

MOTIVES AND BENEFITS OF WORKING WHILE STUDYING ¹

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Having a paid job while studying has become a common practice for many European higher education students, but some differences across EUROSTUDENT countries are noticeable. The prevailing reasons for engagement in paid employment are financial. However, in the majority of EUROSTUDENT VI countries gaining experience emerges

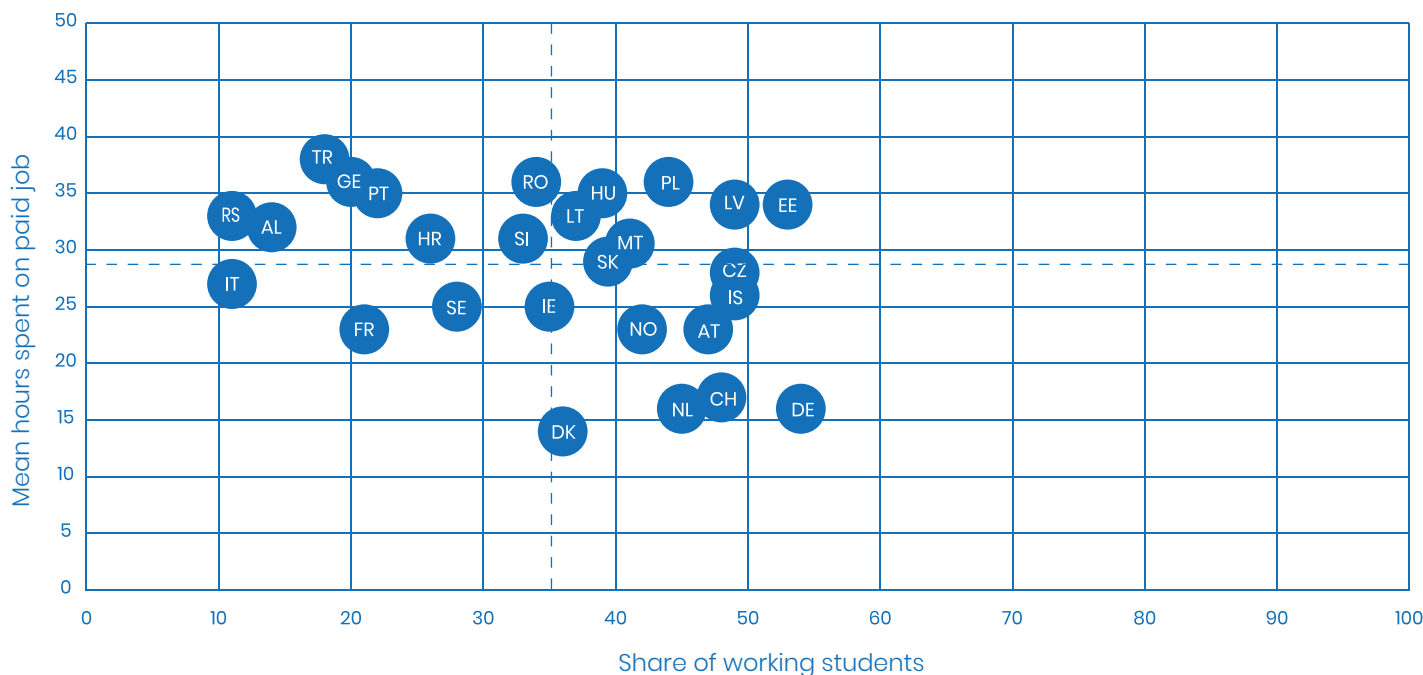
as the second strongest motive to work. Work experience could be beneficial for students' future career and their competitiveness in the labour market as it can provide students with the chance to gain study-related as well as transversal skills, particularly if their jobs are related to their field of study.

THE RATE AND EXTENT OF WORKING ALONGSIDE STUDIES IN EUROSTUDENT VI COUNTRIES

Working during studies has become a reality for a significant number of students. Across EUROSTUDENT VI (E:VI) countries, slightly more than half ² (51 %) of all students are combining studies and paid jobs – either during the whole lecture period or from time to time during term-time. The percentage of students working regularly and occasionally varies from 22 % to 76 % among these countries, and the share of students who work regularly throughout the whole

lecture period ranges from less than 15 % in Italy, Albania, and Serbia, to over 50 % in Germany and Estonia (Figure 1). The average number of hours per week students spend working on regular paid jobs ranges from less than 20 hours in Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, and Switzerland to more than 35 hours in Turkey, Georgia, Romania, and Poland.

