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University as community

Students' perceptions of participation, engagement and belonging at European higher education institutions

UNICOMM PROJECT SURVEY REPORT

University as community: students' perceptions of participation, engagement and belonging at European higher education institutions

UNICOMM Project Survey Report
August 2023

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The layout and graphic design of this report were prepared in accordance with the accessibility policy to make the research results available to a wide audience. The findings/recommendations are marked in bold and presented in frames.

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- Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic
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Introduction: about the UNICOMM project and the report

The idea of the University Community Active Participation (UNICOMM) Project comes from the belief that higher education institutions (HEIs; for a definition of the term see glossary) are more than academic courses and research, and that all the people who work within these institutions and attend them should be noticed and feel motivated to be engaged in the initiatives that they find important. Recent events, such as the pandemic, have highlighted the importance of relationships and being part of a group, but they also proved that rapidly-changing conditions make it difficult to strengthen the bonds and enhance the sense of belonging. Thus, the main aims of the UNICOMM Project are: to identify the patterns and factors that support the incorporation of inclusive and active student participation, to enhance students' competences to allow them to fully participate in the inclusive HEI community, and to create guidelines and recommendations concerning organisational structures of European HEIs in the context of uncertain times and rapid changes.

Starting from November 2022, the consortium consisting of the European Students' Union (ESU), the Palacký University Olomouc, the University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria and the University of Warsaw as a coordinating institution has been cooperating within the UNICOMM Project focusing on the above mentioned goals.

The primary focus of the UNICOMM Project is to survey student and staff expectations and needs. Therefore, the first activity of the consortium, conducted under the coordination of the University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria, was the preparation of a survey aiming at the analysis of the bond-building factors between students and HEIs understood as both institutions and communities consisting of various actors. The initial assumption while designing the survey was that the perception of the academic community and the relationship to the HEIs has changed over the last few years due to generational changes and world events influencing everyday life. The consortium invited students across Europe to fill out the questionnaire and share their opinions in order to verify the aforementioned hypothesis. Hence, the main purpose of the outcomes of the survey is to provide a basis for the design of further activities in the project so that they fit the expectations and needs of students.

The report entitled "University as community: students' perceptions of participation, engagement and belonging at European higher education institutions" first presents how the survey participants perceive their relationship to university, namely whether they see their HEI as a supportive institution and have a feeling of institutional care for their progress. The results presented within the first part of the Report outline the students' perceptions of their own role and connection with the institution, answering the question whether they feel like active actors in the academia or rather passive receivers of educational services.

In the next part, the report investigates the types of students' extracurricular activities (EA; for a definition of the term see glossary) and participation modalities within the HEIs. Moreover,

the presented results also indicate the most important motivations for student engagement, which might help in designing activities and opportunities that will be more appealing for students. The further analysis shows that the topics that are important for the students who took part in the survey are very diverse, with the exception of the issue of students' well-being, indicated as the most significant by the majority of the respondents. Therefore, the part on the students' motivations can be an important signpost for the HEIs working on the offer of extracurricular activities and aiming at the increase in students' participation.

The Report also presents students' perceptions of the relationships with different members of the HEI's community, for instance their lecturers. Students were asked to whom (if to anyone) they are most likely to go in difficult situations not necessarily related to their studies, as being able to seek support in various circumstances is an important factor in one's feeling of belonging. In order to investigate the challenges of students' life, the Report also presents how students are most likely to deal with their problems and what sort of problems they encounter most often.

The survey participants were further asked about their connections with other students, their peer relations, their priorities in terms of the time and planning of various activities and responsibilities, as well as their main concern regarding their time as a student. These sections of the Report can be helpful in the practical aspects of the design of extracurricular offers, as they outline the need for a flexible approach in their preparation.

The initial target group analysis performed within the UNICOMM project's design and then revised just before the start of the project showed that students are most likely to participate in the initiatives connected with the values that are important for them. Therefore, a part of the survey, based on The World Values Survey, was meant to investigate what values students find important for themselves.

The UNICOMM Project aims at incorporating diverse voices into shaping the community of European HEIs and enhancing equal access to the HEIs' academic and non-academic offerings. International students (for a definition of the term see glossary) and students who need to work in order to support themselves often have less opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities and in the life of the academic community due to language, cultural and time barriers. Therefore, the last sections of the Report are focused on these two (often overlapping) groups of students in order to grasp their point of view and create inclusive activities and spaces for the enhancement of belonging.

Considering the composition of the consortium, the majority of the answers come from the students of Polish, Austrian, and Czech institutions, which is also outlined in some sections of the Report. Further activities in the Project will be conducted within the consortium members' institutions; however, they will be confronted with the points of view presented by respondents studying in other European countries in order to propose solutions suitable for diverse contexts.

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Methodology and sample composition

The questionnaire whose results will be analysed in this Report was developed by the UNICOMM Project consortium, partly drawing on existing surveys such as the World Values survey and survey items developed in previous E+ projects (see the full questionnaire in the Annex). The construction of the items followed a broad discussion within the consortium, integrating both a research perspective, as well as actual, concrete experience and expertise of student members of the consortium.

The central aim of the survey was to establish and find out more about the link between engagement and active participation and belonging at university, while also identifying what aspects influence both engagement and belonging. The questionnaire addressed both the level and the types of engagement, especially taking into account participation in extracurricular activities and challenges associated with such forms of engagement. Also, students' topics of interest were gauged in order to inform the further outputs of the project, i.e., the design of extracurricular activities tailored to students' needs and interests. The questionnaire also focused on friendships and interaction with fellow students, the relationship to teachers as well as the level of social integration into the university. Students' priorities and weekly time management were gauged as well. Ultimately, the relationship to the university as an institution was addressed, also with regard to information and support. As part of the project's special focus was on the challenges faced by international and working students, these two groups were addressed separately to find out more about their situation and how it could impact participation and engagement for those groups. The project consortium was further interested in how the respondents' sets of values might influence engagement.

Several items in the survey are based on a Likert-type scale assessing the level of agreement with given statements from 1 (Do not agree at all) to 5 (Fully agree). In the document and the tables, 'agreement' refers to the respondents having checked 4 and 5, 'disagreement' to them having checked 1 and 2. In some cases the arithmetic means of the scales are also given in the tables.

The field phase was conducted between 16 February and 12 April 2023. The survey was carried out across the European Union, targeting only the students currently studying in EU member states. The dissemination relied on the networks of the UNICOMM consortium. After data clearance, 465 completed questionnaires were collected. The results were analysed using SPSS.

It needs to be mentioned that due to the composition of the project consortium, the sample includes an inherent bias, with students studying in the three project countries (Austria, the Czech Republic and Poland) being overrepresented. Further, the sample is highly female (68%); hence, the consortium opted not to weigh the data by gender, but to focus instead on describing the differences between demographic groups throughout, with special attention given to working students and international students. Since the data cannot be considered representative, the analysis serves foremost as a needs-assessment for the activities to be developed and carried out at higher education institutions in the three project countries. While the study remains descriptive and aims at analysing and stating claims for a specific

sample only, the data and the results obtained in its course were compared to those of large-scale representative surveys (such as the World Values Survey and the Eurostudent VII 2018-2021 survey with regard to demographics). The results of this survey broadly align with those presented in the aforementioned surveys; for example, whereas the Eurostudent VII survey found 19% of students working over 20 hours, the present sample features 20%, supporting the reliability of the gathered data.

The detailed sample composition with regard to demographic criteria is given in the Annex.

After deliberations in the project consortium, it was also decided to include and describe the results for the nine participants who entered their gender as "non-binary" in the survey in order to ensure the visibility of this small group in the Report. The rationale behind this decision is that non-binary groups – due to their comparatively small size – are often overlooked for statistical reasons in data-based studies. Thus, the inclusion of the responses from non-binary participants represents a compromise between reliability and representation.

Students' relationship to their higher education institution

The present analysis focuses on prerequisites and conditions that foster belonging at universities. Various studies have shown that the level of integration in the "social and intellectual life of the institution" (Tinto 1993, 176) is a central indicator for student success. Especially belonging is increasingly recognised as an essential determinant of the student experience.[1] The focus of the analysis is also to find out more about the link between active engagement at universities (especially participation in extracurricular activities) and developing a sense of belonging at university.

Table 1. Belonging and community

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements[2] (n=465)	Agree	Disagree	Mean[3]
I feel I belong at university	61%	20%	3,64
I feel part of a community at my university	49%	29%	3,32

Both items in Table 1 gauge the perceived level of integration into the HEI. While "a sense of belonging" can refer to perceptions of being in the right place personally and seeing oneself as an integral part of the university, "feeling part of a community" more strongly emphasises social embeddedness within a group, that is, a feeling of togetherness at and with the institution. However, there is no uniform, precise definition of both notions. In fact, what belonging and community actually means to students will be further addressed in the activities to be developed within the project. Also, students' understanding of belonging and possible changes thereof will be addressed in workshop evaluations in the further phases of the project.

61% of students participating in the survey felt they belonged at university; however, about a fifth stated that this was not the case.

Only around half of students (49%) claimed they felt part of a community at university, with about a third (29%) disagreeing with this notion, pointing to a lack of (social, academic) integration of a considerable part of students.

Both the responses concerning the sense of belonging and feeling part of a community differ with regard to gender, with male students taking a more positive stance overall: male students claimed to feel a stronger sense of belonging (68%) than female students (58%);

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[1] Nairz-Wirth 2017, 12 stated "a trend to a heightened recognition of the relevance of 'soft' factors, including relationships, pedagogy, trust, emotional security and sense of belonging"; compare also Kahu 2020.

[2] Scale of 1 (do not agree at all) to 5 (fully agree); Agree = 4 & 5; disagree =1 & 2. See also methodology section for the analysis of Likert-type scales in the report.

[3] Arithmetic mean of all answers shown.

they also felt part of a community more strongly (57% men, 46% women). Interestingly, the nine students in the sample who identified as non-binary attributed higher values to both belonging and feeling part of a community (89% and 78%).

Further, more mature students over the age of 26 felt slightly less integrated than their younger counterparts (both with regard to belonging: 57%, as well as part of a community: 43%).

While international students felt equally that they belonged at university (60% vs. 61%), they were somewhat less likely to feel part of a community (44% vs. 50%, see also chapter 8 on international students).

The differences between the demographic groups appear the most pronounced with regard to feeling as part of a community at university (less so for the sense of belonging at university), pointing to a comparative lack of perceived integration and social embeddedness for women, mature students and international students.

As an interesting finding, there are no discernible differences between working students (over 20 hours) and students not working at all on the side with regard to both items (belonging: 61% and 60% respectively, community: both 48%). However, among those working students who claimed they needed to work to cover the expenses of their studies, the agreement drops, as only 52% agreed with feeling they belonged and 44% with being part of a community.

Similarly, but not as notably as in the case of the students who need to work, for the students who claim to be struggling with their current economic situation, the values on belonging are below average (56%); however, this does not appear to affect them feeling part of a community (49%).

FINDING/RECOMMENDATION:
Demographics play into belonging and especially into feeling part of a community: in the sample, women, students who need to work on the side, internationals and mature students felt less as part of a community at their higher education institution. These groups might profit from community-building exercises and activities. It might be worth considering for higher education institutions to invest resources into enhancing the sense of belonging among these groups. At the same time, it is important not to lose the level of belonging among men, younger and local students (for a definition of the term see glossary) who are indicating higher rates.

As an important finding of this study, participation in extracurricular activities appears to affect the perceived sense of belonging and community. With regard to belonging, for those respondents who do not participate in extracurricular activities, only 51% agreed they belonged at university (vs. 61% average). This is even more clearly marked in responses regarding feeling part of a community at university: only 34% of students who have not participated in EA answered affirmatively, 38% disagreed.

The findings on belonging strongly support the hypothesis that participation in extracurricular activities increases the sense of belonging and especially feeling part of a community at university (see further below, Figure 1 for an overview).

FINDING/RECOMMENDATION:
Extracurricular activities influence, possibly also enhance, the feeling of belonging and community at universities. As both are vital aspects for student success, increasing participation in such activities is useful.

Perceptions of institutional support

The relationship between students and their higher education institution also depends on the extent to which students view their university as an institution that enables and fosters their progress, as well as on the perceived level of support offered by the institution.

Table 2. Institutional support

	Agree	Disagree	Mean	n
My university is a supportive institution	54%	18%	3,53	464
My university cares about me and my progress	50%	23%	3,36	465

Overall, slightly more than half of all students perceived their university as a supportive institution. When asked if the university cared about students individually, agreement went down slightly. Also, roughly a quarter of students stated that the university did not care about them and their progress. This could indicate that while universities are generally perceived as supportive, concrete support does not reach students individually.

The perception of the university as a supportive, caring institution was the lowest among students in need of financial support: especially the students with financial difficulties and those who claimed they needed to work to cover the expenses of their studies perceived the university as less supportive (both groups less frequently agreed with seeing university as a supportive institution: 46% vs. 54% average). Even more evidently, the agreement with the notion that the university cared about them and their progress was the lowest among students who claimed to struggle financially (41%, n=175, vs. average of 50%). Male students were more convinced that the university cared for them (61% agreement, female students: 47%).

When it comes to the perception that the university cared about individual progress, there is also a difference between students who participate in extracurricular activities and those who do not: 54% of students who participate in extracurricular activities agreed that the university cared about them, as opposed to only 43% of students who have not yet participated in EA.

In the latter group, 27% explicitly disagreed with seeing the university as caring (as opposed to 22% disagreement among students who participate in EA).

Engagement as a two-way street?

The survey also aimed at gauging the degree of students' active engagement in their studies, as opposed to the notion of being passively serviced by university: who is responsible for creating an inclusive study experience – the HEI or the students themselves? The students were also asked about their personal inclinations or propensity for active engagement.

