

At What Cost? Being an International Student in Finland

International basic degree students in Finland

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Tiivistelmä

At what Cost? Being an International Student in Finland on kansainvälisille perustutkinto-opiskelijoille suunnattu tutkimus, jolla selvitetään opiskelijoiden kokemuksia ja mielipiteitä opiskelusta ja tulevaisuudesta Suomessa. Tutkimus on Suomen ylioppilaskuntien liiton SYL:n ja Suomen opiskelijakuntien liiton SAMOKin tilaama ja sen toteutti Opiskelun ja koulutuksen tutkimussäätiö Otus sr. Kyselyyn vastasi 656 kansainvälistä korkeakouluopiskelijaa.

Yleisimmät syyt valita Suomi opiskelumaaksi olivat suomalaisen koulutusjärjestelmän hyvä maine, Suomen houkuttelevuus maana sekä korkeakoulun laatu ja maine. Hieman alle viidennes vastaajista kertoi harkinneensa opintojensa keskeyttämistä. Yleisimmät syyt opintojen keskeyttämisen harkitsemiselle olivat toimeentulovaikkeudet ja motivaatio-ongelmat. Opintoja hidastaviksi tekijöiksi koettiin useimmin niin ikään toimeentulovaikkeudet, ongelmat suomalaiseen yhteiskuntaan integroitumisessa sekä motivaatio-ongelmat. Yleisellä tasolla viidennes vastaajista koki, että ei ole tervetullut Suomeen. Ongelmia Suomeen integroitumisessa oli ollut puolella vastaajista.

Selvästi yleisin keino opintojen rahoittamiseksi oli perheen taloudellinen tuki. Myös säästöt ja palkkatulot olivat tärkeitä rahoituslähteitä. Apurahojen merkitys on selvästi suurempi yliopistoissa kuin ammattikorkeakouluissa, joissa ne vaikuttavat olevan melko harvinaisia. Vain joka kymmenes sellainen vastaaja, joka ei tällä hetkellä maksa lukukausimaksuja, olisi valmis maksamaan opinnoistaan. Lukukausimaksuja maksavista neljä viidestä ilmoitti, että ei olisi valmis maksamaan nykyistä suurempia lukukausimaksuja. Lähes kaksi kolmesta kuitenkin koki, että on saanut vastinetta rahoilleen.

Vain melko pieni osa vastanneista oli saanut Suomesta työ- tai harjoittelupaikan. Tärkeimmiksi työllistymisen esteiksi koettiin kielitaitovaatimukset, kova kilpailu työmarkkinoilla sekä työpaikkojen vähäisyys. Vastaavasti parhaiksi työ- tai harjoittelupaikan saamista edistäviksi keinoiksi katsottiin suomen tai ruotsin opettelu sekä englannin kielen käytölle avoimempi työkuultuuri.

Valtaosa vastanneista arvioi kokemuksensa opinnoista hyväksi ja lähes yhtä moni suosittelisi omaa koulutusohjelmaansa kansainväliselle hakijalle. Selvästi yli puolet vastanneista valitsisi Suomen opiskelumaakseen, jos hakisi opiskelupaikkaa nyt.

Suomesta asumista pidettiin melko todennäköisenä vielä viiden vuoden kuluttua, mutta tästä pidemmällä aikajänteellä Suomessa pysyminen oli keskimäärin epätodennäköistä. Tärkeimmät Suomeen jäämistä puoltavat tekijät olivat turvallisuus, kansainvälinen ilmapiiri, suomalaisen yhteiskunnan toimivuus sekä työllisyys. Suomen houkuttelevuutta vastaavasti vähensivät vaikeudet saada oleskelulupa tai kansalaisuus, työllisyys sekä sää ja ympäristöolot.

Abstract

At what Cost? Being an International Student in Finland is a survey aimed at international undergraduate students, which aims to find out students' experiences and opinions about studying and their future in Finland. The survey was commissioned by the National Union of University Students in Finland and National Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences – SAMOK and was carried out by the Research Foundation for Studies and Education Otus. In total 656 international students from universities and universities of applied sciences responded to the survey.

The most common reasons for choosing Finland as a country of study were the good reputation of the Finland's education system, Finland's attractiveness as a country, and the quality and reputation of the higher education institution. Slightly less than a fifth of the respondents said that they had considered dropping out of their studies. The most common reasons for considering dropping out were lack of sufficient income and issues with motivation. Lack of sufficient income, issues with integration in Finnish society, and issues with motivation were also most often perceived as factors hindering studies. In general, a fifth of respondents felt that they were not welcome in Finland. Half of the respondents had experienced problems integrating into Finland.

By far the most common way of financing their studies was financial support from their family. Savings and own salary were also important sources of funding. Stipends are clearly more important at universities than at universities of applied sciences, where they seem to be quite rare. Only one in ten respondents who do not currently pay tuition fees would be willing to pay for their studies. Four out of five of those who pay tuition fees stated that they would not be willing to pay higher tuition fees. However, almost two out of three felt that they had received value for their money.

Only a relatively small proportion of respondents had obtained a job or traineeship in Finland. The most important obstacles to employment were perceived to be requirement to know local language(s), tough competition in the job market and a shortage of jobs in the sector. Similarly, learning Finnish or Swedish and a workplace culture that is more open to the use of English were considered the best ways to get a job or internship.

The majority of respondents rated their experience of their studies as positive and almost as many would recommend their own study program to an international applicant. Clearly more than half of respondents would choose Finland as their country of study if they were applying for a study place now.

Living in Finland was considered quite likely in five years, but staying in Finland for a longer period of time was on average unlikely. The most important factors in favour of staying in Finland were safety, the international atmosphere, the functioning of Finnish society and employment. The attractiveness of Finland was correspondingly reduced by the difficulties in obtaining a permanent residency or citizenship, employment, and weather and environmental conditions.

Introduction

At what Cost? Being an International Student in Finland is a survey aimed at international basic degree students to examine students' experiences and opinions on studying and the future in Finland. The study was commissioned by the Finnish Student Union (SYL) and the Finnish Student Union (SAMOK), and it was implemented by Otus sr.

The target group of the study was international students completing a Bachelor's or Master's degree in Finland. The data collection was carried out using an electronic questionnaire between 1 October and 31 October 2024. The questionnaire was disseminated with an open invitation link through higher education institutions and student organisations. A total of 656 responses were received.

