

Universell – Norwegian national coordinator in higher education for universal design and inclusive learning environments.

Equity in Student Mobility in Nordic Higher Education (ESMHE)



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Acknowledgements

The ESMHE project is a result of an initiative by the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Education and Research (ÄK-U), which implements the policy of the Nordic Council of Ministers of Education and Research (MR-U). The project is a part of the Nordic “Action Plan for Nordic Co-operation on Disability 2015 – 2017”.

Students with disabilities are an underrepresented group in international mobility in Higher Education. This project will reveal and discuss barriers towards mobility as well as suggestions for action at different levels, both politically and practically.

The project management would like to thank NCM for the opportunity to investigate these questions, and will thank Kai Koivumäki (NCM) and Maria Montefusco (Nordic Welfare Centre, NVC) for all support.

The project had been carried out by a network of Nordic universities, called NNDC (the Nordic Network of Disability Coordinators). Partners in the project has been:

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The project report is written by Elina Lehtomäki and Kjetil Knarlag.

The project group hopes that our investigation can be used to develop better policies and better practice for inclusion in Higher Education, and that student’s with different disabilities have better opportunities to take studies abroad.

On behalf of the ESMHE project and the NNDC cooperation, February 2017.

Kjetil Knarlag
Project Manager

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1. Summary

The ESMHE project is a result of an initiative by the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Education and Research (ÄK-U), which implements the policy of the Nordic Council of Ministers of Education and Research (MR-U). The project is a part of the “Action Plan for Nordic Co-operation on Disability 2015 – 2017” Focus area 3, Free movement, Activity 3.3: Study on the educational mobility of people with disabilities between the Nordic countries.

The project was a result of a request for project proposals by Nordic Council of Ministries the Nordic Welfare Centre 2015, with Universell¹ and the University of Jyväskylä (JYU) as the only applicant. The partnership was established out from a long term relationship between the partners, and the NNDC network² established in 2008. A project application was handed in to Nordic Welfare Centre by May 1st 2015, and accepted with minor amendments.

The project report contains an overview over how each of the Nordic countries address disability in Higher Education, key findings about barriers and the national expert’s suggestions for key actions (chapter 4), the student voice and suggestions (chapter 5), and overall view on barriers and suggestions from the ESMHE project (chapter 6). All country reports are in appendix 1.

The key barriers against Nordic mobility revealed in the ESMHE project are:

1. Lack of information and knowledge, both at the systemic level (HEIs and the public sector) and the individual level (counsellors and students)
2. Roles and responsibilities between stakeholders supporting mobility are not well defined
3. Lack of encouragement at the right level, especially at the HEIs and at funding institutions
4. Lack of role models, at all levels
5. Lack of overall policy, and there are gaps between policy and practice
6. Lack of sufficient funding to cover additional costs
7. Health conditions that limited possibilities to spend long time abroad are important individual challenges for mobility

The ESMHE suggestions are, briefly summarised:

1. Create a forum for information sharing and good preparation of international mobility.
2. Make a roadmap for accessibility and mobility at a Nordic level.

¹ Universell is working on behalf of the Norwegian Ministry of Education as a coordinator of universal design, disability and accessibility in Higher Education. Universell belongs to the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

² Nordic Network of Disability Coordinators, NNDC. The NNDC network was established in 2008. See www.universell.no/norden

3. Clear up roles and responsibilities – who is doing what in each country (municipalities, HEIs, public welfare, national organisations)
4. Bring forward student ambassadors through Nordic information channels
5. Ensure that there is an agreement on accessibility and disability support in the general university agreements on student mobility.
6. Develop a Nordic “mobility-disability-coordinator” to promote equity in international mobility and advise national and HEIs’ mobility offices. This could be an
7. Investigate alternative routes for student mobility
8. Invest in further investigations and research about mobility for students with disability across the Nordic countries.

2. Introduction

Disability in Higher Education has been on the agenda at Nordic Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for decades. The numbers of students with disability have raised considerably the last 20 years. The Eurostudent survey (2015)³ claims that between 18 and 24% of the total student mass have some kind of physical or mental disability. More than 5% of the student mass reports that their disability affects their life as a student severely (ibid). Most European and all Nordic HEIs reports of more students coming forward with their difficulties, asking for both accommodations and support to keep them on track in their study programme.

The work for inclusion of students with disabilities has, until recently, been conducted by enthusiasts. Eventually, a slow development of an inclusive learning environment has been more systematically implemented by HEI authorities and management. International and national policy and legislation, and international initiatives like the UN Convention on Rights for People with Disabilities (CRPD), have been important drivers for action on several areas. Most universities in the Nordic countries offers reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, some already work systematically with universally designed solutions, as well.

In spite of the work of both enthusiasts and the slowly evolving systems thinking, there are several areas where offices and services for students with disability are limited. International mobility is one of those areas, where disadvantaged groups – and especially students with disabilities – are underrepresented in the statistics. Special support staff, like the disability offices, have rarely been challenged to support students who want to go abroad as exchange students (taking parts of a degree in another country), and the students taking a full programme in another country have with almost no exceptions, never been contacting the disability experts in the HEIs. Even more important, the statistics of students with disability asking their international office for support, is equally low. Finally, financial support systems

³ www.eurostudent.eu

are offering very good support programmes for students with disability, but these systems are not very much used.

Both EU, the Nordic cooperation and most European and Nordic HEIs stress the importance of international mobility. An overall objective for student mobility is that at least 20% of the total student mass should include taking a part of their programme in a foreign country. In one of the Norwegian universities, the vision is that 40 % of all students should go abroad. When we know that almost 25 % of the students reports of a disability, and initial investigations show that under 1 % of the students going abroad has a defined disability, this leads to several questions: Why is the participation rate in international mobility among students with disabilities so low? Do the students with disabilities go abroad without using the service offered, also financially, by the institutions? Is the system not suitable for formal exchange, so the students with disabilities go abroad by themselves to a full programme? And important in this investigation, what is the most important barriers, and the key promoters to go to a Nordic country if you have a disability?

This is the background for this project called “Equity in Student Mobility in Nordic Higher Education” (ESMHE).

3. About the ESMHE project

The ESMHE project is a result of an initiative by the Nordic Council of Ministries (NCM), and Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Education and Research (ÄK-U). The project is a part of the “Action Plan for Nordic Co-operation on Disability 2015 – 2017” Focus area 3, Free movement, Activity 3.3: Study on the educational mobility of people with disabilities between the Nordic countries.

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The project application was distributed to all project partners, and the project formally started on October 1st 2015.

3.1 Target groups

The project addresses challenges and best practice at different levels in the public sector. Several difficulties occur due to the sector responsibility, and the lack of collaboration between sectors important for a successful study in another Nordic country. Our

⁴ Nordic Network of Disability Coordinators, NNDC. The NNDC network was established in 2008. See www.universell.no/norden

suggestions are inter-disciplinary and inter-sectorial, and suggests actions at both a practical and political level. This includes:

- Actions at a Nordic political and administrative level (NMC)
- Actions at a national level (like regulations in the university sector or the municipalities)
- Actions at a local level (like enhancing best practice inside a university)

3.2 Project application and activity plan

The project application was worked out by University of Jyväskylä and NTNU/ Universell, and handed in in cooperation and understanding with the NNDC partnership. The project application was funded on 6 key investigations and actions:

1. Review on previous research and available knowledge about mobility and disability in Higher Education.
2. An overview of policy and praxis for including student with disabilities in Higher Education in the Nordic countries, including revealing knowledge of support systems from other sectors. Investigation of international mobility personnel in Nordic higher education institutions.)
3. Survey and interviews of students with disabilities in higher education institutions in the Nordic countries and international mobility personnel in Nordic higher education institutions
4. Analysis of key issues across the findings from different data sets (student survey and interviews, country reports).
5. Dialogue on the key findings with key stakeholders - including NNDC - to create a common understanding concerning recommendations and means to ensure equal and successful mobility within the Nordic countries and autonomous areas
6. Discussions in the project expert group, the NNDC partnership. Two project meetings were planned before concluding on project outcomes.