Table 3. Engagement in learning processes

	n	Mean	Disagree	Agree
In my opinion, my university is responsible for providing a positive, nurturing study environment for me.	461	3,82	13%	70%
I give feedback or participate in course evaluations.	464	3,91	16%	70%
I often share my viewpoint and experiences in classroom discussions.	464	3,59	23%	58%

With regard to students' active engagement in their learning process, a vast majority (70%) stated that they actively participate in feedback and evaluation processes, with 58% claiming that they often share their viewpoints in classroom discussions. Yet, 70% claimed that the university was responsible for providing a nurturing study environment for them, pointing towards a mutual relationship between "servicing" and active engagement.

Students who do not frequently share their viewpoints in class were also less convinced that the university was responsible for providing a nurturing environment (59% vs. 75% of those who claimed to be actively sharing their viewpoints, Pearson's r=0,273**), indicating a slight correlation between active engagement in class and stronger expectations on the part of the university to provide a favourable environment. It appears that the higher the student engagement in class, the higher their expectations of more active involvement of the university.

The data do not support the notion of students expecting to be serviced and turning the responsibility over to the university. However, more active students appear to expect the same degree of engagement from their institution and see it more strongly as a duty of the HEI to provide a nurturing environment that enables and encourages engagement.

Among the group who shared their viewpoints in class more strongly were the students working over 20 hours, students who claimed they needed to work to cover the expenses of

their studies (65% agreement in both groups) and especially more mature students over the age of 26 (73% agreement rate). Conversely, younger students under 23 were less inclined to actively share their viewpoints in class (49% agreed). This can also be observed for starting cohorts, with students having started in or before 2018 being overall more confident in sharing their viewpoints. The confidence to speak up in class thus appears to increase with experience.

The same tendency can be observed with regard to giving feedback: younger students under 23 tended to give less feedback than the students aged 26 and over (65% vs. 80%). With regard to active participation in class, self-confidence that might increase with age seems to play a significant role. Also, males in the sample appeared more confident with sharing their viewpoint (61% male, 55% female).

Active participation in extracurricular activities also influences the general propensity to actively contribute in class: in the sample, students who claimed to participate in extracurricular activities were also more active in sharing their viewpoints in class (64% vs. 47% agreement, with the latter figure indicating those who do not participate in EA). Similarly, students who participated in extracurricular activities were also more inclined to give feedback and participate in course evaluations.

FINDING:
Males and more mature, working students claimed to engage more actively in the classroom/learning experience by sharing their opinions and viewpoints more openly and giving more feedback than younger students and those not working.

RECOMMENDATION:
Develop extracurricular activities that bring together both older, more experienced students and beginners. The former may act as mentors or buddies aiding the latter in finding their voice. Care must be taken not to overburden beginner students with additional responsibilities.

Perceived level of information about ongoing activities

Active engagement in the university community, such as participation in events or (extracurricular) activities, also depends on being aware about available possibilities. Information about activities and events must reach students in the first place.

Table 4. Level of information about ongoing events and activities

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements[4] (n=464)	Agree	Disagree	Mean
I feel well informed about what is going on at campus	48%	23%	3,35
I feel well informed by my university about opportunities to participate in activities outside the classroom	51%	26%	3,41

Around half of all respondents claimed to be well informed about ongoing activities at campus, with a quarter disagreeing, however.

Overall, male students felt better informed about what is going on at campus than female students (58% to 45%), and non-binary students felt the least informed in the sample. Students who claimed to participate in extracurricular activities felt better informed than those who did not (51% vs. 43%). Also, students over 26 years, those working over 20 hours and international students were on average better informed about what is going on on campus.

Similarly, when asked more specifically about information on extracurricular activities, males, more mature students and those working over 20 hours felt better informed. Interestingly, however, with regard to information about EA, no decided differences appeared between students who participate in extracurricular activities and those who do not, indicating that information alone might not be a decisive factor for students opting to participate in extracurricular activities: both groups claimed to be equally informed about ongoing activities.

RECOMMENDATION:
Intensification of dissemination efforts. A considerable part of students is not well aware or not aware at all of what is going on at campus. Strategies for better visibility of activities and ways of reaching more people should be developed in cooperation with the already engaged students. In order to reach new students, it is important to develop ways of informing about extracurricular activities from the very beginning. Supporting (formal and informal) channels of communication that reach especially the newcomers is essential.

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[4] Scale of 1 (do not agree at all) to 5 (fully agree); Agree =4&5; disagree=1&2.

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Role of the extracurricular activities in belonging

The data, as summarised in Figure 1, strongly suggest that participation in extracurricular activities enhances the sense of belonging and influences the relationship to the higher education institution and the perception of the study experience. Also, the relation between personal propensity and engagement in and outside of the classroom becomes apparent.

Figure 1. Relationship to HEI and participation in extracurricular activities
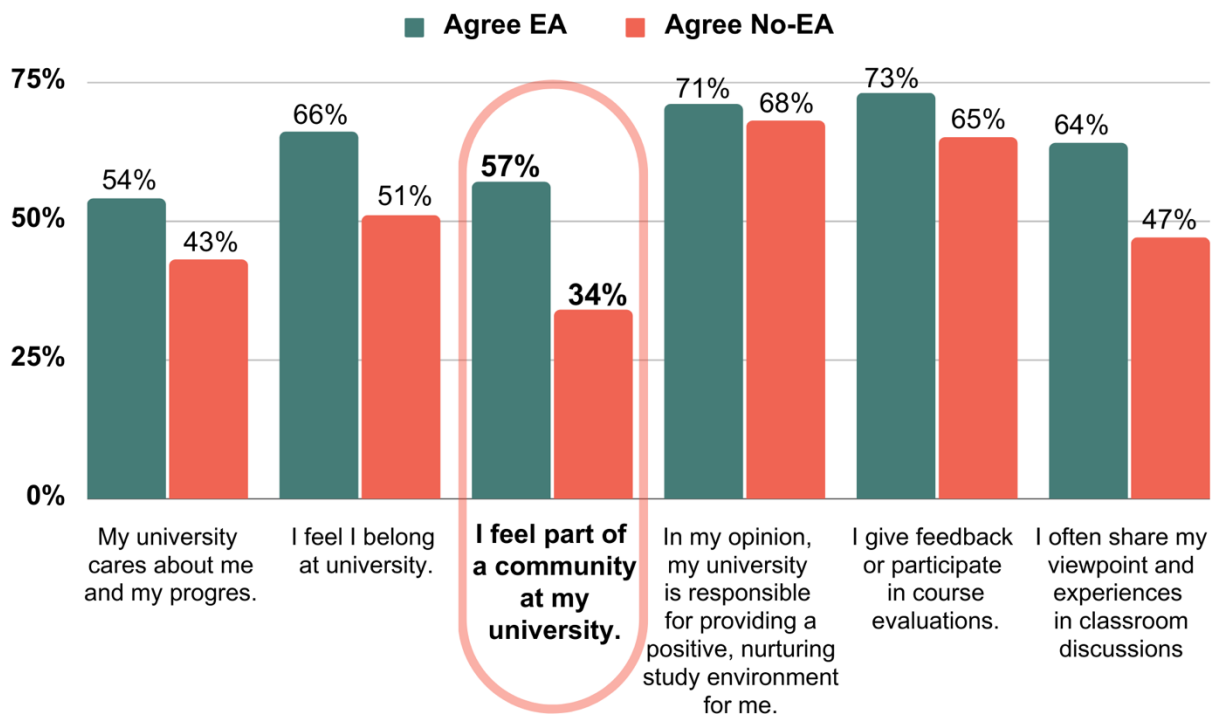
Yet, belonging is not only something that must be enabled by the HEI; it also comes from the students themselves and their initiatives. One student stressed in a comment: "Due to the club I am running, I got to know a lot of new people, expanded my network, and in the process of gaining valuable experience [&] knowledge. I feel that I contribute to the injection of belonging within my community".

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> **RECOMMENDATION:**
> **HEI should create an enabling environment and provide institutional support for student activities to flourish. This could take the form of dedicating budget, tools and resources to various types of student initiatives like projects, groups or associations. Beyond funding, HEI support might include providing organisational support for student-led activities (offering meeting spaces, easing bureaucratic requirements for organising events or forming and recognising groups, possibly even creating institutional units dedicated to supporting student engagement).**

Participation in extracurricular activities

Almost two thirds of respondents (65%) claimed to have participated in either one or more of the extracurricular activities listed below; roughly a third (35%) claimed they had not participated in any of the listed or other activities. Table 5 shows the specific activities by the frequency with which they were mentioned.

Table 5. Participation in extracurricular activities

Which of the following activities have you engaged in at your university? (n=465; multiple answers possible)	Quoted by
Volunteering within the university (e.g. organisation of events or meetings at university, participation in (research) projects, charity activities, etc.)	37%
Participation in student associations or student networks (e.g. AIESEC, ESN, debate clubs, interest groups)	24%
Participation in/active member of a student union	23%
Mandate as student representative (e.g. participation in university governing bodies)	18%
Sports activities	17%
I am/was a peer mentor, buddy or tutor	14%
Cultural, artistic activities (choirs, theatre groups, etc.)	13%
Outreach activities (as ambassador in schools, at education fairs etc.)	10%

Which of the following activities have you engaged in at your university? (n=465; multiple answers possible)	Quoted by
Service Learning (i.e., community service as part of courses and classes)	3%
Other	2%

Volunteering activities within the university clearly represent the most frequently mentioned activity, with 37% of all students claiming that they have volunteered at their higher education institution. Participation in student associations, networks or student unions is also a form of extracurricular engagement that is more frequently taken up by students, with around a quarter of them stating they took part in such activities. Sports and cultural activities also figure as activities taken up by students, yet not as prominently. On the other hand, Service Learning (for a definition of the term see glossary) and outreach activities, as comparatively new forms of participation, were mentioned less frequently; possibly they are also unknown to students.

It appears that volunteering is the most accessible extracurricular activity, whereas those extracurricular activities that are more strongly embedded in teaching or learning (Service Learning, tutoring) or more formally associated with university administration (outreach) are either less known or less attractive/accessible.

Table 6. Reasons for participating in extracurricular activities

Why do you engage in these activities? (n=301; multiple answers possible)	Quoted by	In per cent
Meeting people/making friends	211	70%
Skills development	194	64%
Spending my time in a meaningful way	188	62%
Interest in the topic	173	57%
Helping others	157	52%
Contributing to change, having impact	146	49%
Gaining practical and professional experience	136	45%

Why do you engage in these activities? (n=301; multiple answers possible)	Quoted by	In per cent
Contributing to my university community	115	38%
List in my CV	100	33%
Financial rewards: payment/remuneration	32	11%
Receiving ECTS or other form of formal recognition given by my university	26	9%
Other	4	1%

Asked why they chose to engage in EA, the overwhelming majority of students claimed that making friends and meeting people motivated them to do so. The social aspect of engagement also correlates to the findings on belonging and feeling part of a community. However, skills development and spending time in a meaningful way also figure prominently as reasons for engagement, pointing to individual, personal benefits derived from engagement. Around half of students referred to their intrinsic motivation and the aim of the activity as reasons for joining, stating they were interested in the topic or participated with a view to helping others or contributing to change.

More immediately career-oriented, extrinsic reasons, such as financial rewards, ECTS or a list in the CV figure less prominently as motivations. It appears that neither payment nor recognition/ECTS were the decisive factors in why the students in the sample chose to engage.

Interestingly, 38% of respondents claimed to engage in order to contribute to their university community. This number is especially high among members of student unions (51%) and volunteers (50%), while lower (only 28%) among students who participate in sports activities. These figures indicate that the type of engagement also impacts on reasons for engaging, and both factors are mutually related.

There are no differences in the ranking of reasons between international and local students studying in their home country; however, international students stressed making friends as the number one reason even more strongly (77% checked that item).

RECOMMENDATION:
Focus on impact and contribution to change, as well as broader skills development can be seen as motivating factors; however, the most important reason for engagement appears to be the social aspect associated with EA, i.e., making friends and spending time in a meaningful way. EA to be developed should focus on these aspects and highlight them.

Students were also asked to indicate what hindered their engagement and what challenges they associated with participating in extracurricular activities.

Table 7. Challenges in participating in extracurricular activities

What, if any, are challenges in participating in the activities you mentioned above? (n=301; multiple answers possible)	Quoted by	In per cent
Making time	229	76%
Impact on study progress	84	28%
Lack of remuneration	47	16%
Cultural, language barriers	39	13%
Fear of repercussions for participating in certain interest groups or unions	39	13%
Unwelcoming environment	27	9%
Other	13	4%

Unsurprisingly, finding and making time for extracurricular engagement dominated the responses, with more than three quarters of students finding it challenging to allocate their time between studying and extracurricular engagement (interestingly, no discernible differences arise between working and non-working students, nor with regard to the amount of work, i.e., weekly hours). Further, the impact on study progress caused by extracurricular engagement was mentioned as a challenge, especially by active members of student unions (44%). The expectations of remuneration or lack thereof do not appear to be viewed as a particularly strong deterrent.

RECOMMENDATION:
Extracurricular activities constitute an important tool in increasing social integration into the higher education institution and developing practical and social skills and experience. However, extracurricular engagement, being an additional task on top of studying, is challenging for students. One option to address the crucial issue of time constraints and work overload could be to integrate EA into the curriculum and offer recognition in the form of ECTS, which would alleviate the workload. This solution would combine the social and practical learning benefits of EA with the study progress. When it is implemented, care must be taken to offer a wide array of "electives" and a pool of activities to choose from (peer mentoring activities, social skills courses, project work) tailored to the needs and interests of students so as not to paradoxically "force someone to volunteer", but to offer a wide range of free electives that integrate and recognise non-formal and informal learning outcomes instead.

Although it was mentioned less frequently in comparison with time constraints, around 13% of respondents stated that a fear of repercussions for participating in certain interest groups play into their engagement. This number is unexpectedly high, pointing to the fact that this is an issue that students are confronted with at their universities. It was mentioned by 16,2% of members of student unions and 18% of those who claimed to have held a mandate as student representative (e.g. participation in university governing bodies), indicating that "political engagement" within the higher education institution can be associated with repercussions.

