



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Report reveals wide fluctuations in cost of higher education and support for students**

The cost of higher education for students varies dramatically in Europe, according to a new report issued by the European Commission today. Tuition fees are highest in England, where students pay up to £9 000 (around €11 500) per academic year, while nine countries (Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Malta, Norway, UK (Scotland) and Sweden) do not charge fees in most cases. The Nordic countries tend to be the most generous, although Finland and Sweden recently joined Denmark in introducing fees for international students. All countries, except Iceland and Norway, now charge non-European students.

Many of the non-charging countries, such as Austria, UK (Scotland) and the Nordic countries, also provide generous student support such as maintenance grants and loans (see Highlights of the report). This information on tuition fees and support is now readily available online for students who want to compare the cost of their education in different European countries.

*"I hope the fact that it is now easier for students to compare the cost of education in different countries will lead to increased student mobility and allow students to choose the course that is best for them" said Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth. "This report is both timely and important: it reminds us that modernised education and training is the bedrock of long-term prosperity for Europe and key for overcoming our economic difficulties."*

The report highlights that major differences also exist with regard to student support, which is generous in Germany, the Nordic countries and the UK, while students in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Lithuania receive only limited financial support. There are also significant differences as to who is entitled to support: subsidies can be distributed on a needs-only basis or be readily available to all. Family allowances and tax benefits to parents of students are a significant element of the overall package of student support in around half of the countries.

## **Highlights of the report**

### **FEES**

#### **Highest Fees**

The highest fees are charged in the UK (England, Wales and Northern Ireland). Until 2012 they were set at £3 375 per year for bachelors' courses. As of September 2012, this level increased in England to a new basic tuition fee of £6 000 and a maximum of £9 000. Students in England receive a loan to pay the fees and do not have to re-pay this until they are in relatively well-paid employment. In Wales, however, the additional cost of tuition fees for Welsh domiciled students will be met by the Welsh government, even if they study outside Wales. Meanwhile in Northern Ireland, fees will rise only in line with inflation at £3 465 in 2012/13.

#### **No Fees**

At the other end of the scale, there are 9 countries where students (not including international students from outside the EU/EEA) are not charged fees. They are Austria, Cyprus (bachelors' level), Denmark (though part-time students are charged), Finland, Greece and Malta (bachelors' level), Norway, UK (Scotland) (bachelors' level) and Sweden.

In Germany, for the new academic year 2012/13, two Länder (Bavaria, and Lower Saxony) charge fees, while the other 14 do not.

#### **Proportion of fee payers**

The proportion of students who pay fees in each country ranges considerably. In a number of countries all students pay fees, and this is the case in Belgium (Flemish Community), Bulgaria, Czech Republic, England, Iceland, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Turkey. In seven countries (Belgium's French Community, Estonia, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Romania) a majority pay fees. In four countries (Croatia, Germany, Lithuania, Slovenia), a minority pay fees, and finally there are the 9 countries mentioned above where, apart from the exceptions mentioned, students do not pay.

#### **International student fees**

For students coming from outside the European Union, fee levels tend to be higher. They are generally set by higher education institutions themselves, although in some countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Portugal, Romania) there are central-level regulations governing fee levels.

In 6 countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein and Norway) students from outside the European Union are treated in the same way regarding fees as those from within the European Union.

#### **Differences in fees between cycles**

Fees levels tend to be higher for Masters' level (second cycle) than for bachelors' level (first cycle), and fees are also charged to more students in the second cycle. In Greece, Cyprus, Malta and UK (Scotland), fees are charged in the second cycle but not in the first, while higher levels of fees are typically charged at Masters' level in Ireland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

## **STUDENT SUPPORT**

Student support takes different forms and aims to meet different needs from country to country. However, the most common forms of support are grants and loans, which sometimes operate in conjunction (where the student receives loans and grants) and sometimes separately (student receives either a loan or a grant).

### **Grants**

All countries, with the exception of Iceland and Turkey, provide some types of grant to at least some students. In Turkey there are fee reductions for some students, but no grants.

There is a wide range of situations in other countries regarding the likelihood of receiving a grant.

In Denmark, Cyprus and Malta all students receive grants. In Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) the majority of students receive grants.

In the vast majority of countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, UK (Scotland), Slovakia, Spain) only a minority of students receive grants. The proportion varies from 1% of the student population in Greece to around 40% in Hungary.

### **Loans**

While it may be theoretically possible for students to take out loans in all countries, they are considered as a main feature of student support systems if more than 5% of the student population takes out such a loan. This is the case in 16 countries: Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, the UK (all parts), Iceland, Norway and Turkey.

### **Other support: family allowances and tax benefits for parents of students**

Student support systems may consider the student either as an individual or as a member of a family that may need support. In the Nordic countries, in particular, the student is considered as an individual, and it is the individual who receives support. However, in many other countries, support may depend on overall family circumstances, and some forms of support may be channelled to other members of the family rather than the student.

Family allowances and tax benefits play a significant role in student support in a number of countries: Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia (tax benefits only), Greece, France, Ireland (tax benefits only), Italy (tax benefits only), Latvia (tax benefits only), Lithuania, Malta (tax benefits only), Austria, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia (tax benefits only), Slovakia and Liechtenstein (tax benefits only).

## **Background**

The report is produced for the Commission by the Eurydice network, which consists of [38 national units](#) based in the 34 countries participating in the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme (EU Member States, Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey). It is co-ordinated and managed by the [EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency](#). The review on student fees and support will be carried out annually from now on in order to take stock of changes.

## **For more information**

The full report is available [here](#).

European Commission: [Education and training](#)

[Androulla Vassiliou's website](#)

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