The survey collected information on the daily life of international degree students studying in Finland, the funding of studies, employment and their thoughts on the future in Finland. This report presents the quantitative results of the survey. The survey also included several open questions to which hundreds of responses were received. After the quantitative results have been published, the survey data will be archived for research use, which hopefully will also enable the research use of free-form responses in the future.

Basic information on respondents

A total of 656 international basic degree students responded to the survey. They represent 75 different nationalities and there were a few dozens of dual citizens. 34% of respondents were EU/EEA nationals (including dual nationals who also had EU/EEA nationality) and 66% were nationals of other countries. More than half (52%) of the respondents were Asian and one third (33%) European. 7% of the respondents were from Africa, 5% from North America and 2% from South America. Approximately four per cent of the respondents had dual citizenship in countries located on different continents.

Responses were received from almost all higher education institutions in mainland Finland, with the exception of one university and five universities of applied sciences. 71% of the respondents study at a university and 29% at a university of applied sciences. The respondents were relatively more enthusiastic in universities, as according to 2022 statistics (Statistics Service of the Education Administration, n.d.), 42% of international basic degree students studied at universities and 58% at universities of applied sciences. 42% of the respondents were completing a Bachelor's degree and 58% a Master's degree.

The distribution of the target group and respondents by field of education is presented in Table 1. Responses were received from all sectors. The most underrepresented are the service sectors, information processing and information technology (ICT) as well as trade, administration and law. There was overrepresentation in the agriculture and forestry sectors, social sectors and natural sciences. For the purposes of the analyses, the material has been weighted according to the field of education to better represent the target group.

Table 1: Field of study

Field of study	Target group (%)	Respondents (%)
Education	2,6	5,2
Arts and humanities	7,8	14,2
Social sciences, journalism and information	3,6	7,6
Business, administration and law	21,1	13,7
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	6,4	13,3
Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)	22,1	12,3
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	20,2	18,1
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	1,2	4,3
Health and welfare	11,0	9,9
Services	4,1	1,4
Total	100,0	100,0
N	26 214	648

Women responded relatively more enthusiastically than men. Sixty per cent of the respondents were women, while only 45 per cent of the target group were women. Less than 4% of the respondents reported other gender. Due to the small number of respondents, they are not taken into account in gender-based examinations. 36% of the respondents were under 25 years of age, 35% were between 25 and 29 years of age and 29% were over 29 years of age, i.e. they were relatively young.

The most common type of housing was a shared apartment, where up to 45% of the respondents lived. 26% lived alone, 18% lived with their spouse and 11% otherwise. According to the 2022 Student Barometer (SOA, 2023), 44 per cent of Finnish higher education students lived alone, 29 per cent with their spouse and only 7 per cent in shared housing (cell home or shared home). 9% of the respondents had dependent children.

The respondents had lived in Finland for an average of 1.9 years. 34% had lived in Finland for less than a year, 31% for more than a year but less than two years, 17% for more than two but less than three years and 19% for three or more years.

Everyday life, studies and integration

The respondents were asked why they had chosen Finland as their country of study. One could select four alternatives. The most common response was the good reputation of the Finnish education system, which was selected by 56% of the respondents. The attractiveness of Finland as a country (47%), the quality and reputation of the higher education institution (44%) and the reasonableness of tuition fees (41%) were also common. The quality and reputation of the degree programme had been an important factor for 35% and the desire to work in Finland for 31%. Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses by higher education sector. The quality and reputation of the degree programme was clearly more common in universities (40%) than in universities of applied sciences (28%), as was the reasonableness of tuition fees (45% in universities and 34% in universities of applied sciences). Correspondingly, personal relationships, such as family or friends, were a clearly

more common reason for applying to Finland in universities of applied sciences (22%) than in university students (15%), as was the desire to work in Finland (35% in universities of applied sciences and 28% in universities).

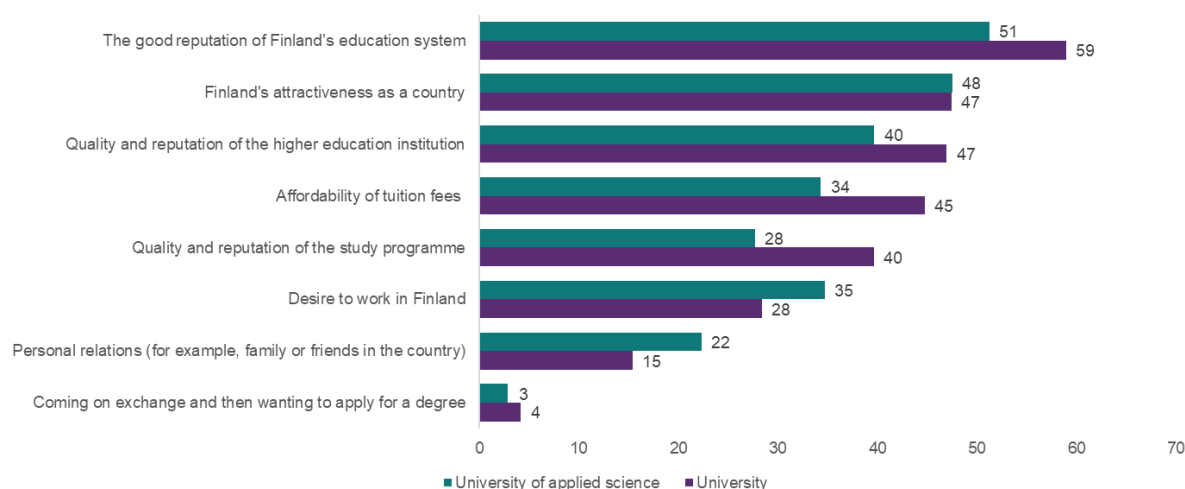


Figure 1: Reason for selecting Finland as the country of study according to the higher education sector. Percent of respondents, N = 651.

There were no statistically significant links between the gender and the reasons for choosing Finland as the country of study. Respondents with dependent children more often cited the desire to work in Finland as a reason for applying to Finland. On the other hand, respondents who did not have dependent children more often mentioned the reasonableness of tuition fees and the quality and reputation of the degree programme. There were several differences according to age: younger respondents had more often justified the choice of Finland by the attractiveness of Finland, the quality and reputation of the higher education institution and the reasonableness of tuition fees, whereas older respondents had more often mentioned the desire to work in Finland.