Also, that 9% of students actually referred to an unwelcoming environment within their extracurricular activities can be considered somewhat alarming.

Especially international students perceived cultural or language barriers: 32% and thus roughly a third of international students saw these obstacles as challenges in participating in extracurricular activities (as opposed to only 6% of local students who study in their home country).

> **RECOMMENDATION:**
> **The design of extracurricular activities should focus primarily on creating a positive, open and inclusive atmosphere: the data suggest that the social aspect of EA is most important to students in the sample and that community-building is among the most valuable outcomes of extracurricular activities.**

Other challenges mentioned by students in an open comment box were also: the need to "keep motivating others when the own motivation is low", the lack of organisation ("unprofessional and chaotic organization (student union) which makes the work a bit exhausting"), the lack of (mutual, peer) support and difficulties in sharing responsibilities. One student saw their "poor social skills" as a challenge.

No extracurricular engagement

35% of respondents claimed not to have participated in extracurricular activities.

Younger students who just started out in higher education have participated in EA less frequently (44% under 23, 50% under 21), pointing to the fact that becoming familiar with the university's offerings and activities takes time; this could also pertain to the need to get accustomed to university life before taking on additional activities. Extracurricular engagement appears to begin after the workload of the first few semesters has been overcome and the initial orientation in higher education has been tackled, with students having gained a footing in higher education. Students under 23 make up a large part of the group who have not (yet) participated in EA (106 out of 164 such respondents); their answers are thus dominating the results.

Surprisingly, only 28% of working students, who are also older, (30% of students working over 20 hours, as compared to 45% of non-working students) have not yet participated in any

of the activities mentioned. Hence, extracurricular engagement appears to be more strongly related to age and experience.

Further, males in the sample were also more inclined to participate in EA than women.

Also, 43% of international students claim to not have participated in the above activities, which points out to the need to inform and integrate this group into ongoing activities on campus more strongly.

When asked for the reasons for not participating in EA, the overwhelming majority of students listed time constraints as the main issue that stands in the way of their extracurricular engagement. Roughly a quarter of respondents also worried that the additional responsibilities incurred by participating in extracurricular activities would become too much, i.e., that they would represent an added workload.

Working students stressed time constraints even more strongly (64% of them quoted the item, as opposed to 52% of non-working students), as well as students who claimed to struggle with their economic situation (63% quoted time constraints). This tendency indicates that extracurricular activities can also be socially selective, as only some students can "afford" the time to take them on.

> **RECOMMENDATION:**
> **Inclusion into the curriculum and formal recognition of EA could alleviate time constraints (see recommendation above). In order to increase the rates of engagement, it might be necessary to design activities that are flexible and less demanding in terms of time consumption. Also, it might be more encouraging for students if their tasks and responsibilities increase over time as they train and gain more skills. Allocating too much responsibility, especially in the beginning, might be overwhelming and discourage further participation.**

Table 8. Reasons for not participating in EA

Why have you not participated in the activities mentioned above? (n=164; multiple answers possible)	Quoted by	In per cent
I don't have the extra time	94	57%
The activities I was informed about do not interest me	46	28%
I thought about it, but felt hesitant or shy to join	44	27%
I am worried the responsibilities will become too much	41	25%
I am not interested	40	24%

Why have you not participated in the activities mentioned above? (n=164; multiple answers possible)	Quoted by	In per cent
I was not aware of the possibilities	34	21%
I don't know who to approach	24	15%
I would like to participate, but haven't gotten around to doing it	24	15%
I don't know, not sure why	17	10%
Cultural or language barriers	14	9%
Money issues: membership fees, costs	9	5%
Other	9	5%
Accessibility issue, the activities were not accessible	8	5%
I did not fulfil admission criteria	5	3%
I felt discriminated	3	2%

The second most frequently mentioned reason, however, was that the offered activities that the students were informed about did not interest them. While the information about possible forms of engagement reached them, the offer did not meet their interest. This also points to the need of tailoring the offerings to students' actual interests and needs on a more systematic basis.

RECOMMENDATION:
More rigorous needs assessments must precede the design and implementation of EA in order for them to align with students' interests.

While a more general lack of interest in the activities also figured strongly as a reason for why students did not participate in extracurricular activities, 27% of respondents answered that they thought about it, but felt hesitant or shy to join. This points to the need and the potential of reaching more students by helping them overcome inhibitions about approaching the offerings through designing formats that facilitate access to extracurricular activities. Reaching shy and hesitant students (almost a third of all respondents) by providing a low threshold and possibly also integrating EA in (mandatory) formats in order to enhance belonging can inform the further development of tools and activities within the project. When

checking for belonging and feeling part of a community for exactly those students who felt hesitant or shy to join EA, the findings support the hypothesis that for students with inhibitions, belonging is less pronounced: they indicated lower rates of belonging (52% vs. 62%) and feeling part of a community (34% vs. 49%). Similarly, 15% claimed a general interest in an activity, yet have not gotten around to registering for it.

> **RECOMMENDATION:**
> **Design extracurricular activities with a low threshold for participating.**

Further, it appears that the social element of EA is the main reason why students participated in these activities; on the other hand, 27% felt too shy to join.

> **RECOMMENDATION:**
> **Introductory but mandatory smaller events with a focus on social exchange, the organisation of networking events and the extension of buddy programmes could alleviate students' first inhibitions about joining EA and encourage further participation. Especially for younger and beginner students, this could facilitate their integration and the sense of belonging at their HEI.**

Only comparatively few respondents claimed that the exclusivity of the measures (accessibility, financial reasons, discrimination or cultural and language barriers) was the reason they did not join EA.

However, cultural and language barriers were mentioned as a reason for not participating by 27% of international students who had not participated in EA, with time constraints being the second most important reason for that group (no students who studied in their home country checked cultural and language barriers). There are also other differences between international and local students, especially with regard to the level of interest: students studying in their home country more strongly indicated that they were simply not interested in the activities.

Other reasons for not participating in EA mentioned by students as open comments were especially that they lived far away from the university, had care responsibilities or that there was an age-gap between them and other students.

Topics of interest

With a view to developing relevant offerings tailored to students' needs and interests, the survey also gauged topics that students were most interested in:

Table 9. Topics of interest

What topics are most interesting to you? (n=465; up to three answers possible)	Quoted by	In per cent
Mental health and personal wellbeing	212	46%
Human rights	143	31%
Art and culture	125	27%
Environmental protection and combating climate change	124	27%
Student rights and the student experience	115	25%
Healthy lifestyle and sports	115	25%
International cooperation and intercultural dialogue	103	22%
LGBTQIA+	78	17%
Combating fake news and disinformation	69	15%
Children's rights and wellbeing	55	12%
Animal rights and wellbeing	55	12%
Peer-support among students	43	9%
Humanitarian aid	37	8%
Local communities support	27	6%
Seniors' rights and wellbeing	9	2%
Other	7	2%

Mental health issues topped the list. Not only since the Covid crisis, issues of mental health and wellbeing are becoming increasingly central to the student experience. This is reflected in the following findings: the topic students were overall most interested in is mental health and wellbeing, healthy lifestyle and sports are also prominent topics of interest. These are the issues of personal development and self-care.

> **RECOMMENDATION:**
> **Focusing on self-care and personal competences in tackling student life in the development of extracurricular activities might prove attractive to students.**

Human rights, art and culture, as well as environmental protection and climate change also represent prominent fields of interest to students, with roughly a quarter agreeing to be interested in these fields. Student rights and international cooperation were also mentioned relatively frequently. Especially student union representatives stressed their interest in student rights (44%, n=46 out of 115, as opposed to only 19% of students who were not active members of a student union).

Senior rights and support for local communities represented the least mentioned topics of interest in the sample.

Focusing on the interest of younger students under 23 (n=242, around half of the sample), one can observe an even higher interest in mental health and wellbeing (51% in comparison to 39% of students aged 23 and over; 52%, n=250, for students who started in or after 2020/Covid vs. 38% for students who started before 2020).

Comparing the two age groups, one younger than 23, the other above 23, there are discernible differences. Especially younger students claimed an interest in mental health issues (see above) and healthy lifestyle/sports (27% vs. 23%), as well as LGBTQIA+ issues (20% vs. 14%) and arts and culture (30% vs. 22%). On the other hand, there is decidedly less interest among younger students in the sample in climate change and the environment (23%, compared to 31% for students aged 23 and over), international cooperation (17% vs. 28%), peer support among students (7% vs. 13%) and, although not as pronounced, human rights (28,5% vs. 33%).

Highlighting the issue of mental health further, the survey also asked if the respondents struggled with anxieties. 58% of younger students under 23 agreed, as compared to 49,5% of students aged 23 and over (38% of students aged 26 and over).

There are also strong differences between genders: while 60% of female respondents struggled with anxieties, only 38% of males claimed so, in addition to a staggering 78% of the nine non-binary respondents in the sample. However, the comparatively low rate for men might also stem from a tendency observed in male respondents to downsize mental health issues or reluctantly admit to struggling.[5]

Overall, more than half of students in the sample (53%) claimed to struggle with anxieties; among younger students the percentage reached 60%. This can be considered alarming and constitutes a clear warning signal and call for action to support students and their mental health.

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[5] Social scientific paradigms of masculinity and their implications for research and practice in men's mental health: Connected papers platform with various researches on masculinity vs. men's mental health [10.05.2023].

Ultimately, students who struggled with anxiety also reported lower levels of belonging and feeling of community and were less likely to see the university as a supportive institution that cared about them and their progress.

Tackling anxiety is not only a personal issue, however. Higher education institutions must work towards creating inclusive learning environments that prevent and counteract anxiety and inhibition (for example, by reflecting on the way students are addressed, by providing inclusive learning materials and didactic methods, etc.). An inclusive atmosphere that values the feeling of being able to share one's voice and experiences can be considered an essential prerequisite for developing a sense of community and belonging.

RECOMMENDATION:
Increase mental health support especially for younger and beginner students, and non-binary students. Provide support with a low threshold to access it. Extracurricular activities should focus on mindfulness exercises, workshops strengthening and supporting mental wellbeing and other coping strategies or psychoeducational approaches to meet the needs that students clearly expressed in this survey. With regard to the large percentage of beginner students, it might be beneficial to offer this support at the beginning of the study experience.

RECOMMENDATION:
Today, mental health unfolds largely in the digital space. As a result, focus on digital competences such as information hygiene and especially awareness of the right and ability to be offline could be included in further project outputs as helpful resources.

This survey was also carried out to find out more about what topics students are most interested in, with a view to developing activities tailored to their needs and interests. Yet, aside from mental health and personal wellbeing, there is not one "hot topic"; the table of interests is diverse.

RECOMMENDATION:
In order to encourage students with different interests to take part in the life of the institution, instead of focusing on a specific topic and "advertising" it, the focus could be more on motivational and social aspects of the activity, as socialisation emerged as the prime incentive to participate in. In this way, offers with "less" interesting topics might become more attractive, too.

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Relationship to teachers

The medieval *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* referred to a community of teachers and learners. The interaction between teachers and learners remains at the core of higher education today. In the survey, students were asked to indicate how they view their teachers and how they perceive the role of teachers in the learning process.

Table 10. Relationship to teachers

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements	n	Mean	Disagree	Agree
I perceive my teachers as authority figures	464	3,85	10%	70%
I work together with my teachers on an equal footing	464	3,25	28%	44%
My teachers are there to support me	463	3,58	16%	56%
My teachers facilitate and guide my learning process	463	3,54	19%	58%
I hesitate to approach my teachers with problems	463	2,83	43%	34%

Around 70% of students in the sample perceive their teachers as authority figures, especially the youngest students, with older and working students agreeing less with this notion. When asked if they worked on an equal footing with their teachers, 44% of respondents agreed; however, 28% explicitly disagreed and implied a more hierarchical working relationship.

Furthermore, the samples from Austria, the Czech Republic and Poland show higher than average notions of teachers as authority figures in comparison to the average of other EU countries.

More than half of students were convinced that their teachers were there to support them, with only 16% disagreeing with this notion, implying expectations and a certain degree of obligation on the part of teachers to provide support. Interestingly, the agreement with this notion rises with age, with older, more experienced students being more convinced that teachers are there to support them.

There is a strong correlation (Pearson's r=0,552**) between working on an equal footing with teachers and seeing them as facilitating students' learning process, as well as between belonging and working together with teachers on an equal footing (0,375**).

Roughly a third of students hesitate to turn to teachers with problems, however.

When the students were asked more specifically, who they turned to with problems "not necessarily related to their studies", the following groups were mentioned in descending order.

Table 11. Groups approached for support

Which of the following groups have you approached when you encountered a difficult situation not necessarily related to your studies? (n=465; multiple answers possible)	Quoted by	In per cent
Teachers	152	33%
Students from my personal network	150	32%
Administrative staff	121	26%
Counselling or support services at my university	77	17%
Student union representatives or advisers	76	16%
Tutors, buddies, peer mentors (i.e., other students in a support function)	68	15%
University leadership (i.e., deans, heads of study programmes etc.)	58	12%
Other	17	4%
I have not approached any of these groups, because I didn't need to	67	14%
I have not approached any of these groups, because I didn't believe it would help me	29	6%

Mostly – and not surprisingly – students turned to teachers and other students from their personal networks for support, with roughly a third of respondents claiming to have turned to these two groups for support. Around a quarter of respondents turned to administrative staff for help. It becomes apparent that more professional support structures are less frequently accessed, possibly pointing to a higher threshold associated with these offerings: only between 15 and 17% of students have sought advice from union representatives, tutors or counselling and support services provided by the higher education institution. This suggests

that students appear to rely more on informal support networks and their teachers as confidants, rather than more formal, professional support structures, least of all university management and leadership.

14% of respondents in the sample claimed no previous need for support, while 6% did not believe the above-mentioned groups could help them.

