1	3.7	3.8	3.3	2.6	3.4	3.6	3.2
Environmental policies	before	3.0	2.2	2.2	3.7	3.4	3.6	3.6	3.0	2.4	3.6	3.5	3.2
	now	3.3	1.7	1.9	3.8	3.5	4.2	3.8	3.4	1.9	4.0	3.4	3.1

Question 8.3: What was your opinion about each of the following aspects of the host country and the home country immediately before you went abroad? And what is your opinion now?

* On a scale from 1 = "highly positive opinion" to 5 = "highly negative opinion"

We note for example that opinions most often change regarding the higher education system of the host country, i.e. an area in which all students had first-hand experience; less than a third of the students kept their opinions unchanged in this area. Altogether, changes of attitudes in the positive direction took place most often in respect of students who spent their study period abroad in Ireland and the Netherlands, while changes in the negative direction occurred most often among students who went to France or Italy.

Opinions about the home country remained much more stable. On average, 69 percent of the ratings remained unchanged, while 17 percent were more positive and 14 percent more negative upon return than prior to the study period abroad. In view of the fact that most students had spent almost all their life in the country of the home university, changes in 31 percent of cases in the ratings of the home country might be considered to be remarkably high. Again, most changes of attitudes took place regarding the system of higher education. Thus, the in-depth experience of higher education in the host country caused in many cases a reconsideration of the strengths and weaknesses of higher education at home. German, Greek, Danish and Dutch students changed their view on higher education in their home country most often in a positive direction, while French students considered the higher education system at home most often more negatively upon return.

9

Comprehensive Assessment by the Participating Students

9.1 Personal Value of Study Abroad

Students were asked to state the extent to which they considered it worthwhile to study abroad, taking into consideration such aspects as study progress, career, foreign language proficiency, understanding the host country, travel, or break from usual surroundings. They were asked to rate each of the eleven aspects covered in the question on a scale from 1 = "extremely worthwhile" to 5 = "not at all worthwhile".

Altogether, 1990/91 ERASMUS students considered the study period abroad supported by the ERASMUS programme as worthwhile. The average rating for all eleven aspects was 2.0, i.e. exactly the scale point 2 called "worthwhile". This was 0.2 point less favourable than the rating of the 1988/89 ERASMUS students.

Most positively assessed were cultural and foreign language outcomes: acquaintance with people in another country, foreign language proficiency (1.4 each), and knowledge and understanding of the host country (1.5). The opportunities to widen personal experience and to enhance career prospects were also highly regarded: opportunity to travel, break from usual surroundings (1.7 each), and career prospects (2.0). Contrasting learning experiences, new views on the home country and finally academic progress were appreciated as well, though with somewhat less enthusiasm: other teaching methods than at home (2.1), new perspectives on home country (2.2), exposure to subjects not offered at the home institution of higher education, study progress during the study period abroad (2.5 each), and finally study progress after return (2.7).

Table 9.1
Personal Value of Study Abroad, by Host Country (mean*)

	Host country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Other teaching methods than at home	2.2	2.0	1.8	2.5	2.1	2.5	2.1	2.1	1.8	2.6	1.9	2.1
Exposure to subject not offered at home institution	2.1	2.4	2.3	2.8	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.3	2.0	2.9	2.5	2.5
Study progress during study abroad	2.4	2.4	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.6	2.4	2.5	2.9	2.4	2.5
Study progress after return	2.6	2.6	3.0	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.7
Opportunity to travel	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.4	1.5	1.9	1.5	1.8	1.7
Career prospects	2.2	1.8	2.1	2.1	1.9	2.5	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.5	1.9	2.0
Acquaintance with people in another country	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.6	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.2	1.4	1.4
Foreign language proficiency	1.8	1.3	1.9	1.3	1.3	1.8	1.3	1.2	1.8	1.4	1.3	1.4
New perspectives on home country	2.4	2.1	2.4	2.3	2.1	2.8	2.2	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.2	2.2
Knowledge and understanding of the host country	1.8	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.6	1.3	1.4	1.8	1.4	1.6	1.5
Break from usual surroundings	1.8	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.7	1.7

Question 8.7: To what extent do you consider it was worthwhile for you to study abroad with regard to the following aspects?

* On a scale from 1 = "extremly worthwhile" to 5 = "not at all worthwhile"

If we exclude foreign language proficiency, because of the uneven role the various foreign languages play in Europe, the mean rating across the ten remaining categories differed only moderately across host countries. The range from 2.0 to 2.2 the latter for students going to Greece and Portugal - clearly varied less in 1990/91 than in 1988/89 (from 1.8 to 2.3).

Most highly appreciated for the academic and professional value of studying there were Germany and Denmark (2.2 on average for the five respective items). Portugal (2.8) and Greece (2.7) were rated lowest in this respect, but the ratings were still just positive on average. The North-South gap was smaller in the responses of the 1990/91 students than for the 1988/89 students. Italy, Portugal, Spain and Ireland were most positively assessed in terms of understanding of the host country and acquaintance with its people, as Table 9.1 shows.

Spanish students rated the study period abroad most positively (1.8). Students from Portugal, Denmark and the Netherlands (2.2 each) were slightly more reserved in their judgements.

The longer the duration of the study period, the more favourably it was rated regarding three aspects: foreign language proficiency, and new perspectives on the home country, and career prospects. Finally, differences in the assessment of the value of study abroad were substantial in only three categories, as far as fields of study are concerned: academic progress during the study period abroad, study progress after return and career prospects.

9.2 Satisfaction with the Period Abroad

Asked to rate their satisfaction with their study period abroad ("all things considered") on a scale from 1 = "very satisfied" to 5 = "not satisfied at all", ERASMUS students 1990/91 rated 1.6 on average. This was marginally less positive than the respective ratings of 1988/89 students (1.5), but still showed an extraordinarily high degree of satisfaction. Only two percent of the students were clearly dissatisfied (rating of 4 or 5).

The degree of satisfaction with the study period abroad did not vary significantly according to the host country in 1990/91. In contrast to 1988/89, study in all host countries was equally well received in 1990/91.

As regards home country, however, we note again in 1990/91 a variation by 0.4. As before, Spanish students (1.4) belonged to those rating study abroad very favourably, while British and Irish students (1.8 each) belonged again to those rating study abroad slightly less favourably. In contrast to 1988/89, however, we no longer see a general North-South difference in Europe in this respect.

9.3 Desired Duration of the ERASMUS Supported Period

Both the positive experiences during the study period abroad and the limits of what they could experience and achieve during their stay led many students to wish for a longer stay abroad than initially intended or supported. Of all the ERASMUS students surveyed in 1990/91, 67 percent stated that they would have liked to spend a longer period abroad. Those who wished for an additional period abroad would have liked to stay an additional 7.3 months on average. In 1988/89, 68 percent wished an extension of the stay abroad of 5.7 months on average. In both years, ERASMUS 1990/91 students would have liked an average duration of the study period abroad of about 12 months.

Some 23 percent of the 1990/91 students surveyed actually extended the stay abroad for an average period of 5.9 months. Among them are the four percent of students who are required to spend more than one year abroad.

The desire to extend the study period abroad neither differed substantially according to field of study, nor according to the duration of the ERASMUS-supported period, nor according to the host country. As regards home country, however, the desired extension varied significantly. It was shortest on average for Danish and Dutch and longest for Italian students who in fact extended their stay abroad most markedly.

10

Summary

The study reports the major findings of the questionnaire survey "Experiences of ERASMUS Students 1990/91". Students awarded a grant by the Commission of the European Communities to spend a period of 3 to 12 months at an institution of higher education in another EC Member State were asked to provide information about their background, the preparation for and their experiences during the study period abroad, and the outcomes in terms of recognition, academic progress, foreign language proficiency, knowledge and opinions of culture and society of the host country, etc. The ERASMUS Programme was inaugurated in 1987/88, and this second survey (the first surveyed the 1988/89 students) addressed the fourth cohort of ERASMUS students. Of the 25,835 ERASMUS students in the academic year 1990/91(excluding "free movers"), a sample of about 5,000 was sent a questionnaire a few months after the completion of the study period abroad. 3,263 students provided valid responses. The high response rate of 66 percent indicates the readiness of the ERASMUS students to provide feedback useful for future generations of students. In fact, some of the responses challenge widespread views about the strengths and weaknesses of study in other countries of the European Community in the framework of the ERASMUS programme.