Respondents were also asked to rate on a scale from one (*very poorly*) to five (*very well*) how well their expectations on certain issues ultimately met reality. The distribution of responses is presented in Figure 2. The expectations concerning the amount of contact teaching were best realised (75% estimated that the expectations were realised well or very well) and the availability of support services (72%). The worst part was the expectations of a sense of community with peers (up to 27% estimated that the expectations were realised poorly or very poorly) and the images offered by the student recruitment process (16%). However, even in these questions, at least half of the respondents felt that the expectations had been met well or very well.

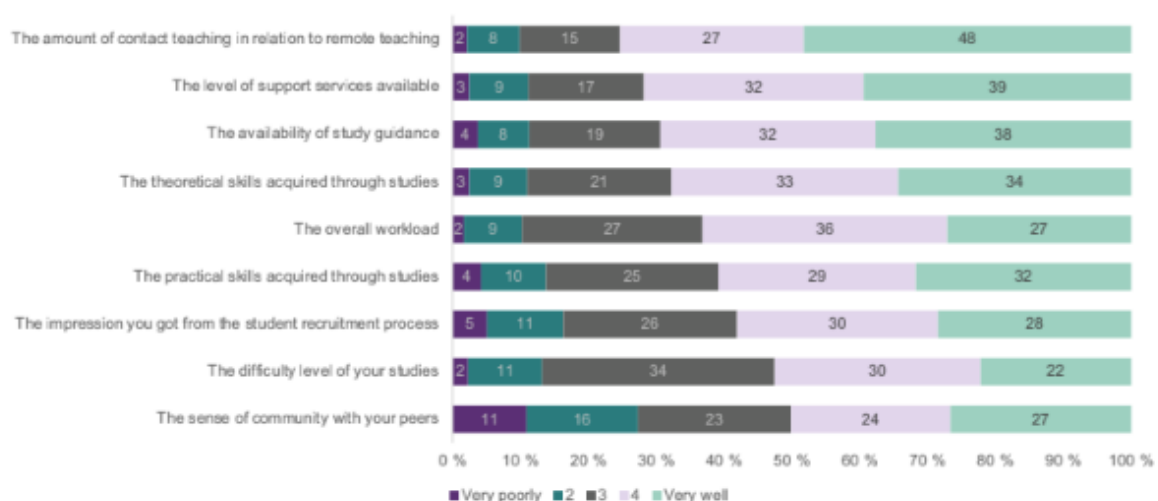


Figure 2: Correspondence between expectations and reality. Percent of respondents, N = 575. *I don't know* answers deleted.

19% of the respondents said they had considered dropping out of their studies. There was no statistically significant link between the higher education sector, degree level or field of education and consideration of dropping out, and neither did gender, age or dependent children. Instead, EU/EEA nationals reported slightly more (25%) considering dropping out than non-EU nationals (25%). This is also reflected in the continental review: 24% of all Europeans said they had considered dropping out, whereas 16% of Asians and only 10% of Africans reported this. Consideration of dropping out of studies increased over time in Finland: whereas 10% of those who had been in the country for less than a year said they had considered dropping out, the corresponding figure was 18% for those who had been in the country for more than a year but less than two years, 26% for those who had been in Finland for more than two but less than three years and up to 32% for those who have been in Finland for three years or more.

Respondents were also asked about slowing down their studies. Only 19% of the respondents reported that their studies have progressed as planned. The most common reasons for slowing down studies were income difficulties (43%), problems with integration into Finnish society (35%) and motivation problems (30%). The same factors in a slightly different order were reported as the main reasons for dropping out of studies for those who had considered dropping out. Figure 3 presents the reasons for the slowdown and possible drop-out. Integration into Finnish society was very often seen as a factor slowing down studies (35%), but only 30% of those considering dropping out reported it as a reason for dropping out. Conversely, other reasons were rarely mentioned (5%) as a reason for slowing down studies, but often (21%) as a reason for dropping out. Similarly, motivation problems, income difficulties and study guidance problems were mentioned even more often as a reason for dropping out (40%, 50% and 17%) than as a factor slowing down them (30%, 43% and 12%).

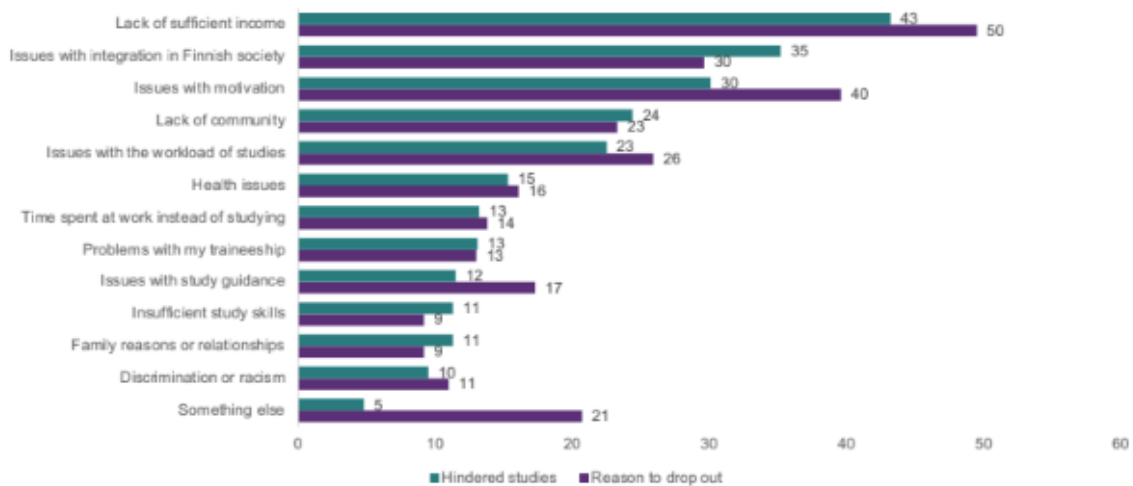


Figure 3: Reasons for slowing down studies (N = 632) and considering dropping out (N = 132). Percent of respondents.

48 per cent of the respondents reported problems related to integration into Finnish society. While there was no statistically significant link in the higher education sector, students studying for a Master's degree reported problems more often (53%) than those studying for a Bachelor's degree (43%). Similarly, gender did not have a statistically significant link to integration problems, but with age the problems increased clearly: 38 per cent of those under 25 years of age reported problems, 51 per cent of those between 25 and 29 years of age and 56 per cent of those over 30 years of age.