> **RECOMMENDATION:**
> **Offering informal peer-support, workshops or groups facilitated by students that enable students to share their problems.**

In open comments, students also indicated that adequate support very much depends on the individual persons involved, i.e., mostly teachers. One respondent highlighted more structural difficulties in turning to support or in delivering complaints: "The headteacher of my department (who is also a teacher and a thesis director) is also the teacher tutor. This situation makes complaints quite complicated in my department since there is no authority to balance their decisions".

> **RECOMMENDATION:**
> **As the survey results show, students are coming with their problems to different actors within the institution. Thus, in order to strengthen the whole community, HEIs should assist teachers and administrative staff in their supporting roles for students (not only in their primary roles in teaching and supporting the educational process) and give opportunities for the development of a variety of skills.**

Challenges

The survey also gauged the challenges the respondents were confronted with in tackling student life, both with regard to transitioning into higher education and in terms of workload and scheduling issues. The majority of students (58%) claimed to feel generally well equipped to handle what is asked of them (see Table 12 below).

Table 12. Challenges in tackling student life

	Agree	Disagree	n	Mean	Median[6]
It was easy for me to adapt to university life	54%	26%	465	3,44	4
I feel well equipped to handle what is asked of me at university	58%	19%	464	3,6	4

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[6] Median is the middle value of a range of values written in numerical order.

	Agree	Disagree	n	Mean	Median[6]
Organising student life (timetables, schedules, free time) is a challenge for me	41%	39%	465	3,05	3
I struggle with anxieties	54%	29%	463	3,4	4
I struggle with my current economic situation	38%	42%	465	2,93	3
I am currently struggling academically	22%	57%	465	2,5	2

How different was it for the students to adapt to the new, foreign and freer environment at university as compared to school? More than half of respondents agreed that it was easy for them to adapt to university life, although roughly a quarter disagreed. It is not easy for everyone to adapt: first-in-family students find it more difficult than those who were not the first in their family to study at university (29% vs. 25% disagreed with the statement that it was easy), younger students under 23 also reported higher difficulties (29% disagreement vs. 23% for students aged 23 and over), and so did women (29% disagreement, as compared to only 18% of males). The most pronounced difference in the sample is between working students and those who claim they do not work. Interestingly, the students who are not working (mean age: 22,52 years, median 21 years) showed higher rates of difficulty in adapting (32% disagree) than those who do work (mean age: 24,18 years, median 23; 21% disagree). International students also found it slightly harder to adapt than those studying in their home country (29% disagree vs. 25%).

Generally, organising student life appears to be a challenge for many; 41% of respondents agreed that this was the case. Again, younger students (although less likely to work or have care obligations) agreed more strongly to the notion of a challenge (47% of those under 23, as opposed to 34% of those aged 23 and over). This might indicate that beginner students first have to find their way in the new, freer environment as compared to school. Also, students who were not working on the side reported higher difficulties in organising their university life (44% vs. 39% among the working).

The challenges in adapting to higher education faced especially by beginner students were also highlighted by a student who commented: "During my 1st Bachelor year it was much more difficult. As a MA Student, I got used to working independently and to work [working] more responsibly". Especially beginner students are faced with an overload of the new. Extracurricular activities for that group should avoid burdening them with further, time-consuming voluntary work, but rather focus on supporting them in the transition phase and fostering their social and academic integration. This could take the form of providing support in academic writing, offering coping strategies in the form of student-led workshops and creating opportunities for informal social exchange, especially the exchange and advice from older students.

The findings of this survey seem to suggest that starting out in higher education can be difficult, and especially younger or beginner students could profit more strongly from support offerings that target orientation and aid in structuring their daily lives and support them in adapting to new routines.

RECOMMENDATION:
Providing and developing support offerings for beginner students that target orientation, time- and self-management.

22% of respondents answered they struggled academically. International students agreed somewhat more strongly that this was the case (27% vs. 21% for local students), as did to a smaller degree first-in-family students (25% vs. 21% a smaller degree first-in-family students), and – even less evidently – younger students under 23 (23% vs. 21% of younger students). Gender and work status had no discernible effects on academic problems.

Students who struggled academically also marked decisively lower levels of belonging and feeling part of a community at university. Extracurricular activities for that group could, for example, focus on academic writing or peer-to-peer tutoring and other forms of academic support or academic mentoring.

Students were also asked to indicate how they dealt with problems and what strategies they applied in tackling challenges.

Figure 2. Problem solving approaches (multiple answers possible)

When I encounter problems...
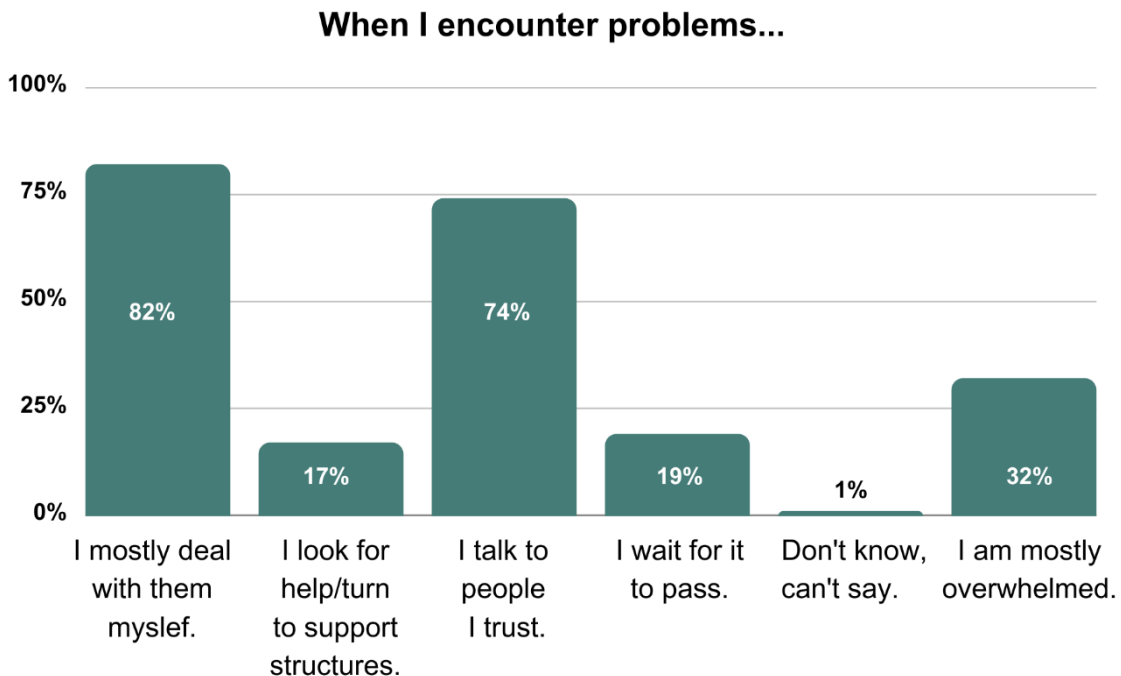
The most frequently mentioned strategy was dealing with problems by oneself, followed by talking to people they trusted. Accessing more formal support structures is a coping mechanism only 17% of students resorted to. This could also point to a high threshold associated with more formal support structures and accessing them. Around a third of

respondents claimed to be mostly overwhelmed by problems, and 19% declared taking a more passive stance by waiting out the problem.

> **RECOMMENDATION:**
> **Creating support offerings with a low threshold, possibly integrating a social or peer support element might prove useful in aiding students in problematic/challenging situations. On the other hand, support offerings that can be accessed anonymously/digitally (without fear of embarrassment) might prove helpful, as most students deal with their problems by themselves.**

Social integration

The degree of social integration, especially the ability (or rather, possibility) to establish contacts and build friendships with other students can be considered a vital – if not the most important – aspect of developing a sense of community at university.

Table 13. Level of social integration

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements	Agree	Disagree	n	Mean	Median
When I am done with class, I mostly return home and leave campus	71%	17%	465	3,91	4
My university provides various opportunities for social interaction, i.e. for meeting other students	38%	31%	465	3,11	3
It was easy for me to befriend other students	49%	31%	465	3,25	3
I have a network of friends at university	56%	24%	465	3,47	4
My contact with other students is mostly restricted to cooperating in learning groups and working or studying together, not as friends	41%	41%	465	3	3
I mostly spend my free time with people that I did not meet through university	51%	30%	464	3,38	4

With regard to students' social integration into the university and their interaction with fellow students, the results are mixed at best. Over 70% of respondents claimed they mostly returned home after class and left campus. Around a third of students disagreed that it was easy to make friends or that their university provided ample opportunity to meet other students.

The sample is split on the issue that contacts with other students are limited to working together, not as friends. 41% of students agreed with that statement, while another 41% stated that social interaction with other students went beyond working together, i.e., forming friendships. Also, more than half of respondents agreed that they mostly spend their free time with people they met outside of university.

The degree of social integration affects belonging, as various studies have shown. Not surprisingly, having a network of friends at university strongly correlates with feeling part of a community (Pearson correlation coefficient: 0,487**) and to a lesser degree with belonging (0,299**). There is also a slight correlation between struggling academically and contacts to other students restricted to working together (0,216**). A strong negative correlation appears between only working together with fellow students in learning groups and having a network of friends at university (-0,610**) and only working together with fellow students in learning groups and the ease by which other students were befriended (-0,514**).

It is also the HEI that can act to initiate social contacts among students. Those students who felt their university provided various opportunities for meeting other students, at the same time reported having a network of friends more often and found it easier to make new friends.

Figure 3. Correlations between social integration and a feeling of community/belonging (Pearson's r correlation coefficient shown)

	I feel I belong at university	I feel part of a community at my university	When I am done with class, I mostly return home and leave campus	My university provides various opportunities for social interaction, i.e. for meeting other students	It was easy for me to befriend other students	I have a network of friends at university	My contact with other students is mostly restricted to cooperating in learning groups and working or studying together, not as friends	I mostly spend my free time with people that I did not meet through university
I feel I belong at university	1	,695**	-,194**	,231**	,239**	,299**	-,174**	-,191**
I feel part of a community at my university	,695**	1	-,302**	,278**	,385**	,487**	-,325**	-,309**
When I am done with class, I mostly return home and leave campus	-,194**	-,302**	1	-,194**	-,260**	-,338**	,352**	,329**
My university provides various opportunities for social interaction, i.e. for meeting other students	,231**	,278**	-,194**	1	,329**	,307**	-,203**	-,165**
It was easy for me to befriend other students	,239**	,385**	-,260**	,329**	1	,682**	-,514**	-,320**
I have a network of friends at university	,299**	,487**	-,338**	,307**	,682**	1	-,610**	-,371**
My contact with other students is mostly restricted to cooperating in learning groups and working or studying together, not as friends	-,174**	-,325**	,352**	-,203**	-,514**	-,610**	1	,478**
I mostly spend my free time with people that I did not meet through university	-,191**	-,309**	,329**	-,165**	-,320**	-,371**	,478**	1
I am currently struggling academically	-,185**	-,136**	0,075	-0,065	-,120**	-,169**	,216**	0,073

The data underline the connection between social integration and a sense of belonging. They also show that the university as an institution can contribute to this sense of belonging and the creation of friendship and contacts by providing opportunities thereto.

> **RECOMMENDATION:**
> **Fora for social interaction and informal exchange created by the university can contribute to social integration and enhance it: HEIs should focus on these offerings and expand them, as well as tailor the existing offerings to more informal exchanges in order to enhance belonging and the university community.**

Regarding demographic groups and their perceived level of social integration, it is again the male students in the sample that answered more positively than women, but also international students declared a relatively high level of social integration, despite pointing out the lack thereof elsewhere in the survey (see Chapter 8 on the situation of international students). In the sample, the groups that indicated the lowest values on most items regarding social integration were the local, the younger, and the non-working students. Students who were not working on the side least agreed to having a network of friends, and their contacts with other students were more restricted to learning.

While the non-working students reported an even lower level of integration than those working over 20 hours, the most socially integrated group in the sample were the students working part-time up to 19 hours.

In fact, the level of social integration seems to be related to the starting year at university: students who started relatively recently, in 2021 and 2022, stated they returned home after class most often and indicated more difficulties in making friends and maintaining a network of friends. These results appear to mirror the beginner students' difficulties in establishing social connections at university.

> **RECOMMENDATION:**
> **Establish complementary offerings aimed at fostering social exchange and interaction especially for beginner students to ease the transition into higher education. This could pertain to informal events, spaces and other student-led initiatives.**

Priorities in time as a student

With regard to their goals (in other words, what they get out of studying at university), students were asked to indicate what was important to them in their time as a student.

Table 14. Goals and priorities in time as a student

What is important to you with regard to your time as a student? (Choice of top three answers)	Quoted by	In per cent
Gaining knowledge	256	55%
Making friends: meeting other people, interaction with others	237	51%
Personal development	208	45%
Employment prospects, future employment opportunities	198	43%
Getting to know new viewpoints and perspectives	111	24%
Fast completion of degree	92	20%
Building a network of contacts with a view to my further career	84	18%
Learning how to apply knowledge to solve (societal) problems	82	18%
Participating in university structures and engaging myself at university	57	12%
Gaining social skills	43	9%

Gaining knowledge and making friends make up the two most important goals for students, with over half of respondents mentioning them. Gaining knowledge figures slightly more prominently among older students and those that started before 2020 (i.e., before Covid), as well as among local, non-international students. However, the social element of the university experience, i.e., making friends, is more pronounced among students under 23 (56%) than more mature students aged 23 and over (45%). Interestingly, students who worked on the side also mentioned the importance of social interactions more often (54%) than students

who only studied (47,5%). An even higher agreement with the social goal of studying was manifested by international students in the sample, with 57,5% crossing this item (as opposed to 49% of local students).

Regarding more noticeable demographic differences in terms of goals pursued by students in their studies, female students mentioned employment prospects more often than male students (male 35%, female 46%, average: 43%). That goal also pertained to younger students and students who are not (yet) working on the side (47%, working students: 39%).