As regards the profile of the participating students, a wide range of fields of study was supported by ERASMUS grants. On average, students were older than 23 years and had completed 2.8 years of study before they went abroad. They spent seven months on average in the host country, and 21 percent of them participated in a work placement while abroad. Most students had spent some period abroad prior to their ERASMUS-supported study. Their socio-economic background appears to match that of all students at institutions of higher education: 39 percent reported that either their father, their mother, or both parents were college-trained. Forty-one percent of these students rated their parents' income

status as above average and 13 percent as below average; 56 percent of the ERASMUS-supported students surveyed were female.

The timing of application for ERASMUS support and the timing of the receipt of the support on the part of the students is one of the most critical issues of the ERASMUS programme. In defining "typical" as the timing reported by the 50 percent of the ERASMUS students closest to the average, we observe that students typically had to apply 5-8 months prior to the study abroad period. They received notice of acceptance typically 2-4 months prior to departure and were officially notified that they would receive an ERASMUS grant between four months prior to departure and the time of departure. They got to know the amount of grant mostly between one month before and one month after departure and they typically received the first money between the time of departure and two months after. Thirty-five percent got to know only during the last two months before departure that they were accepted while 30 percent did not know officially even two weeks before departure whether they would be awarded an ERASMUS grant. Sixty-two percent did not know two weeks before departure how much ERASMUS support they would receive and 57 percent had not received the ERASMUS grant two weeks after the arrival at the host institution.

We note that participating departments developed a substantial range of provisions for preparing students for study abroad as well as providing administrative and academic advice and support for incoming ERASMUS students during the study period abroad. For example, 39 percent of the students participated in mandatory preparatory courses and a further 19 percent in optional preparatory courses; only seven percent went abroad without any specific preparation. Only 18 percent reported no support regarding registration at the host institution, course selection and related administrative and organisational issues, although 31 percent were not given guidance and advice in academic matters. On average, students assessed such measures prior to but also during the study period abroad somewhat cautiously. Obviously, many of them saw a need for some improvement in these areas.

Most ERASMUS students reported rich academic experiences at the host institution of higher education: 55 percent had frequent contact with the teaching staff of the host institution of higher education; more than two-thirds took courses involving content not available at the home institution, and more than half experienced new methods of teaching and learning. About 90 percent of the students took, at least in part, courses taught in the language of the host country. Students spent on average 16 hours weekly in taking lectures - about three hours less than at home. In addition, most students were exposed to a broad range of cultural and social experiences in the host country.

Five problems encountered during the study period abroad were most frequently rated as serious by the ERASMUS students. Accommodation (22 %), financial matters (21 %), and too much contact with people from home country (20 %) were stated most frequently, but administrative problems abroad (18 %) as well as matters of recognition and credit transfer (18 %), were reported almost as often.

Accommodation in the host country for 57 percent of the ERASMUS students was available upon arrival, with only 14 percent still searching after one week. Twenty percent were not provided with any help in finding accommodation while 49 percent were provided with university accommodation abroad, in contrast to 30 percent at home. Twenty-one percent rated the quality of accommodation as bad.

ERASMUS students surveyed received an average monthly financial support of 194 ECU (about 1,4000 ECU for an average period of about seven months) supposed to cover the additional costs incurred by studying in another Member State of the European Community, notably round-trip fare, additional living expenses and possibly costs of language training. Students actually reported that they spent on average per month about 79 ECU on additional living costs, 77 ECU on almost three roundtrips to and from the host country on average, 24 ECU for retaining their home accommodation, and only a further 3 ECU for additional tuition and fees. The ERASMUS grants in 1990/91 on average appeared to cover the additional costs for study abroad. There are, however, financial constraints: some students reported much higher costs abroad than support received (while the opposite was true for others). As already stated, some students reported that they experienced serious financial problems. The data did not reveal how many students lived more thriftily abroad than at home and how many students did not go abroad because they considered the support as being too low.

Three criteria for recognition were employed: (a) 74 percent of the study actually undertaken abroad was recognized with 58 percent of the ERASMUS students reporting full recognition according to this measure. (b) Study achievements recognized corresponded on average to 72 percent of typical study at home, with only 33 percent of the students reported complete recognition in this respect. (c) According to the strictest measure, the degree of non-prolongation, only 54 percent of study abroad during an ERASMUS-supported period was recognized (the expected prolongation corresponded on average to 46 percent of the study period abroad, with 48 percent of students not expecting any prolongation). In search for possible causes of limited recognition we note that students considered only 40 percent of the courses they took abroad as equally demanding to

those at the home institution; 22 percent of the courses were rated as more demanding and 28 percent as less demanding.

In contrast to the shortcomings regarding recognition, students themselves rated their academic progress abroad very positively. Fifty-three percent of students considered their academic progress abroad better, and only 20 percent reported less academic progress than during a respective period at home. Even allowing for some overestimation on the part of the students, these findings suggest that there is more academic value to study abroad as judged by the students' themselves than is formally recognized by the home institutions of higher education.

ERASMUS students acquired substantial knowledge of their host country, but their opinions on the host country on average did not change substantially. There was a great diversity of findings but, in general, students from southern EC Member States rated higher education in the host country slightly more favourably than higher education at home, while the reverse was true for students from northern EC Member States. Conversely, higher education in most northern EC Member States was rated slightly more positively than higher education in most southern Member States. This is reinforced in responses to questions about the value of studying abroad and the academic problems faced abroad.

Proficiency on the language of the host country was rated only 4.2 on average on a scale from 1 = "very good" to 7 = "extremely limited" prior to the study period by students taking all or at least part of their courses in a foreign language. Upon return, the mean rating was 2.2. Forty-one percent of courses taken at the host institutions by ERASMUS students were taught in English, 22 percent in French, 15 percent in German, ten percent in Spanish, seven percent in Italian and at most one percent each in other languages.

Satisfaction with the study period abroad was very high altogether. Only two percent reported that they were clearly dissatisfied with the ERASMUS-supported study period abroad. Most students considered a study period in another EC country as a culturally academically worthwhile experience, with cultural and linguistic outcomes more positively assessed than academic outcomes.

It is not the aim of this summary to suggest any general evaluative statements about the procedures and outcomes of the ERASMUS programme. Four aspects, however, might deserve special attention in drawing conclusions from the findings of this study.

First, we observe striking differences in the conditions and provisions of student mobility in the ERASMUS programme. They would appear even more striking if this study had aggregated the students' responses according to individual home and host departments. Both the aggregation according to country and

the aggregation by field of study reveal substantial variations but, by and large, conditions and provisions for study abroad varied more strongly by country than by discipline. For example, the proportion of students by home country reporting no organised preparation ranged from 45 to 83 percent. No support in finding accommodation was reported by ten percent of the students hosted in the country in which most support was provided, and by 41 percent of the students hosted in the country in which such support was least common. Finally, less academic progress abroad than at home varied according to the host country from 14 to 28 percent of the ERASMUS students. There appears to be some North-South differences: students from northern countries in the European Community tended to rate some of their study environment at home relatively positively and tended to assess the conditions for study in the southern host countries less favourably; in contrast, students from southern Europe rated their study conditions and experiences during the ERASMUS-supported period abroad more favourably. But altogether, variations between individual countries according to specific aspects are more noteworthy than any such general pattern.

