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**ERASMUS
MUNDUS**



IESN

INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE
ERASMUS STUDENT NETWORK

Erasmus Survey 2013-2014

**ერასმუს მუნდუსის
2013-2014 წლის
მობილობის შეფასება**

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The research report is prepared based on Erasmus Mundus 2013-2014 beneficiaries' survey that was carried out by ESN Tbilisi ISU with the support of Erasmus + National Office

Year 2014



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Foreword

Erasmus programmes are presented from 2007 In Georgia and their amount have already reached 18. Today we are moving to the new level of Erasmus, after Erasmus was recognized as one of the successful projects of European Commission. Erasmus + programme has launched increased in scale and variety of opportunities. This shows that programme has succeed in accomplishing its objectives. Though there still are some pitfalls that is quite normal and needs continuous work to solve them and implement new ideas. For the programme development and to raise effectiveness it's essential to study beneficiaries' views about that enables us to reveal problems and better fit the programme to beneficiaries' needs. Erasmus has been successful in this during the years and in this process Erasmus Student Network was taking an important part from 1989. Moreover, the purpose of the creation of our network was to advocate students' position in European Commission and take an active part in improvement of European educational system. We annually implement the biggest survey on the continent named Erasmus Survey that is good example of our part in the process of developing Erasmus and European educational system. The survey covered 20 thousand Erasmus students in 2013 and the process was entirely carried out by volunteers that makes the outcomes more valuable. We as the representatives of Erasmus Students have daily contact with 180 thousand exchange students annually. That makes our recommendations, surveys, ideas especially valuable for the programme development. The aim of our current Erasmus Survey 2013-2014 that was carried out by ESN Tbilisi ISU with the cooperation of Erasmus + National Office is exactly this. It is first time we do such kind of research in Georgia and will act as basis for the future researches and will be used as start point to evaluate progress of the programme in our country.

We want to thank Erasmus + National Office for support. We appreciate the support of International Relations Departments of Georgian Universities in the survey communication process.

Research Methodology

Research Objectives:

- To study the experience of Erasmus Mundus 2013-2014 Georgian Beneficiaries
- Reveal problems in the programme and offer recommendations to key stakeholders
- Develop basis for future researches for progress evaluation

The research consisted with two parts: exploratory qualitative and descriptive survey.

On the first stage was collected, organized and analyzed basic information to set survey problems and hypothesis. This helped us to design questionnaire and enabled us to set focus on certain important issues. During the information gathering process we used the information from our online communication channels where is recorded all online correspondence with Erasmus applicants and beneficiaries when they address us with questions. We also organized information and experience got during numerous informational presentations and workshops provided by us. We did research of Facebook informal groups of Erasmus Mundus winners. Students write there about their problems and followed discussions are very informative to study students' views, problems and experiences.

As exploratory research is qualitative in nature and results cannot be generalized, on the second stage we provided quantitative research in form of online survey. The questionnaire referred to entire process: evaluation of the work of different bodies involved during the process, different aspects of the programme and generally, the study of beneficiaries' opinions. The questionnaire was semi-structured with close and open-ended questions. The survey was anonymous and was respected all ethical requirements. In case of respondent had will to share additional information that was not covered in the questionnaire they could contact us. After we got the first results of the survey we provided focus group with Erasmus students to explain the results and help us to develop recommendations. The focus group was recorded and analyzed.

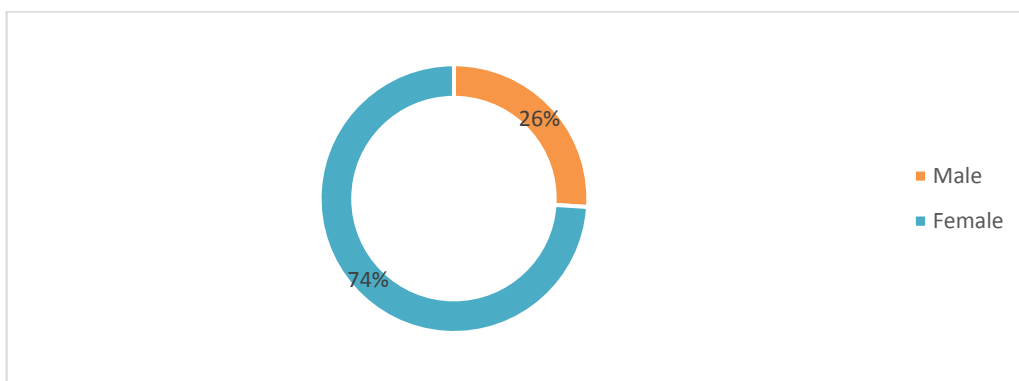
At the end of the research, based on the results ESN Tbilisi ISU worked out recommendations.

Sampling

The target group of our research was Erasmus Mundus 2013-2014 mobility period beneficiary Georgian students. The size of general population was about 200 students. From this we surveyed 62 respondents that is 31% of the general population. This means 10% confidence interval for 95% confidence level.

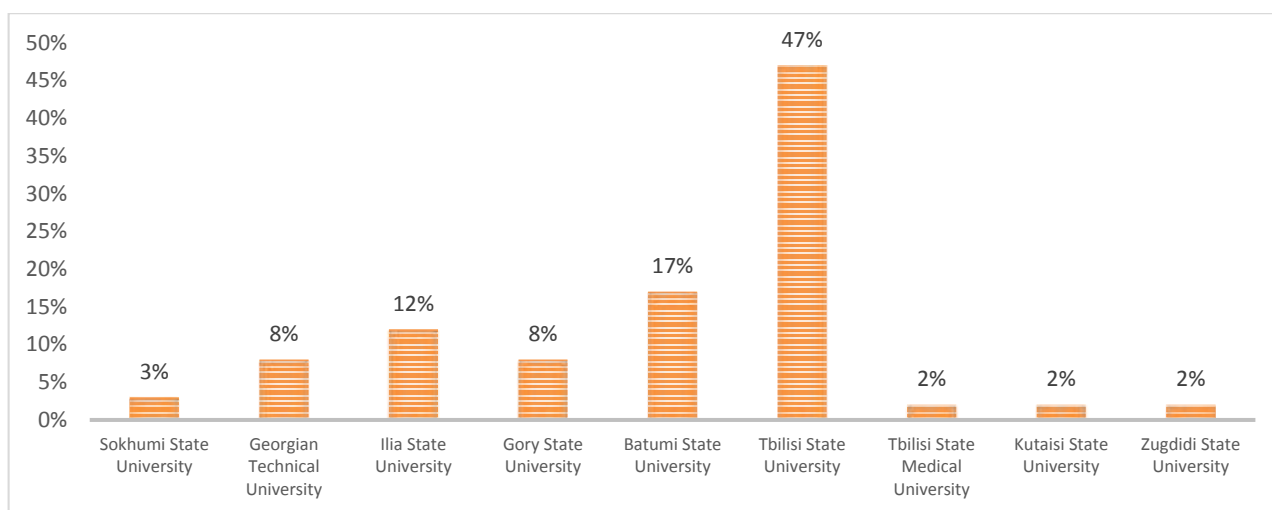
The distribution of respondents according to gender was the following:

Chart 1 Respondents' distribution by gender



The distribution according to home universities was the following:

Chart 2 Respondents' distribution by home universities



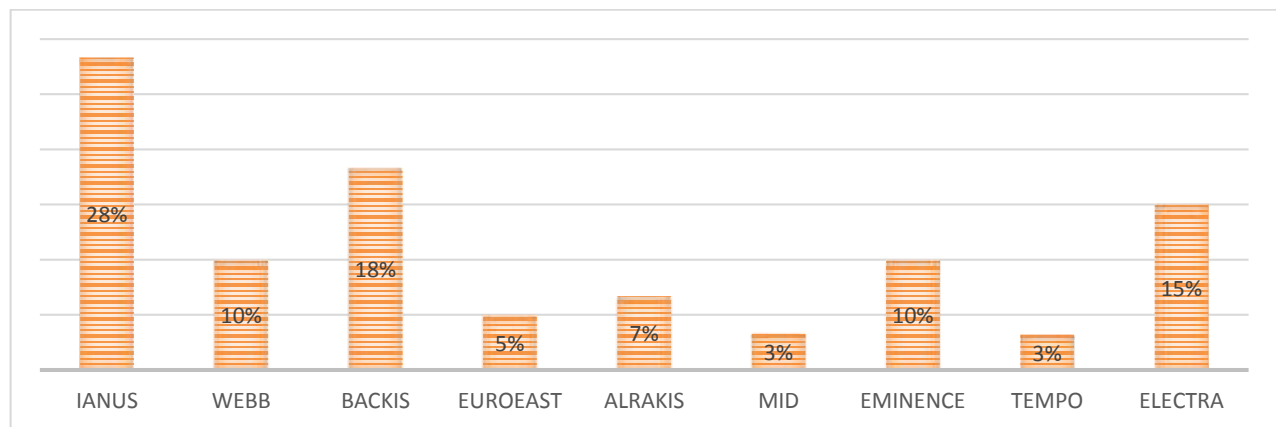
The majority of respondents, 65% was bachelor student, while 23% was master and 11.7% PHD student.