While no apparent differences between the demographic groups appeared with regard to the remaining student goals, in the case of participating in university structures, both the age difference (15,4% agreement of students aged over 23 vs. 9,5% under 23), and especially the difference between beginner cohorts appeared: whereas 19% of students who started before Covid considered participation in university structures important, only 7% of students who started in or after 2020 shared this view. Also, women mentioned participation less frequently than men (as quoted by 10% of female respondents and 19% of males).

Further, it is noteworthy that participating in university structures was ranked (almost) at the bottom of the list.

Significant differences in terms of student goals also appear between the students who feel they belong at university and those who claim otherwise. For example, among the respondents who disagreed that they belonged, 40% identified the fast completion of a degree as a goal, as opposed to only 12% among those who fully agreed they belonged. The results are inverse with regard to the goal of making friends: it is a goal for 53% of the students who fully agreed to belong, as opposed to only 36% of those who felt they did not belong. Also, the willingness to engage and participate in university structures is less pronounced among students who do not feel they belong. Engagement (in and for the university) is thus related to the sense of belonging.

Table 15 shows the differences in priorities between students who participate in extracurricular activities and those who do not. While gaining knowledge and making friends top both lists, for students with previous extracurricular engagement, making friends was almost as important as gaining knowledge, whereas for the other group, gaining knowledge clearly ranked first. Personal development and building networks were also prioritised more strongly by students who engage in extracurricular activities. On the other hand, the fast completion of a degree was more important to the no-EA group. There is also a recognizable difference between both groups with regard to "participating in university structures and engaging myself at university": only 4% of students who have not yet taken part in extracurricular activities checked this item as important, as opposed to 17% of "engaged" students. This might also be due to the number of student union representatives in the sample (n=105).

Table 15. Goals and priorities in time as a student by level of extracurricular engagement

What is important to you with regard to your time as a student? (Choice of top three answers) EA (n=301)	In per cent	What is important to you with regard to your time as a student? (Choice of top three answers) No EA (n=164)	In per cent
Gaining knowledge	53%	Gaining knowledge	59%
Making friends: meeting other people, interaction with others	53%	Making friends: meeting other people, interaction with others	48%
Personal development	47%	Employment prospects, future employment opportunities	47%
Employment prospects, future employment opportunities	40%	Personal development	41%
Getting to know new viewpoints and perspectives	21%	Getting to know new viewpoints and perspectives	29%
Building a network of contacts with a view to my further career	19%	Fast completion of degree	25%
Learning how to apply knowledge to solve (societal) problems	17%	Learning how to apply knowledge to solve (societal) problems	18%
Fast completion of degree	17%	Building a network of contacts with a view to my further career	16%
Participating in university structures and engaging myself at university	17%	Gaining social skills	9%
Gaining social skills	9%	Participating in university structures and engaging myself at university	4%

The management of student life with respect to allocating time for various purposes was also gauged in the survey. Students were asked to indicate their main priorities during a regular week in terms of devoting time and energy.

Table 16. Time management during a regular week
In terms of devoting time and energy, what are your main priorities during a regular week? *(Ranking, average rank assigned; arithmetic mean, and number of quotations shown)*

Non-working students (n=204)	Average rank	Quoted by
Studying	1,88	201
Family and care obligations	3,53	156
Free time & entertainment	3,91	190
Socialising with other students	4,31	158
Daily (household, shopping) chores	4,32	172
Non-mandatory activities outside the classroom	5,36	142

Working students (n=261)	Average rank	Quoted by
Studying	2,33	246
Work	2,97	247
Family and care obligations	4	204
Free time & entertainment	4,56	230
Daily (household, shopping) chores	4,82	223
Socialising with other students	5,06	207
Non-mandatory activities outside the classroom	5,67	196

Students working over 20 hours a week	Mean	Quoted by
Work	1,8	89
Studying	2,55	82
Family and care obligations	4,03	65
Daily (household, shopping) chores	4,65	71
Free time & entertainment	4,95	74
Non-mandatory activities outside the classroom	5,39	62
Socialising with other students	5,43	67

Students working part-time (5-19 hours a week)	Mean	Quoted by
Studying	2,35	113
Work	3,15	110
Family and care obligations	4,25	91
Free time & entertainment	4,39	106
Socialising with other students	4,71	95
Daily (household, shopping) chores	5,1	104
Non-mandatory activities outside the classroom	5,78	93

The time allocated to specific activities throughout the week depends on the work status of students. For the students working over 20 hours a week, work comes first. For the students who work part-time, between 5 and 19 hours per week, studying already takes overall priority. Also, not surprisingly, students who claimed not to be working on the side devote most time or energy to studying throughout the week.

Interestingly, family and care obligations take the second spot among all groups.

Maintaining a work-life balance and managing the amount of free time at their disposal is also harder for working students, as comparatively less time is allocated to free time and entertainment by that group, especially among those working 20 hours or more per week. Socialising with other students ranked lowest among students working over 20 hours, whereas daily household chores are more prominent. The working group is also older on average (median age: 25 years, no work: 21 years). Hanging out with friends or other students is less of a priority in the life of these more mature student groups.

Non-mandatory activities outside the classroom, i.e., extracurricular activities, generally occupy the last spot (with the exception of students working over 20 hours), indicating that such activities seem to represent an add-on, if time allows, not a priority.

> **RECOMMENDATION:**
> **Both socialising with other students and extracurricular engagement assume little priority in the weekly lives of students. The development of activities within the project could aim to combine the social element (socialising with other students) with non-mandatory activities to enhance the two aspects, as both extracurricular engagement and social integration impact on belonging and feeling part of a community at university.**

Values

This study aimed to find out more about student engagement and posited that value sets or different attitudes might influence the likelihood of engaging at or in university, as well as affect the likelihood of participation in extracurricular activities and the overall approach to the university experience.

Responding to the items derived from the World Values Survey,[7] the students were asked to indicate (if they had to choose) their preference between two important values.

Here, decided differences appeared between the students from the project countries (Austria, the Czech Republic and Poland, as well as other EU member-states as a fourth group) and international students:

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[7] EVS/WVS (2022). European Values Study and World Values Survey: Joint EVS/WVS 2017-2022 Dataset (Joint EVS/WVS). JD Systems Institute & WVSA. Dataset Version 4.0.0, doi:10.14281/18241.21.

Table 17. Values – freedom and equality

Most people consider both <u>freedom and equality</u> to be important, but if you had to choose between them, which one would you consider more important?[8]	Freedom	Equality	n
All	59%	41%	463
Internationals	53%	47%	120
Austria (without internationals)	51%	49%	76
Czech Republic (without internationals)	67%	33%	87
Poland (without internationals)	64%	36%	94
EU (without internationals)	59%	41%	78
Under 23	65%	35%	240
23 and over	52%	48%	214

In the average of the sample, more students chose freedom over equality (59% vs. 41%). The EU average corresponds to this result. Both the students from the Czech Republic and Poland valued freedom a lot more (almost twice as much) than equality, which might point to/reflect (different) historical experiences. In Austria, equality was ranked highest, almost the same as freedom, with respondents split in half over the issue. What is more, international students valued equality somewhat higher than the average.

Interestingly, younger students under 23 strongly preferred freedom over equality, with older students taking a more balanced view. This also holds if the Czech Republic and Poland are excluded, with younger students in Austria and the rest of the EU strongly preferring freedom (64% freedom for under 23, 41% freedom for 23 and over), while more mature students in Austria and the rest of the EU leaned more strongly towards equality (59%). However, older students in Poland and the Czech Republic did not follow this pattern (63% over 23 choosing freedom).

Also, students who work over 5 hours per week (up to full time) showed a slightly higher preference for equality than students who do not work or work only occasionally/during semester breaks (38,5% to 33% respectively).

Overall, of students who have not participated in EA, 67% chose freedom (33% equality), and as for those participating in EA, 54% opted for freedom and 46% for equality. Again, this

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[8] Austria and Poland were not surveyed on these items in the WVS, but the results for the Czech Republic in the WVS are 74% freedom and 26% equality within a representative sample of the Czech population (excluding no answers and "don't know" in the WVS). However, when looking at students in the WVS, the results for all students worldwide are 52% freedom and 48% equality, which aligns with the above findings for international students in the EU (constituting a quarter of the present sample), underlining the validity of the results.

tendency might reflect the influence of the age factor, as younger students, who generally participate in EA less frequently, also favoured freedom. Interestingly, when looking at the group of "engaged" students more closely, one can observe certain discrepancies within the two specific groups in the sample: active union members were split in half (50%-50%) between freedom and equality, and students with political mandates preferred equality (46% freedom, 54% equality).

Table 18. Values – freedom and security

Most people consider both <u>freedom and security</u> to be important, but if you had to choose between them, which one would you consider more important?[9]	Freedom	Security	n
All	41%	59%	462
Internationals	40%	60%	119
Austria (without internationals)	30%	70%	76
Czech Republic (without internationals)	41%	59%	87
Poland (without internationals)	46%	54%	94
EU (without internationals)	42%	58%	78
Under 23	36%	64%	240
23 and over	46%	54%	213

When asked to choose between freedom and security, 59% of all students opted for security, with Austrian students showing the strongest preference for security (higher than the EU average and the Czech Republic, which largely overlap on this item). As an interesting finding, despite choosing freedom over equality, especially younger students (under 23) in the sample decidedly favoured security over freedom, while older students again took a more balanced view. This high percentage of younger students choosing security might point to a need for security at an uncertain period of time in their lives.[10]

With regard to the degree of extracurricular engagement, no discernible differences between the students who have participated in EA and those who have not appeared on this item, as both groups largely correspond to the average of the sample. However, again, students with political mandates in governing bodies took a special stance, exceptionally ranking freedom higher than security (51% freedom, 49% security).

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[9] Austria and Poland were not surveyed on these items in the WVS, but the results for the Czech Republic in the WVS are 36% freedom, 64% security from a representative sample of the Czech population (excluding no answers and don't know in the WVS), which broadly aligns with the above findings. The results in the WVS for all students worldwide are: 31% freedom, 69% security.

[10] No discernible differences arose according to students' work status.

Finally, the survey attempted to gauge the need for structure, as the lack of structure and relative freedom in comparison to school environment also characterise the university experience. The last question aimed to gauge the degree of a certain need or preference for structured environments. Anecdotal evidence procured prior to the survey showed that especially younger students preferred a more structured approach and organisation of extracurricular activities.

Table 19. Values – freedom and structure

Most people consider both freedom and structure to be important, but if you had to choose between them, which one would you consider more important?	Freedom	Structure	n
All	66%	34%	461
Internationals	64%	36%	119
Austria (without internationals)	53%	47%	76
Czech Republic (without internationals)	67%	33%	87
Poland (without internationals)	85%	15%	94
EU (without internationals)	60%	40%	78
Under 23	69%	31%	238
23 and over	63%	37%	214

Roughly two thirds of respondents preferred freedom over structure, with a relatively even distribution among groups. Only Polish students favoured freedom most strongly. On the other hand, Austrian students showed the highest inclinations towards structure in the sample. The above observation that younger students favoured more structured environments is not backed by these results, with students under 23 leaning more towards freedom than the average.[11]

The same tendency can be observed among students who have not (yet) participated in EA. They showed a somewhat higher inclination towards freedom (70% freedom, 30% structure, as opposed to 64% freedom, 36% structure for students who have participated in EA), possibly, again, also related to age.

Further, students were asked to name three words they associated with values.

The top ten associations with values mentioned by students in the sample were (in ranked order): family, respect, honesty, friends, freedom, equality, knowledge, love, health and important.

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[11] No discernible differences arose according to students' work status.

Figure 4 shows the most frequent associations mentioned by students in the three project countries, in the rest of the EU, as well as by international students currently not studying in their home country (the responses from the last two groups were calculated separately):

Figure 4. Most frequently mentioned associations with "values" by country of study and country of origin

AUSTRIA		CZECH REPUBLIC		POLAND		REST EU		INTERNATIONALS		TOTAL	
respect	12	family	23	family	21	honesty	13	family	19	family	78
equality	7	friends	11	respect	13	family	12	friends	12	respect	49
freedom	7	health	10	freedom	12	respect	8	respect	12	honesty	47
helping	7	freedom	9	honesty	12	friends	7	equality	11	friends	43
honesty	6	honesty	7	love	12	integrity	7	knowledge	9	freedom	41
trust	6	kindness	7	knowledge	11	morals	7	honesty	9	equality	35
friendliness	5	love	7	equality	10	freedom	6	ethics	8	knowledge	29
important	5	truth	6	friends	10	equality	5	health	8	health	26
loyalty	4	relationships	5	important	6	ethics	5	culture	7	love	26
appreciation	3	trust	5	well-being	6	happiness	4	freedom	7	trust	25
family	3	justice	4	care	5	important	4	important	6	important	22
friends	3	knowledge	4	health	5	knowledge	4	morals	6	morals	20
integrity	3	respect	4	peace	5	work	4	trust	6	ethics	19
kindness	3	education	3	trust	5	rights	3	education	4	integrity	16
love	3	ethics	3	development	4	experience	3	empathy	4	loyalty	16

For the three main project countries, word-clouds containing all associations with values were created with a view of showing distinctly different results.

Figure 5. Most frequently mentioned associations in Austria (without internationals)

Figure 6. Most frequently mentioned associations in Poland (without internationals)

Figure 7. Most frequently mentioned associations in the Czech Republic (without internationals)

Whereas in Austria respect and equality were most frequently associated with values, in Poland and the Czech Republic, it was especially family and friends/friendship that came to mind when thinking about values.

These differences do not pertain to age groups. In the sample, students under and over 23 named family, honesty, respect, equality, freedom, knowledge and health as the most frequently mentioned associations. However, there were two exceptions: younger students stressed "friends" more strongly, and more mature students mentioned "health" more frequently.

International students' situation

26% of the respondents claimed they were currently studying in a country that is not their home country. Around half of the international students in the sample came from EU-member-states, with the other half being third-country nationals.