Secondly, the findings of this study call for consideration of outcomes of the ERASMUS programme which could and should be expected. For example, could 90 percent recognition be expected, and does 56-74 percent recognition according to different measures indicate substantial problems and a need to improve the various measures aimed to ensure recognition? Or is 75 percent recognition more realistic, because some problems of learning in a foreign language will at least be common at the beginning, with some students facing adaptation problems to a foreign culture, some taking fewer courses, others deliberately choosing courses outside their home curricula in order to broaden their horizon or making use of the period abroad for extra-curricular experiences?

Thirdly, we compared most of the findings of this survey of 1990/91 ERASMUS students with those of a previous survey addressing 1988/89 ERASMUS students. In various respects, we noted more or less the same results. The same proportion of students lived in university accommodation, and ratings of the quality of accommodation did not change on average. Serious problems of study abroad were on average not more frequently reported by 1990/91 students than by 1988/89 students. In other respects, we observe a slight decline: recognition of study achievements abroad upon return was two percent lower on average in 1990/91, and the proportion of students reporting better academic progress abroad than during a corresponding period at home declined by two percent as well. Possible causes for this slight decline were reduced provision of preparatory courses and reduced participation in preparatory courses as well as a lower average level of proficiency in the host country language prior to the study period

abroad. On the other hand, a smaller number of 1990/91 students reported academic problems abroad such as those due to differences in teaching and learning styles between the home and host country and taking examinations in a foreign language.

Again questions have to be raised on what could be expected. On the one hand, departments newly joining the ERASMUS scheme might contribute to some watering down of the quality of standards or difficulties might occur in the care for a growing number of ERASMUS students participating, for example regarding individual guidance or provision of accommodation. If these views are valid, some decline in average quality during a period, in which the number of ERASMUS students more than doubled, would not come as a surprise. On the other hand, we might expect a consolidation of those cooperation programmes which have existed for a long period. We also might expect a collective learning process in terms of new networks making use of the information available from previously established networks or in terms of more targeted selection criteria, both among networks and among students applying for support. Both factors would support an expectation that 1990/91 ERASMUS students should experience improved conditions and report more positive results.

Fourthly, the information provided and the views stated by the ERASMUS students do not in all respects confirm the conventional wisdom as regards most desirable and most needed improvements to the ERASMUS programme. Many commentators on the ERASMUS programme have called for more funds, improved administrative processes, most notably in transferring student mobility grants to the students more quickly, and more favourable conditions for study abroad. The ERASMUS students themselves underscore those views in some respects, most strongly on the timing of award decisions and the provision of grant. On the other hand, the ERASMUS grant appears to cover the additional expenses of students abroad surprisingly well at least for those students who receive a grant. However, ERASMUS students also emphasize shortcomings in administrative and academic arrangements within cooperating institutions and departments. They made clear that improvements were also desirable in other areas, notably in the quality of preparation, the extent and quality of advice, the support at the host institution and, above all, in recognition. These are all issues for which the institutions of higher education and their departments are not only predominantly responsible, but have also, in their applications to the ERASMUS programme, undertaken to resolve.

Appendix

Research Design, Methods, and Procedures

This study is based on the questionnaire survey "Experiences of ERASMUS Students 1990/91". Experiences acquired in a previous survey of ERASMUS ICP students 1988/89 and ERASMUS ECTS students 1990/91 and meetings with experts from the Commission of the European Communities, the ERASMUS Bureau, persons involved in the ERASMUS network and other experts helped in setting thematic priorities and in formulating the questionnaire.

Students were asked to provide information regarding:

- their biography and educational careers;
- the patterns of the ERASMUS supported period;
- preparation for the study abroad period;
- advice and support provided by the host institution of higher education;
- living in the host country;
- studying at the host institution of higher education;
- accommodation;
- financial resources and expenses;
- foreign language proficiency before and after the study period abroad;
- knowledge of and opinion about the host country culture and society;
- academic achievements and recognition of study abroad; and
- summarizing assessment of the life and study period in the host country.

The questionnaire comprised 20 pages, more than 70 questions and about 850 variables. Most of the questions were closed, though leaving room for statements in a final open category "others". At the end of the questionnaire, students were asked to describe their worst and best experiences as well as difficulties successfully overcome. The questionnaire was translated into each of the nine official EC languages. Students in Belgium were given a questionnaire in both French and Dutch.

About half of the programme administrators at the individual institutions of higher education were asked in summer 1991 to provide addresses of the stu-

dents of the ERASMUS programme. This resulted in about 18,000 addresses, i.e. the addresses of about half of the participating students. To ensure at least 3,000 responses, a sample of 5,133 students was drawn from the fund of available addresses. The sampling procedure enabled us to collect a representative sample - according to the data available on the award of grants - regarding the criteria "home country" and "field of study". The survey did not include the individually mobile students supported by the ERASMUS programme ("free movers"), as the addresses of these students, who comprised less than two percent of all ERASMUS students in 1990/91, were not available at the time the survey was conducted. Also, ECTS students are not included in this survey and a separate survey on ECTS students' experiences has been undertaken.

The survey was conducted at the time when all students had not only completed the study period in the host country, but also had experienced life and study at the home institution again - even in some cases received recognition for their study abroad achievements - and thus could view it from a full range of perspectives. During the third week of December 1991, students were sent the questionnaire by the ERASMUS Bureau. A letter by the Task Force Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth of the Commission of the European Communities was enclosed, explaining the rationale of the study and asking for information. An explanatory note from the head of the research project, printed on the cover pages, explained the measures taken to assure confidentiality. Finally, major terms used in the study were explained on the front pages. A return envelope and postage stamps were provided. Two months later, a reminder letter was sent out to those who had not responded at that time.

Of the 5,133 questionnaires, 144 (2.8 %) were returned because the addresses were not valid. Of the remaining 4,989 questionnaires, 3,280 were returned within 22 weeks. Seven of the responses had to be excluded, in most cases because the stay abroad was less than four weeks (and hence more likely to have received support in the framework of Intensive Programmes). Ten respondents sent blank questionnaires back. Thus, this study is based on 3,263 valid responses.

The high response rate of 65.5 percent (66.8 percent in 1988/89) indicates that the questionnaire was well received by most ERASMUS students. In spite of the substantial work load required to respond to the questionnaire - a fact which was referred to by some students on the last page of the questionnaire - ERASMUS students obviously were most cooperative in providing feedback on their experiences which might be useful to further generations of students, persons in charge of exchange programmes and to those politically and administratively responsible for the ERASMUS programme in general.

Table A
Representation of ERASMUS Students in the Survey and Return Rate by Country of Home Institution of Higher Education

	A		B		C		D	E
	All ERASMUS students[1]		Valid address		Respondents		Return rate	Representation ratio
Home Institution	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	(C : B)	(C : A)
B	1080	4,2	300	6,0	224	6,9	74,7	20,7
D	4644	18,0	778	15,6	564	17,3	72,5	12,1
DK	547	2,1	113	2,3	82	2,5	72,6	15,0
E	3169	12,3	558	11,2	322	9,9	57,7	10,2
F	5287	20,5	997	20,0	706	21,6	70,8	13,4
G	465	1,8	136	2,7	74	2,3	54,4	15,9
I	3052	11,8	462	9,3	343	10,5	74,2	11,2
IRL	603	2,3	135	2,7	88	2,7	65,2	14,6
LUX	0	0,0	7	0,1	5	0,2	71,4	*
NL	1849	7,2	367	7,4	208	6,4	56,7	11,2
P	411	1,6	130	2,6	94	2,9	72,3	22,9
UK	4728	18,3	999	20,0	553	16,9	55,4	11,7
Total	25835	100.0	4982	100	3263	100	65,5	12,6

*As the absolute number of Luxembourgian ERASMUS students is very small, all of those were sent a questionnaire for whom an address was made available. Therefore, the representation ratio was likely to be substantially higher.

[1] Excluding ECTS students, LINGUA students and "free movers".