Distribution according to mobility type was the following:

1 Academy Semester	33,3%
1 Academy Year	46,7%
2 Academy Years	14,5%
3 Academy Years	5%

The majority of respondents was the participant of IANUS project that was 28%. The overall distribution according to projects is the following:

Chart 3 Respondents' distribution according to Erasmus Projects



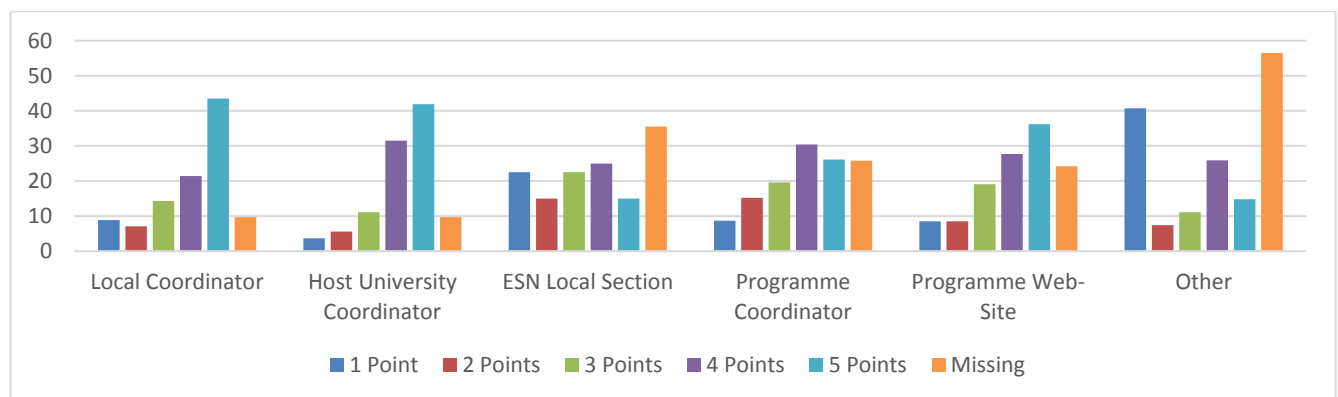
Pre-Mobility Period Evaluation

The questionnaire started with pre-mobility part.

A.1 Please, Identify your information sources during pre-mobility period and evaluate it with 5 point scale system (information - 1-incomplete, 5-complete)

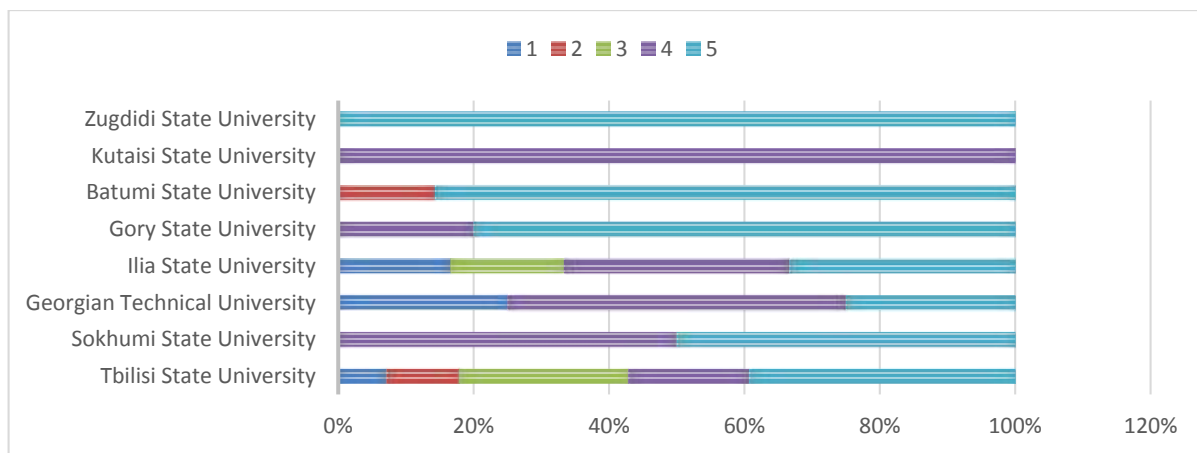
Respondents evaluated the quality of information got from the local coordinator by average 3.92 points, information got from host university coordinators – average 4.14 points, information provided by ESN local section – 2.95 points and information provided by the programme main coordinator with 3.5 points. The information displayed on project’s official web-sites was evaluated by average 3.74 points.

Chart 4 Please, Identify your information source during pre-mobility period and evaluate it with 5 point scale system (1-incomplete, 5-complete)



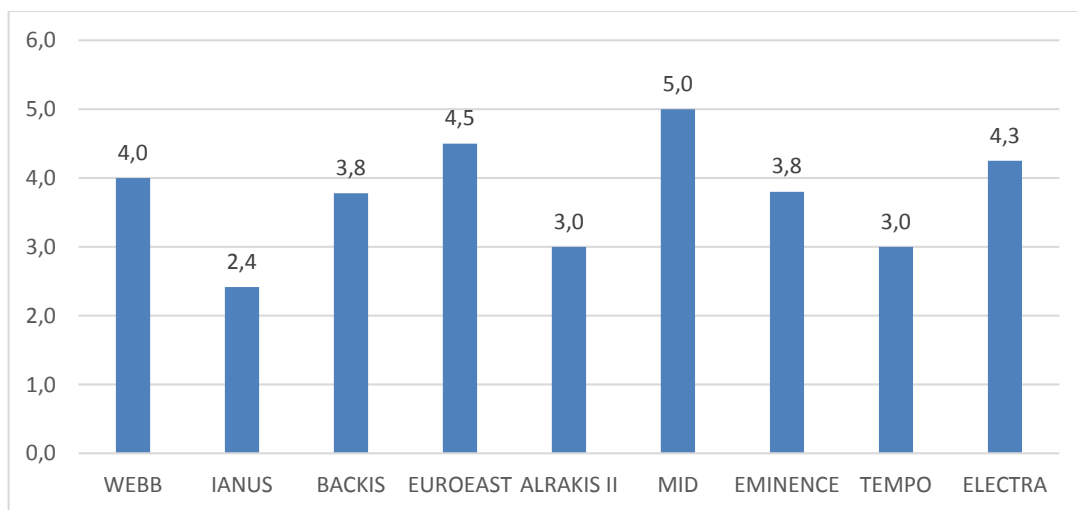
The following chart shows how information, provided by Georgian University local coordinators was evaluated. Here should be mentioned that this question was answered by one respondent from Kutaisi and Zugdidi Universities.