Table 20. International students' situation

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements[12] (n=120)	Agree	Disagree	Mean
I felt welcomed by my institution	69%	10%	3,9
I felt welcomed by other students	61%	16%	3,7
It is hard to approach non-international/local students	42%	35%	3,0
As international students we mostly stay within our group	50%	26%	3,3
I perceive strong cultural differences at my university compared to where I come from	32%	49%	2,8
I often feel lonely at my university	34%	48%	2,8
My university was helpful in pointing out social events and other initiatives to connect me with other students	44%	31%	3,1
I can easily communicate in the language of the country I am currently studying in	53%	38%	3,3

Regarding their situation and experience at university, 69% of international students felt welcomed by their institution. They felt slightly less welcomed by other (non-international or local) students. In fact, interacting and establishing contact with local students appears to be somewhat of a challenge for international students, with 42% of the sample claiming that it was hard to approach non-international/local students, and 50% of internationals stating that they mostly stayed within their group. Every third international student claimed that he or she often felt lonely at university. Also, around a third of international students did not see the university as helpful in pointing out opportunities to meet other students.

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[12] Scale of 1 (do not agree at all) to 5 (fully agree); agree = 4 & 5; disagree =1 & 2.

One student commented: "As an international student, sometimes I feel very lonely in the university and I am the last person to be informed about events..., and I actually expect more attention to be paid to students like us because for us university is our second home."

About a third of international students in the sample noticed strong cultural differences compared to where they came from. One student commented: "For me it was very important to integrate into European culture, that's what I like and that's what I wanted to understand and analyse, however, in my first semester it went very bad. In the second semester I am feeling a bit ok". Another one echoed this sentiment: "I came from Pakistan […]. Though my mindset is open and not conservative, [...] still it was very hard for me to integrate with my European friends".

38% of international students also indicated difficulties with the language spoken at their university (70% of those came from non-EU countries).

In an open question that asked for initiatives that international students found particularly helpful, especially (more informal) offerings aimed at getting to know each other and fostering social interaction were most frequently mentioned, for example: "the interaction workshop organised by the […] programme broke the ice among us hence we ended the workshop no longer strangers but friends", or: "faculty Christmas party, student's meetup introduction course organised by our faculty; welcoming drinks with our professors for our class; Happy Erasmus: our Spanish teacher brought us in touch with local students who are interested to learn our language".

While the activities of formal "Welcome Centres" or "Welcome Points" were also (less frequently) mentioned, one student commented: "There are few initiatives such as a *Welcome-center* which helps international newcomers and promotes activities, yet [is] not particularly helpful as it often fails to deliver information and to adapt activities to the studies schedule, and lacks warmth".

The results thus indicate a mixed picture for international students, with roughly a third indicating difficulties in contacting and interacting with students, loneliness, strong cultural differences and language problems.

RECOMMENDATION:
Develop activities that facilitate exchange among local and international students and provide secure and encouraging meeting spaces. Activities designed for international students should focus on informal exchange and social interaction, while also including intercultural competences, which might prove beneficial both for international and local students. For example, "freshers" weeks for beginner students could combine these elements, bringing together international and local students, also across study programmes. It must be assured that these activities are not only one-time events, but are carried out with a certain degree of continuity and regularity across the academic year. Extracurricular activities could also provide an opportunity for diverse students to meet and work on the topics that are important for everyone engaged. (Example: Multicultural Volunteering at UW www.wolontariat.uw.edu.pl/wwk)

Working students' situation

More than half of the respondents (56%) claimed they combined studying and working. 20% of all the students asked worked 20 or more hours per week. The extent of their work status is outlined in Table 21.

Table 21. Respondents' work status

I work… (n=261)	Of all working students	Of all students
full time (over 35 hours per week)	12%	7%
part time (around 20-34 hours per week)	23%	13%
part time (around 5-19 hours per week)	44%	25%
under 5 hours a week	6%	3%
occasionally	11%	6%
during semester breaks/vacation	3%	2%

Further, around 43% of all working students claimed that they needed to work in order to cover the expenses of their studies (27% of all students). 40% of working students also stated they had difficulties in combining their studies with work. These difficulties are even more pronounced for students working over 20 hours on the side (53% of such students agreed).

More than half of working students (51%; 40% of those working 20 hours or more) claimed that their HEI was not aware that they worked on the side.

Working students were also asked to indicate if there were any specific initiatives in place at their HEIs that they found helpful in combining study and work. Among most frequently mentioned measures were online programmes or flexible time arrangements (less frequently, also references to scholarships and internships). However, a recurring comment was also: "None" or "I don't know", with one student claiming: "They say that you shouldn't be working and that working is no excuse".

> **RECOMMENDATION:**
> **HEIs need to acknowledge and address the situation of working students more openly. Developing staff's awareness and empathy for the needs and diverse living arrangements of students is crucial. As 27% of students in the sample claimed they needed to work in order to cover the expenses of their studies, creating flexible, inclusive arrangements that alleviate the time-constraints and cater to the needs of this considerable part of students is a necessity to ensure their equal opportunities and a level playing field.**

In the sample, working students, especially those working over 20 hours, were overall more mature, both with regard to age, as well as study and professional experience. In the sample, they generally appeared more confident and informed: as mentioned above, working students claimed to have less problems in adapting to university life, were more likely to speak up in class and saw teachers less as authority figures. They were (most likely owing to age and study-experience) more engaged in extracurricular activities than younger, non-working (beginner) students. Working students were also generally more socially integrated. Acknowledging and supporting working students and the professional and academic experience they bring can be beneficial for the higher education institution. Instead of seeing them as "disadvantaged" or not acknowledging their work-status at all, HEI could view working students as an especially relevant target group and as multipliers within extracurricular activities, who are able to share and pass on their experience.

> **RECOMMENDATION:**
> **Utilising the potential of apparently more seasoned working students and explicitly including them in extracurricular activities might prove beneficial, especially in exchanges with younger or beginner students who have to find their way at university and establish contacts in the first place. At the same time, and in order not to exacerbate time constraints of working students, this group could especially profit from formal recognition of their engagement (ECTS).**

Summary – further steps and practical application

The presented Report is the initial phase of the UNICOMM Project. All the next steps are designed in order to develop a practical approach to community building and enhancing belonging among students and higher education institutions. The results of the Report are the foundation on which further activities in the project will be based.

In summary, the survey results show that students are rather eager to engage in activities within the institution. Thus, it is beneficial for all the parties if HEIs are supporting possibilities of engagement. Through extracurricular activities, the institution's community is strengthened, and the feeling of belonging increases, as students feel that their university needs them also outside the academic classroom. In this way, the institution gains active students (who are more likely to share their thoughts and opinions).

The results of the survey indicate that students are interested in many different topics, and there are various motivations for them to engage; however, the well-being and social factors are the prevailing ones. To build a space of belonging for each member of the academic community HEIs extracurricular offer should be adjusted to diverse audiences and fit into the needs and expectations of numerous student groups. Therefore, when preparing the extracurricular offer for students, HEIs should not only take into account freedom and students' agency, but also a secure and credible atmosphere, which might be more crucial for some of the students. In the long-term perspective, such an approach might increase the sense of belonging and agency for less confident students.

The main obstacle to student engagement according to the survey is the lack of time. Therefore, in order to increase the students' sense of belonging through extracurricular engagement, diverse and flexible forms of participation should be included into the offer. As a consequence of the Report findings, the next step in the UNICOMM project is the design of workshop scenarios that will be flexible in terms of time and form, and that can be adapted to different organisational forms in European HEIs. Students regardless of their field or year of study will be able to participate in the workshops, which will be added value to their regular academic curriculums. Through the workshops series, students will have the opportunity to not only participate actively, but also co-create the results of the project in order to develop their skills, have an influence on the life of the community and develop their sense of agency. The insights and practical experience gathered by the project team through the workshops series conducted in each consortium members' institution will allow to adjust the curricula to various organisational conditions of HEIs, as well as to different modalities of university activities (within or outside the academic curricula). The final results for a practical implementation of workshops will be included in a publication with practical tips both for students and HEI's staff and in podcasts that will enable the appreciation of diverse skills and development in the frames of the HEI for audiences beyond the project's consortium.

The survey results also showed that when encountering problems, students are most likely to turn to their teachers. Therefore, as an integral part of the institutional community, university employees will also have the possibility to share their needs and opinions on their relation with the HEI and on the recognition of their relation with students within the frames of the

UNICOMM Project. Also, in the course of the Project, a peer-coaching group for employees supporting student engagement will be created in order to help to empower the staff engaged in the topic of student participation and increase their confidence, as well as skills related to their tasks. The peer-coaching group will aim at the exchange of good practices and professionalisation of the forms of support of student participation through establishing a professional learning community focused on mutual encouragement. The most useful tools, ideas and advice resulting from the group meetings will be summarised and presented in the form of podcasts and infographics to ensure an easy and quick access for anyone interested in the topic.

All the news about the actions and results of the UNICOMM Project will be published on the following website and social media:

→ **wolontariat.uw.edu.pl/unicomm**
→ **UNICOMM Instagram profile**
→ **UNICOMM Facebook group**
→ **UNICOMM LinkedIn group**

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Glossary

EA/extracurricular activities: extracurricular activities are voluntary activities taken up by students outside the formal curriculum, but without precluding the possibility of recognizing non-formal and informal learning outcomes acquired in such activities. Extracurricular activities cover a wide range of activities, from active membership in student unions, volunteering at (or outside of) university, memberships in student clubs or associations, sports and cultural activities, to participation in (research) projects, peer-mentoring and tutoring or other forms of institutional support (outreach programmes, etc.).

HEI/higher education institution: refers to all forms of higher education institutions, not only public research universities that are most commonly associated with the term "university" (for example, also universities of applied sciences, teacher training colleges, etc.).

International students: those students who indicated in the survey that they were currently not studying in their home country.

Local students: in the survey, "local" students are those students who claimed to be currently studying in their home country.

Service Learning: community service as an integral part of classes and courses.

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Detailed data described in the report

Table 1.1 Relationship to university by country of study and international students[13]

		Austria (n=99)	Czech Rep. (n=111)	Poland (n=134)	Rest EU (n=116)	International (n=120)	Local (n=337)[14]
I feel I belong at university.	Agree	58,6%	64,9%	55,4%	64,7%	60,0%	60,8%
I feel I belong at university.	Disagree	20,2%	16,2%	22,3%	19,8%	19,2%	20,2%
I feel I belong at university.	Mean	3,55	3,79	3,58	3,66	3,61	3,65
I feel part of a community at my university.	Agree	46,0%	51,7%	47,2%	50,8%	44,2%	50,4%
I feel part of a community at my university.	Disagree	36,0%	26,7%	30,8%	26,4%	30,0%	28,5%
I feel part of a community at my university.	Mean	3,34	3,39	3,15	3,44	3,22	3,36
I feel well informed about what is going on at campus.	Agree	50,5%	47,7%	46,0%	50,4%	52,1%	46,3%
I feel well informed about what is going on at campus.	Disagree	20,2%	22,5%	29,5%	20,0%	25,2%	23,4%
I feel well informed about what is going on at campus.	Mean	3,4	3,38	3,19	3,47	3,41	3,31
I feel well informed by my university about opportunities to participate in activities outside the classroom.	Agree	55,6%	55,0%	44,6%	50,4%	53,8%	49,3%
I feel well informed by my university about opportunities to participate in activities outside the classroom.	Disagree	25,3%	23,4%	30,9%	21,7%	26,9%	25,5%
I feel well informed by my university about opportunities to participate in activities outside the classroom.	Mean	3,48	3,52	3,22	3,45	3,52	3,36

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[13] Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements. Scale of 1 (do not agree at all) to 5 (fully agree); Agree =4&5; disagree=1&2;

[14] Excluding 8 respondents who chose "prefer not to say".

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		Austria (n=99)	Czech Rep. (n=111)	Poland (n=134)	Rest EU (n=116)	International (n=120)	Local (n=337)[14]
I give feedback or participate in course evaluations.	Agree	64,6%	60,4%	76,3%	75,7%	73,1%	69,1%
I give feedback or participate in course evaluations.	Disagree	22,2%	21,6%	10,8%	13,0%	15,1%	16,6%
I give feedback or participate in course evaluations.	Mean	3,74	3,66	4,17	4	3,96	3,9
I often share my viewpoint and experiences in classroom discussions.	Agree	53,5%	57,7%	58,3%	60,9%	58,8%	57,0%
I often share my viewpoint and experiences in classroom discussions.	Disagree	25,3%	24,3%	24,5%	17,4%	25,2%	22,0%
I often share my viewpoint and experiences in classroom discussions.	Mean	3,54	3,52	3,58	3,72	3,63	3,57
In my opinion, my university is responsible for providing a positive, nurturing study environment for me.	Agree	72,7%	68,5%	69,3%	69,3%	72,9%	68,4%
In my opinion, my university is responsible for providing a positive, nurturing study environment for me.	Disagree	8,1%	11,7%	16,8%	14,0%	9,3%	14,3%
In my opinion, my university is responsible for providing a positive, nurturing study environment for me.	Mean	3,9	3,82	3,76	3,84	4	3,75
My university cares about me and my progress.	Agree	56,6%	41,4%	52,5%	50,0%	50,0%	49,6%
My university cares about me and my progress.	Disagree	20,2%	29,7%	20,9%	23,3%	22,5%	24,0%
My university cares about me and my progress.	Mean	3,53	3,14	3,45	3,34	3,43	3,32
My university is a supportive institution.	Agree	60,6%	55,5%	50,4%	52,6%	56,7%	53,0%
My university is a supportive institution.	Disagree	13,1%	18,2%	16,5%	23,3%	12,5%	19,9%
My university is a supportive institution.	Mean	3,68	3,52	3,5	3,44	3,7	3,46

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Table 1.2 Relationship to university by gender, age group and work status