The sample of addresses were drawn according to the distribution of students by "home country" and "field of study" as expected at the time when support was granted to the respective ICPs. The actual distribution of respondents, thus can differ from that of the ERASMUS 1990/91 students for two reasons. First, the distribution of actual ERASMUS students differs slightly from that of expected students at the time of the award decision. Secondly, return rates vary, as Table A shows. Column E of Table A indicates that the respondents of the questionnaire represented the total ERASMUS students 1990/91 quite well. German, French and Italian students were slightly over-represented while British and Spanish students were under-represented. As regards host country (not documented here in a table), students going to the United Kingdom for their period abroad were clearly over-represented, while the proportion of respondents going to Belgium or the Netherlands was slightly too small.

Formal checks of the responses and the coding of open questions were taken care of by members of the research team with the aid of students from the respective countries. The data processing and statistical analysis took place on the Siemens BS2000 computer at the Comprehensive University of Kassel and on IBM personal computers at the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work. Programme packages SPSS-X served the statistical analysis and the provision of tables.

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In 1990/91, the fourth year of the ERASMUS Programme, approximately 30,000 students were supported unter ERASMUS while undertaking a period of study abroad in another EC Member State. This study is based on responses to a written questionnaire by a sample of 3,263 ERASMUS students. The study focuses on academic and administrative support by the home and host institutions, academic recognition and academic achievements whilst abroad, improvement in the acquisition of a foreign language and cultural awareness. The study reveals that although the ERASMUS Programme has, within two years, almost tripled in size, there has not been a major loss in quality over this period.

1990/91, im vierten Jahr des ERASMUS-Programms, erhielten etwa 30.000 Studierende Unterstützung für eine Studienphase in einem anderen EG-Land. Diese Studie zeigt die Antworten von 3.263 ERASMUS-Studierenden auf eine schriftliche Befragung auf. Sie behandelt die Unterstützung durch die Herkunfts- und Gasthochschule in Studien- und Verwaltungsangelegenheiten, Studium und Leben im Ausland, die Anerkennung der Studienleistungen sowie die Studienerträge. Die Untersuchung zeigt, daß die schnelle quantitative Ausweitung des ERASMUS Programms ohne größeren Qualitätsverlust erfolgte.

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Table 5.2
Accommodation Problems Abroad, by Host Country (percent; multiple reply possible)

	Host Country											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Too small	26	20	11	23	34	35	20	19	18	23	28	26
Incomplete/inconvenient furniture or equipment	25	15	15	33	31	38	25	33	26	20	18	24
Problems of damp rooms, vermin, subst. repair needed	15	5	0	22	14	27	15	34	13	23	13	14
Sharing room with other students	6	10	7	22	7	35	43	15	7	34	6	12
Lack of privacy	15	13	25	21	15	27	32	19	11	39	14	17
Problems in sharing joint facilities with others	21	24	13	17	26	27	19	21	19	32	23	22
Noise or rude treatment by neighbours etc.	16	14	8	21	23	22	21	19	11	16	28	21
Restrictive regulations (visitors etc.)	11	9	8	9	19	2	31	12	5	25	7	12
Problems with owner/ manager/caretaker	10	13	11	15	10	15	21	10	6	9	6	11
Problems of security	7	5	1	6	18	7	11	6	8	5	7	9
Inconveniently located as regards host university	9	15	25	14	14	10	21	14	17	16	12	14
Inconveniently located as regards access to shops etc.	14	17	10	6	18	13	14	12	10	5	12	13
Other	11	8	10	17	9	20	14	15	8	11	12	11
Not ticked	23	30	29	18	15	10	15	15	28	11	19	20
Total	208	198	174	242	252	290	302	242	187	268	206	227
(n)	(143)	(502)	(72)	(363)	(680)	(40)	(235)	(113)	(142)	(44)	(929)	(3263)

Question 7.8: Which of the following problems did you experience concerning your accommodation in the host country? If you changed during the ERASMUS period, please refer to your principal accommodation)

As regards host countries, the following patterns emerge:

- very few ERASMUS students had problems of the quality of the rooms as such in Denmark and Germany. However, problems of sharing joint facilities were mentioned often by students going to Germany and lack of privacy as well as inconvenient location as regards host institutions of higher education by those studying in Denmark;
- the quality of the room (small, lack of furniture, repair needed etc.) was most often criticised by ERASMUS students going to Greece, Spain and Ireland. The ratings of Greece in 1990/91 on this aspect were substantially worse than in 1988/89;
- disturbance by others (lack of privacy, problems of sharing rooms and facilities, problems with neighbours. etc.) was referred to most often by students who spent their period abroad in Portugal, Greece and Italy;
- restrictive regulations, for example lack of rights to invite visitors to one's room, were most often reported by ERASMUS students going to Italy (31 %), Portugal (25 %) and France (19 %). In contrast, students going to Portugal in 1988/89 hardly had faced these problems at all; and
- problems of security were most often stated by students who spent the study period in France (18 %).

Students spent on average 31 minutes daily on the return journey to the institution of higher education. Actually, a third of the students spent more than half an hour on their daily return journey to the host institution, eight percent of whom spent even more than one hour. These figures for 1990/91 were almost identical to those for 1988/89.

The commuting time between the institution of higher education and the place where students lived was undoubtedly an important element in judging the quality of accommodation. As only 14 percent had rated their accommodation as inconveniently located as regards the host institution, the threshold of problematic location was on average a return journey lasting more than 50 minutes. This was reported most often by students spending their period of study abroad in Spain (28 %; students going to Spain spent on average 42 minutes) and in Denmark (31 %; 40 minutes on average). On the other hand, only seven percent of those going to Belgium spent more than 50 minutes, and the average commuting time was only 19 minutes.

6

Costs and Financing of the Study Period Abroad

6.1 Monthly Expenses for Life and Study Abroad and at Home

The subsequent text and the tables are based only on the responses of students who provided complete information on sources and expenses both while studying abroad and at home. This was done by only 57 percent of all respondents. Some students provided incomplete answers to this difficult and time-consuming section of the questionnaire, others refused to state expenses and resources.

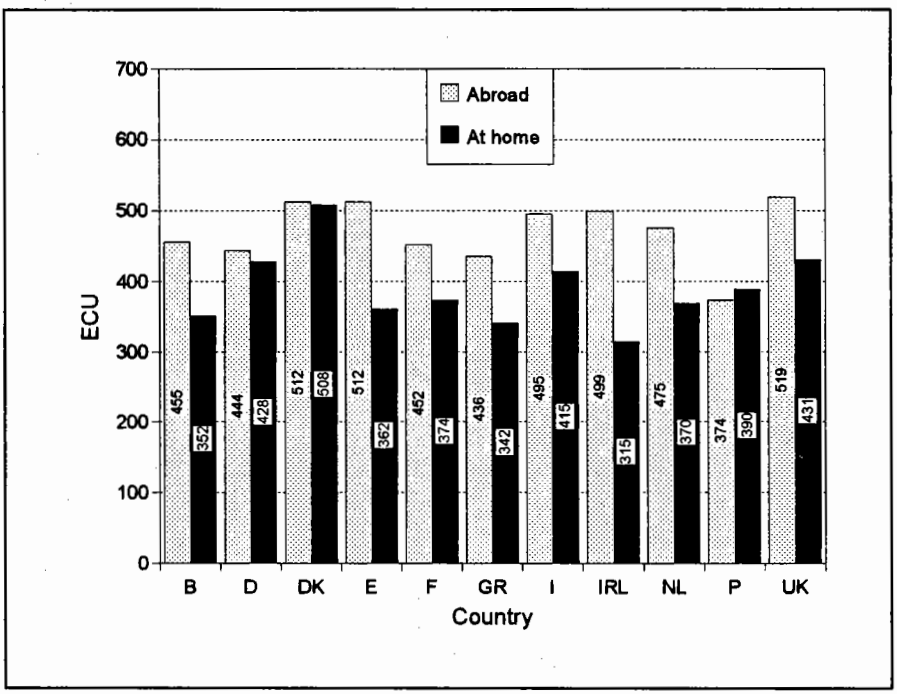
On average, ERASMUS students 1990/91 spent 479 ECU per month during the study period abroad for life and study in the host country. This sum does not include tuition fees and other related fees, the round-trip fare to the host country and continuing expenses in the home country while abroad. While studying at home, ERASMUS students 1990/91 had spent 400 ECU monthly on average (excluding tuition fees and other related fees, including possibly the value of free rent at home). Thus, the monthly expenses abroad for life and study were 79 ECU (20.0 %) higher than expenses at home.