Chart 5 The information provided by Georgian Universities' local coordinators



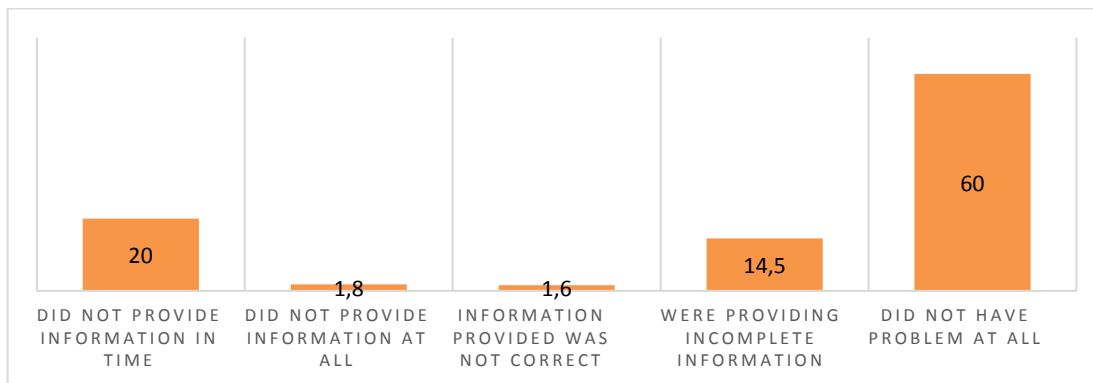
The chart below displays the evaluation results of the information provided by programme main coordinators. As we see highest evaluation has MID, though only one respondent from this programme answered this question. From IANUS programme 12 respondents answered the question. This programme gets quite low evaluation – average 2.4 points. To conclude, we have quite considerable problems during providing information by programme main coordinators.

Chart 6 Average evaluation of the information provided by programme main coordinators



A2. What kind of problem did you face during getting information?

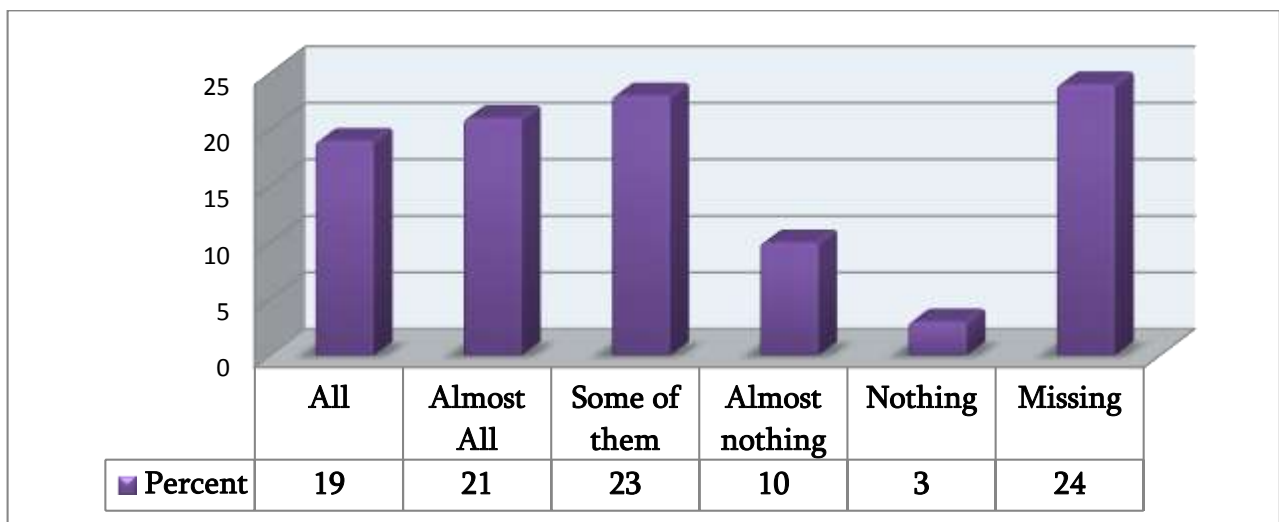
Chart 7 Problems revealed during receiving information



It is important that the majority of respondents indicated that basically, they did not face any problems regarding receiving information.

A4. According to the curriculum, how many chosen subjects coincided with the home university courses?

Chart 8 chosen subjects corresponded to the home university courses



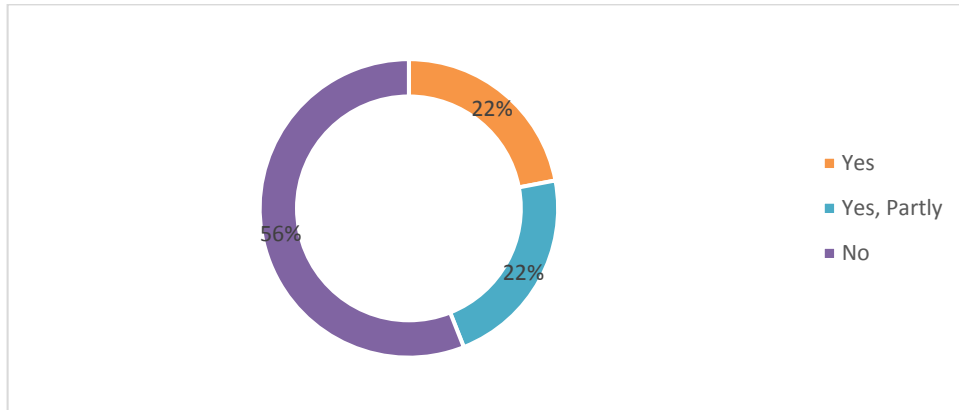
In the most cases, the majority of chosen subjects coincided with the home university courses. Some subjects, almost none and none matched for 22 respondent out of 47, therefore they faced problems. Some of them might need extra semester in order to collect required number of credits. It is obvious that the problem requires review and response. Based on the results, it is clear that universities' programs are needed to be increased the correspondence to the international standards.

Also, important issue is necessary procedures related to the embassy. There was revealed the problems with refund of the travel expenses.



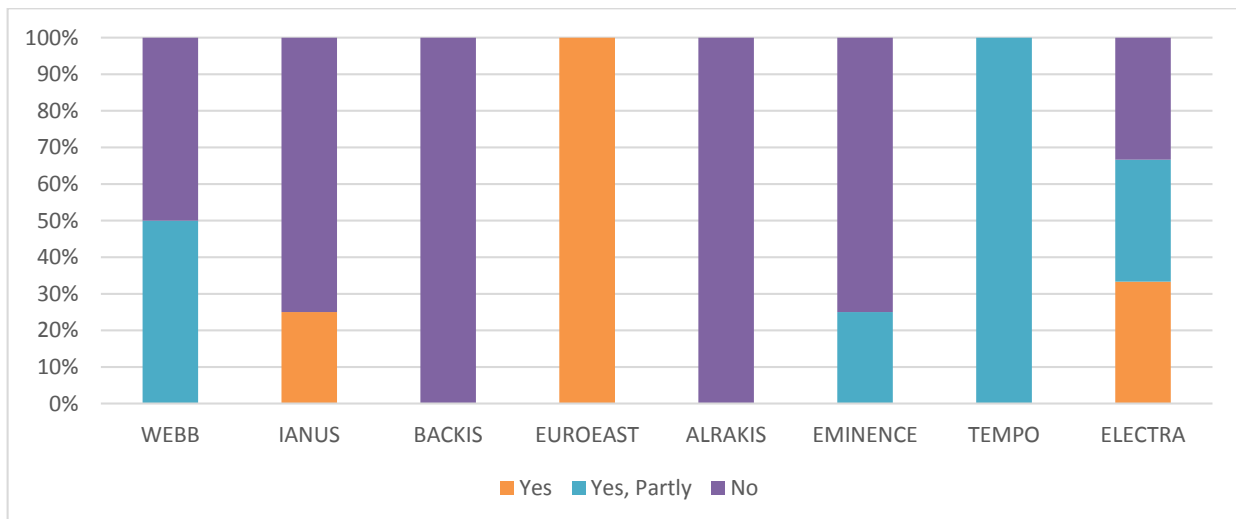
A6. In case there was not host country embassy in Georgia, did the programme refund travel expenses?

