

Studying abroad: What matters for the successful integration of international students in 15 European countries?

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ABSTRACT: Internationalisation of higher education became a core trend in the past decades due to convergence of several factors, such as the university ranking system, the growth of human migration due to globalization and high-speed transportation, as well as to the development of supra-national political entities, as European Union, fostering student mobility within their boundaries. However, studying abroad brings stress and anxiety as international students going through a complex process of cultural and academic adaptation, while being separated from their home social networks (e.g. family, schoolmates, friends). Universities play a central role in dealing with this adaptation process by providing a wide array of services, such as educational, financial, psychological counselling.

Using data from EUROSTUDENT survey, collected in 2023 in 15 European countries, on representative samples of university students, this paper employs fixed effects OLS regression and looks at how the services provided by universities impact on students' socio-academic integration and self-assessed labour market outcomes, comparing international and domestic students with the purpose of finding out what type of services foster the integration of the international ones.

The results of show that the availability of online resources and educational counselling play key role for all students' labour market outcomes and socio-academic integration, while financial counselling in more important for international students and housing counselling in only relevant for the domestic ones. The results indicate significant differences across the countries especially when it comes to self-assessed labour market outcomes of international students, with Denmark scoring the highest among the 15 countries compared. The analyses indicate more homogeneity for international students' socio-academic integration across countries.

Internationalisation is one of the core trends in today's higher education due to the convergence of several factors, such as the university ranking system that takes it into account when assessing the university's position, the growth of human migration due to globalisation and high-speed transportation (Luthra, Platt, 2016; Ploner, Nada, 2020). In addition, the development of supra-national political entities, such as the European Union, fosters student mobility within their boundaries (European Commission, 2015). Although beneficial for all actors involved in the process, namely the home and host societies, the universities, as well as the students themselves (Dahlbeg, Vigmo, Surian, 2021), internationalisation comes with some costs for the same actors and researchers are focusing more and more on finding ways to diminish the bill.