35% of EU/EEA citizens had experienced problems in integrating into Finnish society, whereas 54% of citizens of other countries had had them. 36% of all Europeans reported integration problems, 53% of Asians and 54% of Africans. The length of stay in the country was also linked to integration difficulties. 31% of those who had been in the country for less than a year, 56% for more than a year but less than two years, 61% for more than two but less than three years and 54% for more than three years.

On a scale of one (*not at all*) to five (*yes, very*), 20% of the respondents said that they had not felt welcome in Finland. 63 per cent had felt welcome. The results are very similar to those related to integration problems. The distribution of responses by continent is presented in Figure 4.

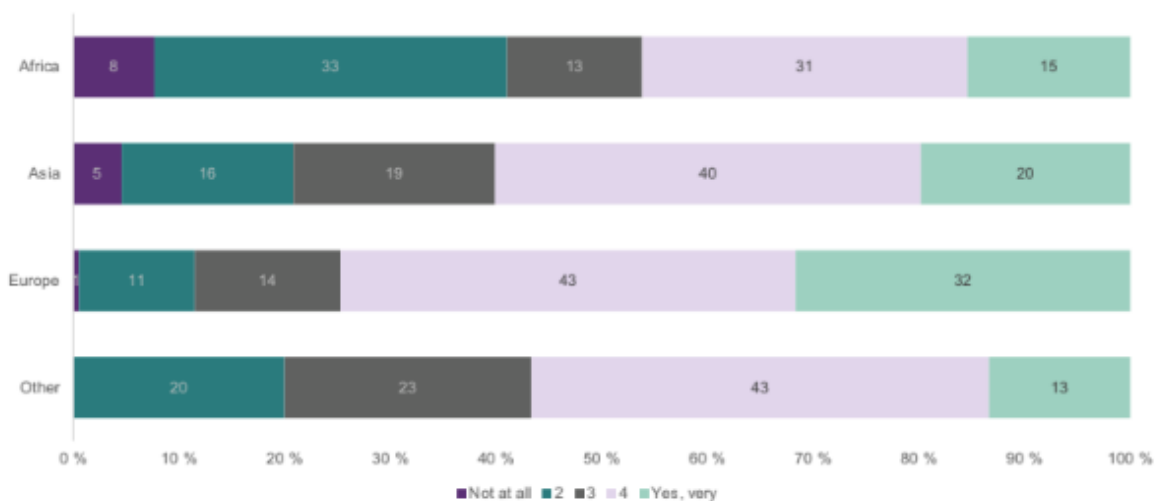


Figure 4: Has one felt welcome in Finland, by the continent. Percent of respondents, N = 550.

Funding of studies and tuition fees

The most common method for funding studies was family financial support. Two out of three respondents (75%) mentioned it among the three main funding channels, and nearly half (44%) said it was the most important source of funding. The second most common funding channel was savings and the third was own salary. Only 12% of the respondents named the grant as the most important source of funding and only a quarter (25%) of the three most important sources of funding in general.

The sources of funding and their order of importance by education sector are presented in Figure 5. University students mentioned family support slightly more often (76%) than students in universities of applied sciences (71%), but more than half (51%) of UAS students considered it the most important source of funding, whereas the corresponding figure in universities was only 41%. The savings were of greater importance in universities, whereas own salary was a more significant source of funding in universities of applied sciences. However, the most significant difference was in grants: 17 per cent of university students named the grant as the most important form of funding for their studies and 32 per cent in total among the three most important sources of funding, whereas the corresponding figures for UAS students were only two per cent and 13 per cent.

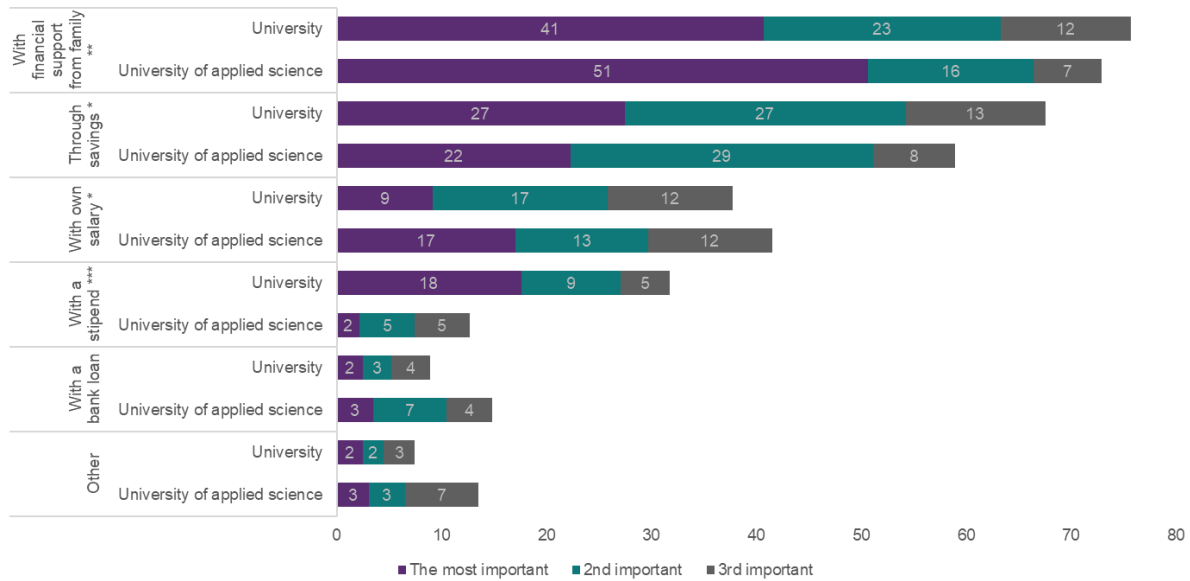


Figure 5: How do you mainly fund your studies? By education sector, % of respondents, N = 635.

There were no statistically significant differences in the ways studies were funded by gender. The significance of family financial support was emphasised by younger respondents, but it decreased slightly in older age groups. Savings were mentioned as the most important source of funding by the oldest respondents, but the second or third most important by the youngest. The mentions of the grant became more common with age. If the respondent had dependent children, the significance of the savings was emphasised, and if not, the family's financial support had been mentioned more often.