Chart 9 Refund of expenses for traveling to the neighboring country for visa



29% of survey respondents had to go to another country, because there was not embassy of the host country in Georgia. 29% is 18 respondents. 10 respondents out of this 18 had not had travel expenses reimbursed. As we can see, this issue needs to be paid attention.

Chart 10 Compensated travel expenses for visa according to the programs



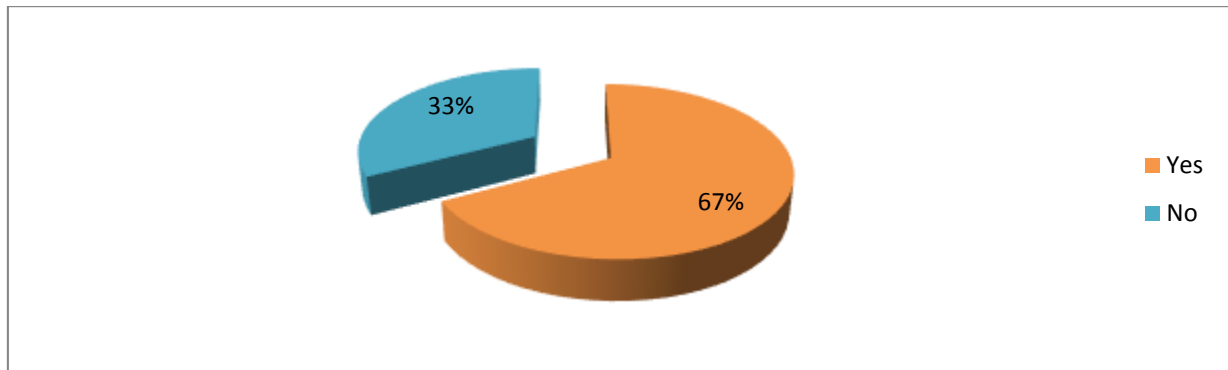
As we can see, there are the different cases in the same program. It is true that this is only result of survey and doesn't provide any proof, but it is best to review current practice and determine whether there was unequal treatment towards student or not.



The evaluation of mobility period

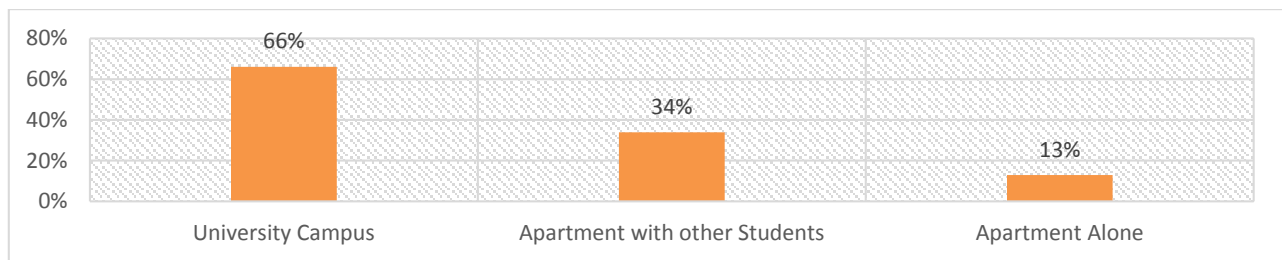
A7. Did the university provide housing during the mobility period?

Chart 11 The host university providing accommodation



A8. Please identify, where were you living during the mobility and rate the accommodation with 5 point system (1 – very bad 5-very good)

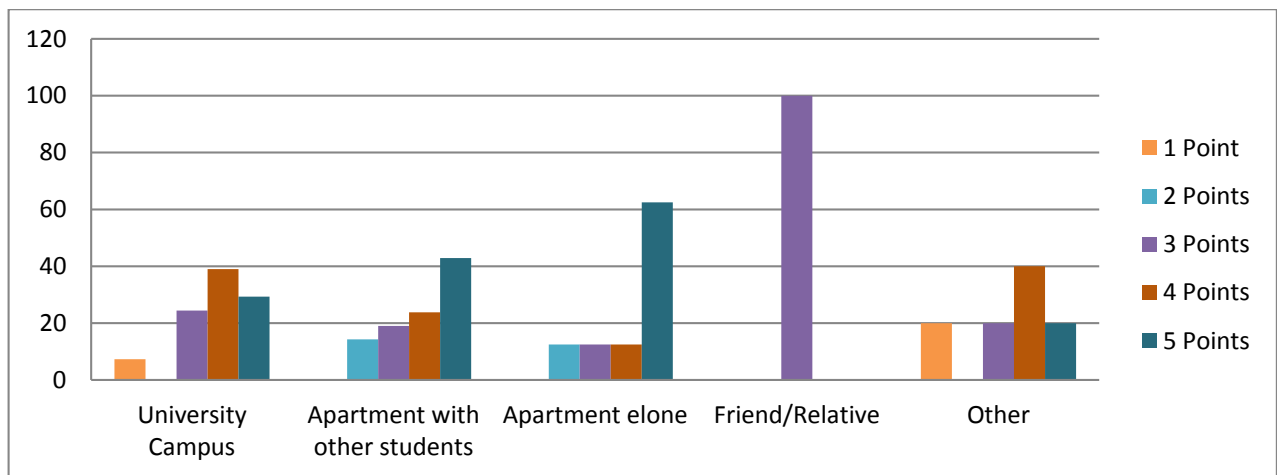
Chart 12 Type of accommodation



Note: The diagram's total percentage is over 100%, because some students had been living in different housings.

The rating of the housing is the following:

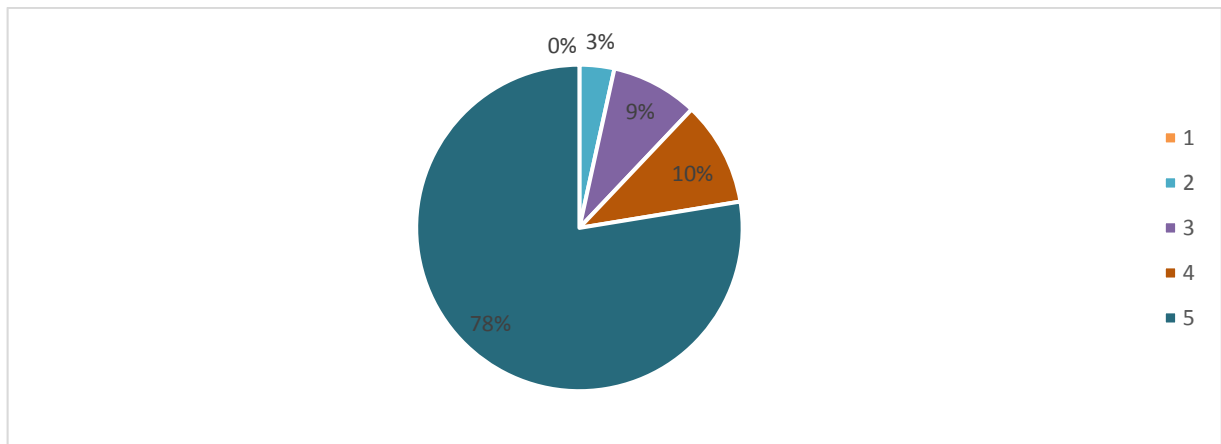
Chart 13 Rating of housings



Based on the results, 41 respondents rated students housing and the conditions there for an average of 3,8 points, which is really good. However, it should be noted that 3 students rated the university's housing's conditions with 1 point.

A10. Please assess, whether scholarship was enough for food, accommodation and educational inventory.