		Female (n=319)	Male (n=125)	Non-binary (n=9)	23 and over (n=214)	Under 23 (n=242)	Work (n=261)	No work (n=204)
I feel I belong at university.	Agree	58,3%	68,0%	88,9%	60,3%	61,2%	60,5%	60,8%
I feel I belong at university.	Disagree	22,3%	14,4%	0,0%	23,4%	16,1%	20,7%	18,6%
I feel I belong at university.	Mean	3,57	3,82	4,33	3,58	3,71	3,63	3,65
I feel part of a community at my university.	Agree	45,8%	56,8%	77,8%	49,4%	48,0%	50,5%	47,7%
I feel part of a community at my university.	Disagree	32,0%	20,0%	11,1%	28,4%	29,4%	27,3%	23,4%
I feel part of a community at my university.	Mean	3,21	3,62	4,22	3,31	3,35	3,35	3,28
I feel well informed about what is going on at campus.	Agree	45,5%	57,6%	33,3%	51,4%	46,7%	51,2%	45,1%
I feel well informed about what is going on at campus.	Disagree	24,1%	21,6%	33,3%	23,4%	23,1%	20,8%	27,0%
I feel well informed about what is going on at campus.	Mean	3,29	3,54	3	3,41	3,32	3,42	3,27
I feel well informed by my university about opportunities to participate in activities outside the classroom.	Agree	50,5%	53,6%	55,6%	50,9%	51,2%	53,8%	47,1%
I feel well informed by my university about opportunities to participate in activities outside the classroom.	Disagree	28,5%	18,4%	22,2%	24,3%	26,4%	22,3%	29,9%
I feel well informed by my university about opportunities to participate in activities outside the classroom.	Mean	3,35	3,58	3,56	3,44	3,38	3,48	3,31
I give feedback or participate in course evaluations.	Agree	69,3%	70,4%	66,7%	76,2%	64,9%	72,3%	66,7%
I give feedback or participate in course evaluations.	Disagree	17,6%	12,8%	22,2%	13,1%	18,6%	14,6%	18,6%
I give feedback or participate in course evaluations.	Mean	3,91	3,89	3,78	4,05	3,81	3,97	3,84

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		Female (n=319)	Male (n=125)	Non-binary (n=9)	23 and over (n=214)	Under 23 (n=242)	Work (n=261)	No work (n=204)
I often share my viewpoint and experiences in classroom discussions.	Agree	55,5%	60,8%	66,7%	67,8%	49,2%	62,7%	51,5%
I often share my viewpoint and experiences in classroom discussions.	Disagree	26,3%	15,2%	11,1%	15,0%	29,8%	19,6%	27,0%
I often share my viewpoint and experiences in classroom discussions.	Mean	3,49	3,8	3,89	3,89	3,33	3,75	3,39
In my opinion, my university is responsible for providing a positive, nurturing study environment for me.	Agree	68,8%	73,4%	66,7%	71,4%	68,3%	72,2%	66,8%
In my opinion, my university is responsible for providing a positive, nurturing study environment for me.	Disagree	14,2%	8,1%	22,2%	12,7%	13,3%	12,0%	14,4%
In my opinion, my university is responsible for providing a positive, nurturing study environment for me.	Mean	3,79	3,93	3,89	3,87	3,77	3,88	3,75
My university cares about me and my progress.	Agree	47,0%	60,8%	55,6%	48,6%	52,1%	49,0%	51,5%
My university cares about me and my progress.	Disagree	23,2%	22,4%	0,0%	22,9%	24,0%	24,9%	21,6%
My university cares about me and my progress.	Mean	3,32	3,53	3,67	3,36	3,38	3,32	3,42
My university is a supportive institution.	Agree	54,7%	56,0%	66,7%	51,4%	57,3%	52,5%	56,7%
My university is a supportive institution.	Disagree	18,6%	15,2%	11,1%	18,2%	17,0%	21,1%	13,8%
My university is a supportive institution.	Mean	3,52	3,6	3,67	3,51	3,56	3,46	3,61

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Table 2.1 Relationship to teachers by country of study and international student

		Project countries				Country of origin	
		Austria	**Czech Rep.**	**Poland**	**Rest EU**	**International**	**Local**
I hesitate to approach my teachers with problems.	Agree	38,4%	23,4%	36,5%	37,1%	34,5%	33,9%
I hesitate to approach my teachers with problems.	Disagree	39,4%	43,2%	45,3%	44,0%	43,7%	42,6%
I hesitate to approach my teachers with problems.	Mean	2,94	2,66	2,86	2,84	2,84	2,83
I perceive my teachers as authority figures.	Agree	70,7%	76,6%	71,0%	60,3%	64,7%	71,8%
I perceive my teachers as authority figures.	Disagree	8,1%	6,3%	12,3%	13,8%	9,2%	10,7%
I perceive my teachers as authority figures.	Mean	3,93	4,01	3,86	3,6	3,79	3,87
I work together with my teachers on an equal footing.	Agree	45,5%	41,4%	52,2%	37,1%	47,9%	43,0%
I work together with my teachers on an equal footing.	Disagree	17,2%	31,5%	18,1%	44,0%	25,2%	28,2%
I work together with my teachers on an equal footing.	Mean	3,37	3,16	3,49	2,95	3,32	3,23
My teachers are there to support me.	Agree	58,6%	52,3%	61,3%	50,9%	59,7%	54,5%
My teachers are there to support me.	Disagree	7,1%	19,8%	16,8%	20,7%	11,8%	17,9%
My teachers are there to support me.	Mean	3,71	3,44	3,72	3,45	3,71	3,54
My teachers facilitate and guide my learning process.	Agree	55,6%	54,1%	66,7%	53,0%	65,5%	55,1%
My teachers facilitate and guide my learning process.	Disagree	19,2%	25,2%	14,5%	19,1%	10,9%	21,7%
My teachers facilitate and guide my learning process.	Mean	3,49	3,34	3,77	3,49	3,73	3,46

Table 2.2 Relationship to teachers by gender, age group and work status

		Female	Male	Non-binary	23 and over	Under 23	Work	No work
I hesitate to approach my teachers with problems.	Agree	37,2%	27,2%	22,2%	27,1%	39,6%	33,8%	34,0%
I hesitate to approach my teachers with problems.	Disagree	41,3%	48,0%	66,7%	50,0%	37,9%	43,1%	43,3%
I hesitate to approach my teachers with problems.	Mean	2,9	2,63	2,44	2,62	2,99	2,83	2,82
I perceive my teachers as authority figures.	Agree	70,8%	67,2%	77,8%	64,5%	75,1%	69,3%	70,0%
I perceive my teachers as authority figures.	Disagree	8,2%	16,0%	0,0%	12,6%	7,9%	14,2%	5,4%
I perceive my teachers as authority figures.	Mean	3,9	3,72	3,89	3,75	3,95	3,75	3,97
I work together with my teachers on an equal footing.	Agree	41,2%	52,0%	66,7%	49,1%	39,8%	43,7%	45,3%
I work together with my teachers on an equal footing.	Disagree	29,2%	22,4%	22,2%	24,8%	30,3%	31,0%	23,2%
I work together with my teachers on an equal footing.	Mean	3,19	3,4	3,78	3,35	3,16	3,18	3,35
My teachers are there to support me.	Agree	54,6%	58,4%	88,9%	60,7%	51,7%	55,8%	56,2%
My teachers are there to support me.	Disagree	17,4%	12,8%	11,1%	15,9%	17,1%	17,7%	14,8%
My teachers are there to support me.	Mean	3,55	3,66	4,44	3,69	3,48	3,56	3,61
My teachers facilitate and guide my learning process.	Agree	59,6%	52,8%	77,8%	63,8%	52,3%	53,1%	64,0%
My teachers facilitate and guide my learning process.	Disagree	19,2%	18,4%	11,1%	17,4%	21,2%	20,0%	18,2%
My teachers facilitate and guide my learning process.	Mean	3,55	3,5	4,11	3,64	3,44	3,45	3,66

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Table 3.1 Challenges by country of study and international students

		Austria	Czech Republic	Poland	EU	International	Local
I am currently struggling academically.	Agree	14,1%	26,1%	25,2%	22,4%	26,7%	21,1%
I am currently struggling academically.	Disagree	65,7%	47,7%	56,1%	61,2%	55,8%	58,2%
I am currently struggling academically.	Mean	2,2	2,7	2,56	2,49	2,55	2,49
I feel well equipped to handle what is asked of me at university.	Agree	64,6%	48,6%	57,2%	62,1%	60,0%	56,8%
I feel well equipped to handle what is asked of me at university.	Disagree	16,2%	22,5%	23,2%	13,8%	20,0%	19,0%
I feel well equipped to handle what is asked of me at university.	Mean	3,7	3,44	3,55	3,72	3,67	3,57
I struggle with anxieties.	Agree	36,4%	55,0%	61,2%	58,6%	53,8%	53,9%
I struggle with anxieties.	Disagree	42,4%	28,4%	25,9%	22,4%	27,7%	29,8%
I struggle with anxieties.	Mean	2,9	3,39	3,61	3,56	3,34	3,41
I struggle with my current economic situation.	Agree	31,3%	41,4%	37,4%	39,7%	40,8%	36,5%
I struggle with my current economic situation.	Disagree	51,5%	37,8%	43,2%	37,1%	32,5%	46,0%
I struggle with my current economic situation.	Mean	2,66	3,06	2,91	3,07	3,17	2,84
It was easy for me to adapt to university life.	Agree	52,5%	59,5%	44,6%	61,2%	47,5%	56,4%
It was easy for me to adapt to university life.	Disagree	21,2%	27,0%	32,4%	20,7%	29,2%	24,9%
It was easy for me to adapt to university life.	Mean	3,48	3,53	3,2	3,6	3,31	3,49
Organising student life (timetables, schedules, free time) is a challenge for me.	Agree	30,3%	46,8%	43,2%	41,4%	44,2%	39,8%
Organising student life (timetables, schedules, free time) is a challenge for me.	Disagree	51,5%	35,1%	36,0%	35,3%	40,0%	38,6%
Organising student life (timetables, schedules, free time) is a challenge for me.	Mean	2,71	3,23	3,12	3,08	3,07	3,04

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Table 3.2 Challenges by gender, age group and work status

		Female	Male	Non-binary	23 and over	Under 23	Work	No work
I am currently struggling academically.	Agree	23,2%	21,6%	11,1%	21,5%	22,7%	22,6%	22,1%
I am currently struggling academically.	Disagree	56,1%	63,2%	44,4%	61,2%	55,0%	54,4%	61,3%
I am currently struggling academically.	Mean	2,56	2,36	2,44	2,44	2,53	2,55	2,44
I feel well equipped to handle what is asked of me at university.	Agree	54,1%	68,8%	55,6%	64,5%	51,9%	61,5%	53,4%
I feel well equipped to handle what is asked of me at university.	Disagree	20,1%	14,4%	33,3%	15,0%	23,7%	16,9%	22,1%
I feel well equipped to handle what is asked of me at university.	Mean	3,54	3,78	3,44	3,79	3,42	3,7	3,47
I struggle with anxieties.	Agree	59,6%	37,6%	77,8%	49,5%	57,9%	51,5%	56,7%
I struggle with anxieties.	Disagree	24,6%	41,6%	11,1%	34,1%	24,2%	32,7%	24,6%
I struggle with anxieties.	Mean	3,54	2,97	4,33	3,27	3,53	3,29	3,53
I struggle with my current economic situation.	Agree	38,2%	35,2%	44,4%	43,9%	31,4%	41,0%	33,3%
I struggle with my current economic situation.	Disagree	41,7%	46,4%	44,4%	39,3%	45,5%	38,3%	47,1%
I struggle with my current economic situation.	Mean	2,96	2,8	3,33	3,08	2,78	3,07	2,75
It was easy for me to adapt to university life.	Agree	51,7%	60,8%	44,4%	56,5%	50,8%	60,5%	45,6%
It was easy for me to adapt to university life.	Disagree	28,5%	18,4%	33,3%	23,4%	28,5%	20,7%	32,4%
It was easy for me to adapt to university life.	Mean	3,38	3,63	3,11	3,53	3,34	3,6	3,24
Organising student life (timetables, schedules, free time) is a challenge for me.	Agree	42,0%	37,6%	66,7%	34,1%	46,7%	38,7%	43,6%
Organising student life (timetables, schedules, free time) is a challenge for me.	Disagree	40,1%	37,6%	22,2%	47,2%	31,8%	39,8%	37,7%
Organising student life (timetables, schedules, free time) is a challenge for me.	Mean	3,05	3,01	3,78	2,8	3,25	3	3,1

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Table 4.1 Social integration by country of study and international students

		Austria	Czech Republic	Poland	EU	International	Local
I have a network of friends at university.	Agree	58%	58%	45%	65%	54%	56%
I have a network of friends at university.	Disagree	23%	20%	32%	19%	25%	24%
I have a network of friends at university.	Mean	3,55	3,58	3,12	3,72	3,42	3,48
I mostly spend my free time with people that I did not meet through university.	Agree	63%	41%	62%	38%	43%	54%
I mostly spend my free time with people that I did not meet through university.	Disagree	18%	38%	27%	37%	37%	28%
I mostly spend my free time with people that I did not meet through university.	Mean	3,79	3,05	3,64	3,03	3,13	3,46
It was easy for me to befriend other students.	Mean	3,41	3,27	2,94	3,45	3,27	3,23
It was easy for me to befriend other students.	Agree	54%	50%	39%	56%	53%	47%
It was easy for me to befriend other students.	Disagree	28%	31%	40%	25%	30%	32%
My contact with other students is mostly restricted to cooperating in learning groups and working or studying together, not as friends.	Agree	43%	32%	53%	34%	42%	41%
My contact with other students is mostly restricted to cooperating in learning groups and working or studying together, not as friends.	Disagree	35%	46%	37%	47%	35%	44%
My contact with other students is mostly restricted to cooperating in learning groups and working or studying together, not as friends.	Mean	3,11	2,77	3,27	2,8	3,08	2,96
My university provides various opportunities for social interaction, i.e. for meeting other students.	Agree	33%	51%	31%	37%	43%	36%
My university provides various opportunities for social interaction, i.e. for meeting other students.	Disagree	33%	16%	36%	36%	27%	33%
My university provides various opportunities for social interaction, i.e. for meeting other students.	Mean	2,99	3,52	2,88	3,08	3,18	3,07
When I am done with class, I mostly return home and leave campus.	Agree	86%	59%	80%	60%	68%	73%