3.3 Project partners

The project partners were recruited through the NNDC network (Nordic Network of Disability Coordinators). The NNDC network was created in 2008 by 10 Nordic universities and university colleges, initially financed by the Nordic Welfare Centre. The NNDC network arranged a conference about disability in Higher Education in 2009, and has regularly cooperated in smaller projects the following years. The main purpose has been exchange of knowledge and best practice about students with disabilities.

After the call for project applications, the University of Jyväskylä and Universell (NTNU) formed a partnership for a joint application, involving the NNDC partners as national experts of disability in Higher Education in the Nordic countries in the project. Five Nordic countries

are represented in the ESMHE project, and the following organisations has been contributing directly into the project and project activities:

- Karolinska Institutet (Sweden)
- Lærings og kompetancecenteret (Denmark)
- Luleå Technical University (Sweden)
- Norwegian university of science and technology (NTNU) / Universell (Norway)
- University of Iceland (Iceland)
- University of Jyväskylä (Finland)
- University of Southern Denmark (Denmark)
- University of Turku (Finland)

Universell has been the coordinator, responsible for project management, the expert group meetings, the country reports and the finalization of the project report. University of Jyväskylä has been responsible for the student survey, the analysis of incoming data from the quantitative and qualitative research, and for co-writing the report together with Universell. The other partners have contributed through expert group meetings, by recruiting students to the research, for writing the reports from each country, and for quality assurance of the final report.

3.4 Delimitations

The ESMHE project has adjusted the level of ambitions to be feasible within the time frame and grant awarded to the project. This has led to the following delimitations in the ESMHE project investigations:

- a) Only 1-2 HEIs from each country, totally 7 HEIs, have been included into the investigation
- b) The student survey has been spread to students registered at the disability services in the 7 HEIs. The students interviewed has been recruited among the respondents to the general survey.
- c) The investigation has only questioned student mobility when it comes to *exchange programs*, full program students (students with disabilities which take a full program in another country) have not been included in the investigation. They might
- d) When it comes to the statistics, there has been no separate survey within the project, all numbers are from different national surveys and the EUROSTUDENT survey (2015)

4. Disability and mobility in Nordic Higher Education

The ESMHE project has investigated how each country address accessibility to Higher Education for students with disabilities. First, this includes an overview of support and services inside the HEIs. What kind and level of support does the institutions offer to students with different disabilities, and what kind and level of support does the institutions offer to students with disabilities who want to go abroad as part of their studies.

Secondly, the project has briefly looked at crucial arrangements and services *outside* the education sector. This includes arrangements in the public welfare system, the municipalities and suppliers in other parts of the public sector.

In addressing these topics, the main purpose has been to investigate:

- a) Which arrangements from the *sending country* can students bring to another Nordic country
- b) Which arrangement can students achieve from the *receiving country* when going abroad as an exchange student to another Nordic country

As part of the investigation, the ESMHE partners has included statistics (if available) of the number of students with disabilities, the number of students going abroad, and the number of students applying for additional funding/ support grants out of disability reasons.

4.1 Addressing disability in Nordic Higher Education

There is no formal common definition of disability used by the HEIs in the Nordic countries. All countries have ratified the UN Convention on Rights for People with Disabilities (CRPD), and adopts the social (relational) model of disability, which defines disability as including long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with barriers in the environment may hinder participation on equal basis with other.

In spite of the ratification of the CRPD, the ESHME project members state that the implementation of the CRPD into sectoral legislation and regulations, like the different HE acts, has been a slow process. According to this, there are substantial differences between the countries when it comes to support, which affect incoming students.

All countries offer *reasonable accommodation*, defined as an adjustment made in a system to accommodate or make fair the same system for an individual based on a proven need (CRPD). All HEIs offer reasonable accommodation requested by their students, but the level of support varies substantially between the counties.

4.2 Support

In Norway, the level of support is defined autonomously by the different HEIs. The Higher Education Act defines the framework for support, but prioritisations (budget and personnel) are set locally. Furthermore; There is no code of practice following the legislation, but the Ministry of Education recently have claimed quality assurance of all services given to students with disabilities. This leads to differences between the support given by the HEIs.

and which also includes support to incoming exchange students. On the other hand, the term *universal design* is a more prominent strategy similar to the other countries.

Equally important is the support given by the public welfare sector (NAV and the Municipalities). A great deal of support given to students with disabilities is financed through public welfare, and to achieve these kind of support you must be staying in Norway for more than a year. This support (transport, technical aids, financial support for housing etc.) is dependent on individual needs assessment. What is a considerable barrier, also for Norwegian students, is that this support is due to an inquiry made by the student's native municipality or county municipality when it comes to utilities/ technical aids etc.

The main barrier for students in Norway, both Norwegian students and incoming students, is the imbalance between services provided by the HEI and the Public Welfare system, like NAV, municipalities and county municipalities. If a student has financed the education through NAV, a lot of support is available. If only supported by the HEI, the support is more limited. Still, a lot of students manage very well on State Loan funding, and universally designed learning environment combined with individual accommodation given by the HEI. But important areas like transport and technical and pedagogical aids, is dependent on diagnose and citizenship. This is proved to be challenging for incoming students.

In Denmark, the national system of special support (SPS), gives clear regulations on the level of support given to students with disabilities. The HEIs carry out a screening investigation of the student, which leads to documentation approved or refused by SPS. An approval leads to a verification for both the student and the HEI about support, and the HEI can apply for refund of expenses from the SPS system. This is support for the individual student, as personal support or technical aids.

Most important, this system has a clear benefit in streamlining the level of support, securing equity for the students. The support is verified nationally, and support is given regardless of programme of study or affiliation. The disadvantage is time lost in administrative procedures, and that a special equipment must be listed by the SPS to be offered. In this matter, this system looks a bit like the Norwegian NAV system, but more students seem to be inside the solution than in Norway. Only full time students from abroad are included in this arrangement.

Communication between the municipalities and the HEIs are challenging, and there are difficulties regarding to define responsibility. Danish legislation on a municipality level⁵ can provide extra funding and service for students with disabilities, like to have extra money if you are unable to work alongside your study, training programmes, mentoring, cover of additional costs due to a disability and so on. As the financial support often is placed in small funding systems, there is a lot of work for the individual to receive extra funding. Moreover, there are no clear lines between the SPS systems and support given by the municipalities, and it is challenging to have an overview of all kinds of support. Finally, sectoral

⁵ LAB and LOS regulations, see the Danish country report

responsibility is challenging support given by different sectors to the students. The system is seen by the HEIs as too stiff and inflexible.

In Finland, key words in Finnish education policy are equality, efficiency, equity and internationalization. Great effort is done to ensure individual accommodation at a local level, still more national guidelines are requested to define the level of support given to the students by the HEIs.

Higher education has a significant role in Finnish society aiming to a world-class knowledge society. There are 14 universities and 24 applied science universities. Their common objectives for 2025 are:

- strong higher education units that renew competence
- faster transition to working life through high-quality education
- impact, competitiveness and well-being through research and innovation
- the higher education community as a resource.

In light of the role, aim and objectives it is somewhat surprising that there is hardly information and knowledge on access and participation of students with disabilities in the Finnish higher education.