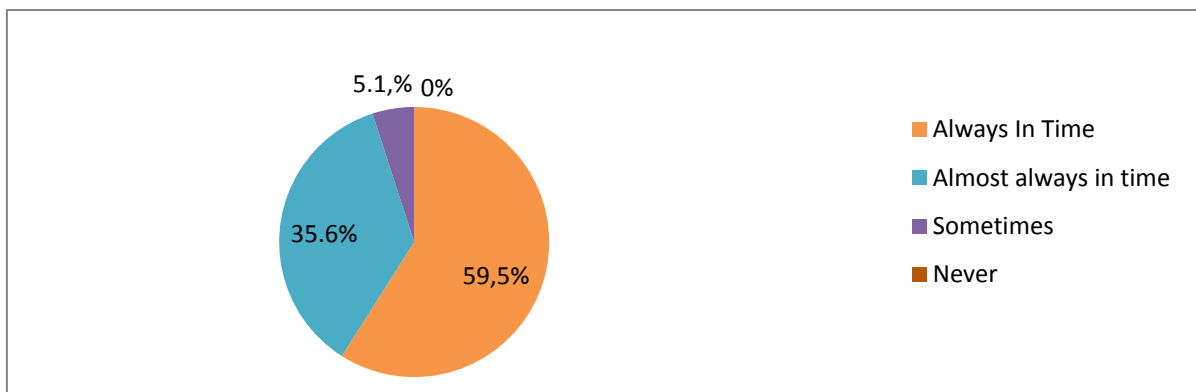
Chart 14 Scholarship sufficiency (1 - very poor, 5 - totally enough)



Scholarship sufficiency problem is mainly in the western and northern European countries. However, the results clearly show that the scholarship was quite enough for majority of participants and not only enough, but they also could travel to the different countries of Europe. Answers show that students could travel to 15-16 countries.

A11. Did you receive scholarship in time?

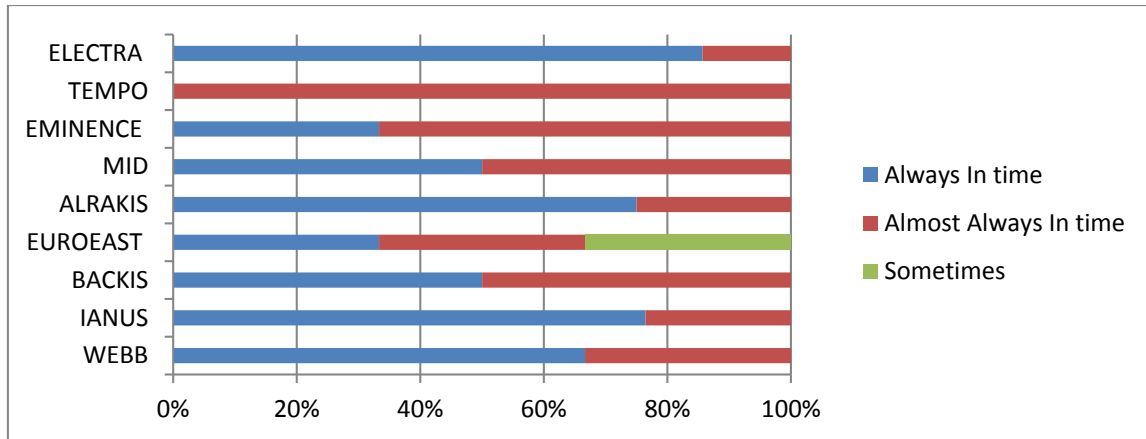
Chart 15 whether they received scholarship on time or not



According to the data, we found out that the most commonly due time was BACKIS and EUROEAST programs.



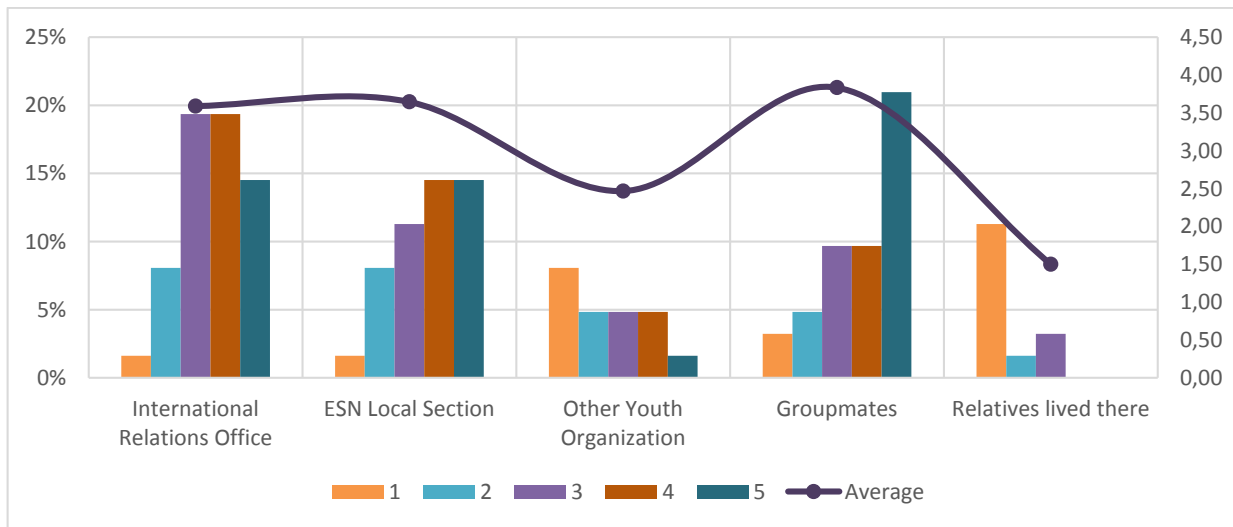
Chart 16 Timing of transferring scholarship by programmes



A14. Please, identify who help you in adaptation process in host country and rate

On a question - who helped you to adapt, respondents could choose from the following answers: foreign department, ESN’s local section, other students organizations, mates, relatives that live there and no one. In addition, respondents were not limited to these choices, they could choose the category - other.

Chart 17 who helped you to adapt



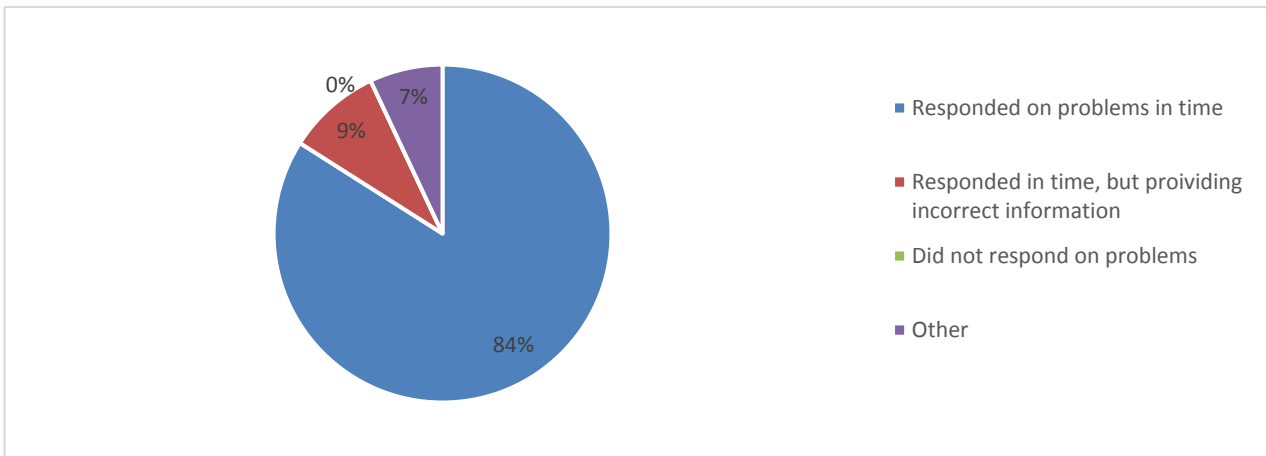
As we can see from the table above, Georgian students were mostly supported by other students in adaptation. Also, ESN local sections’ help is important, with average rate 3,65.

A15. Local coordinator response on students’ problems.

Respondents were positive about the work of local coordination. This is confirmed by the fact that 85% of 58 respondents said that coordinators reacted to the problems on time.



Chart 18 Host university's coordinators' response to students' problems.



With these results, we can conclude that in 2013-2014 universities local coordinators were taking care of the students, they reacted to the problems. Nevertheless, some of the respondents note receiving wrong information.