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		Austria	Czech Republic	Poland	EU	International	Local
When I am done with class, I mostly return home and leave campus.	Disagree	5%	27%	12%	25%	19%	17%
When I am done with class, I mostly return home and leave campus.	Mean	4,36	3,55	4,19	3,53	3,87	3,92

Table 4.2 Social integration by gender, age group and work status

		Female	Male	Non-binary	23 and over	Under 23	Work	No work
I have a network of friends at university.	Agree	56%	56%	67%	54%	57%	61%	50%
I have a network of friends at university.	Disagree	25%	22%	11%	25%	24%	19%	31%
I have a network of friends at university.	Mean	3,42	3,61	4	3,46	3,47	3,63	3,26
I mostly spend my free time with people that I did not meet through university.	Agree	53%	44%	33%	54%	48%	49%	53%
I mostly spend my free time with people that I did not meet through university.	Disagree	28%	37%	44%	29%	32%	27%	34%
I mostly spend my free time with people that I did not meet through university.	Mean	3,48	3,1	2,78	3,47	3,28	3,4	3,35
It was easy for me to befriend other students.	Agree	47%	53%	78%	50%	48%	53%	44%
It was easy for me to befriend other students.	Disagree	34%	26%	11%	33%	30%	28%	36%
It was easy for me to befriend other students.	Mean	3,16	3,42	3,89	3,23	3,26	3,38	3,07
My contact with other students is mostly restricted to cooperating in learning groups and working or studying together, not as friends.	Agree	43%	38%	11%	42%	40%	36%	48%
My contact with other students is mostly restricted to cooperating in learning groups and working or studying together, not as friends.	Disagree	40%	44%	78%	38%	44%	44%	37%
My contact with other students is mostly restricted to cooperating in learning groups and working or studying together, not as friends.	Mean	3,09	2,84	2	3,05	2,95	2,87	3,17

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		Female	Male	Non-binary	23 and over	Under 23	Work	No work
My university provides various opportunities for social interaction, i.e. for meeting other students.	Agree	36%	43%	33%	39%	36%	42%	33%
My university provides various opportunities for social interaction, i.e. for meeting other students.	Disagree	29%	30%	56%	30%	31%	29%	33%
My university provides various opportunities for social interaction, i.e. for meeting other students.	Mean	3,12	3,15	3	3,1	3,1	3,18	3,01
When I am done with class, I mostly return home and leave campus.	Agree	75%	65%	67%	69%	73%	68%	76%
When I am done with class, I mostly return home and leave campus.	Disagree	16%	22%	22%	18%	18%	19%	16%
When I am done with class, I mostly return home and leave campus.	Mean	3,99	3,71	3,67	3,89	3,92	3,84	4

Demographics: composition of sample

Gender

Gender	n	In per cent
Female	319	68,6%
Male	125	26,9%
Non-binary	9	1,9%
Other:	1	0,2%
No answer/Prefer not to say/n.A	11	2,4%
Total	465	100%

Age

Age	n	In per cent
Under 18	3	1%
18	24	5%
19	29	6%
20	54	12%
21	66	14%
22	66	14%
23	53	12%
24	34	7%
25	41	9%
26 to 34	69	15%
35 and over	17	4%

Disability or learning difficulties

I consider myself to have a disability or learning difficulty	n	In per cent
Yes	53	11,4%
No	388	83,4%
No answer/prefer not to say	24	5,2%
Total	465	100%

Country of study

Country of study	n	In per cent
Austria	99	21,3%
Belgium	2	0,4%
Croatia	2	0,4%
Cyprus	29	6,2%
Czech Republic	111	23,9%
Denmark	1	0,2%
Estonia	12	2,6%
Finland	3	0,6%
France	2	0,4%
Germany	7	1,5%
Ireland	1	0,2%
Italy	7	1,5%
Latvia	7	1,5%
Luxembourg	5	1,1%
Malta	2	0,4%
n.A.	10	2,2%
Netherlands	1	0,2%

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Country of study	n	In per cent
Poland	139	29,9%
Portugal	6	1,3%
Romania	1	0,2%
Slovenia	1	0,2%
Spain	10	2,2%
Sweden	7	1,5%
Total	465	100,0%

Discipline

Discipline	n	In per cent
Humanities, Languages	83	17,8%
Teacher training and education	73	15,7%
Business and administration, economics	63	13,5%
Social sciences and Psychology	54	11,6%
Medicine, Health	29	6,2%
Media, Communication	22	4,7%
Interdisciplinary field	21	4,5%
Life sciences	24	5,2%
Engineering	19	4,1%
Computer sciences	15	3,2%
Physical sciences, mathematics	14	3,0%
Law	10	2,2%
Social services	10	2,2%
Arts	8	1,7%
Chemistry	8	1,7%
Construction, Architecture	6	1,3%
Other:	4	0,9%
n.A.	2	0,4%

Parental education

I am the first in my family (siblings, parents) to study at university.	n	In per cent
Yes	143	30,7%
No	314	67,5%
No answer/prefer not to say	8	1,8%
Total	465	100%

Questionnaire

1. Relationship to university

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: Scale of 1 (do not agree at all) to 5 (fully agree)

- My university cares about me and my progress.
- My university is a supportive institution.
- I feel I belong at university.
- I feel part of a community at my university.
- In my opinion, my university is responsible for providing a positive, nurturing study environment for me.
- I give feedback or participate in course evaluations.
- I often share my viewpoint and experiences in classroom discussions.
- I feel well informed about what is going on at campus.
- I feel well informed by my university about opportunities to participate in activities outside the classroom.

Comment (optional):

2. Relationship to teachers and other groups

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: Scale of 1 (do not agree at all) to 5 (fully agree)

- I perceive my teachers as authority figures.
- I work together with my teachers on an equal footing.
- My teachers are there to support me.
- My teachers facilitate and guide my learning process.
- I hesitate to approach my teachers with problems.

Which of the following groups have you approached when you encountered a difficult situation not necessarily related to your studies?

- Teachers
- Student union representatives or advisers
- Counselling or support services at my university
- Students from my personal network
- University leadership (i.e. deans, heads of study programmes etc.)
- Administrative staff
- Tutors, buddies, peer mentors (i.e. other students in a support function)
- Other:
- I have not approached any of these groups, because I didn't need to.
- I have not approached any of these groups, because I didn't believe it would help me.

Comment (optional):

3. Extracurricular activities

Which of the following activities have you engaged in at your university?

- Participation in/active member of a student union
- Mandate as student representative (e.g. participation in university governing bodies)
- I am/was a peer mentor, buddy or tutor.

- Outreach activities (as ambassador in schools, at education fairs etc.)
- Volunteering within the university (for example, organisation of events or meetings at university, participation in (research)projects, charity activities, etc.)
- Service Learning (i.e. community service as part of courses and classes)
- Cultural, artistic activities (choirs, theatre groups, etc.)
- Sports activities
- Participation in student associations or student networks (for example AIESEC, ESN, debate clubs, interest groups)
- Other:
- I have not participated in any of the above activities.

4. Motivation for activities [FILTER]

Why do you engage in these activities?
- skills development
- spending my time in a meaningful way
- list in my CV
- contributing to change, having impact
- meeting people/making friends
- receiving ECTS or other form of formal recognition given by my university
- interest in the topic
- helping others
- contributing to my university community
- financial rewards: payment/remuneration
- gaining practical and professional experience
- Other:

What, if any, are challenges in participating in the activities you mentioned above?
- Making time
- Lack of remuneration
- Cultural, language barriers
- Impact on study progress
- Unwelcoming environment
- Fear of repercussions for participating in certain interest groups or unions
- Other:

Comment (optional):

5. NO Extracurricular activities [FILTER]

Why have you not participated in the activities mentioned above?
- I don't have the extra time.
- I am worried the responsibilities will become too much.
- I am not interested.
- I was not aware of the possibilities.
- The activities I was informed about do not interest me.
- I don't know who to approach.
- I thought about it, but felt hesitant or shy to join.
- I did not fulfil admission criteria.
- I felt discriminated.

- Accessibility issue, the activities were not accessible.
- I would like to participate, but haven't gotten around to doing it.
- Money issues: membership fees, costs
- Cultural or language barriers
- I don't know, not sure why.
- Other:

6. Topics

What topics are most interesting to you? Choose up to 3.
- Children's rights and wellbeing
- Seniors' rights and wellbeing
- Animal rights and wellbeing
- Human rights
- Humanitarian aid
- Student rights and the student experience
- Combating fake news and disinformation
- Environmental protection and combating climate change
- LGBTIQ+
- International cooperation and intercultural dialogue
- Local communities support
- Art and culture
- Peer-support among students
- Healthy lifestyle and sports
- Mental health and personal wellbeing
- Other:

7. Priorities

What is important to you with regard to your time as a student? Please select the three most important aspects.
- Fast completion of degree
- Making friends: meeting other people, interaction with others
- Employment prospects, future employment opportunities
- Participating in university structures and engaging myself at university
- Getting to know new viewpoints and perspectives
- Gaining knowledge
- Learning how to apply knowledge to solve (societal) problems
- Personal development
- Gaining social skills
- Building a network of contacts with a view to my further career
- Other:

In terms of devoting time and energy, what are your main priorities during a regular week? Please rank the items by dragging them into the box to the right (from top priority on the top, to lowest priority at the bottom), on mobile devices by clicking on them. Only select those items that apply to your situation.
- Studying
- Socialising with other students

- Non-mandatory activities outside the classroom
- Work
- Family and care obligations
- Daily (household, shopping) chores
- Free time & entertainment
- Socialising with friends outside university

8. Personal Approach/situation

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: Scale of 1 (do not agree at all) to 5 (fully agree)

- It was easy for me to adapt to university life.
- I feel well equipped to handle what is asked of me at university.
- Organising student life (timetables, schedules, free time) is a challenge for me.
- I struggle with anxieties.
- I struggle with my current economic situation.
- I am currently struggling academically.
- When I encounter problems/difficulties/challenges...
- Please check all that apply.
- I mostly deal with them myself.
- I look for help/turn to support structures.
- I talk to people I trust.
- I am mostly overwhelmed.
- I wait for it to pass.
- Don't know, can't say
- Other:

Comment (optional):

9. Values

Please write down three words that come to mind when you think of "values"?

Most people consider both freedom and equality to be important, but if you had to choose between them, which one would you consider more important?

- Freedom
- Equality

Most people consider both freedom and security to be important, but if you had to choose between them, which one would you consider more important?

- Freedom
- Security

Most people consider both freedom and structure to be important, but if you had to choose between them, which one would you consider more important?

- Freedom
- Structure

Comment (optional):

10. Social interaction with fellow students

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: Scale of 1 (do not agree at all) to 5 (fully agree)

- When I am done with class, I mostly return home and leave campus.
- My university provides various opportunities for social interaction, i.e., for meeting other students.
- It was easy for me to befriend other students.
- I have a network of friends at university.
- My contact with other students is mostly restricted to cooperating in learning groups and working or studying together, not as friends.
- I mostly spend my free time with people that I did not meet through university.

Comment (optional):

11. International students

Are you currently studying in a place that is not your home country?

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to say.

12. Situation for Internationals [FILTER]

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements (Scale of 1 (do not agree at all) to 5 (fully agree)

- I felt welcomed by my institution.
- I felt welcomed by other students.
- It is hard to approach non-international/local students.
- As international students we mostly stay within our group.
- I perceive strong cultural differences at my university compared to where I come from.
- I often feel lonely at my university.
- My university was helpful in pointing out social events and other initiatives to connect me with other students.
- I can easily communicate in the language of the country I am currently studying in.

Are there specific initiatives at your university that you found particularly helpful?
If so, please enter below:

13. Work & Study

Do you combine studying with working?

- Yes
- No

14. Work & Study [FILTER]

I work...

- full time (over 35 hours per week)
- part time (around 20-34 hours per week)
- part time (around 5-19 hours per week)
- under 5 hours a week

- occasionally
- during semester breaks/vacation

I need to work to cover the expenses of my studies.
- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say.

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: Scale of 1 (do not agree at all) to 5 (fully agree)
- My university is aware that I combine studies with work.
- I have difficulties with combining my studies with work.

Are specific initiatives in place at your university that you found helpful in combining study and work? If so, please enter below.

15. Demographics

What gender do you identify with?
- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Other:
- No answer/Prefer not to say

Please indicate your age in years:

I consider myself to have a disability or learning difficulty.
- Yes
- No
- No answer/prefer not to say

What is your country of origin? [LIST of 196 countries plus Other:]

In which country are you currently studying? [LIST of EU member-states and Other:]

In what year did you first enter university?
- before 2018
- 2018
- 2019
- 2020
- 2021
- 2022

What is your field of study/discipline?
- Business and Administration, Economics
- Law
- Chemistry
- Arts
- Life sciences
- Physical sciences, Mathematics

- Engineering
- Medicine, Health
- Teacher training and Education
- Humanities, Languages
- Social sciences and Psychology
- Computer sciences
- Interdisciplinary field
- Media, Communication
- Construction, Architecture
- Social services
- Other:

I am the first in my family (siblings, parents) to study at university.
- Yes
- No
- No answer/prefer not to say

16. Course and Prize

This survey is completely anonymous. However, as a thank you for participating we offer a free online intercultural skill and/or promotion and communication training. If you are interested in participating in the training, please let us know by entering your email-address below:

Note: By clicking "Continue" below, your answers will be submitted and you will no longer be able to access the survey at a later point.

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17. Thank you for taking part in this survey.

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