Municipalities and the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (KELA) bear the responsibility for providing support needed by persons and also students with disabilities. Also students with disabilities apply for necessary medical and technical devices, personal assistance and interpreter services from their *home municipality health and social services*. KELA (2016) offers financial assistance:

“Disability Allowance for persons aged 16 years or over is aimed at making it easier for disabled persons to manage their everyday activities and to cope with their work and studies. The allowance can be awarded to persons over 16 years who have an illness or injury which will reduce their functional capacity for a period of at least one year. A person is concerned to have a functional impairment when his or her ability to

- look after him- or herself
- perform necessary household chores or
- cope with work or study demands.”

According to this, most services offered to students is provided by the municipalities, and not the HEIs which offer only counselling and advice. This differs considerably from the other Nordic countries, and might also affect the possibility for support to incoming and outgoing students.

In Sweden there are several regulations of how to include students with disabilities in Higher Education, including the Higher Education Act, regulations of state authorities for implementing disability policy, and more recently the Discrimination Act, including provisions about pedagogical availability and physical accessibility.

The support system for students with disabilities is well organised, where all universities and institutions of higher education in Sweden there is at least one contact person / coordinator, working with issues relating to educational support for students with disabilities. The

coordinator is also involved in the work with plans and strategies for the development of accessibility and equal opportunities, and is a source of knowledge and guidance for the university staff. Equally important, each university and higher education institution in Sweden is obliged to set aside the funds to cover extraordinary costs for educational support measures for students with disabilities. A large part of these costs is financed and distributed annually from a common national pool. The support seems to be equal, and not dependent on local strategies, ambitions and budgets. Each university and higher education institution offers special support to students with disabilities but each decides what form that support is to take. There are frequently possibilities to receive various individual support measures (i.e. talking books, note takers, accommodations at exams), although their availability cannot be promised to all students in all study programmes.

Outside the HEIs, there are several well established support systems. The *National Agency for Special Needs Educations and Schools* (SPSM) covers some costs at universities for services in the area of personal support to students with mobility difficulties and mentor support for students with cognitive difficulties due to for example ADHD and Asperger's syndrome. Secondly, the *Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society*, ensures young people's access to important areas like information, communication and physical spaces. Thirdly, the *Swedish Library of Talking Books and Braille, MTM* ensures that all persons with reading impairments can access literature and daily newspapers through media appropriate to them. One special mandate is to provide university and college students access to their required reading through media appropriate to them. Finally, the Equality Ombudsman can receive complaints about discrimination related to disability.

The system seems to be very well organised to the benefit for students with disabilities. Sweden has a clear legislation and financing strategy to support the students, leading to a lot of support systems described in detail in the Swedish country report. Support also includes arrangements for incoming and outgoing mobility students (see chapter 3.4).

In Iceland, disabled people's rights are guaranteed by the constitution, general laws, and regulations, as well as international conventions and declarations that Iceland is a part of.

As well as services guaranteed by the university, and rendered to disabled students, there are various services specified by law that are available through the state and municipalities but at times it seems unclear who should administer a specific service, whether it is the university or other public parties concerned. Nevertheless, The University of Iceland has developed regulation on disability services, providing registered students with various services, concentrated around individual accommodation of examinations, digital study materials etc. Some services are not supported by the university, and the students are dependent on support from the municipality. As in most Nordic countries, the roles and responsibility seems to be unclear, and the need for systematic approach on best practice when it comes to areas like transport, personal assistance must be sorted out.

The University of Iceland Student Counselling and Career Centre (USCCC) is responsible for organizing services within the University of Iceland for students with disabilities and learning disabilities. This includes all student enrolled at the University, regardless of nationality.

4.3 Statistics

There are no clear statistics on students with disabilities across the Nordic education sector. On a European level, the Eurostudent survey has investigated this question, leading to some major findings relevant for the Nordic HEI sector. The research has used self-assessment as a method, and suggests the following share of students (in percentage of the total student population):⁶

- Denmark: 23 %
- Finland: 17 %
- Norway: 22 %
- Sweden: 18 %

Self-reporting of disability represents a methodical problem, and we see that most HEIs operate with lower numbers, most of this registration is students applying for support during their study or at the examination. From participating HEIs we have following registration:

- Denmark: 4 %
- Finland: < 1 %
- Iceland: 8 %
- Norway: 5,5 %
- Sweden: 3 %

This remarkable difference in numbers has several reasons. This might be because of students not want to disclose, the number of students with mental health difficulties does not register at the disability office, and out of experience several students do not apply for accommodations out of several reasons.

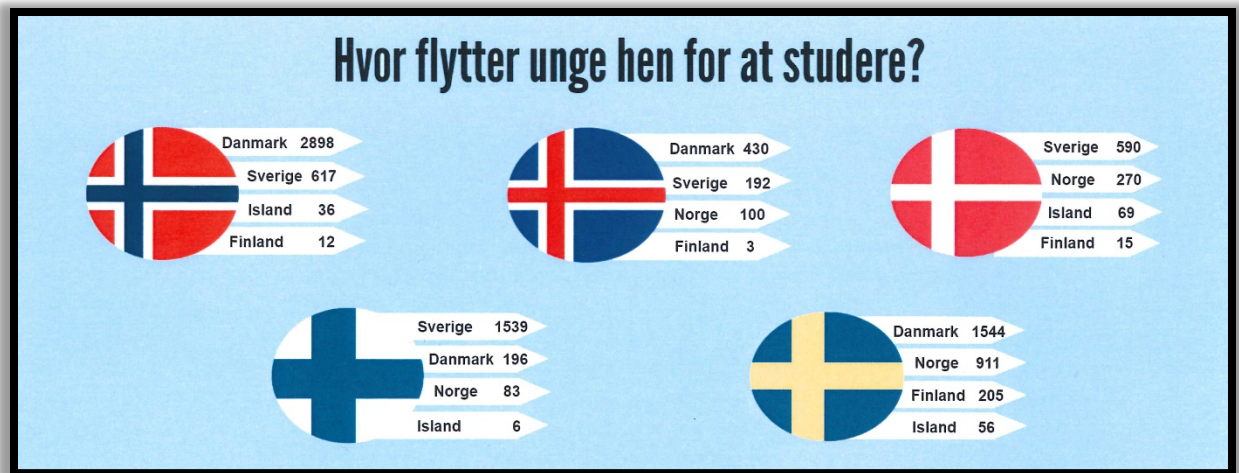
This leads to an uncertainty about the liability of figures presented, and there is a need for better statistics to have a better data source for later investigations.

4.4 Disability and mobility – key findings

In general, several countries report of a significant increase of students crossing borders the latest decade. Still, introducing tuition fees in some of the Nordic countries, has led to an overall reduction the last few years.

Do students travel within the Nordic countries? General statistics from each country on student mobility can be read out of most country reports. Statistics from Nordisk Statistikbank shows the general picture:

⁶ Eurostudent V: Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe. Synopsis of Indicators. Please note that Iceland has not been part of the Eurostudent surveys.



Where do young move to study?⁷ Source: Nordisk Statistikbank
Graphics by Hallå Norden

Even though the numbers of students going abroad is not very high when it comes to travelling to the Nordic country, we can register a significant number of students move across the Nordic countries. What is more important is to answer the question about mobility for students with disability, and especially between the Nordic countries. If we use the Eurostudent V as source, a high number of students with disabilities should be moving across Nordic borders as exchange students or “free movers”, even the moderate figures from the disability offices indicates a considerable numbers of students with disabilities participating in student mobility.

There is not very much trustworthy information in this field. Our limited sources of information are:

- National data from financing institutions (national levels, Erasmus programmes, Nordplus students)
- Students asking for support at the HEIs included in this investigation
- Other registration systems at national level

The proportion of known students with a disability participating in an exchange programme is very low. We have learned

- The academic year of 2015 over 12 000 students with known disabilities asked for support measures during their studies. It is therefore a big question why we cannot find them in our statistics (the Swedish country report)
- Luleå Technical University reports that no one has asked for support for going abroad for several years.