One third (32%) of the respondents said they would pay a full tuition fee for their studies. 17 per cent of university students and up to 56 per cent of UAS students reported this. Similarly, one third (34%) reported that they do not pay tuition fees because they are nationals of an EU or EEA country. There was no great difference in this between different sectors, with 35 per cent for students studying at universities and 31 per cent for universities of applied sciences. Almost a quarter of the respondents said that the scholarship covers the entire amount of tuition fees and 12% said that the scholarship covers part of the fees. As many as 35 per cent of university students said that the scholarship would cover tuition fees in full and 13 per cent in part, but the corresponding figures for UAS students were only two per cent and 11 per cent. Figure 6 shows the payment of tuition fees by field of education¹. The largest number of respondents paying tuition fees themselves were in the fields of trade, administration and law (47%), services (44%), education (12%) and humanities and arts (16%). Of course, there is great variation in the proportion of respondents who reported that they were EU or EEA citizens and therefore not within the scope of tuition fees, but also in how many reported that the scholarship would cover tuition fees, either in full or in part. University of applied sciences students said more often than university students that they

¹The result is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), but due to the rather small number of respondents, the generalisability of the results must be approached with caution.

fund their studies with a bank loan or other means, but the shares are very small and not statistically significant.

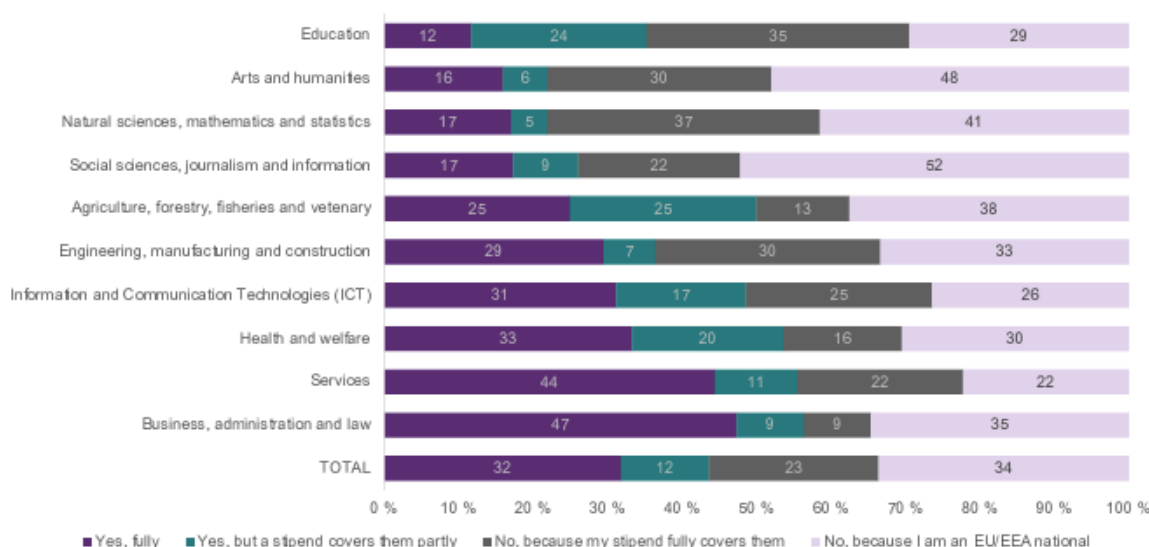


Figure 6: Are you paying tuition fees? By field of education, % of respondents, N = 641.

Those who did not pay tuition fees (N = 397) were asked whether they would be willing to study in their current degree programme if they had to pay tuition fees. Only 9% said yes. 68% said no and 22% did not know. There was little difference between the higher education sectors, as nine per cent of university students and 11 per cent of UAS students would be willing to continue in the current degree programme if they had to pay tuition fees. While there were no statistically significant differences between gender and age group, as many as 29%² of respondents with dependent children would be willing to continue in their current education programme even if they had to pay tuition fees. Only 8% of childless respondents said so. Those who responded positively (N = 34) were asked how much they would be prepared to pay for their studies. The average willingness to pay was EUR 4 290 per year.

When those paying tuition fees (N = 247) were asked about the amount of tuition fees, the average amount was EUR 8,810 per year, more than twice the aforementioned willingness to pay. Those paying tuition fees were also asked whether they would be willing to study in their current degree programme if the tuition fees were higher. Four out of five (79%) reported that they would not be willing to pay more. 13% would be willing to pay an additional EUR 1 000 per year and 6% an additional EUR 2 000 per year. Only a few respondents reported that they would be willing to pay twice or triple the amount they have now paid. There was no statistically significant link between gender, age group or dependent children and their willingness to pay higher tuition fees.

Respondents paying tuition fees were also asked whether they had a negative impact on the following issues: free time, employment, employment in their own field, livelihood, progress of studies, opportunities to study Finnish or Swedish, integration into the student community,

²The result is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), but due to the very small number of respondents, the generalisability of the results must be approached with caution.

and well-being or mental health. Tuition fees were said to have the greatest negative impact on leisure time, well-being or mental health and employment. Tuition fees had the least negative impact on studying Finnish or Swedish and integration into the student community. The distribution of responses is presented in Figure 7.

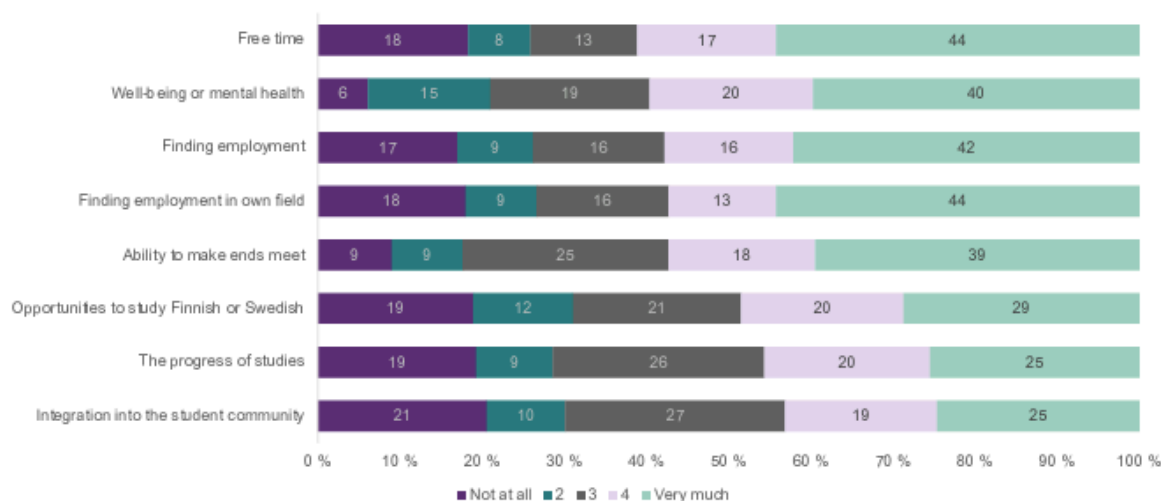


Figure 7: Have tuition fees had a negative impact on the following issues? Percent of respondents. N = 244.