Figure 1. The rate and extent of working alongside studies. Average time spent at a paid job and the share of students working during the whole lecture period in %



Source: EUROSTUDENT VI

The differences in the amount of hours that students work may be explained by such factors as the funding structure of higher education, the availability of part-time work on the labour market, the socio-economic profile of students, and the ways in which learning is organized (Brooks, 2017). In addition, policy measures on the national or institutional

level or reforms in higher education systems which directly or indirectly target the working students in a country might have an impact on the share of working students in the entire student population as well as on the number of hours that students spend on paid employment.

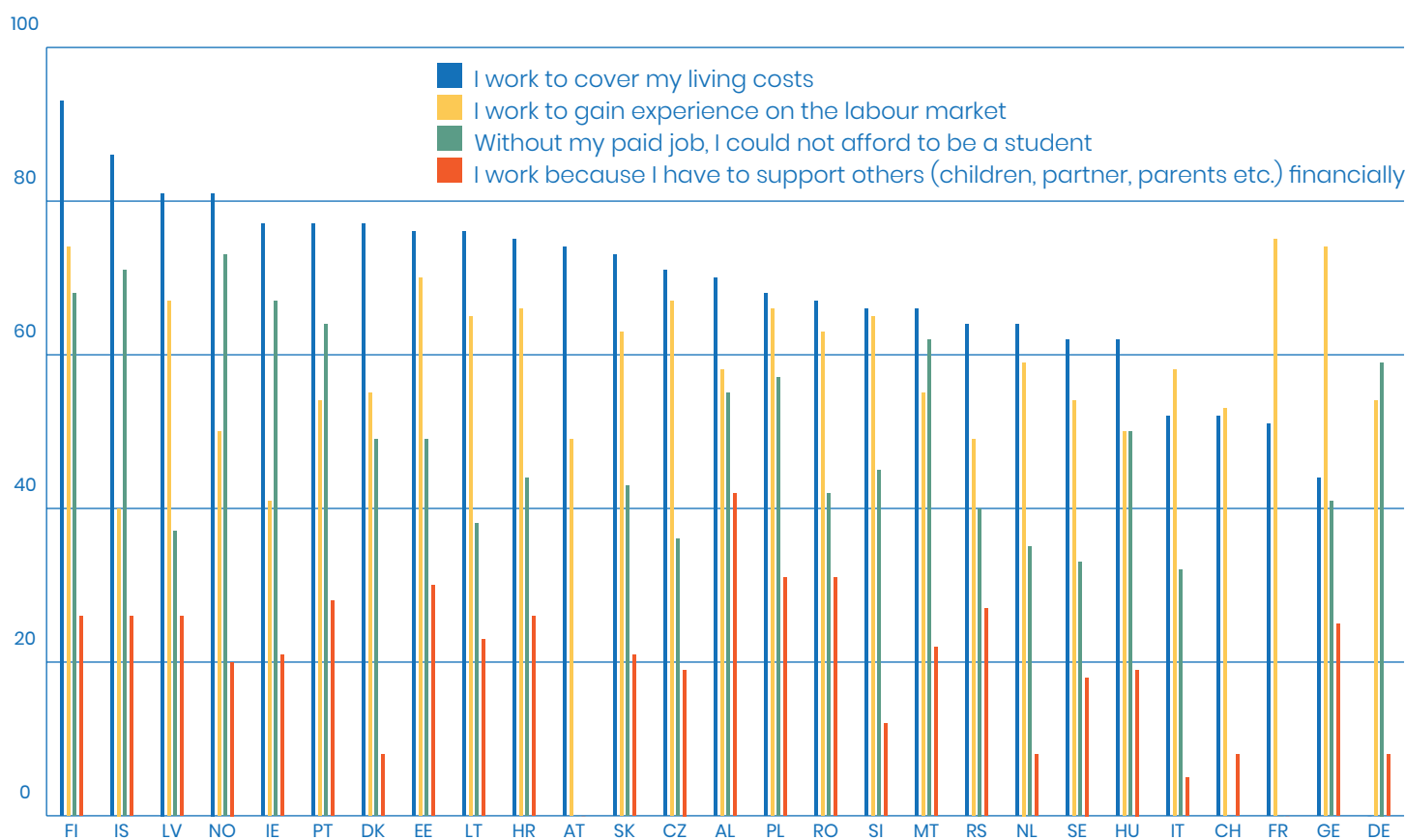
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² On unweighted average.