A17. Please identify and rate the most important benefits for you from the exchange mobility period.

It was interesting question about receiving benefit from the mobility period. Respondents had to rate the issues with 5 point system. They could rate each or some. However, they could have added more to the list. The list was: 1. improving language skill, 2. getting to know European educational system, 3. improving professional occupation, 4. traveling and learning about new culture, 5. entertainment, 6. meeting new friends, 7. learning local language, 8. other

Chart 19 Benefits from the Mobility

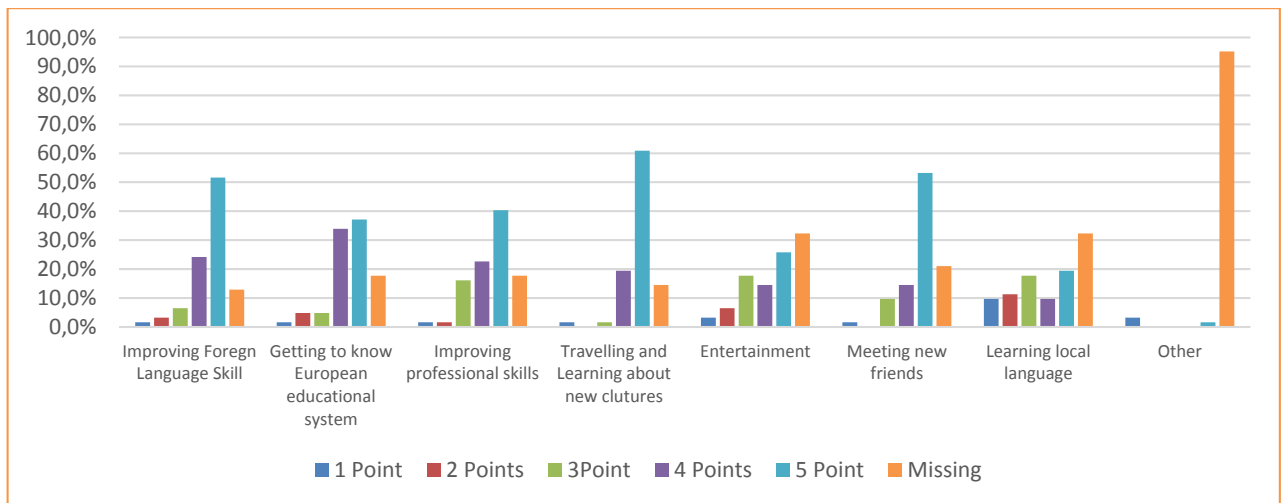
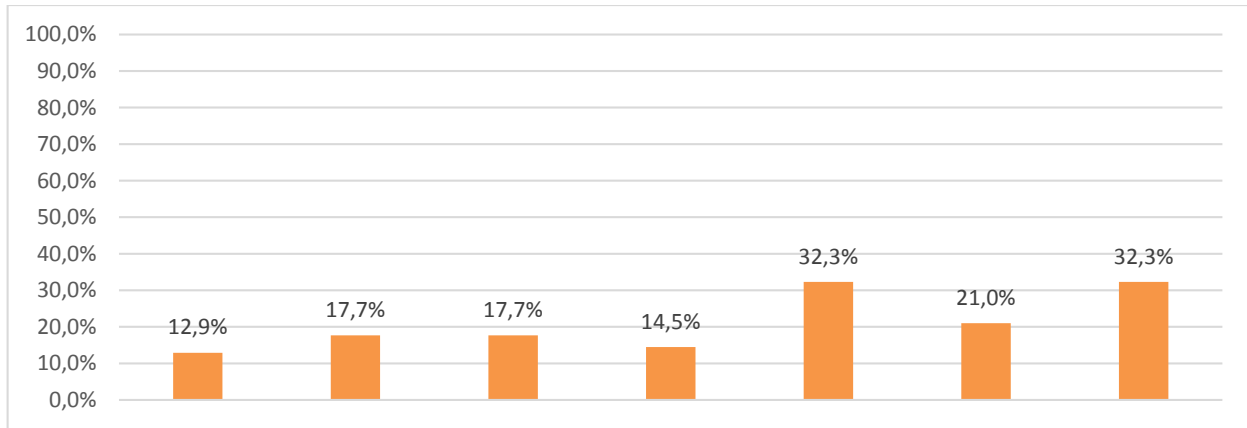
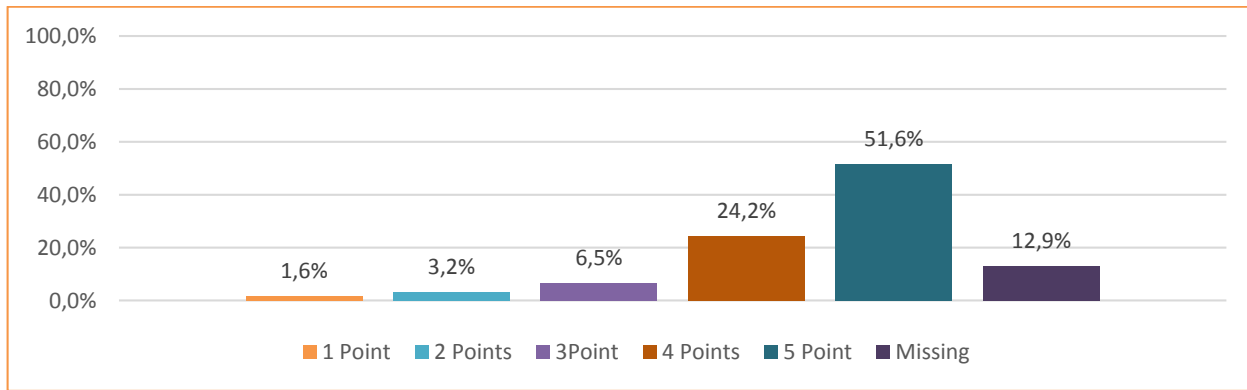


Chart 20 percentage of the respondents, who do not believe and appreciate the benefits.



It should be noted that more than 30% of students did not rate entertainment and learning local language. It is possible to think that students are least likely to benefit from these issues. But, on the other hand, not rating issues does not allow to confidently claim that these issues are the least important benefits.

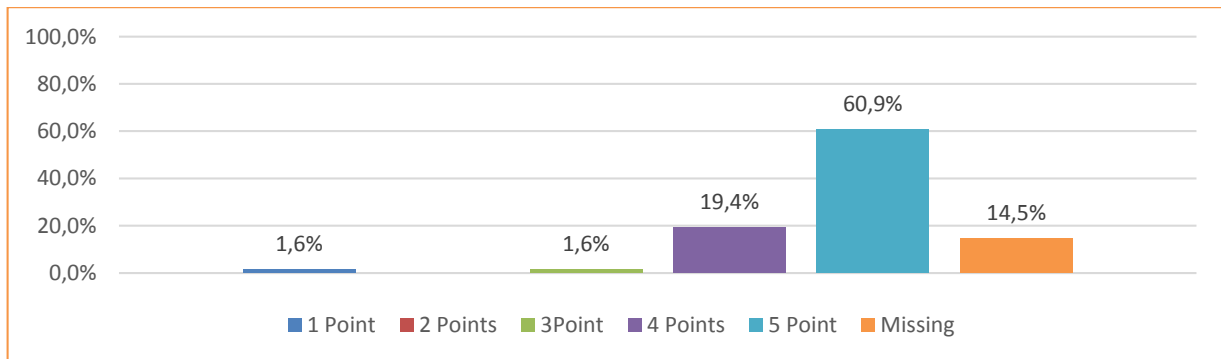
Chart 21 Benefit - Improving foreign language skill



According to the table, a very small amount of students leave out improving language skills, most of them rate this issue with 5 scores. The average rate of the issue is 4.39. This figure clearly demonstrates programs' one of the most important benefits - improving foreign language skills, which is Erasmus's and now Erasmus +'s main goal.