In 1988/89, ERASMUS students had spent 419 ECU per month for life and study abroad and 355 ECU at home. Thus, the expenses increased by 14 and 13 percent respectively within two years.

As Chart 6.1 shows, the monthly average expenses for life and study abroad varied to some extent by host country. Those going to Spain in 1990/91 spent 521 ECU on average, and those going to the United Kingdom, Denmark, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands about 500 ECU. Those going to Belgium, France, Germany and Greece spent about 450 ECU, and those going to Portugal only 374 ECU. In comparison to 1988/89, expenses for students going to the Netherlands and Spain increased substantially above average, while expenses for students going to Denmark increased by less than the average.

The differences found by host country did not match fully assumptions about differences in general living expenses. There are various factors which might lead to unexpectedly high expenditures in the host country, for example shortage of reasonable accommodation, relatively short study periods which might cause higher costs per month, or students' difficulties in adjusting to food and the lifestyle prevailing in the host country. On the other hand, general subsidies to studies, food, accommodation etc. in some countries benefited the visiting students as well and thus reduced the costs of living abroad.

Chart 6.1:
Comparison of ERASMUS-Students' Monthly Expenses for Life and Study* Abroad and at Home - by Country** (ECU)



* Excluding tuition and other fees (both students abroad and at home), and excluding round-trip fare to the country and continued expenses at home while abroad (students abroad)

** Expenditures during the ERASMUS-supported period abroad, by host country, and expenditures at home, by country of home institution of higher education.

abroad, grants and loans are the major sources for funding of study at home for Danish (70.7 %), Dutch (62.4 %) and British students (46.6 %) (also the few students from Luxembourg). ERASMUS students from other EC Member States on average funded their study at home predominantly by their own and their parents' resources.

6.6 The Role Played by ERASMUS Support

Students were not asked to provide information on the exact amount of ERASMUS grants they received. In combining the information provided on the expenses and on the ways of financing the study period abroad, it is possible to estimate the amount of grant received.[7] As shown in Table 6.5, the average ERASMUS monthly grant was 194 ECU for all 1990/91 students responding.
The monthly grant was about 15 percent higher than in 1988/89,[8] corresponding to the increasing costs. As already reported, the 1990/91 students surveyed reported 14 percent higher expenses for life and study abroad than the 1988/89 students surveyed.

As the additional monthly expenses for the study period abroad - travel, additional living costs and continued costs at home while being abroad - amounted to 181 ECU and the additional costs for tuition fees and related fees were at most three ECU on average, the ERASMUS grant surpassed the additional expenses abroad by ten ECU. There might be moderate errors in the estimate, but the figures allow us to conclude that the ERASMUS grants in 1990/91 on average covered the additional costs associated with study abroad completely.[9]

Based on the same ways of calculation, we estimate that parents and students themselves covered 300 ECU of the monthly expenses while the students were at

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7 Based on the students' responses, we estimated the following tuition fees and other fees paid per month at home and the additional fees paid per month abroad according to country of home institution: Belgium (31 and 4 ECU), Germany (8 and 2 ECU), Denmark (0 and 13 ECU), Spain (40 and 2 ECU), France (36 and 4 ECU), Greece (0 and 17 ECU), Italy (23 and 2 ECU), Ireland (29 and 2 ECU), the Netherlands (57 and 2 ECU), Portugal (4 and 2 ECU), and United Kingdom (10 and 14 ECU).

8 The estimate of 158 ECU reported in Maiworm/Steube/Teichler, op. cit., p. 126, was about 9 ECU too low, because no estimates of tuition fees and related fees were taken into consideration.

9 The respective figure for 1988/89 was calculated as 23 ECU. Adjusted to include estimates on tuition and related fees, the figure comparable to that of 1990/91 would be 29 ECU for 1988/89.

the home university, and 268 ECU of the expenses abroad. The parents' and students' contributions to the study period abroad, thus, were lower than to the study period at home. One has to bear in mind, though, that the expenses stated for the study period at home include the value for free rent at home; therefore, it might have been more difficult for the parents to cover the expenses abroad.

The absolute amount of other grants and loans was more or less the same on average for the study period abroad as for study at the home institution (about 115 ECU). Other sources covered somewhat more than ten ECU per month of the expenses while studying at home and somewhat more than 30 ECU of the expenses for the study period abroad.

As Table 6.5 shows, Portuguese students were awarded an ERASMUS grant of about 500 ECU per month; Italian, Belgian, Spanish and Greek students were awarded somewhat more than 250 ECU; German and Danish students received about 200 ECU, and finally French, Irish, British and Dutch students received around 150 ECU.

Thus, Italian, Portuguese and Belgian students were awarded about 80 ECU per month more on average than the additional expenses for the study period abroad. British students received about 40 ECU more than the additional expenses. German, Danish and Spanish students received more or less as much as the additional expenses for the study period abroad. The grants awarded to French, Irish and Dutch students remained on average somewhat below the additional expenses abroad (about 30 to 60 ECU per month). Finally, Greek students on average spent about 140 ECU more for the study period abroad than their ERASMUS award.

Table 6.5
ERASMUS Grant and Additional Expenses for the Study period abroad*, by Country of Home institution (in ECU; mean)

	Country of home institution of higher education											Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Additional costs	184	192	204	273	186	393	180	193	196	414	106	184
ERASMUS grant	261	200	199	256	159	250	267	151	139	499	147	194
Difference	77	8	-5	-17	-27	-143	87	-42	-57	85	41	10

* Including estimates on tuition fees and related fees paid additionally during the study abroad period

Altogether, the information provided by the students suggests that the ERASMUS grants were slightly higher on average than all additional expenses for the study period abroad. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the grants solved all problems related to additional costs of a study period abroad. As shown above, some students received an ERASMUS grant smaller than the additional costs which they actually incurred in the context of their study period abroad (while other students received a higher grant than costs incurred). In addition, the comparison made does not necessarily reveal all financial means and expenses; for example, students might have had opportunities of earning money while studying at home which did not exist while studying abroad. Furthermore, information about the actual expenses did not reveal how many students might have been compelled to choose thriftier living conditions abroad. This was certainly the fact for many among the 21 percent of the ERASMUS students, notably Irish, Greek and French students, who reported financial problems. Finally, a survey on ERASMUS students by definition cannot reveal how many students did not apply for ERASMUS support or did not go abroad when offered support because they considered it too small.

at home, while German students considered academic progress abroad in the United Kingdom (2.5) clearly better than in France (2.8). British students considered study progress abroad in France and Germany (2.9 each) only moderately more positive than at home.

7.5 Impediments to Academic Progress Abroad

Those who rated their academic progress abroad to be lower than at home, i.e. one fifth of the ERASMUS students, were asked to state the major reasons. Of the nine categories provided, those mentioned most often were:

- differences in teaching, learning and examination modes between the host and the home university (45 % of those rating their academic progress abroad lower, i.e. 9 % of all ERASMUS students surveyed);
- substantial differences in course content (39 %, or 8 % of all respondents); and
- lack of guidance and supervision (35 %, or 7 % of all students).