The only statistically significant gender difference was that women felt that tuition fees had a negative impact on employment slightly more often than men, but the difference is very small. Age or dependent children did not have a statistically significant link to the negative effects of tuition fees.

Lastly, those paying tuition fees were asked how they estimated that they had received value for money from zero (*very poorly*) to ten (*very well*). The average of the responses was 5.8, median 6 and mode 8. Six per cent of the respondents had selected the middle value (5), one third (32%) felt that they had received poor value for their money (values 0–4) and nearly two thirds (63%) felt that they had received good value for their money (values 6–10). There was no statistically significant difference between higher education sectors.

Employment

Only slightly more than half (56%) of the respondents believed that their studies gave them sufficient skills and competence to find employment in Finland (Figure 8). Almost one fifth (18%) of the respondents disagreed. It was estimated that education was the best way to promote employment in the rest of Europe: two out of three respondents (67%) agreed and only 8% disagreed.

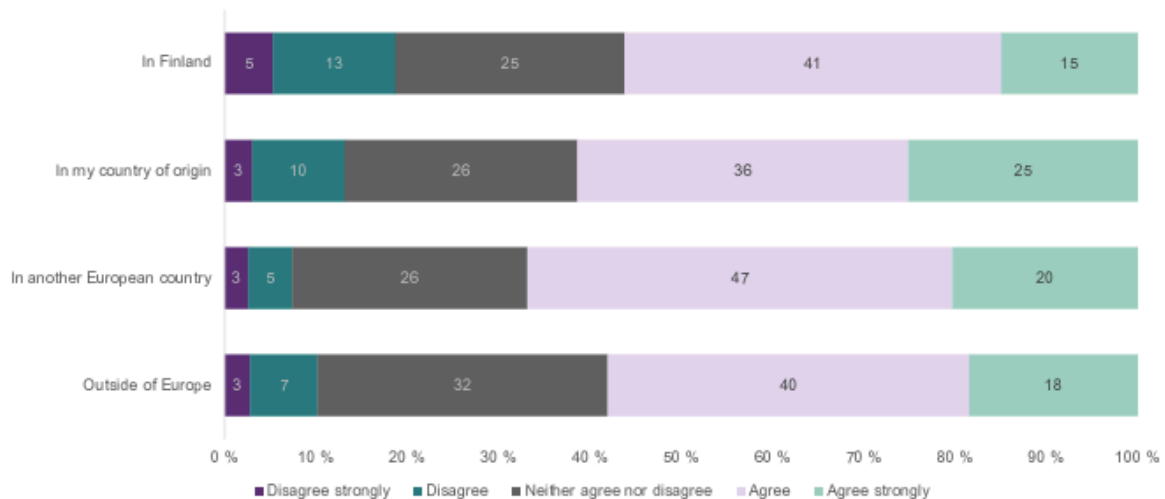


Figure 8: The skills and capabilities provided by the studies to find employment in Finland, the original home country, the rest of Europe and outside Europe. Percent of respondents, N = 641. *I don't know* answers deleted.

Respondents were asked about their success in applying for a job or a traineeship both during their studies and after a possible first degree³. During the studies, 22 per cent of the respondents had received a job and 28 per cent had a traineeship. After the first degree, 10% of the respondents had received a job and only 5% had a traineeship. The figures are very small, but a very large proportion of the respondents had not even applied for a job or a traineeship: 26% had not yet applied for a job during their studies and 47% had not yet applied for a job after their first degree. At least 26 per cent of the respondents had not applied for a traineeship during their studies and 49 per cent had not applied after their first degree.

Those who had received a job or traineeship were asked whether the work had been in their own field. The traineeship during the studies was most often entirely (58%) or even partly (31%) in one's own field, as was the traineeship during the studies (35% in full and 38% in part). The number of respondents who had already completed their first degree was very low, but more than half of them reported that they did not have a job (55%) or a traineeship (63%) in their own field. A total of 63 per cent of the respondents said that they had been paid for the traineeship during their studies, but only 29 per cent of the respondents reported this after their first degree.

The most common obstacle to finding a job or a traineeship was language skills requirements. It was mentioned by four out of five respondents (82%) and 59% of respondents considered it the most significant obstacle to finding a job or a traineeship. The second most common reason was fierce competition in the labour market (55% mentioned) and the third was the low number of jobs (38%). The distribution of responses is presented in Figure 9.

³*Does not apply to me* answers deleted

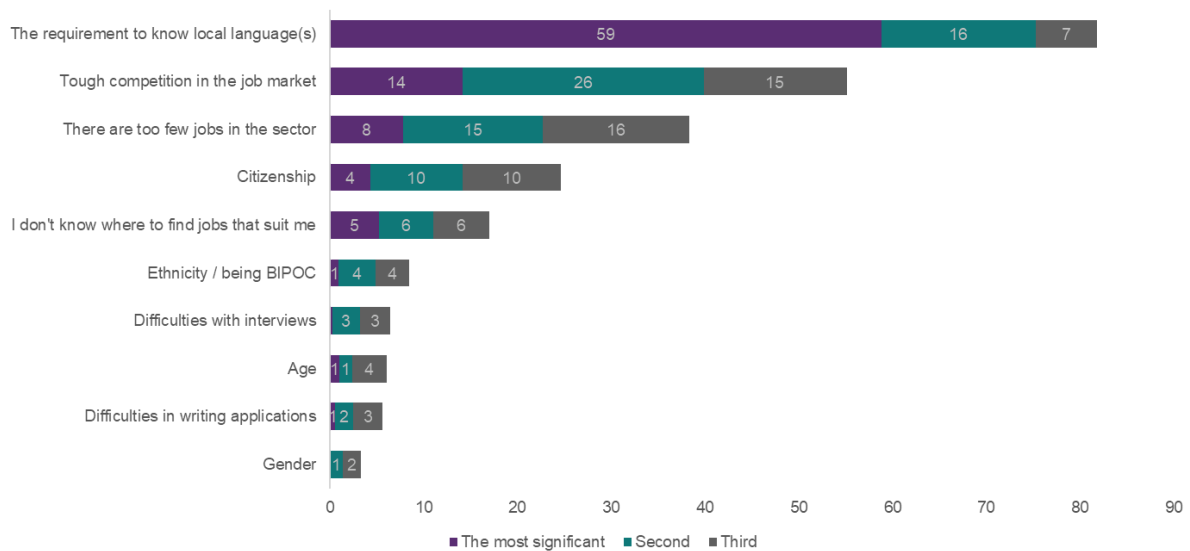


Figure 9: The most significant obstacles to finding a job or a traineeship. Percent of respondents, N = 595.