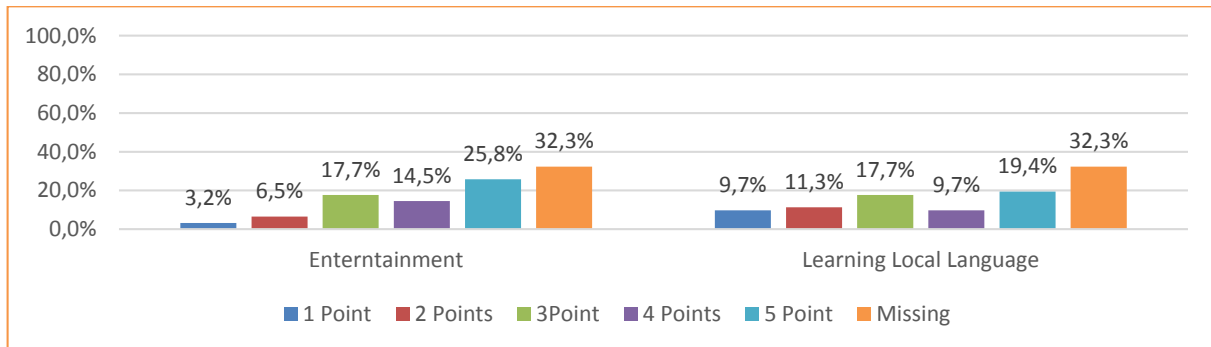
Clearly, as significant benefit can be considered traveling and learning new culture too. About 86% of respondents rate it. Most of the students rate it with 5 points. The average rate is 4.66.

Chart 22 Benefit - Travelling and Learning about new cultures



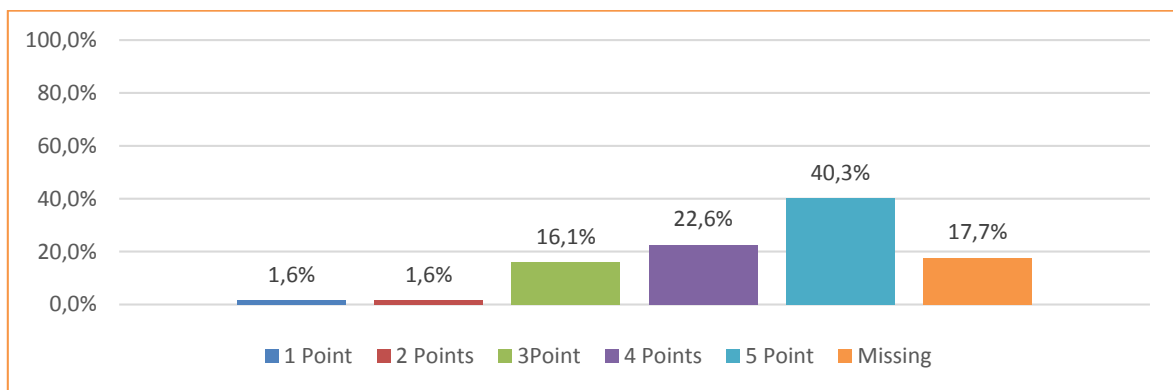
As we noted, the students least rate entertainment and learning local language. Entertainments' average rate is 3.79, while learning local languages - 3.26. Despite the fact that their rating is lower than other benefits', the fact is that student still manage to learn local language, which is necessary for learning local culture and socialization.

Chart 23 Benefits - Entertainment and Learning local language



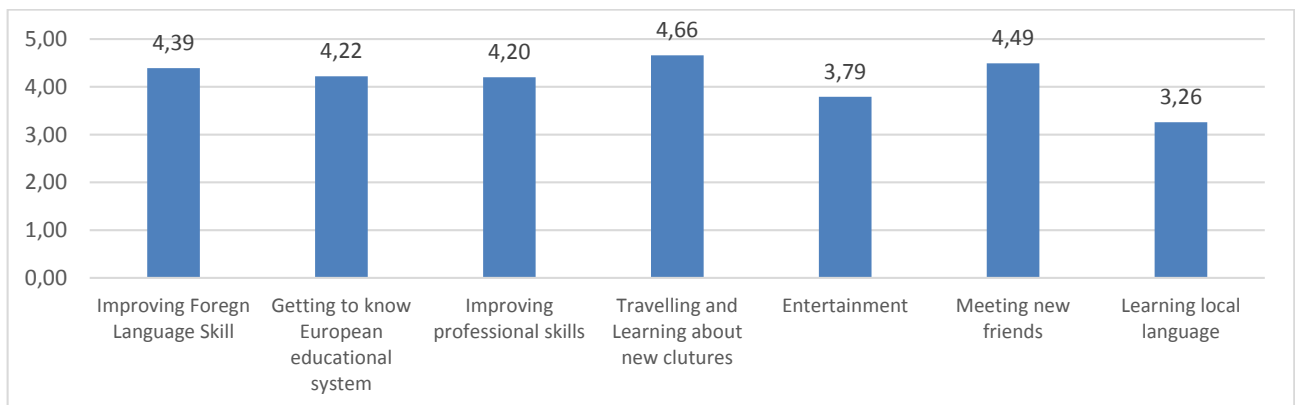
We want to draw attention to the professional knowledge development. This graph is filled by almost 82%, where most rate it with 5 points, the average score is 4.2. According to the data, we can say that programs fulfill their goals. Program helps them to receive professional knowledge and career advancement in the future.

Chart 24 Benefit - Improving Professional Skills



This is really the most important benefit of the program. With this it helps not only to learn about the culture, but also it brings cultures closer, because making friends has high average score - 4.49.

Chart 25 Average Rate of the benefits



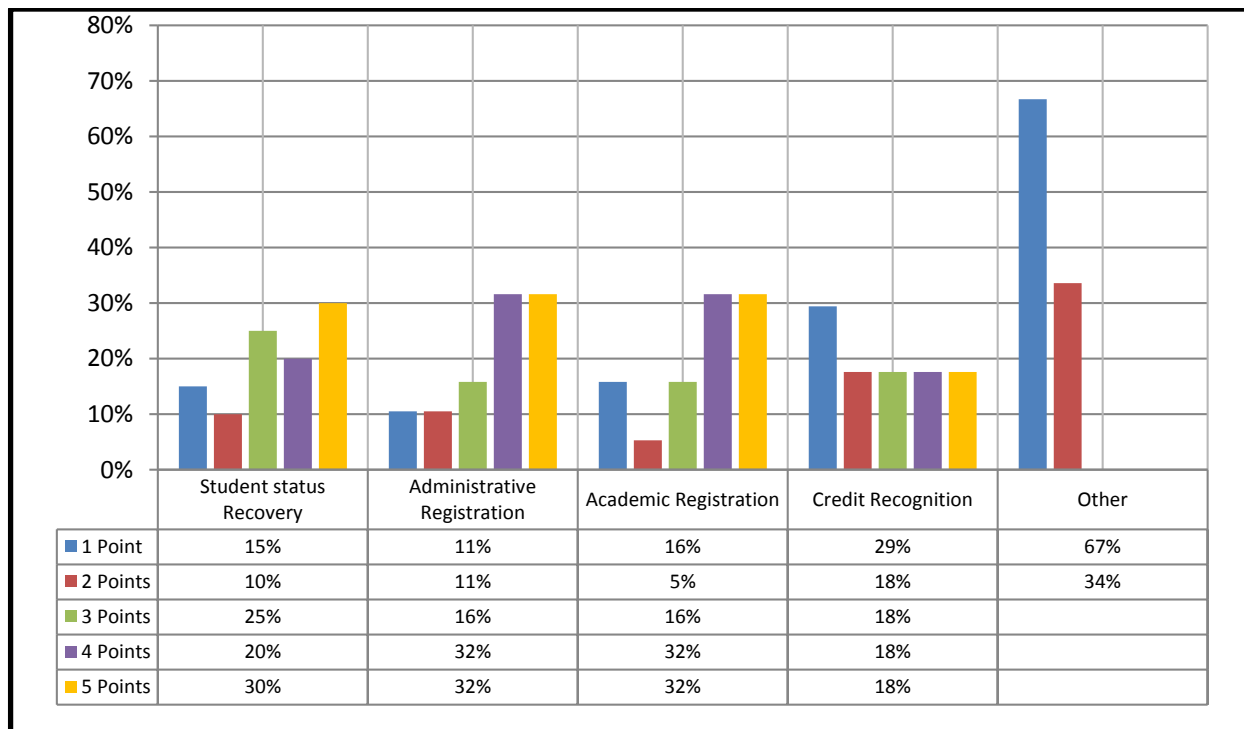
Post mobility period

The last part of the survey was about post-mobility period, which was filled by only those students, who have completed mobility.