STUDENTS' MOTIVES TO WORK ALONGSIDE STUDIES

E:VI data not only captures the scope of students' engagement in paid employment, but also their motives to work. On average, the majority (69 %) of working students indicates that they work to cover their living costs. This motive is especially important for working students in Finland, Iceland, Latvia, and Norway, where over 80 % state that they work to pay for their living expenses (Figure 2). Furthermore, across the E:VI countries, every second working student also claims that they could not afford to study without the income received from a paid job. Every fifth working student has reported working because of the necessity to support others financially. In addition

to the financial motive to have paid jobs during studies, a few additional ones are worth mentioning, as well. On average, three out of five working students state that they work to gain experience on the labour market, making it the second most popular motive. In France, Italy, Georgia, and Switzerland, larger shares of working students indicate that they work to gain experience rather than to cover their living costs. In Norway, Iceland, Finland, Ireland, Portugal, and Malta however, more than 60 % of working students report that they could not afford to study without a paid job.

Figure 2. Students' motives to work. Share of all working students for whom the following reasons to work apply (totally) in %



Source: EUROSTUDENT VI

In all E:VI countries, between 40 % and 75 % of students work to gain experience in the labour market. Despite the fact that the relevance of this reason differs between countries, cross-country patterns are noticed when looking at the students' characteristics. In most of the countries, students in second cycle programmes take up jobs to gain experience more often than Bachelor students, presumably as they are closer to transitioning into the labour market or have started their job already before taking up the Master's programme. Also, non-university and low intensity students more often work to gain experience than their counterparts. The socio-economic characteristics of students also

appear to be related to students' motives to work. Results reveal that in at least two thirds of E:VI countries direct transition students³, students with a higher educational background⁴, students from families in a better financial situation, and students without financial difficulties more often work to gain experience. In the meantime, covering living cost is more crucial for students with no prior family experience in higher education, for students who live separately from their parents, and older students. Older students work to support others more often than other student groups.

³ Direct transition students have a delay of no more than 24 months between leaving school and entering higher education.

⁴ In EUROSTUDENT, students with higher education background have parents of which at least one has attained a tertiary education degree.

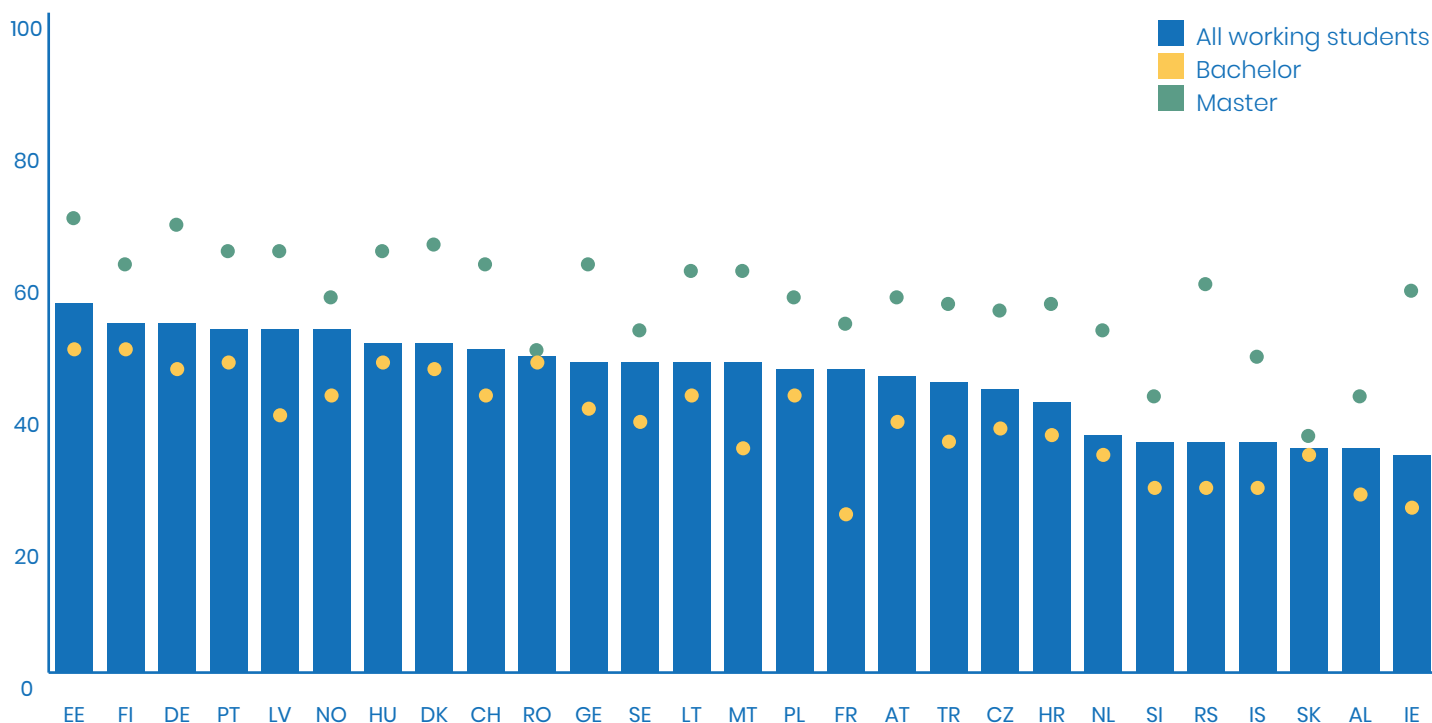
HOW CAN STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM WORKING WHILE STUDYING?