Clearly, the most frequently stated reasons for limited academic success referred to educational discrepancies between higher education systems or to the academic setting of the programme. Organisational drawbacks were named by 27 percent of ERASMUS students reporting less academic progress abroad (5 % of all students surveyed). Reasons which could be attributed to the students themselves played - according to the students' perception - a lesser role than those of the academic setting:

- language barriers (30 % of those rating their academic progress abroad lower than at home, or 6 % of all students);
- students themselves did not work well, i.e not hard enough, etc. (24 %, or 5 % of the total);
- students' personal problems (10 %, or 2 % respectively);
- more demanding courses at host university (8 %, or 2 % of all students), and
- students' difficulties of living abroad (8 %, or 2 % of all students).

Finally, it is worthwhile mentioning that language barriers were mentioned more than average as a reason for low academic progress abroad by the respective Irish (53 % of those reporting less academic progress abroad and 19 % of all Irish students), Greek (50 % and 7 % respectively) and British students (42 % and 12 % respectively). On the other hand, 13 percent of all ERASMUS students going to Portugal reported that language barriers were among the reasons for less academic progress abroad. The respective figure was ten percent for all students going to Italy, as compared to three to eight percent for students going to other countries.

8

Improvement of Foreign Language Proficiency and Cultural Impacts

8.1 The Scope of the Analysis

Pursuit of academic interests and academic achievement, improvement of career prospects as well as cultural enhancement and foreign language learning are generally accepted as major motives for a period of study in another country. Within the framework of this study we could not establish the long-term impacts of a study period in another EC Member State. What was possible, though, was to elicit students' views regarding the progress of foreign language proficiency in the course of the study period abroad.[1] Similarly, a few dimensions of cultural impacts were analysed: the knowledge acquired on a range of aspects of the host country's culture and society, and the change of opinions on various aspects both of the host and the home country.

1 One methodological issue should be briefly addressed in advance. Students were asked upon return to rate their foreign language proficiency, cultural knowledge and opinions of the host and home country both before and after the study period abroad. Thus, proficiencies, knowledge and attitudes prior to the sojourn were measured retrospectively. Retrospective surveys of this kind are criticized for creating artificially large measures of change, because respondents, believing that they have improved, might rate prior proficiencies lower and prior attitudes too negatively, exaggerating their improvement. On the other hand, students asked before and after the study period in the framework of a longitudinal study might change their yardstick in assessing proficiencies and attitudes. We cannot prove the superiority of any of the two procedures in the framework of this study. Our option for a retrospective analysis was pragmatically based on the timing and the resources available; but a retrospective analysis can claim certainly sufficient validity and might be superior to a longitudinal analysis.

8.2 Improvement of Foreign Language Proficiency

ERASMUS students were asked to rate their proficiency in the (major) language of instruction at the host institution of higher education in three separate aspects:
- reading, listening, speaking and writing;
- separately in academic setting and outside classroom; and
- prior to the study period abroad and after the period abroad.

All 16 ratings were on a scale from 1= "very good" to 7 = "extremely limited". Excluded from the subsequent analysis were 11 percent of ERASMUS students, most of whom were taught completely or predominantly in their mother tongue while abroad, and some of those who did not provide complete ratings.

According to their ratings, ERASMUS students had a remarkable level of foreign language proficiency already prior to the study period abroad. Average ratings ranged from 3.7 to 4.4, as Table 8.1 shows. 1990/91 students rated their language proficiency prior to the study period abroad somewhat worse than 1988/89 students (from 3.4 to 4.2). In both surveys, proficiency in academic settings was rated to be only slightly inferior to proficiency outside the classroom. Passive proficiency, i.e. reading and listening, was considered clearly better - about half a scale-point - than active proficiency, i.e. speaking and writing.

On average across the eight ratings made by the ERASMUS students 1990/91, Spanish (3.6) and Greek students (3.7) considered their proficiency in the major language taught abroad best, while Irish (4.8), Italian (4.6) and British (4.4) rated it lowest. The low proficiency of Irish and British students certainly reflects the fact that their home language is most widely used internationally and thus the need for foreign language learning seems to be less obvious. This corresponds to the fact that students who went to Ireland and to the United Kingdom rated their prior knowledge of the language of instruction at the host university highest (means of 3.4 and 3.7 across the eight ratings), as Table 8.2 indicates. Students going to Portugal (6.0), Denmark and Greece (5.4 each) felt least prepared with regards to proficiency in the host country language.

Students enrolled in foreign language studies as well as those in business studies felt strongest in the foreign language prior to the study period abroad, while students in architecture, agriculture, geography and geology, and engineering rated their prior foreign language proficiency more modestly. It is worth reporting that students who went abroad immediately at the beginning of their first year of study reported the highest level of foreign language proficiency prior to the study period abroad (3.6 on average of the eight ratings compared with 4.1 for all students).

Table 8.1
Selfrating of Competency in Language of Instruction Before and After Study Period Abroad, by Country of Home Institution (mean*)

		Country of home institution of higher education											Total
		B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Reading in academic setting	before	3.3	3.5	3.6	3.2	3.4	3.6	4.4	4.3	3.6	3.6	4.1	3.7
	after	1.9	1.9	2.1	1.8	1.9	2.3	2.1	2.3	2.1	2.1	2.5	2.0
Listening in academic setting	before	3.8	3.9	3.9	3.5	3.8	4.0	4.6	4.4	3.9	3.9	4.4	4.0
	after	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.9	2.4	2.1	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.4	2.0
Speaking in academic setting	before	4.5	4.4	4.5	4.0	4.3	4.3	5.0	5.0	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.5
	after	2.5	2.4	2.7	2.3	2.3	2.7	2.5	2.8	2.7	2.4	2.8	2.5
Writing in academic setting	before	4.4	4.3	4.9	3.9	4.0	4.1	5.1	4.9	4.5	4.8	4.5	4.4
	after	2.7	2.6	3.2	2.4	2.4	2.7	3.0	3.0	2.8	3.1	3.1	2.7
Reading outside classroom	before	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.6	3.4	4.2	4.9	3.6	3.6	4.2	3.7
	after	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.0	1.9	2.3	1.9	2.1	2.5	2.0
Listening outside classroom	before	3.7	3.7	3.3	3.5	3.9	3.6	4.4	4.8	3.8	4.0	4.3	3.9
	after	1.9	1.9	1.6	1.8	1.9	2.2	1.9	2.1	1.9	2.1	2.3	1.9
Speaking outside classroom	before	4.1	4.1	3.7	3.7	4.1	3.7	4.6	5.2	4.1	4.4	4.4	4.2
	after	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.4	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.1
Writing outside classroom	before	4.2	4.1	4.3	3.6	4.0	3.6	4.8	5.1	4.3	4.6	4.6	4.2
	after	2.6	2.5	2.8	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.7	2.9	2.6	2.9	3.0	2.6

Question 6.15: How do you rate your competence in the (major) language of instruction at the host institution (reply only if different from the language of instruction at your home institution)?

* On a scale from 1 = "very good" to 7 = "extremely limited"

Table 8.2
Selfrating of Competency in Language of Instruction Before and After Study Period Abroad, by Host Country (mean*)