A18. Please, evaluate the process of administrative settlement after returning from the mobility at your home university

After finishing mobility, the process of administrative settlement in home university is important. We emphasize this issue. The respondents had to rate these procedures with 5 point system (1 - very hard, 5 - very easy): student status recovery, administrative registration of student, student's academic registration, recognition of credits. If students had other types of problems, there was a column - the other. Only 3 students filled the column - other.

Chart 26 Bureaucratic processes evaluation



According to the data, there were issues that are mostly problematic for students after finishing mobility. For example, the process of recognition of credits is quite difficult and problematic. Also, student status recovery involves, much bureaucracy.



Recommendation

Application and Selection Stage

Our organization was actively involved in the dissemination process of Erasmus Mundus. We were providing daily consultations and workshops. We were official partners of Erasmus Mundus programme EMINENCE, though we were supporting all, 9 programmes of ERASMUS Mundus. During this process we got well aware about the problems raised during the selection and Pre-mobility stages. Moreover, we provided depth interviews with students who faced the problems, to study issues further.

Were revealed the following problems:

Problem -Dissemination

Part of Erasmus programmes was disseminated poorly that is expressed in the amount of applicants. Practice shows that usually dissemination process involved one or several informational presentation provided by IR departments and informational materials on universities' web-sites. Informational presentations did not cover all study buildings that resulted unequal access to information by university students of different faculties. Moreover, on universities' web-sites Erasmus program does not have specially devoted place and information posted there is not complex and does not ensure correct communication of Erasmus programme.

Recommendation – we encourage HEIs to more actively involve associated partners in dissemination process, increase the amount of informational meetings with students and improve web-site communication tools. Due to the importance of the programme we think, Erasmus and now Erasmus + deserves devoted place on web-sites that not only support dissemination process, but also encourage popularization or Erasmus values. To meet this objectives, we recommend you to involve information about programme values, mission and the importance in programme description articles. Erasmus is not only an exchange programme, it helps Europe to develop as one family. Together with all of these above, we recommend to use social media more actively and not only university and programme official pages, but non-formal groups of university students. Here we would like to mention that Facebook pages are very effective by their strength of daily permanent and complex communication.

Problem - Language Certificates

Most of the students, especially in regions do not have language certificates that do not give them chance to participate in most exchange programmes. The result is low competition and winner students, who do not have good academic performance and do not show proper results during mobility period. They only win because of language certificate.

Recommendation – best practice develop by Tbilisi State University suggests the way out. The university provides internal language certification test that enables students to participate in the exchange programmes where TSU appears as partner. Students actively participate in testing process and the result is very high competition in Erasmus programmes. Together with this, we encourage you to implement informational campaigns to show students the importance and benefits of language certification.

Selection Stage

Problem – Expulsion of interviews from the selection stage

This decision was resulted in several negative consequences. In case, if programme does not demand language certificate, documents like motivation letter, language self-assessment form and CV do not guarantee proper evaluation of language



knowledge level – motivation letter is written by other person, language knowledge level is exaggerated. As it turned out during the mobility stage, part of the beneficiaries did not meet minimum level of language knowledge that was necessary to get quality education and socialize.

The problem was not just language knowledge level. In some cases students had necessary language skills, but their motivation of participating in the programme was quite vague. This is shown by the low amount of credits got by students during the exchange. Moreover, part of the students could not manage to socialize with local society and with other exchange students due to different reasons. The reasons were individual, but to generalize, they could not understand the importance and idea of Erasmus programme and could not get the main benefit of it: understanding European cultures and the experience to live in international society.

Recommendation – we recommend IR departments to provide interviews on the last stage of selection process. As they are required to evaluate their applicant students and this has effect on final selection decision, we think, it's necessary to involve interview result in local coordinator evaluation. We also find it necessary interviews to be provided for TG2 and TG3 applicants.

Pre-Mobility Stage

Problem – Providing information

Students had and have to wait for information about university registration, academic calendar and visa related information during previously undefined time. This causes worries, additional stress that is also transferred on local coordinators, as students try to find answers from them, but answers are not available in most cases.

Recommendation – we find as the way out to set concrete schedule for providing information (for example: visa related information will be provided on 30th of June). This will eliminate uncertainty.

Problem - Visa

When there is no respective country embassy in Georgia, students have to go to neighbor countries for visas that is resulted in quite serious expenses. As survey showed the majority of programmes do not reimburse this kind of expenses.

Recommendation – The amount of reimbursement of travel expenses is calculated based on distance between home and host destinations based on Erasmus regulations. Such calculation is in most cases resulted in much higher funds than it is necessary to cover ticket expenses. We think, the leftover money must be enough to cover also visa travel expenses.

Mobility Stage

Problem – Accommodation

Students faced problems when university did not offer them university campuses and even did not help them to find accommodation either. For example, due to this students who arrived in Paris had to live in hotel during first three weeks that resulted in high expenses. In some cases university coordinator was providing real estate agent contact information or students were trying to get it themselves. In the most cases the result was much higher accommodation price than usual, market price. Commission fee for agent plus warranty and advanced payments together were reaching quite high



number, some cases students had to pay even 1000 euro ahead. Students even had to make advanced payments in case of university accommodation. These were causing serious financial problems for students and their families.

Recommendation – We kindly ask the universities to pay much attention to accommodation issues. In case when university offers accommodation in its campuses it's quite easy to avoid advanced payments. We have best practice of it at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, IANUS project. Students start paying accommodation fee after the transfer of first scholarship.

Problem – Other payments

We faced cases when university asked students to pay 200 euro for license registration. The amount of money was even higher in case of master and PHD students. As students say, they were not informed ahead about this payment and university was refusing to involve them in educational process unless the payment was done. This caused serious problem, as the scholarship was not transferred yet and students did not have enough money to make the payment. Students finally paid 200 euro, but it was not reimbursed by the project ALRAKIS II. This university also demanded students to make new insurance as they said Erasmus one was not enough. Though the problem was solved later.

Recommendation – Partners of Erasmus consortiums must respect consortium and programme regulations. We find it necessary to be worked out procedures and sanctions that will avoid such misunderstanding in future and discourage universities to have careless attitude towards Erasmus.

Post-Mobility

Problem – Credit Recognition

Credit recognition still remains as one of the most important problem. As turned out from the survey results from focus group discussion and individual interviews, students in almost all cases faced this problem. We have cases of zero recognized credits and added semesters due to the problem. Problem of recognition arises when course names of home and host university does not match. We had cases when though syllabuses were matching, course name mismatch was stated as the reason why credits were not recognized. Moreover, problem raise when host and home university credit systems are not compatible. During mobility students cover courses with 3, 5, 7, 8 credits, but most Georgian universities do not use such variety of credits. Part of the Georgian faculties give just 5 credits. When student arrives with credit different from home university system it is simply not recognized even though all other required condition is applied. Even if credits are recognized, the process involves huge bureaucracy. 25% of respondents who already finished their exchange say they will have to take additional semester because their credits were not recognized.

Recommendation – We advise IR departments to improve communication between university departments about Erasmus programmes and especially with University Quality Management departments, which is responsible for credit recognition. In most cases they are not fully aware about Erasmus programme and Universities do not have strategy referring the programme. As different departments of university are not agreed about the rules how they act when it comes to Erasmus or some other exchange programme we face credit recognition and bureaucracy problems.

