

Social Dimension – Best Practice Germany

Student Services/StudentAffairs enable access to higher education institutions, retention and study success. This can be shown by results from the Eurostudent Reports, but as well – concerning the situation in Germany – by the 19th Social Survey - an empirical analysis of economic and social conditions of students' life in Germany conducted on behalf of the Deutsches Studentenwerk and further studies. Students Services tasks comprehend financial support, accommodation, restaurants, social and psychological counselling, childcare, cultural offers, specific offers to international students, offers for students with disabilities, employment services, career services etc. Student services are offered in Germany by 58 regional Studentenwerke outside from the universities, offering their services to more than 350 Higher education institutions in 180 university sites and to more than 2 million students.

Participation of students by social background

The decision to start a study at a higher education institution depends on different factors and questions, i.e. the education level of the parents, the family income, recommendations by teachers, information to realistic expectations and to questions of financing a study just at schools, especially to avoid doubts of parents etc.

Study Financing

Study financing is one important factor in social dimension for access to Higher Education and study success. In 2001 the national financial study support has been reformed in the sense of more transparency and higher financial support (as well in 2008 and 2010) and the share of loans has been limited by 10.000 Euro, therefore the share of grants normally exceeds 50%. As the consequence the participation of students grow from 12 up to 15% between 2003 and 2009. Especially students with migration background finance their monthly income by higher rates of national financial support (23% to 15%). 81% of the supported students answered, that wouldn't have been able to study without support. In average the monthly support makes 413 Euro in 2009.

Financial counselling as one task of student services is on the first position of students needed counselling services (22%). This concerns different study phases, but as questions about study possibilities abroad (16%). On the other hand problems of financing bring out breaks or completion of studies without degree.

Since 2009 the national financial support enables the portability of grants and loans to foreign countries (EU and USA) from the first semester. Even in the past the portability really increased the number of students from lower social background studying abroad.

Students accommodation

Students residents halls Wohnheime are important for a successful study access, start and mobility.

Nearly the half of foreign students live in resident halls (41%), the rate of Study starters is more than 50 %.

The distance to the parents residence amounts only by 36% domestic study starters more than 100 kilometers, but anyhow 20% of study starters live in resident halls – among all students 115 depending on the limited capacities. This underlines the meaning of resident halls for study access.

As a big advantage residential halls are attractive for students as the rent is with 222 Euro the cheapest form outside the parental home in contrary to the average rent in residential market with 283 Euro (2009). That's why the social survey related to the social structure of the domestic students underlines that they are representing all social backgrounds with one common attribute: the monthly income of 40% amounts less than 640 Euro, in average the monthly income of all students amounts 812 Euro.

Especially Bachelor students show a tendency to resident halls (18% versus 12% average), if they don't stay in the parents home (26%).

Restaurants

Students restaurants constitute one form of non direct subsidy to students. The subsidy enables low meal costs and in this way low studying costs in totally. On this background it doesn't surprise that 85 % of students visit a campus restaurant 4 times a week. The share of students visiting a restaurant for lunch amounts around 60%.

Students in Bachelor Courses oftener visit Restaurants than students in traditional study courses: (41% zu 39%).

These developments due to an increasing attractiveness of meals in restaurants, basing on an improved quality, an expanded and diversified bargain, better service and ambience and last but not least in increasing obligations being present on Campus.

Counselling services

Considerable reasons for study interruptions exist in efficiency problems (20%) and financial problems (19%). In addition the subjective pressure increased in the last 10 years, for example realising a good degree (57% up to 63%)

So the 19th survey 61% of students articulated necessity on counselling services. This need is focussed on different themes, like questions to financial support, problems in continuing there studies, in study orientation, problems related to themselves as persons or the personal environment.

Concerning students in Bachelor courses the need on counselling services regularly increases related to questions of study financing in general (25%) or a of studying abroad (17%) and doubts about continuing their studies (15%) and efficiency problems (13%). As well they demand offers on time management, strategies accomplishing stress situations, learning problems, difficulties to get in touch to other students etc.

Depending on the social structure 66% students from lower social background ask for counselling services, differentiated in financial 53%, efficiency problems 41 % , problems concerning the personal environment 28 %.

On this background counselling services contribute to study success in offering accessible solutions, free of charges and by differentiation depending on different questions from financial support to psychological aid.

The number of demands increased in the last years by implementation of the new study structure: psychological counselling interviews by 21%, social counselling interviews by 27%.

Childcare services

5% of Students have one or more children (F 6%, M 4%). This number remains constant since 2000. The share of studying parents with migration background is about 7%. As well 7% are single Mother or father. 53% of the children are under 3 years old, without a guarantee of public childcare, because those facilities have to be offered by public law from the age of 3 years.

64% of studying parents articulated, that they have to prolong their study time because of the children, 55% couldn't visit lessons because of non compatible times, 40% had problems in financing their living cost including children, 34% didn't find adequate flexible childcare offers.

That's why the 58 Studentenwerke offer nearly 7000 childcare places in 205 institutions, flexible short-time care, financial support to children like cheap meals or free of costs, baby equipments and other subsidies.

Those childcare services and offers contribute to study success, shorten study interruptions etc.

International Students

Germany is as a target country for international students at moment worldwide in the third position after USA and UK.

As the results of the 19th Social Survey of the Deutsches Studentenwerk (DSW) 'Internationalization of Higher Education – Foreign Students in Germany' show, 40% of international students have difficulties in orientation with the study system, 39% articulated obstacles in financing their studies, and 37% articulated barriers getting in touch to german students or german inhabitants. 11% are studying parents.

That's why Student services offer to international students specific counselling services, financial support, employment services, peer or tutor programs etc. with the aim to reduce obstacles to study success.

Students with disabilities

8 % of students feel affected by disability or a chronic illness. Students with disabilities more often interrupt their studies (20%), change the study course (23%), produce a



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higher demand to counselling services. On this background 38 Studentenwerke offer specific counselling services to students with disabilities, especially in social judicial questions. 53 Studentenwerke offer resident halls for Students with disabilities, and 9 Studentenwerke specific technical support.

In their work the regional Studentenwerke are supported by the information centre for students with disabilities, located in the DSW.