		Host country											Total
		B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	NL	P	UK	
Reading in academic setting	before	4.2	3.8	4.9	3.9	3.6	5.2	4.4	2.9	4.5	5.5	3.2	3.7
	after	2.3	2.2	2.8	2.0	2.0	4.2	2.3	1.7	2.6	2.4	1.8	2.0
Listening in academic setting	before	4.5	3.9	5.3	4.2	3.9	5.6	4.6	3.4	4.8	5.9	3.7	4.0
	after	2.4	2.1	3.1	2.0	1.9	4.3	2.2	1.7	2.7	2.5	1.9	2.0
Speaking in academic setting	before	4.8	4.4	5.7	4.8	4.3	5.7	5.1	4.0	5.1	6.3	4.1	4.5
	after	2.7	2.6	3.6	2.4	2.3	4.6	2.7	2.2	3.3	3.2	2.3	2.5
Writing in academic setting	before	5.1	4.4	5.7	4.7	4.3	5.7	5.2	3.8	5.3	6.2	3.9	4.4
	after	3.5	2.8	3.9	2.7	2.7	4.6	3.2	2.4	3.9	3.6	2.4	2.7
Reading outside classroom	before	4.1	3.8	4.9	3.9	3.5	5.0	4.4	2.9	4.6	5.5	3.3	3.7
	after	2.4	2.1	2.5	1.9	2.0	3.5	2.2	1.7	2.6	2.1	1.9	2.0
Listening outside classroom	before	4.2	3.7	5.4	4.3	3.8	5.5	4.5	3.3	4.8	6.1	3.7	3.9
	after	2.2	1.9	3.0	1.9	1.9	3.6	2.0	1.8	2.6	2.3	1.9	1.9
Speaking outside classroom	before	4.6	4.1	5.5	4.6	4.0	5.4	4.8	3.6	5.1	6.2	3.8	4.2
	after	2.4	2.1	3.2	2.1	2.0	3.7	2.2	1.8	2.8	2.8	2.0	2.1
Writing outside classroom	before	4.9	4.1	5.6	4.6	4.2	5.4	5.0	3.5	5.2	6.3	3.8	4.2
	after	3.1	2.6	3.7	2.5	2.6	4.1	2.9	2.2	3.5	3.5	2.3	2.6

Question 6.15: How do you rate your competence in the (major) language of instruction at the host institution (reply only if different from the language of instruction at your home institution)?

* On a scale from 1 = "very good" to 7 = "extremely limited"

Students going to Spain and Ireland mentioned more problems than those going to other countries. Notably, they criticized the high price, the scarce provision and the poor quality of accommodation available in these two countries. Also students going to Italy pointed out the high price, and a substantial proportion of those going to Portugal did not know where and how to look as well as facing language difficulties in the search.

5.5 Quality of Accommodation

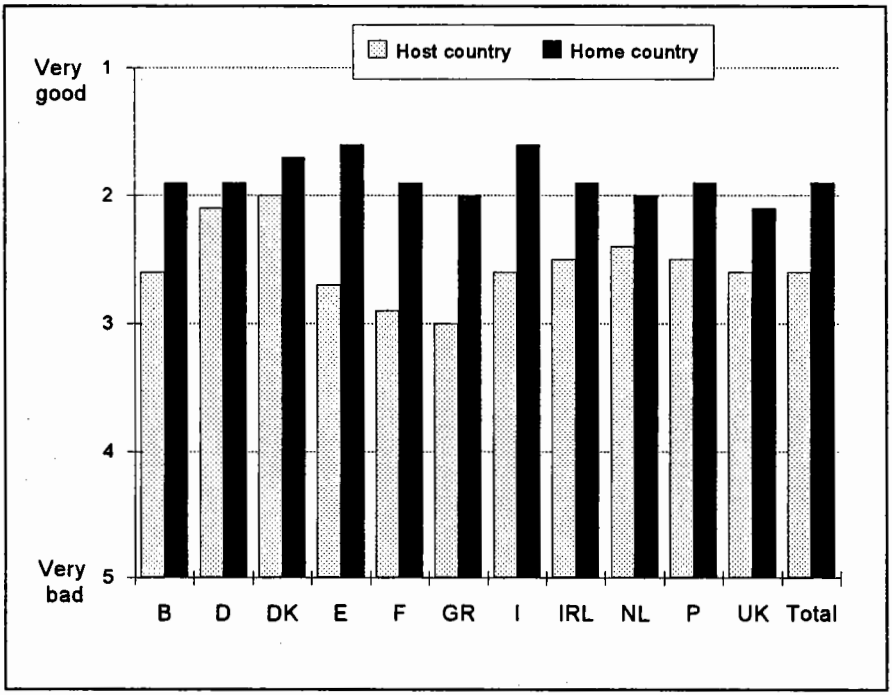
Altogether, 1990/91 ERASMUS students were not dissatisfied with their accommodation in the host country. On average, they rated 2.6 on a scale from 1 = "very good" to 5 = "very bad". They considered accommodation abroad, however, clearly worse than accommodation at home which was rated 1.9 on average, as Chart 5.3 shows. Some 21 percent of the ERASMUS students rated their accommodation abroad as bad (scale points 4 and 5), but only five percent did so on accommodation at home. These figures for 1990/91 were almost identical to those for 1988/89.

Two host countries clearly stood out in the quality of accommodation provided with 72 percent of ERASMUS students studying for some period in Denmark and 71 percent studying in Germany rating housing provided there as good. They considered it almost as good as accommodation in their respective home countries. Accommodation in both countries was also rated most positively in 1988/89. As regards the remaining countries, positive ratings in 1990/91 ranged from 35 to 55 percent, with accommodation in Greece (37 % negative ratings compared to 10-28 % in other host countries) being considered worst. In 1988/89, accommodation in France was also frequently rated as poor by students spending their period abroad there, while accommodation for students going to Ireland was frequently rated as poor in 1988/89, but considerably less so in 1990/91.

Eighty percent of the ERASMUS students stated that they had problems with the quality of their principal accommodation in the host country. The range of problems faced was obviously broad, as Table 5.2 shows: the most frequent one was stated by 26 percent of the students, compared with nine percent for the problem least frequently mentioned. Small size of the room as well as problems of furniture and equipment were most frequently mentioned, with problems in sharing facilities with others as well as noise or rude treatment by neighbours following closely. The frequency of problems mentioned regarding each category

by ERASMUS students 1990/91 **differed by** at most three percent from those mentioned in 1988/89.

Chart 5.3
Quality of Accommodation in Host Country* and in Home Country** (mean)



Question 7.7: How would you, in general, describe the quality of your accommodation in the host country and in your home country?

* By host country (for example, quality of accommodation in Belgium for students spending study period abroad in Belgium)

** By home country (for example, quality of accommodation for students from Belgium while studying at home in Belgium)

7

Recognition and Academic Progress

7.1 Need for Varied Measures of "Recognition"

Recognition of the ERASMUS supported period in another EC Member State upon return is one of the most crucial measures of the success of the ERASMUS programme. In principle, ERASMUS support is only granted to institutions of higher education willing to recognize the academic achievements of their students upon return. This emphasis on recognition is based on the assumption that a study period in another country of the European Community will be an integral part of studies, if study successfully undertaken at a host institution substitutes for study loads or study periods at home.

There does not exist, however, any generally agreed definition of recognition. We might consider recognition to be fully granted, if all work successfully completed at the host institution of higher education is - formally or de facto - recognized by the home institution upon return. This measure of recognition is sound, but it might be misleading, if it is the only measure employed. For students might take a reduced study load abroad; even if this is fully recognized, study at the host university does not fully correspond to study at the home institution. Finally, students might face additional work-load at the home institution leading to a prolongation of the total duration of the study period up to the completion of the degree, even if their study achievements at the host institution are completely recognized. For example, the home institution might formally recognize the achievements during the study period abroad, but not fully offset the course and examination requirements of the study programme at home.

Therefore, three different measures of recognition were addressed in this student survey:

(a) *degree of recognition*: the extent to which the academic study actually undertaken at the host institution of higher education was recognized or otherwise considered equivalent to study at the home institution of higher education;
(b) *degree of correspondence:* he extent to which study at the host institution of higher education actually corresponds to the amount of typical study at the home institution during a corresponding period of study; and
(c) *non-prolongation*: the expected non-prolongation of the total duration of studies due to the study period at the host university.[1]

7.2 Degree of Recognition, Correspondence and Non-Prolongation

As the final row in Table 7.1 shows, 74 percent of the studies actually undertaken by ERASMUS students 1990/91 at the host institutions of higher education were recognized upon return. Actually, 56 percent of the students reported that all their study at the host institution of higher education was recognized (or otherwise considered equivalent) upon return by the home institution while 16 percent were credited for less than a quarter of their study at the host university.