⁷ Statistics limited to full time students, taking a full degree in another country. Numbers for exchange students taking parts of their education in another Nordic country are more uncertain, and not collected in the presented statistics. Most statistics collected on exchange students show numbers travelling between bilaterally between the countries to be below 500 students annually. As an example, approximately 500 students were on exchange from Finland to Sweden in 2014-2015, which seems to be the largest registered number.

- In Norway, the largest university (NTNU) reports of only a handful of requests from students going abroad, but there are interesting numbers from the Norwegian State Loan funding organisation, which gives extra grants for students with disability. A total of 171 students with disability asked for extra funding for studying abroad in the study year of 2014-2015. 25 of them went to Denmark, and seven went to Sweden. We know very little about these students, a guess can be that several of them are taking a full programme abroad, and not an exchange programme. In contradiction to the numbers applying for support through the Norwegian State Loan programme, no students at all applied for the extra funding through the Erasmus+ programme. This strengthens the assumption that for several reasons, it is more difficult to participate as an exchange student than being a free mover on a full programme.
- In Denmark, the Nordplus programme is playing an important role. SDU had the study year of 2015-2016 131 students abroad through Nordplus, and as many as 27 of them were known by the SPS system. This is 2 % of the student mass joining this programme, and a good number compared to the 4 % rate of students with disability registered by SDU.
- The two Finnish HEIs participating in the ESMHE project, reports of very low numbers of known students going abroad with a disability. Only 0-2 students arrive the University of Turku with a disability each year, and only 0-1 of the outgoing students reports of a disability. The University of Jyväskylä reports of equally low numbers.
- The University of Iceland (UI) reports of very low numbers on Erasmus+ extra funding due to disability (only 3 registered students overall). 36 students with support due to disability reasons has been abroad, but there is no record if they had some kind of extra funding for travelling abroad. Seventeen international students have, through a 5-year period, had an agreement with UI regarding special support.

In general, we can conclude that there is a significant imbalance of students with a disability going abroad through exchange programmes, and we can assume that the numbers of free movers are equally low. We can speculate about reasons for this underrepresentation, it could be lack of support systems at a national and local level, the student's personal reasons for not going abroad, or as shown in the Norwegian investigation carried out by Universell in 2015 – lack of information and knowledge between key stakeholders important for student mobility.

4.5 Support for mobility

What kind of support exists? What support can you bring abroad out of disability reasons (i.e. technical aids), and what can you expect from the receiving country? These are important questions asked by the project, and answered by the NNDC expert group through the country reports and out from experience of the work area.

All countries report that it is possible to bring technical aids abroad for study reasons, and there are good solutions for extra support (like a disability allowance) to go abroad. This is confirmed by several organizations, like the Norwegian NAV system.

More interesting is the fact that according to the “Nordic Convention on Social Assistance and Social Services”⁸, students from other countries are included in the solutions offered through the LAB and LOS regulations:

A person who is covered by this Convention and who, during a lawful sojourn in a Nordic country, requires immediate social assistance and social services shall obtain such assistance from the country where he or she is sojourning which under the country's legislation is in keeping with the need for assistance.

Information on what to do is crucial to ensure high quality in services provided for the students. The Finnish representatives state this clearly:

Incoming students are advised to contact their host university that applies for accessibility grants. The students' experiences of this are positive⁹. For incoming students, the challenges are that Finnish HEIs do not provide assistance, such as devices, equipment, interpretation and personal assistants, and countries differ significantly in ways of organizing and providing support for studies abroad; some countries offer no support for outgoing students.

It is important to be aware of the fact that there are several sources of extra funding for students with disability going abroad:

- **Erasmus+** Students on an exchange on an Erasmus+ program students can apply for accessibility grants in their home university before they start mobility. The number reported in this project is very low, with an exception from the University of Iceland where a considerable number of students has used this opportunity. Even though, it is an understatement that this is arrangements which is hardly in use at a Nordic level, and the reasons for this should be investigated closer. The ESMHE project recommends better information through the international offices of this opportunity, perhaps as a campaign or similar promotion.
- **NORDPLUS HIGHER EDUCATION:** Participants with special needs can be funded and have extra support. Costs involving participants with special needs can be covered by 100 per cent. In the event of participants with special needs requiring additional help and support, the coordinator may apply for further funds also after the ordinary application deadline. The application should be addressed directly to CIMO. Additional funds may be provided to cover the cost of escorts, interpreters or similar. The applicants are requested to contact CIMO well in advance.
- **SPS:** Support through the SPS programme in Denmark is possible to bring abroad. The only limitation is that the students has to be participating in a full programme, also during their stay abroad.

⁸ <http://www.norden.org/en/om-samarbejdet-1/nordic-agreements/treaties-and-agreements/social-and-health-care/nordic-convention-on-social-assistance-and-social-services>

⁹ <http://www.cimo.fi/ohjelmat/north-south-south/kokemuksia/sheena>

- **THE NORWEGIAN STATE LOAN FUNDING:** Students with disabilities can ask for extra funding due to disability reasons. Studying abroad is no limitation for receiving the extra funding.

Organizations like CIMO (Finland and Sweden) and SIU (Norway) work for promoting these systems and arrangements. Their support and services seems to be, with exceptions, not very well known by the disability experts in the HEIs and the students themselves. Clearly, there is a need for better cooperation between all stakeholders to provide better knowledge to the students. Both the national organizations, the international offices at the HEIs and the disability experts must be responsible for better cooperation in the future.

4.6 Findings and suggestions from the national experts

The NNDC network has discussed the findings in the country reports closely. There are clearly a lot of good systems unknown (or at least not used) for students and student counsellors. At the same time, there are difficulties at all levels which must be sorted out before an improvement in mobility between the Nordic countries can take place.

Without taking the student investigation into consideration, the NNDC expert groups has concluded with the following key obstacles for mobility between the Nordic Countries:

1. Lack of information and knowledge

Key stakeholders have little or no knowledge or information about disability, and available arrangements for better inclusion of students with disabilities. This leads to inaccurate information to students, and occasionally even negative attitude towards the student asking for support.

Knowledge and information about education, mobility, diversity, disability, legislation and regulations and available support should be present among all key stakeholders:

- Disability service/ counselling
- International offices at the universities
- National organisations of mobility (i.e. CIMO, SIU)
- Support systems at municipality level

A very good example is all the potential funding for student mobility, where there seems to be an underconsumption of service and support.

2. Roles and responsibilities between stakeholders are not well defined

All countries report of challenges due to ambiguity of roles and responsibilities, and silo thinking between sectors. Students with disabilities often relates to different legislation, like health, education and work. There is discrepancy between services offered by different sectors, and in some occasions this leads to lack of service at all. This is the situation both locally, nationally and between the Nordic countries.

What seems to be a critical challenge in the sector, is the areas where no agency claim responsibility.

3. Lack of research about Higher Education and Disability

We have very little information about students with disabilities, partly because of absence of research and formal registrations. The HEIs are not allowed to register and count students, and investigations about important questions (like student surveys) do rarely include questions about disability. The result is that development of support might be inaccurate. To give good advice, you must have deeper knowledge.

4. Lack of role models and ambassadors for mobility between the Nordic countries

Both students and organisers appreciate good practice and experience for motivation and learning. Student ambassadors for mobility do rarely have a disability, which might lead to an assumption that mobility is impossible.

Role models are also important for the students wish and ability to disclose their difficulties to other stakeholders. There has to be an open culture which accepts diversity, also within mobility. Many students do not identify themselves as having a disability, and will miss opportunities like funding etc. Students with dyslexia might be of this category.