Similarly, it was asked which issues would promote finding a job or a traineeship (Figure 10). 70% of respondents mentioned learning local languages (40% considered this the most important) and 70% mentioned a working culture that is more open to English (32% considered this the most important). A better financial situation (32% mentioned) and assistance in job-seeking (25% mentioned) were also considered useful.

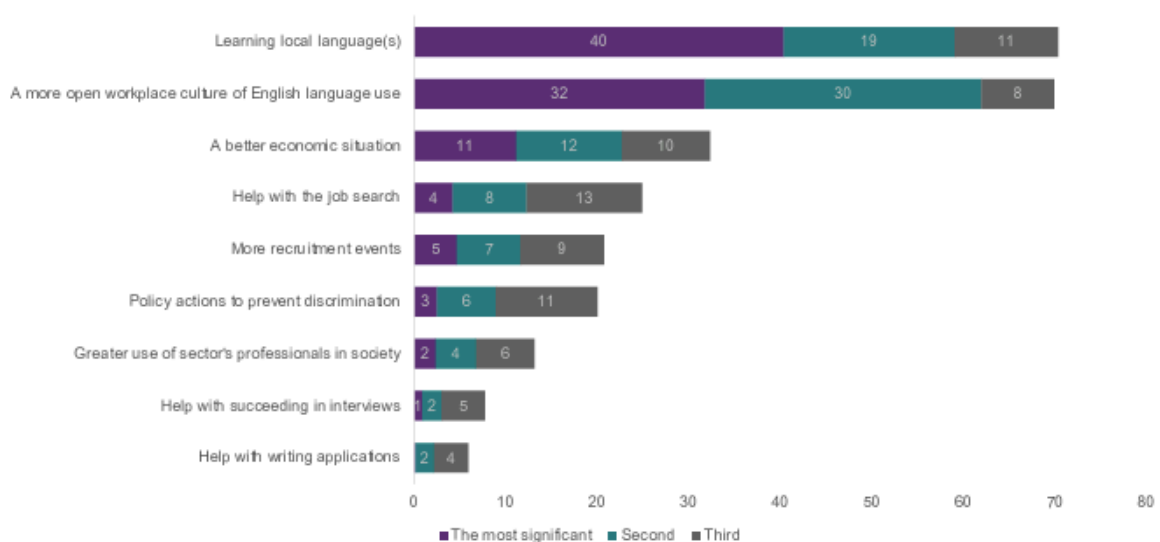


Figure 10: The most significant factors contributing to finding a job or a traineeship. Percentage of respondents, N = 601.

Future in Finland

Respondents were asked to assess their experience of studies as a whole from zero (*very poor*) to ten (*very good*). The average of all respondents was 7.1 median 8 and mode 8. Only 2% of respondents chose the middle value (5). Their experiences were considered poor (values 0–4) by 13 per cent of the respondents and good (values 6–10) by as much as 85 per cent. There were relatively few differences between different groups. On average, students at universities gave slightly better grades (7.4) than students at universities of applied sciences (6.7). Differences according to degree level or fields of study were not statistically significant, nor were differences between genders or age groups. On average, citizens of EU or EEA countries were slightly more satisfied with their experience (7.5) than citizens of other countries (7.0). The longer people had lived in Finland, the weaker the overall assessment of the studies: Those who had lived in the country for less than one year gave an average score of 7.5, those who lived for less than two years, 6.3, and those who lived for less than three years, 6.6.

Similarly, the respondents were asked whether the respondent would recommend their own degree programme to an international applicant considering studying in Finland. On a scale from zero (*not at all*) to ten (*yes, strongly*) the average was 6.8, median 8 and mode 10. The middle option (5) had again been chosen by only 2% of respondents. 23% (values 0–4) would not recommend their degree programme, while 76% (values 6–10) of the respondents would recommend it. University students would on average be more likely to recommend their own degree programme (7.2) than university of applied sciences students (6.1). Citizens of EU or EEA countries were also more likely to recommend (7.8) than citizens of other countries (6.4). Again, time spent in Finland reduced the likelihood of recommending the degree programme: Those who had been living in the country for less than one year reported an average probability of recommending 7.5, those who had been living in Finland for less than two years 7.0, those who had been living in Finland for less than three years 5.8 and those who had been living in Finland for longer 6.1.

60% of the respondents would choose Finland as their country of study if they were now applying for a study place. 19% would not choose Finland, and 21% would not know. 63 per cent of university students and 55 per cent of UAS students would re-elect Finland. There was no statistically significant link between the degree level and the field of study. 73 per cent of EU or EEA citizens and 56 per cent of citizens of other countries would choose Finland. Finland would be re-elected by 50% of Africans, 56% of Asians, 73% of Europeans and 67% of others. 70 per cent of those who had lived in Finland for less than a year, 59 per cent of those who had lived for less than two years, 57 per cent of those who had lived in Finland for less than three years and 49 per cent of those who had lived in the country for longer. Of the respondents aged under 25, 70% would re-elect Finland, 53% of those aged 25–29 and 58% of those aged over 30. Gender or dependent children had no statistically significant connection to this.

The probability of living in Finland was asked on a scale of one (*very unlikely*) to ten (*very likely*) and separately on the time scale of one year (average 8.6), three years (7.3), five years (6.0), eight years (4.9) and ten years (4.7). On average, the respondents believed that they would still live in Finland after five years, but not after eight years. Figure 11 shows the likelihood of living in Finland in different time horizons as a stacked column by the education

sector, field of education and citizenship (dichotomical according to the EU/EEA and by continent). The figure shows that university students find living in Finland less likely than university of applied sciences students, especially in the longer term. Similarly, those studying in the agriculture, forestry and service sectors find living in Finland more likely – but it should be noted that the number of respondents in these sectors is very small. Those studying social fields as well as humanities and arts are the least likely to remain in Finland. When examined by nationality, citizens of EU and EEA countries consider that staying in Finland is less likely than citizens of other countries. According to continents, citizens of African and Asian countries consider staying in Finland the most likely and Europeans the least likely.