As shown in the centre of Chart 7.1, academic studies at the host institution of higher education - on average for all ERASMUS students responding - corresponded to 72 percent of the typical amount of study at the home institution. Only 33 percent of students reported that the amount of study abroad equalled that at home or even surpassed it. As 74 percent of the studies abroad were recognized and as the study load actually taken abroad or the number of courses completed abroad was about one sixth lower than that typically carried out or completed during a corresponding period at home, one could have expected that the academic studies at the host university corresponded to a lesser extent to the typical amount of study at home.

On average, ERASMUS students expected that their overall period of study up to the completion of the degree was prolonged for more than three months due to their study period abroad. The prolongation expected corresponded to 46 percent

1 The percentages in the subsequent tables refer only to those students actually stating that recognition was granted or expected. Some students had not (yet) returned to the home university at the time the survey was conducted; in other cases, the recognition procedure was not yet completed. 88 percent of the students provided information on the degree of recognition, 89 percent estimated the degree of correspondence of study at the host institution with that at the home institution, and 82 percent replied to the questions regarding possible prolongation of studies due to study abroad.

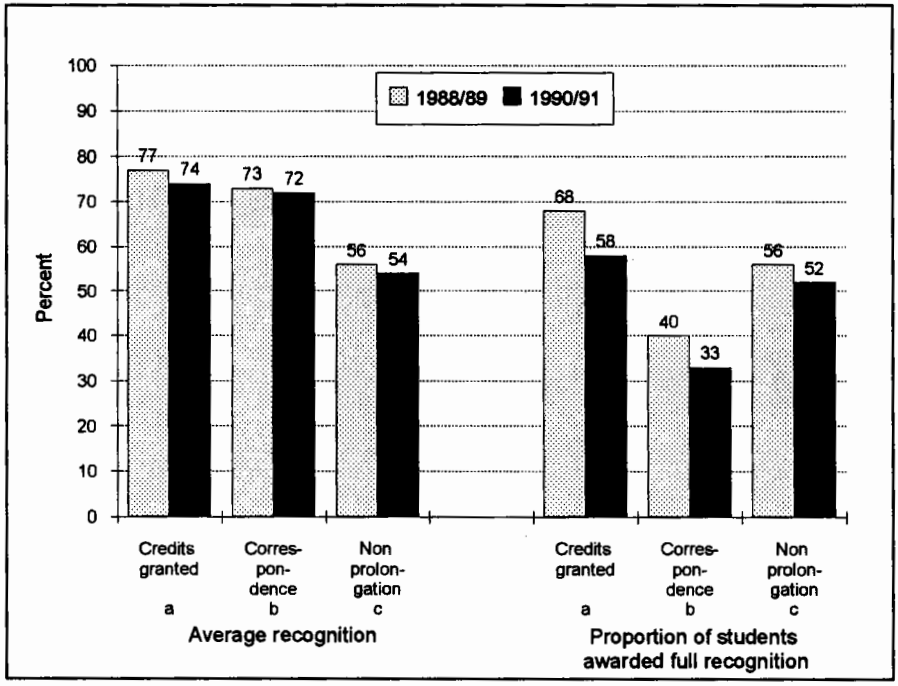
Table 7.1
Degrees of Recognition of the Academic Study at the Host Institution, by Country of Home Institution
(percent of amount and mean of types of recognition)

	Country of home institution of higher education												Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	L	NL	P	UK	
100 % and more	61	51	64	56	66	45	44	58	60	68	61	47	56
75% - 99%	16	8	17	13	10	6	17	3	20	11	11	3	10
50% - 74%	10	15	10	13	10	14	18	12	20	9	8	6	11
25% - 49%	6	9	4	6	5	17	7	9	0	4	4	8	7
less than 25%	7	17	6	11	10	17	14	18	0	9	15	36	16
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(199)	(499)	(72)	(298)	(629)	(64)	(289)	(77)	(5)	(190)	(71)	(459)	(2852)
Degree of recognition	83.0	70.2	84.1	77.2	81.7	65.8	71.9	72.1	86.0	83.6	76.6	57.5	73.9

Question 6.17: To what extent is the academic study you actually undertook at the host institution recognized (granted credit or otherwise considered equivalent) by the home institution?

of the study period abroad, as Table 7.2 shows. While 52 percent of the students did not expect any prolongation of their studies, 37 percent of the students stated that the prolongation of studies due to study abroad would be as long as the study period abroad (in a few cases even more).

Chart 7.1
Recognition According to Different Criteria 1988/89 and 1990/91
(all students; percent)



Taking all three criteria into consideration (see Chart 7.1.), we note a small decline in recognition (2 % on average) from 1988/89 to 1990/91.[2] One could have expected that recognition might have increased, because some inter-university

2 In the publication of the 1988/89 survey (Maiworm/Steube/Teichler, op. cit., p. 134-136) the ratio of non-prolongation stated was 47 percent, i.e. 9 percent lower. A subsequent check of the responses, however, showed that the mean score was inflated by the fact that some students had included a period without lectures in the calculation of prolongation, but not in the duration of the study abroad period. This error was excluded in both of the 1990/91 and 1988/89 data stated in this chapter.

Table 7.2
Ratio of Expected Prolongation and Duration of Period Abroad, by Country of Home Institution (percent)

Prolongation in percent of study period abroad	Country of home institution of higher education												Total
	B	D	DK	E	F	GR	I	IRL	L	NL	P	UK	
None	84	27	30	69	73	31	20	63	100	53	56	50	52
Less than 50 %	3	3	6	5	5	2	9	2	0	5	7	1	4
50 - 74 %	2	11	14	2	3	4	12	2	0	2	3	1	5
75 - 99 %	0	2	0	0	2	2	4	0	0	1	1	0	1
100 and more	10	57	49	24	17	60	56	32	0	39	32	47	37
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(n)	(204)	(489)	(63)	(219)	(582)	(45)	(253	(80)	(5)	(189)	(68)	(449)	2646
Ratio of prolongation (mean)	17.6	68.4	63.0	34.4	24.0	69.3	75.2	37.9	0.0	45.5	44.4	50.9	46.2

Question 6.19: The ERASMUS study period is likely to prolong the total duration of your study by:

cooperation programmes might have consolidated over time and because the concept underlying the ERASMUS programme became more popular. On the other hand, the quantitative expansion of the ERASMUS programme might have led to the inclusion of a larger proportion of networks in which academic cooperation was not yet well established.

Recognition of study abroad upon return seems to be a generally well-established principle at Belgian and French institutions of higher education participating in the ERASMUS programme and, naturally, institutions in Luxembourg are well-adjusted to acceptance of study periods abroad. On the other hand, many institutions in Italy, Greece, Germany and Denmark accepted study achievement abroad only formally, but did not integrate them into their course programme and examination system in a way which would allow study abroad without prolongation of study.

It should be added that recognition of study abroad differs much less according to host country than according to country of home institution. These data do not suggest that lack of confidence in the quality of higher education in certain host countries substantially limits recognition upon return. ERASMUS students 1990/91 enrolled in medicine expected least prolongation of study due to the study abroad period (27 %). Students in business studies (37 %) and architecture (38 %) also expected prolongation to a lesser extent than students in other fields. On the other hand, students in communication and information sciences (60 %), law (60 %) and social sciences (57 %) anticipated a prolongation on average corresponding to more than half of the study period they spent abroad. Similar patterns can be noted according to "degree of recognition" and according to "degree of correspondence", as Table 7.3 shows.

The "degree of recognition" and the "degree of correspondence" did not differ substantially according to the duration of study. In contrast, students having been abroad for at most three months only expected a prolongation of 34 percent, while those spending about half or one academic year abroad expected a prolongation corresponding to half the study period abroad. According to all three categories, however, recognition appeared to be highest for those spending more than one year abroad: both "degree of recognition" and "degree of correspondence" surpassed 90 percent, and participating students expected on average only a 23 percent prolongation.

Female students reported a slightly lower "degree of recognition" (72 %) than male students (76 %), and also a slightly lower "degree of correspondence" (70 % and 76 % respectively). As regards non-prolongation, however, no difference can be observed.