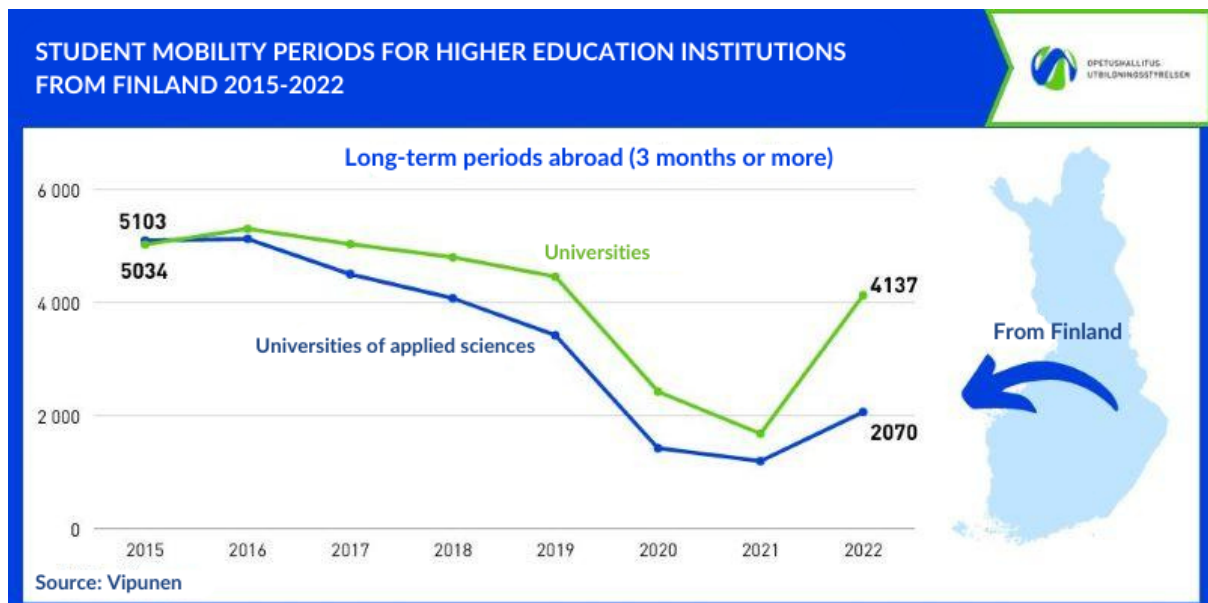


More internationalisation: SAMOK's and SYL's ways to increase the number of mobility periods

The number of mobility periods taken by students in Finnish higher education institutions has decreased considerably in recent years and even before the pandemic. In this document, we present the methods used by the National Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences SAMOK and the National Union of University Students in Finland SYL to increase the number of international mobility periods.



Background

The number of mobility periods taken by students in Finnish higher education institutions has decreased considerably in recent years and even before the pandemic. Especially among UAS students, mobility has decreased considerably: between 2016 and 2022, the number of mobility periods of more than 3 months fell



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by more than 50%. The decrease in the number of corresponding mobility periods among university students is around 20%. (Vipunen.)

The number of long-term mobility periods began to decrease in 2016, when the government at the time decided on cuts to student financial aid and the maximum period of financial aid for higher education studies, among other measures. The number of student mobility periods began to decrease significantly the following year when these decisions entered into force. A clear link can be seen between the cuts to students' income and the decrease in the number of student mobility periods. It is essential to note that it the pandemic was not the only factor contributing to the decline in student mobility, but rather the last straw in an already downward trend. Among European countries, Finland ranks second worst in the development of student mobility periods without taking into account the effects of the pandemic (OPH). No similar change can be observed in the mobility periods of students coming to Finland.

From the perspective of higher education students, the downward trend is particularly due to the following:

1. Additional financial costs for students (Eurostudent 2022)
2. Pressure on students to graduate within a tight deadline
3. Difficulties in including a mobility period as part of a degree (Eurostudent 2022: limited benefit to studies)
4. Separation from family (Eurostudent 2022)

Next, we present ways in which the student movement can increase the number of international mobility periods at the local, national and European level.

Local measures

- Each higher education degree must include the option of an internationalisation period, including a student exchange or internship abroad.
- The recognition of studies and internships completed abroad as part of the degree should be facilitated.
- Students should be offered a wide range of mobility opportunities abroad of different lengths, such as a shorter in-person mobility periods that are integrated with other internationalisation.
- If an internationalisation period is not included in the degree, the student should be able to go on a mobility period despite exceeding the credit requirements of the degree.



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- The internationalisation services of higher education institutions must provide students with concrete information on mobility periods and grant opportunities already in the early stage of studies.

National measures

- A mobility period abroad must be defined as an acceptable reason for extending the period of studies entitling to a student loan compensation.
- The funding model for higher education institutions should more effectively guide institutions towards investing in internationalisation, for example by incorporating the number of mobility periods in the funding model.
- A national Erasmus+ ambassador should be established in Finland, in which students who have already completed their mobility period tutor other students about Erasmus+ exchange, internship and grant opportunities.
- Finland should explore ways to increase the number of mobility periods in countries that have successfully increased student mobility, especially the Nordic countries.
- Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms must be created for the internationalisation services of higher education institutions in order to implement Erasmus+ student tutoring.
- Finland should explore the possibilities of compiling statistics on the participation of underrepresented groups (such as families) and students with fewer opportunities (such as students with disabilities) in Erasmus+ programme. In the longer term, national targets should be defined for the participation of these groups in the programme, and targeted actions should be developed to achieve these objectives.

European measures

- Funding of Erasmus+ must continue to grow, including doubling the programme's budget for the period 2028-2033.
- The amount of an individual Erasmus+ grant should be increased, and the amount of the grant should more accurately reflect the price level in the destination country.
- Erasmus+ grant for students with fewer opportunities and underrepresented groups should be increased.
- The relative share of mobility-focused funding in the Erasmus+ programme's budget should be maintained.
- New ways to increase student mobility, such as Erasmus+ ambassador activities, should be trialled in the Erasmus+ programme.