Gaining work experience might increase graduates' future employment prospects and their competitiveness in the labour market. However, it is important to consider the extent and the nature of the work experience. Researchers have tried to find a correlation between the number of working hours and its effect on acquiring academic competencies. Although the findings are inconclusive and sometimes contradictory, moderate engagement in paid activity appears to be able to help develop the generic skills necessary for the labour market. For example, Neill et al. (2004) found that students have experienced working alongside studies as being useful in developing their oral communication, leadership, and teamwork. The necessity to combine studies and a paid job might also improve time management skills (Sanchez-Gelabert et al., 2017). Besides, employment could be considered as a networking tool, where students can accumulate contacts for the future and open up the best opportunities for a professional career (Beerkens et al., 2011). However, as E:VI data indicate, working longer hours per week alongside studies can potentially become problematic in various aspects:

a paid job might become an obstacle for students' mobility, a risk factor for successful and continuous engagement in their studies, or even a reason to interrupt one's studies (Hauschildt et al., 2018).

Whether a job alongside studies is beneficial or detrimental can depend on the extent to which it is related to students' studies (Tuononen et al., 2015). There are indications that study-related jobs are less detrimental to the study process, and even beneficial from both personal and academic perspectives (Tuononen et al., 2015). EUROSTUDENT VI results reveal that, on average, 45 % of working students have jobs which are related to their studies. In Estonia, Finland, Germany, Portugal, Latvia, and Norway, more than a half of the students have a paid job closely related to their studies (Figure 3). In all EUROSTUDENT countries, Master students more often work in study-related positions when compared to their counterparts in Bachelor studies. The share of those working in study-related jobs is also higher for students who work more than 20 hours per week, compared to students who work less intensively.

Figure 3. Share of all working students whose job is (very) closely related to the content of their studies, in %



Source: EUROSTUDENT VI

Tuononen et al. (2015) have summarized the benefits of working in a field relevant to the studies and stated that the perception of the work being complementary to one's studies and the ability to better identify future goals help to deal with a heavy workload. EUROSTUDENT VI data

supplements these findings, showing that in the majority of countries, students working in study-related jobs are more satisfied with their time budget compared to those working in jobs not related to their study content.

IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY

Understanding which groups of students work for financial reasons, and which can afford to study only because of a paid job is relevant for monitoring the social dimension in higher education systems and for designing and funding student support systems. Furthermore, knowing which students work, and how, may help to develop more measures targeted at widening participation, increased inclusivity, and life-long learning in higher education systems – goals that are outlined in past

Ministerial communiqués of the Bologna Process (Yerevan Communiqué, 2015; Paris Communiqué, 2018) and the renewed EU agenda for higher education (European Commission, 2017). Moreover, it is relevant for higher education decision makers and providers to understand which factors enable students to reach a good balance between the two activities, and to maintain sufficient study progress, especially if work becomes necessary in order to be able to afford higher education studies.

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ABOUT EUROSTUDENT

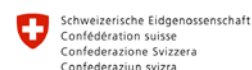
The EUROSTUDENT project collates comparable student survey data on the social dimension of European higher education, collecting data on a wide range of topics, e.g. the socio-economic background, living conditions, and temporary international mobility of students. The project strives to provide reliable and insightful cross-country comparisons. The data presented here stem from the sixth round of the EUROSTUDENT project (2016–2018).

The comparative report [“Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe”](#) (2018) provides insight into many other questions related to students’ characteristics as well as other aspects of student life in Europe. Furthermore, the [EUROSTUDENT database](#) allows users to explore country data by topic area and in comparison between countries. Also visit www.eurostudent.eu for more information and results.

Country abbreviations

| | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------|----------------------|---------------|
| AT = Austria | FR = France | LT = Lithuania | RO = Romania |
| CH = Switzerland | GE = Georgia | LV = Latvia | RS = Serbia |
| CZ = the Czech Republic | HR = Croatia | MT = Malta | SE = Sweden |
| DE = Germany | HU = Hungary | NL = the Netherlands | SI = Slovenia |
| DK = Denmark | IE = Ireland | NO = Norway | SK = Slovakia |
| EE = Estonia | IS = Iceland | PL = Poland | TR = Turkey |
| FI = Finland | IT = Italy | PT = Portugal | |

EUROSTUDENT Consortium members:



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