5. Gap between policy and praxis

There are several acts and regulations on inclusion, like the UN convention (CRPD), national acts and regulations, and local regulations formally set by the institutions. Still, both students and disability practitioners and experts register that there is a discrepancy between policy and praxis, and that arrangements made for the “regular student” might be discriminating individuals.

The expert group have seen that a very strict interpretation of regulations, alongside with bureaucracy, is in disadvantage for students with disabilities. Due to this, administrators and student counsellors report of difficulties in supporting students with their application to systems like funding etc.

Likewise, the NNDC expert group has concluded with the following advice for action:

1. Clarification of roles and responsibilities to ensure that policy will be carried out in praxis

Quality assurance of support and services to students with disabilities must be carried out by all stakeholders. Silo thinking must be challenged both at a political and an administrative level. Bureaucratic tangles must be dissolved, and grey areas cleared out. A prolonging of this first investigation might work directly with each stakeholder.

2. Make an accessible roadmap for Nordic mobility

This is a knowledge base, with adjusted information and competence for students and all stakeholders. The knowledge base – defined as a project - must provide information to relevant stakeholders until knowledge and competence is present at the lowest possible level.

Collaboration between disability/accessibility coordinators and international student services need to be strengthened.

A solution could be a “forum” for information sharing and good preparation of international mobility, with the following tasks:

- Clear up roles and responsibilities – who is doing what in each country (municipalities, HEIs, public welfare, national organisations)
- Engage mobile student ambassadors (see bullet point 3)
- Work on an agreement on accessibility and disability support in university agreements on student mobility.
- Defining a Nordic “mobility-disability-coordinator” to promote equity in international mobility and advise national and HEIs’ mobility offices.

3. Recruit role models and student ambassadors

Students who have experienced studies abroad, with or without disabilities, possess knowledge and experiences that could be a great resource for students with disabilities. They could share their stories through portrait interviews, act as mentors and be receptive for questions for future students. This is an initiative that is especially necessary for students with disabilities, but helpful for all students.

A common website for information (as described in bullet point 2) is necessary for easy access for all.

4. Research and investigations

There is need for more knowledge, and smaller development and research project must be financed and implemented in this question. Examples:

- Evidence at scale: send the online survey used in this study to all Nordic HEIs and interviews of students with disabilities in each country.
- Study how alternative approaches encourage students to participate in Nordic or international mobility.
- Follow up mobile students with disabilities to identify ways how mobility influences their employment and careers.
- Involve students with disabilities in conducting the studies and disseminating findings.

5. Well supported short-term study periods (in Nordic or European countries) and internationalization at home HEIs

Some students prefer (due to health conditions, family situation etc.) to participate in short-term mobility in Nordic or European HEIs. Furthermore, intensive support, e.g. medical care, therapies and 24h assistance are easier to organize and provide for a short term.

Nordic HEIs and countries have means to negotiate and offer alternative options. The current criteria for funding international student mobility (by ministries, funding agencies, European Union) are limited to a minimum of three-months study abroad.

How does these key obstacles and suggestions for action match with the student's experience? This will be addressed in the next chapter, where we bring forward the voice of the students through surveys and interviews.

5. Students' experiences and thoughts of international mobility

5.1 Data collection

The data collection was planned by a team of two master's degree students and one researcher who all have mobility experiences and two are with disabilities. The planning involved reviewing previous research and reports on international student mobility. The survey and interview themes and questions were prepared in collaboration with JYU's student services and international office.

The team designed an online survey and piloted its accessibility at JYU with five respondents, including students, student services and other university staff, among them some with disabilities. The first version was prepared in Finnish and English, and each respondent could choose the language of their preference. The questionnaire worked well using common browsers (Internet explorer, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox), though not through Linux. The student services confirmed, however, that students prefer the common browsers which are used also by the university services.

The first question in the survey requested students to identify themselves in one of the potential respondent groups, i.e. those who have:

- 1) thought about studying abroad but haven't been abroad yet
- 2) been abroad (study exchange or internship abroad)
- 3) not thought about studying abroad.

These three groups correspond to categories identified in previous reports on international mobility. For each respondent group there was a specific set of questions (Appendix X).

Information about the survey, its purpose, scope and target group, and a link to the survey were sent to potential respondents by the disability coordinators, by email and/or using the participating HEIs' websites. In Denmark and Iceland, for instance, the questionnaire was sent to those students who have an agreement regarding special support during their studies. In Finland, the regular student services' news email and website provided information and a link to the online questionnaire. Students were informed that the survey was available also word format by request.

In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked about their willingness to voluntarily participate in interviews. The student team members interviewed six students with disabilities in Finland and four in Iceland. In Norway, the disability coordinators interviewed six students. Due to the limited time, it was not possible to conduct interviews in all the participating HEIs, though there were students willing to be interviewed.

5.2 Survey respondents and interviewees

The biggest challenge, according to the disability coordinators, was how to reach the potential respondents and motivate them to participate in the survey. In general, response rates in student surveys are low, on one hand due to the amount of information provided for students and on the other hand due to their busy schedules. With this survey's target group, it was difficult to have and even estimate the response rate, because most HEIs register support needs rather than students with disabilities and others have no register, which means that the accurate number of students with disabilities is not known (see the Country reports).

The number of respondents in the participating HEIs was too small to provide comparative statistics. SDU had the biggest number of respondents, a total of 79 students, most of them were female (80%). The respondents' age varied from 20 to 52, the biggest age group were students who were 20-24 (43%). The respondents' self-reported fields of studies were organised into broader categories (in line with CIMO et al. 2013). The most common fields of studies were 1) medicine, health and welfare related fields, 2) humanities and arts, and 3) social sciences, business and law. At JYU seven women and six men responded to the survey. The respondents' age varied from 19 to 54. The details of respondents from the other participating HEIs are not provided, because the numbers of respondents were very small and the students' identity has to be protected. When presenting the findings, reference is made only to the HEI or country, without any personal details of the respondents or interviewees.

5.3 Key findings

5.3.1 Students have thought about mobility

In all the participating HEIs only a small number of the respondents had participated in international mobility. At SDU, which had the biggest number of respondents, majority of the respondents (54%) had thought about studying abroad, only few had studied abroad and many had not thought about studying abroad (Figure 4.1). Also at JYU, where 13 students

responded to the survey, most of them (n=9) had thought about studying abroad but not yet been abroad.

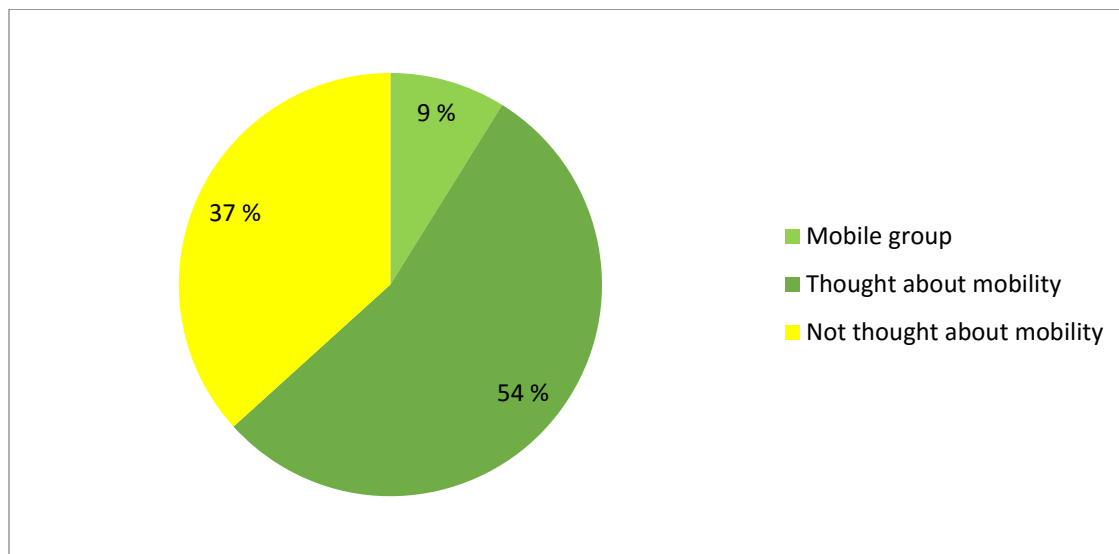


Figure 5.1 Mobility groups among SDU respondents (N=79)

The mobile group in this study is significantly smaller (9%) than the overall mobile group in Nordic countries, which according to the recent representative survey conducted in Finland, Norway and Sweden included 33% of the students (N=6432, CIMO et al. 2013)). What is important to note is that the biggest group in this study is those students who have thought about international mobility but not yet participated (54%). Their needs deserve immediate attention.

