

## Chapter A3

# General methodological notes

### Data collection

EUROSTUDENT couples a central coordination approach with a strong network of national partners in each EUROSTUDENT country (> [Chapter C4](#)). The EUROSTUDENT consortium (> [Chapter A2](#)) provides national contributors with the EUROSTUDENT questionnaire, as well as extensive instructions for conducting the field phase at national level, data cleaning and weighting, calculation of indicators, and data delivery.

The national research teams are chosen and funded by the participating national ministries. They are responsible for implementing a national student survey and delivering the data to the EUROSTUDENT 8 data team in accordance with EUROSTUDENT conventions. The delivered data are checked in a series of feedback loops for accuracy and comparability and are validated for publication by the national research team.

In the eighth round of the EUROSTUDENT project, the process of data collection and delivery was headed by the consortium partner Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) in Vienna, Austria.

EUROSTUDENT conventions are the instruments used to ensure the comparability and quality of the data collected. Since the first round of EUROSTUDENT, these conventions have been continuously developed further and are the result of productive discussions during several project meetings, intensive seminars, and workshops which were organised by the EUROSTUDENT consortium. They are documented in several handbooks which are provided to all EUROSTUDENT partners.

### EUROSTUDENT questionnaire

The EUROSTUDENT questionnaire details the items, responses, and instructions to be used in the national surveys. The questionnaire handbook provides in-depth explanations of the purpose of each question and instructions on adapting it, if necessary, to the national context. EUROSTUDENT employs hashtags (#) to mark instances where the national teams need to go beyond simple translation of the question by making adaptations to the particular national context. For example, '#common language(s)' would, in Germany, mean German, in Switzerland it would be German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romanic. This method is used to ensure that the resulting national questionnaires will be understandable and applicable to the students being surveyed in each country.

## Survey execution

The questionnaire handbook also provides guidelines for the preparation and execution of the survey at national level. It provides information on the EUROSTUDENT standard target group, sampling guidelines, as well as information on the survey organisation and method. Mandatory preparatory seminars for all national teams additionally provided the opportunity to present and discuss the plans for national implementation with other national teams and the EUROSTUDENT data team.

### Box A3.1

#### Methodological note: EUROSTUDENT target group

The EUROSTUDENT target group includes all students who are – at the time of observation (usually: semester) – enrolled in any national study programme regarded to be higher education in a country. Usually that corresponds to ISCED levels 5, 6, and 7. This means all students should be included regardless of:

- **Nationality** – National and foreign students should be included, as long as they are studying for a full degree in the country of observation (and are not only obtaining a limited number of credits, e.g. as an Erasmus student).
- **Full-time/part-time status** – Full-time, part-time, ◯ correspondence, and distance students (including those in fully online degrees) should be included, as long as they live in the country of survey during the current lecture period. This represents a change from previous rounds of EUROSTUDENT, in which distance learning students in fully online degrees were excluded from the sample.
- **Character of the higher education institution (HEI) or study programme** – General as well as professional orientations of HEIs and study programmes should be included, as long as the programmes and institutions are considered to be higher education in the national context.
- **Legal character of the HEI** – Public and private institutions should be included, as long as private institutions are considered to be a regular part of the higher education system in the national context.

Excluded from the EUROSTUDENT target group are:

- **Students on (temporary) leave**, i.e. students who have officially or non-officially interrupted their studies at the time of observation for whatever reason.
- **Students on credit mobility**, short-term mobile students (e.g. Erasmus students), i.e. students who are currently studying in the country of observation (incoming) or who have currently left the country of observation (outgoing) for a short time period (e.g. one or two semesters) with the purpose of gaining only a relatively small number of credits.
- **Students in ISCED 8 study programmes (PhD and doctoral programmes).**
- **Students in distance learning study programmes** (only virtual classes) who do not live in the country of survey during the current lecture period.
- **Students at very specialised HEIs**, e.g. military or police academies, or HEIs directly affiliated with one company. This might also include programmes providing training only for public administration.
- **Students in programmes classified as ISCED (2011) levels 5 or 6 which are not regarded to be higher education in the national context.** This could encompass,

for example, further vocational training programmes for Master crafts(wo)men, or upper secondary schools or post-secondary programmes not regarded as higher education.

- **Students enrolled in higher education but not entitled to finish a common programme.** This might be students with an ‘extra-ordinary’ or ‘guest’ status or students only enrolled in single courses if they are not allowed to graduate from an entire, ordinary programme (i.e. their achievements will not be recognised for a common title like Bachelor or Master).

#### Box A3.2

#### **Methodological note: Notes on national samples and deviations from the EUROSTUDENT standard target group**

Not all countries were able to fully comply with the standard target groups. The following countries indicated deviations from the EUROSTUDENT conventions:

- **Netherlands:** Private institutions (covering around 7% of students) are not included in the sample. This constitutes a deviation from the EUROSTUDENT target group.
- **Ireland:** No private institutions are included in the sample. This constitutes a deviation from the EUROSTUDENT target group.

#### **Survey mode**

EUROSTUDENT encourages the use of online surveys. Most national contributors have followed this recommendation, while others have chosen other methods based on the national context or employed multiple survey modes (see >[Chapter C3](#) for details).

#### **Data cleaning and analysis**

After the data collection, national contributors clean the data and prepare the calculation of national indicators. Detailed cleaning and coding instructions are given for each variable, so that a national dataset adhering to EUROSTUDENT standards is created. SPSS syntax supporting this process is also provided.

EUROSTUDENT recommends weighting the raw data using population data on sex, ISCED level, fields of study, types of HEIs, enrolment status, and age. Additional weighting variables (e.g. region of HEIs, citizenship, place of birth, number of international students) are encouraged if deemed relevant. >[Chapter C3](#) provides an overview of the implemented weighting schemes at the national level.

The EUROSTUDENT data team supports the national research teams during the data cleaning and delivery process. Furthermore, each national team is required to attend a seminar at which the process is explained in detail and the steps are discussed between the national teams and the EUROSTUDENT data team.

The calculation of the indicators in EUROSTUDENT 8 is done using a (semi-)automatic SPSS syntax. The results of these calculations are uploaded into the EUROSTUDENT database, where they are checked and commented on by the national teams. Delivered data were checked by the EUROSTUDENT data team before being validated for publication by the national researchers. Small deviations between the Synopsis of Indicators and the [> Database](#) may occur due to rounding.

Any deviations from the EUROSTUDENT conventions in national questionnaires or calculations are noted beneath each figure/table and explained in more detail in [> Chapter C2](#).