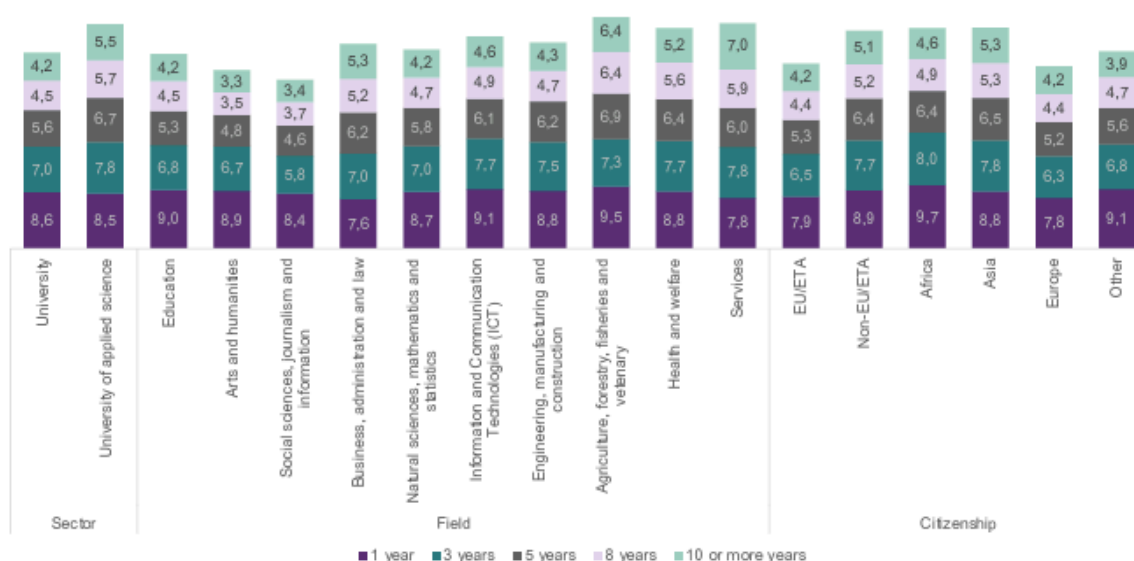


Figure 11: Probability of living in Finland by education sector, field of education and nationality. Average comparison, N = 440.

Factors affecting staying in Finland were also surveyed using a single set of questions (Figure C.5). Safety was the major proponent of living in Finland: up to 79 per cent of the respondents said that it increases Finland's attractiveness at least to some extent. The international atmosphere (65%), the functioning of Finnish society (63%) and employment (60%) were also seen as attractive factors. Similarly, difficulties in obtaining a residence permit or citizenship (36% said this reduced Finland's attractiveness at least to some extent), employment (35%) and weather and environmental conditions (29%) were seen as factors pushing away from Finland.

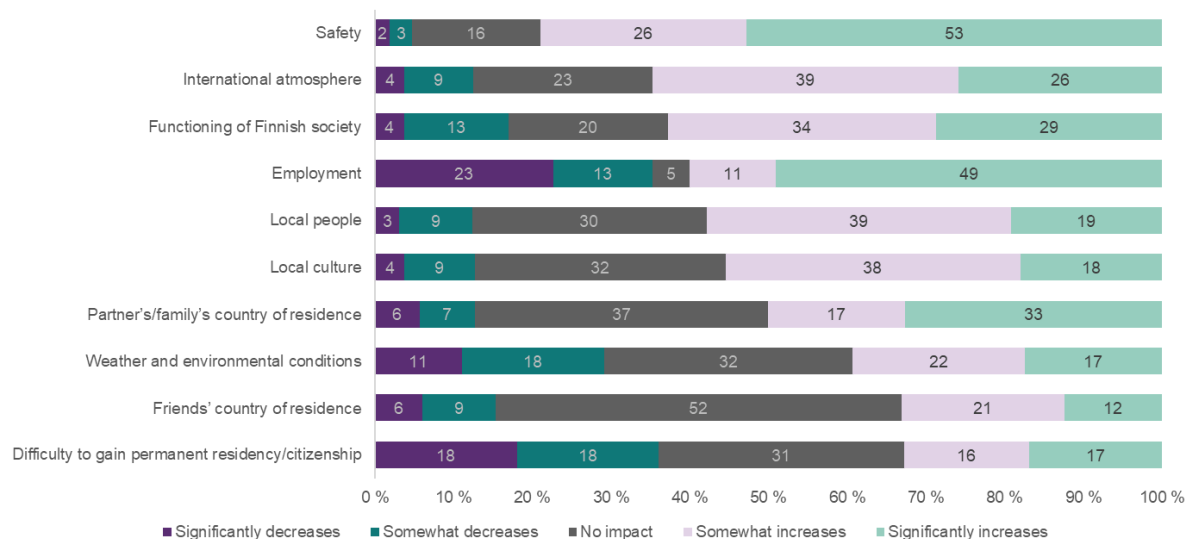


Figure 12: How do the following factors affect your decision to stay in Finland?. Percentage of respondents. N = 543

Summary and conclusions

Respondents mainly assessed their experience of the studies as good, would be prepared to recommend their degree programme to other international students, and most would also choose Finland again if they were now applying for a study place. However, half of the respondents had experienced problems in integrating into Finnish society, and one in five did not feel welcome in Finland. Living in Finland was considered rather unlikely for a long time. Many felt that the skills gained from the studies supported employment better elsewhere than in Finland.

Few of those who do not currently pay tuition fees would be willing to pay for their current studies. Similarly, those paying tuition fees would not, as a rule, be prepared to pay more for their studies. However, this makes it difficult to conclude whether the extension or increase of tuition fees would reduce the number of new applicants.

The studies are mainly funded by family financial support, which will certainly affect the selection of international students. Savings and earned income are also important, but employment in Finland during studies was relatively low. The significance of the scholarships is fairly small, even though the tuition fees for more than one in three respondents cover the scholarship in full or in part.

The safety and functioning of Finnish society are seen as important pull factors. However, it seems that a factor affecting both directions, employment, may determine whether to stay in Finland after the studies or head elsewhere. Language requirements and more cyclical factors, such as the low number of jobs and fierce competition in the labour market were considered the most significant barriers to employment. In addition to improving the economic situation, not only learning Finnish national languages but also a more open attitude to the use of English in working life were seen as opportunities promoting employment.

Sources

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