5.3.2 Why students consider but do not participate in mobility?

In general, students are positive towards learning abroad. They know that is common in many fields of studies to participate in international mobility. Almost all students consider their language skills, particularly in English or Scandinavian languages sufficient for mobility. Those students who major in languages were well aware that they have to study abroad to practise and improve their language skills.

Many students would like to study in the Nordic countries, because of the similarities in culture, health care and social services, and quality of education. Some students, especially students with multiple disabilities or health issues, thought that mobility would be too demanding due to lack of sufficient support.

“As people come to me from different backgrounds and nationalities it would be useful to have knowledge [of] living abroad and associating with people from different cultures.” (Iceland)

The students had little or no information about how mobility could be arranged in practice, e.g. at SDU in Denmark 90% of the respondents who had considered mobility (n=43) did not have information about funding. Students were not aware about possibilities to apply for additional financial support, available e.g. through Nordplus and Erasmus+, or doubted whether these programmes can cover all the necessary costs (medical care, therapies, assistants, interpreters). At LTU in Sweden, for instance, during the last 15 years no student has applied for special educational support funds for mobility. In Finland, HE students receive support from their home municipalities usually only for studies within the country, which limits opportunities for participating in international mobility.

"I have received a social support provided by my home municipality covering approximately 15 hours of the mobility training. However, due to the fact it was not sufficient, I had to apply in several foundations for further funding." (JYU)

"In order to find a personal assistant for my trip I contacted people from my home country living in my aimed destination. Facebook served me as a tool to do it and I got several applications. However, when I applied for funding to cover the salary of my assistant, I have received a negative decision from my home municipality claiming that it is not the point to be equal with other people but with other disabled people. I have contacted two lawyers to solve my case but I am aware of the fact that it is going to be a long process." (JYU)

The students clearly emphasized the importance of information about accessibility and support. Knowledge of contact persons, similar to the disability coordinators at home HEI was an important factor that contributed to thinking about but not participating in international mobility. When information about disability coordinators or services was provided by the host HEIs the students thought mobility would be successful.

"I might be able to finish all my courses or then just one if have a bad period. I do not know who I could ask about these kinds of things." (Iceland)

When responding to the questionnaire and, especially during the interviews many of the students, who had considered but not yet been abroad, started to think about how to do it. Their responses provided good ideas for planning necessary support and options.

"I think that on the information events about going abroad, they should have something on one of the lasts slides like: 'If you have a disability, you can contact X to get further information about the opportunities you have, when studying abroad'." (SDU)

"If I ever decided to participate in the international mobility, I would need to have fully equipped apartment. Also the facilities at the university like comfortable chair would have to be in place." (Iceland)

One question was designed to invite the study participants think about international mobility: Imagine that your circumstances changed and you decided to go study abroad –

what countries would you consider first? The students both in SDU as well as JYU chose Nordic or European countries. This indicates planning and providing mobility options within Europe would benefit most of those students who consider but have not yet participated in international mobility.

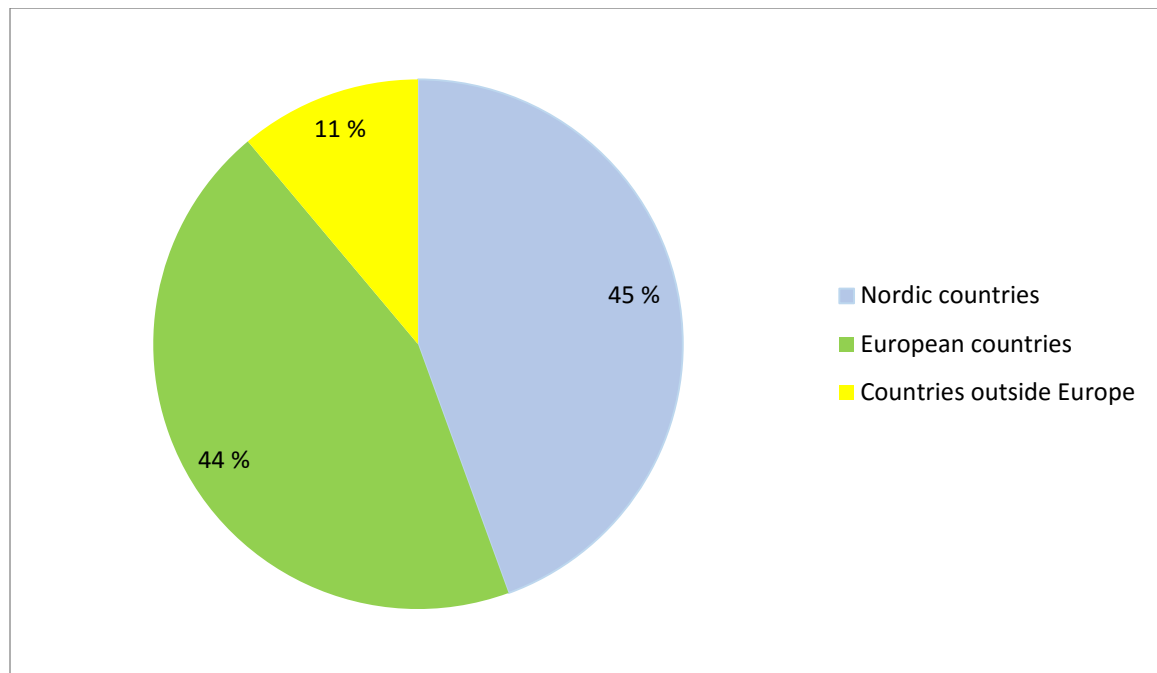


Figure 5.2 Distribution of SDU respondents (n=36) by the countries they would consider, if their circumstances changed.

Some students had searched for information and used their social media and personal networks to get the type of details they needed for considering mobility. Some students had planned to study abroad but found the preparation process too challenging. Often the reason was insufficient information about the available support at the host HEI and country. One student described how it was difficult to know how to explain her needs:

"I applied for an exchange at the university in Holland and though I haven't been able to complete the process yet, I had a feeling I am kind of lost in the process. For instance, I was not sure if there are any key words how to define my disability or how deeply I should explain it in the application." (Iceland)

What may be considered alarming is that most of the students who have thought about studying abroad but not yet been abroad, found little or no information about services for students with disabilities in the websites of potential host HEIs in the Nordic and European

countries. There is a clear need to improve information about accessibility and support, and this information has to be in accessible format.

Most students had never met students with disabilities who had studied abroad. The idea of meeting someone who had the experience was welcomed:

“In fact I would want to meet anyone with disability.” (SDU)

Those few students who had met mobile students with disabilities reported that these students had the experience of not only studying abroad but of solving practical problems in accessibility and finding solutions in daily life.

“That you need to be an active part of the social meetings and step out of your comfort zone.” (SDU)

5.3.3 Students who have not thought about mobility: reasons for not going abroad

The group of students with disabilities who have not thought about international mobility form the second biggest group among the questionnaire respondents and interviewees. Their reasons for not considering or participating include several factors. At SDU the most important reason was ‘other’ (Figure 4.3), which were family and pets, e.g. “I can’t leave my husband and dog”, illness or disability related, e.g. “autism, I think the change would be hard for me”, and lack of interest, e.g. “I do not long for something else”. The main other reasons, family and pets, are in line with the findings of broader studies on student mobility and groups of students who do not participate in mobility.

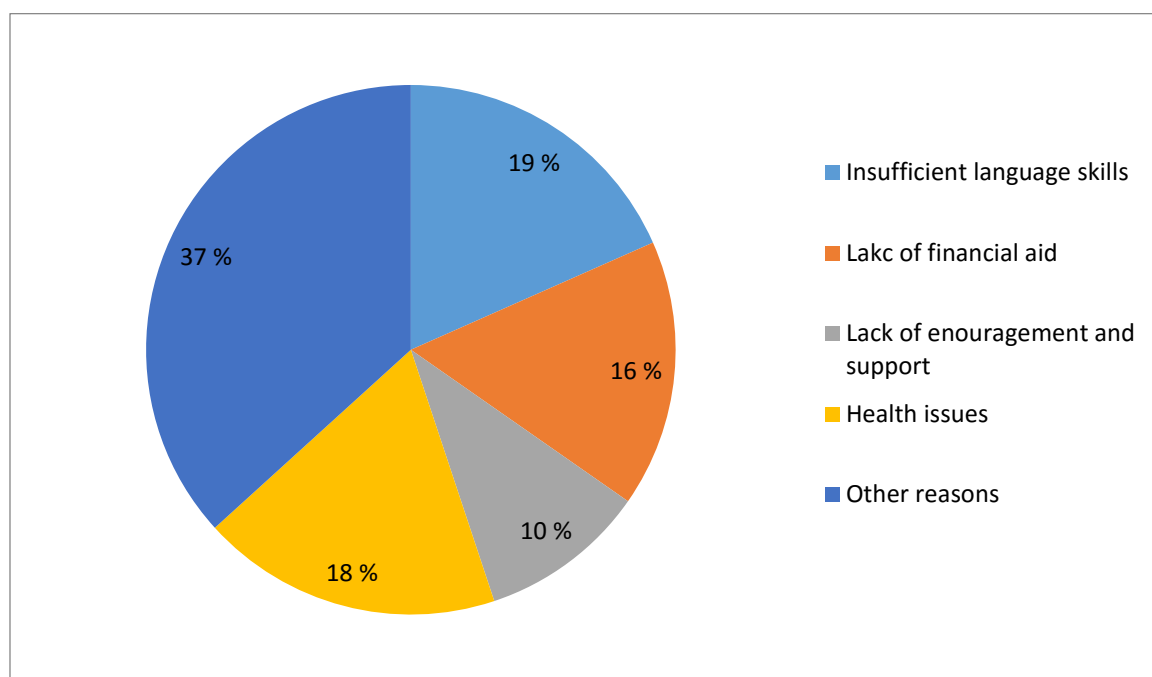


Figure 5.3 Reasons for not studying abroad at SDU (n=29)

In planning how to improve international mobility opportunities and participation the reasons chosen by many students, i.e. insufficient language skills, lack of financial aid, lack of encouragement and support and health issues require attention. An important aspect may be the combination of several factors. Health issues or lack of information what insurance would cover and what types of services would be available in host HEIs and countries were a serious concern for many students. One student explained the challenge:

“Attitudes toward my medication make me worried about going to see doctor during my exchange. I am happy with my healthcare here in Iceland and would not want to change it while abroad.” (Iceland)

Both the students who had thought about studying abroad and those who had not thought about it stated that attitudes of the host HEIs towards their disability would matter in decision-making whether and where to apply for studies abroad. For instance, one student who never wished to study abroad emphasized the necessity of being open about needs for support:

“Hiding and not being open cause prejudices so I decided to openly discuss my problems possibly influencing my studies with relevant people. By doing this I found out that the flow of my studies goes easier. I am aware of the fact that I need to communicate about my special needs in advance, because if I did it too late, the lecturers may consider it as an excuse”. (Iceland)

The importance of explaining about needs and disabilities may be easier in a familiar environment and own language. Therefore, alternative ways of internationalization (at home HEI or country) may be an option.

5.3.4 Mobile students' experiences

Those students who had participated in international mobility were highly motivated. Many of them had looked for opportunities, knew persons with disabilities in other countries, had participated in international activities, e.g. through civil society organizations or been interested in international issues and cultural experiences. These students deemed international experience valuable for themselves as individuals as well as for their future employment and careers.

“I like the idea of having more opportunities regarding jobs after ending my education. I would love to work in another country. I believe it would increase my possibilities if I had studied abroad.” (SDU)

“Unforgettable, life changing, life affirming and priceless.” (Finland)

These students described how they had gained self-confidence. In their view disability was not an obstacle but rather a factor that required better preparation for mobility and more

individual efforts. These students had broadened their knowledge about situation of persons with disabilities in other parts of the world.

“Living with the local people makes me understand the host culture better. Before applying for my exchange I met several people coming from the country I wanted to visit and there is a strong community of people with the same disability, so I believed I am safe enough to go there. Nevertheless, the process of bureaucracy is really slow in my aimed destination and it was really complicated to get used to it at the beginning, but I managed.” (Finland)

Studies abroad meant also additional stress and more work. Some students were worried about their study credits and also the correspondence to their study plans at home HEI. Pace of study programmes as well as environments were different. Furthermore, it took time to get to know people and find friends.

“For me it was the most stressed and lonely experience of my life. Even though I had many great experiences while I was abroad, I struggled to feel secure, because of slow response time when I wrote to my home university about [...] what would happen if I failed a course abroad. Besides being stressed I also found it hard to make close friends which made me very home sick.” (SDU)

The mobile group of students is willing to promote mobility among their peers, which is an important message. Yet, they emphasise the importance of information, planning and sufficient support. One student highlighted how to encourage those students who have thought but not yet been abroad and also those who have not even considered mobility:

“I think that if you have the chance to go abroad, then grab it. As a disabled person, the competition for a job will be very tough when you have to compete against people WHO do not really have any disabilities. So by going abroad, I think that you strengthen yourself and your chances at getting a job.” (SDU)

5.3.5 Students' suggestions how to improve participation in international mobility

The students had many good suggestions how to improve participation in international mobility. Mobility portal that provides and gathers information about accessibility and services for students with disabilities is needed. Also information about pedagogical solutions and flexible modes of learning and studying are important. A contact person at host HEI was considered vital. Also medical database or co-operation between doctors about medication and healthcare would make international mobility more accessible. Coverage of insurance was an issue:

“Information like who will pay my health care issues, who will inform me about accessibility issues in the particular university should be gather on one place, because currently there is no one who could answer me these questions. It would make the universities more attractive for people with special needs.” (Iceland)

The suggestions are organised by the target groups, i.e. HEIs, international mobility organizations and students.

Higher education institutions need to:

- Appoint a contact person for accessibility/disability issues.
- Provide information on the HEI websites about accessibility, services, equipment available, flexibility options in teaching and learning, and contact persons for students with disabilities.
- Initiate or strengthen collaboration between international offices and accessibility/disability coordinators.
- Advise students how to apply for funding to cover additional costs, e.g. assistance, therapies, medical care.
- Ensure that teachers and programmes allow additional time for completing studies.

Students' suggestions to mobility organizations

- More information about practical enabling factors, especially on eligibility to additional funding.
- Develop instruments to offer sufficient funding.
- Short-term exchange options, e.g. one or two weeks or months would be easier to arrange in practise (related to issues such as assistance, interpretation, medical care, therapies).
- Mobility to HEIs in the neighbouring Nordic countries would be easier to arrange.
- Recruit and use role models, i.e. mobility ambassadors with disabilities (good experiences in Erasmus+).

Students' suggestions for other students

- Start the mobility planning and process as early as possible, because you need time for checking accessibility (of accommodation, studies) and available services, and for securing sufficient funding.
- Inform the host HEI about your needs and check what their services cover.
- Contact and learn from other students with disabilities who have studied abroad.
- Create a forum for sharing experiences.

5.4 Conclusions

Success criteria (5+) for equity: successful international student mobility

In summary, according to the students who participated in this study and the disability coordinators who compiled the country reports, there are five success criteria for equity in international student mobility:

- 1) Accessible and sufficient information about international mobility and HEIs' accessibility and support services, and careful preparation well in advance
- 2) Collaboration between international offices and accessibility/disability coordinators both at home and host HEIs
- 3) Sufficient funding to cover additional costs (medical care, therapies, assistants, equipment)

- 4) Accessibility of all aspects at host HEIs
- 5) Role models or student ambassadors: mobile students with disabilities

More suggestions are brought to the table by both disability experts and students.

1. Accessible and sufficient information about international mobility and HEIs' accessibility and support services, and careful preparation well in advance

- HEIs' websites with information about accessibility, services, equipment available, guidance on flexibility in teaching and learning, and contact persons for students with disabilities.
- Possibilities to check issues related to accessibility of studies and environments, flexible options for completing courses.
- Ways of including study credits done abroad (at host university) in degrees at home university.
- Knowledge of additional funding options, such as accessibility or special support grants.
- Creating a contact between the contact persons at home and host HEIs before mobility.
- Database: a regularly updated international data base offering comparison of available services and support at HEIs and countries for persons with disabilities, and experiences (rating) of persons with disabilities.

2. Collaboration between international offices and accessibility/disability coordinators at HEIs

- Joint planning of international mobility together with students to check and document their specific needs for support and assisting students to inform (host) HEIs.
- Ensuring that teachers and coordinators of study programmes at host HEIs understand the identified needs for support, such as being flexible with pedagogical arrangements, allowing additional time for completing studies, providing or assisting in finding accessible accommodation and using transport.
- Advising students in how to apply for funding to cover additional costs, e.g. assistance, therapies and medical care.
- Connecting students with mobile students who know the host HEI environment.
- Finding ways to integrate of the mobility in study programmes.
- Ensuring teachers at home HEI know about the equal right to international mobility.
- Connecting students who think about mobility with those students who have successfully participated in international mobility.
- Host HEIs' provision of student tutors (to assist with practical matters, studies and social contacts) and study guidance (to find ways of participating in relevant courses).

3. Sufficient funding to cover additional costs

- Accessibility (or special) grants cover all necessary additional costs, such as assistance, therapies, medical care, interpretation, equipment and transport.
- Some students with disabilities prefer Nordic countries on the basis of similarities in cultures, languages, health and medical care, human rights and accessibility in

education. Students with disabilities have the equal right to international mobility but due to health conditions some prefer alternative options, e.g. short-term mobility (may improve mobility of majority of students, i.e. all those who think but do not participate in mobility).

- Nordic countries or HEIs may negotiate to experiment short-term mobility and assess its influence in general and, in particular, for mobility of students with disabilities.

4. Accessibility of all aspects at host HEIs

- Host HEIs' accessibility, support services and especially the availability of contact persons who advise students as well as host HEI's staff, and solve potential problems are very important.
- Depending on individual needs, various issues are emphasised by students: accessibility of accommodation, transport, study facilities and environments, materials, equipment, availability of assistance (guides, readers), interpretation services, medical care and therapies.
- Pedagogical accessibility and teachers' knowledge and support are needed.
- Getting to know other students and people in the host country as well as active participation in student life, leisure time and social activities are mentioned by many students.

5. Mobility ambassadors: mobile students with disabilities

- Erasmus+ student ambassadors, some with disabilities, who visit HEIs and meet students encourage students to participate.
- Both students and HEIs benefit from student ambassadors, i.e. mobile students with disabilities who are willing to share their knowledge and experiences.
- Practical and personal experiences of other students' interest students who think about international mobility.
- A Nordic forum for sharing of knowledge and information among students could offer recommendations, motivation, accessibility and support services, financing, study systems, situation of persons with disabilities in host countries and good timing of mobility (in relation to studies and host HEIs' programmes).

Barriers (5+) defined through the analysis across the different data sets

The biggest group of respondents are those students who have thought about mobility but not studied abroad.

- Lack of information about accessibility and support services in host HEIs as well as accessibility grants (or additional funding).
- Lack of encouragement.
- Most students did not know any student with disabilities who had studied abroad.
- Checking and arranging practical matters required big efforts, e.g. accommodation, transport, support services, assistants, interpreters, accessibility of studies and learning environments.
- Lack of sufficient funding to cover additional costs.
- Health conditions that limited possibilities to spend long time abroad.

6. Overall conclusions: Barriers towards Nordic Mobility and suggestions on how to improve equity in Nordic student mobility

When we compare the output from investigations and experience made from the NNDC expert group with the student voice, we find a quite close correlation in both defining barriers and addressing action to improve mobility.

The barriers revealed in the project are:

1. Lack of information and knowledge, both at the systemic level (HEIs and the public sector) and the individual level (counsellors and students)
2. Roles and responsibilities between stakeholders supporting mobility are not well defined
3. Lack of encouragement at the right level, especially at the HEIs and at funding institutions
4. Lack of role models, at all levels
5. Lack of overall policy, and there are gaps between policy and practice
6. Lack of sufficient funding to cover additional costs
7. Health conditions that limited possibilities to spend long time abroad are important individual challenges for mobility

The students and the NNDC expert group have sorted out a lot of key actions to improve mobility.

A: Collaboration between disability/accessibility coordinators and international student services need to be strengthened.

1. Create a forum for information sharing and good preparation of international mobility.
2. Make a roadmap for accessibility and mobility at a Nordic level.
3. Clear up roles and responsibilities – who is doing what in each country (municipalities, HEIs, public welfare, national organisations)
4. Bring forward student ambassadors through Nordic information channels
5. Ensure that there is an agreement on accessibility and disability support in the general university agreements on student mobility.
6. Develop a Nordic “mobility-disability-coordinator” to promote equity in international mobility and advise national and HEIs’ mobility offices.

B: Investigate alternative routes

Some students prefer (due to health conditions, family situation etc.) to participate in short-term mobility in Nordic or European HEIs. This could be addressed through intensive support, e.g. medical care, therapies and 24h assistance are easier to organize and provide for a short term. The ESMHE project believes that the Nordic HEIs and countries have means to negotiate and offer alternative options.

1. Rebuild the current criteria for funding international student mobility (by ministries, funding agencies, European Union), which now are limited to a minimum of three months' study abroad.
2. Investigate the challenges in short time exchange studies.
3. Develop well supported short-term study periods (in Nordic or European countries) and internationalization at home HEIs

C: Call for more research and investigations

1. Use research results in a wider scale: send the online survey used in this study to all Nordic HEIs and interviews of students with disabilities in each country.
2. Study how alternative approaches encourage students to participate in Nordic or international mobility.
3. Follow up mobile students with disabilities to identify ways how mobility influences their employment and careers.
4. Involve students with disabilities in conducting the studies and disseminating findings.

7. Appendix: Country reports

A: Country report Denmark (with attachments)

B: Country report Finland

C: Country report Iceland

D: Country report Norway

E: Country report Sweden



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